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Play of novice monks before and after being ordained: an exploratory study

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According to the Buddhist texts, monks are considered as distinctive group of people. Hence, even novice monks, undergo rigorous trainings/ restrictions after being ordained, though they are considered to be children and therefore have the right to play according to the convention of Child Rights. Therefore, question arises whether novice monks are allowed to play after being ordained and whether significant differences can be observed within their play behavior before and after the ordinance.

In order find out the answers to these research questions the present study explored the play behaviors of 15 novice monks in two distinctive age groups; novice monks (n = 08) in early adolescence (10-14 Yrs.) and novice monks (n = 07) in their middle adolescence (15-18 Yrs.), using semi structured interviews by the first author.

The key findings of this study are as follows:

Psychosocial development was observed before and after being ordained within the novice monks' play behavior impacted by their chronological age.

After being ordained, novice monks experienced guilt while playing regardless of the fact whether adults reprimanded them or not, which could be attributed to the religious and cultural consciousness/ beliefs, social values and attitudes ingrained within their training.

There was a decline in the number, types and duration of play behaviors of the novice monks after being ordained.

Modern life style and competitive educational system has created a negative impact on Sri Lankan children's play behaviors in general whether they are novice monks or ordinary school going children

Findings are discussed in the contexts of psychoanalysis, socio-cultural, behavioral and developmental and rights based perspectives.

Key words: Play, Novice monks, Ordinance, Child rights