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En foco: Variaciones sobre el tema de la Juventud y la Violencia

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The impact of the juvenile vandalism in the public urban space. The case of Parsabad's city in Iran.

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Abstract

Vandalism is a social phenomenon that results in the destruction of public facilities. Vandalism has a variety of adverse impacts on the urban public space. The purpose of this article is to study vandalism and its impact on the urban public realm in Parsabad (a highly populated city in Ardebil province adjacent to the Azerbaijan Republic). This study is a quantitative research carried out based on survey techniques and the data collection tool was a prefabricated questionnaire. The statistical research population includes all 12 to 20 years-old teenagers living in the city of Parsabad in the year 2017 with a size of 33922 persons. The sample size was 379 based on standard Morgan table. The research findings based on SPSS software and t-test show that the most important factors in the occurrence of vandalism in the city of Parsabad are revenge against injustice, to prove oneself and show off, amusement and entertainment, fight against the existing social order, hanging around with vandals, and claiming power and prestige in the gang. Also, according to Friedman's test results, revenge against injustice with 38%, to prove oneself and show off with 18%, amusement and entertainment with 14%, fight against the existing social order with 12%, hanging around with vandals with 10%, and claiming power and prestige in the gang with 8% rank first to sixth in the order of factors. Also, graffiti writing, tearing down, arson, and breaking the public

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property are some impacts of vandalism on the public properties and spaces in the city of Parsabad.

Keywords: Vandalism; destruction of public property; crime

El impacto del vandalismo juvenil en el espacio público urbano. El caso de la ciudad de Parsabad en Irán.

Resumen

El vandalismo es un fenómeno social que causa la destrucción de instalaciones públicas. Tiene una variedad de impactos adversos sobre el espacio público urbano. El objetivo de este artículo es el estudio del vandalismo y su impacto en Parsabad (una ciudad sumamente poblada en la provincia Ardebil adyacente a la República de Azerbaiyán). Se trata de una investigación cuantitativa cuyo instrumento de recolección de datos fue un cuestionario prefabricado. La población de investigación estadística incluye a todos los adolescentes de 12 a 20 años que vivían en la ciudad de Parsabad en el año 2017 – 33.922-. El tamaño de la muestra es 379, basada en la tabla estándar de Morgan. Las conclusiones de investigación basadas en el software SPSS y la prueba de t muestran que los factores más importantes en la presencia de vandalismo en la ciudad de Parsabad son la venganza contra la injusticia, mostrarse y lucirse, el entretenimiento, la lucha contra el orden social, perdiendo el tiempo con vándalos, y reclamando el poder y el prestigio en la pandilla. También, según los resultados de la prueba de Friedman, cuentan en el orden de los primeros factores: la venganza contra la injusticia – con el 38 %-, la búsqueda de respeto – con el 18 %-, el entretenimiento y – con el 14 %-, lucha contra el orden existente – con el 12 %-, la pérdida de tiempo – con el 10 %-, y el reclamo de poder y prestigio en la pandilla – con el 8 %-. Igualmente, pintura y manchas en las paredes, derrumbes, incendios intencionados y daños a la

propiedad pública son impactos de vandalismo en la ciudad de Parsabad.

Palabras clave: Vandalismo; Destrucción de propiedad pública; Crimen

Introduction

1-1 Statement of the problem

Nowadays, vandalism is an unpleasant and at the same time inevitable reality especially for those who are living in big and populated cities. Vandalism is taken from *Vandal*, one of the German-Slavetribes. They lived in the fifth century A.D. in Europe. They were aggressive and bloodthirsty warriors who attacked the surrounding areas and caused much destruction and looted the occupied areas and towns. Their devastating manners that have been remembered in the history, particularly in the twentieth century, resulted in coining the term *Vandalism* to portray the people who knowingly destroy public property and objects, artworks, and scientific, historical and ancient relics (Johnvernj, 2017:14). Therefore, vandalism is a social phenomenon that leads to the destruction of public facilities and equipment. This social phenomenon has been observable in the past centuries, but since the second half of the twentieth century it has become more prevalent and due to the extent and vastness of cities and population density, the cities and especially metropolises are the main location for the occurrence of this phenomenon. Vandalism has many impacts on the urban realm like economic and psychological damages, public order disturbance etc. (Faramarzi, 2014:3). Study of problems may help to unfold solutions and possible approaches to a subject. Hence, the researcher has tried to investigate the problem of vandalism and its destructive impacts on urban space to address this issue, so with the efforts of others better measures could be taken. By the same token, the purpose of this paper is a review of the phenomenon of vandalism and its effect on urban spaces in the city of Parsabad in Ardabil province and to find an answer to this basic question that *what are the most important variables affecting urban vandalism in the city of Parsabad and what are the impacts of such vandalism on the urban public realm?*

1-2 Importance and necessity of research

Vandalism as a global and universal phenomenon has broad dimensions and manifestations, particularly in urban areas and many of contemporary societies ranging from modern and industrial nations to developing communities. In the countries with an information recording system relating to the scope and dimensions as well as the extent of the damage caused by vandalism in different sectors such as services, environment, health education, recreation and the like, the provided information suggests the breadth, intensity and diversity of vandalism in these sectors (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2010:249).

Social science researchers believe the destruction of public property or vandalism, especially among teenagers, can be a precursor to criminal and perverted behavior. Especially, a deep investigation into this problem reveals that teenagers and even adolescents by destruction of public property in educational places, like breaking the desk and carving on it, graffiti and disturbing writings on the walls and doors; besides the creation of inappropriate cultural and social image and destroying public and private property and damaging the welfare facilities of a community, somehow punish these equipment vis-à-vis their unresolved complexes that could pave the way for the future misdemeanors (John Hasani, 2008:22).

Damages caused by vandalism and destruction are magnificent in most countries. Every year, huge public budgets are spent on the repair of the objects and equipment (broken chairs and desks, ...) damaged by vandals. Damages caused by vandalism in Iran and the city of Parsabad are mainly directed towards urban public bus transport companies, education and training sector, sports venues, etc. and incur huge costs to organizations and the government. This would delay the implementation of new projects and better facilities. This problem is important because the destruction of public property as an irreparable complication imposed on the resources and facilities of the contemporary communities, causes colossal losses to public funds and magnificent damages to national capital every year. Based on the above considerations, this research is important because in comparison with other types of teenage crimes that might have particular motivations, it suffers from more complexity and the factors that cause such attitude are somewhat more obscure. On the other hand, since the adolescence age is one of the most sensitive part of life for all members of the community and this period of time plays a major role in the life of each person, therefore, committing such acts in this period may pave the way for other social deviations and provide the setting for various perversions in the individual's personality and the social role of the individual in society. This problem, for a young population that in the not-so-long-term its affairs will be entrusted to the youth is a dire phenomenon. This issue is important in terms of cost and time and efforts that the government dedicates to solve them as well (Stodeh, 2015: 137-138).

Also, in order to understand the factors that cause such a problem and to provide appropriate strategies to prevent the spread of the vandalism trend from various viewpoints, the necessity of doing such research will be revealed. From the theoretical aspect in this study, the theories of social deviance that we use in defining various phenomena will be tested. Since the public property in any community is owned by all members of the society and form a part of its national capital, any destruction and damage to it will be a loss to that community in one way or another. It is noteworthy that the people who destroy public property intentionally do not gain any particular gain by achieving this. Therefore, it is essential that due to the popularity of this phenomenon among the students, its socio-economic factors and outcomes should be explained to reduce or moderate the extent of this phenomenon.

1-3 Research objectives

The overall goal: an investigation of teenagers' vandalism and its effects on public urban realm of the city of Parsabad.

Minor objectives:

- to determine the factors affecting teenagers' vandalism in the public urban realm of the city of Parsabad.
- to determine the vandalism instances in the public urban realm of the city of Parsabad.

1-4 Research hypotheses

- Revenge against injustice is one of the factors that cause teenagers' vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- To prove oneself and show off is one of the factors that cause teenagers' vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- Amusement and entertainment is one of the factors that cause teenagers' vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- Fight against the existing social order is one of the factors that cause teenagers' vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- Hanging around with vandals is one of the factors that cause teen vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- Claiming power and prestige in the gang is one of the factors that cause teenagers' vandalism in the city of Parsabad.
- Graffiti, tearing down, arson, and breaking the public property are impacts of teenagers' vandalism on the city of Parsabad.

1-5 Conceptual model of research

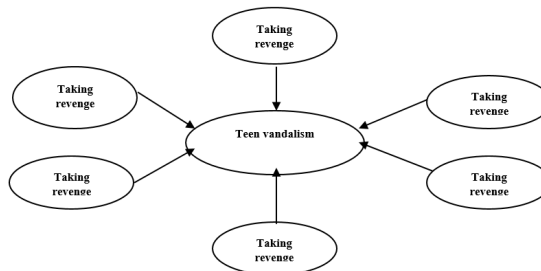


Fig.1-Conceptual model of research

2. Literature of research

2-1. Background

The results of a study by Khakinahad in 2009-2010 shows a relationship between the destruction of public property and relationship with school, relationship with family, relationship with friends, parental income, wealth and assets of the family, place of residence, parental education, belief in religious beliefs, and leisure time. And there are relationships between social, economic and cultural capital and the destruction of public property; with different intensity or reversed order.

Another research by Fattah entitled *Measurement of the Amount of Inclination Towards Vandalism Behaviors and the Study of Some of the Social and Personal Factors Affecting It Among the Teens in the City of Urmia in the Academic Year 2008-2009* and the results of multivariate regression analysis and path analysis showed that “the greatest amount of correlation with the dependent variable belonging to factors justifying the variables of vandalism behavior are belief in the rules and regulations of the school, loyalty to vandal friends, adapting to school environment and solidarity with family. The analytical model of this research has been able to explain 45.6 percent of the changes to inclination towards vandalism (Fattahi, 2016:17). Menakr (2015) in a study entitled *Factors Affecting Violence and Vandalism in the Public Pathways in UK*, with the use of social pressure theory and micro-culture, represents the impact of family factors and the factors related to violence and vandalism and also suggests a positive and significant correlation between the people's gender and vandalism. That is, boys commit more violence and vandalism than girls. Also, there is a positive and direct relationship between age and vandalism, so that with the increase of age from 15 to 20 years the rate of youth violence rises and vandalism behavior among adolescent boys is more compared with teenage girls.

2-2. Theoretical foundations

Mayer and Klinard (2005) define vandalism as frequent and continuous voluntary destruction of public property. The phenomenon of vandalism or destruction of public property is a sinister social phenomenon that in sociology texts is defined as a kind of morbid mood in which case the individual tends to destroy public and sometimes private property with informed decision. This phenomenon has its roots in human ego and doesn't depend on gender, race, nationality, culture, religion, age, ethnicity, academic degree, and the type of family and society; and can be seen in all developed and under-developed countries (Zakai, 2007:117). Vandalism is divided into two individual and group categories and most destruction is done by individual vandalism that incurs huge damages to the community. Based on the research conducted around the world, vandalism acts are done by young people without knowing that this practice is a crime. They think their acts are a kind of joke. In relation to vandalism, it is noteworthy that vandals come from different classes of society, and not only the lower and uneducated classes. Hackers and those who inject virus in the Internet network are considered vandals. However, social experts have a

variety of opinions regarding the incidence of this phenomenon, the reasons such as mental and psychological illness, economical poverty, low education level, companionship with criminal friends, antisocial personality disorder, low intelligence, educational and family problems, and social and cultural problems will cause the social phenomenon of vandalism (Ahmadi Aliabadi, 2010:12).

Most of the explanations offered by the experts about vandalism have some common points: "vandalism is a deliberate act intended to destroy or hurt something that belongs to others." (Haining, 2009:164). "The deliberate destruction of the environment without any gain." (2016:3, Spaij). In many of researches, the social science scientists have concluded that the vandals and adolescent criminals have been brought up in non-disciplined families and away from social norms. These individuals often feel helpless and show such feelings in a forced and aggressive manner against adult generation, power elite, and all the existing institutions and organizations in the community. These individuals due to inability of coordinating themselves with the values dominant in the society, as well as severance and lack of bonding with the values imposed by the parents and what constitutes the terms of the ruling movements in the community, alienate with the community values and start their fight with it. On the other hand, vandalism is a kind of collective and emotional behavior lacking rationality that is mostly caused by hurried and illogical adherence to others. In such a situation, a vandal person is affected by peer pressure and proceeds to destroy to identify with the group (Ghassemi, 2009: 72).

If we are to consider vandalism as a perverted behavior; in addition to economic basis, Coleman, Bourdieu and Putnam include the person's social capital and his family, and Sutherland includes Differential link (companionship with vandals), and Hirshi & Seaman include lack of control over the perverted behaviors, and T.R. Ger and Blau include the relative feeling of deprivation in the incidence of such deviations and actions. Also, the Huber vandalism theory is mainly based on his research in the area of violence and vandalism in public transport vehicles in European countries. Huber (2001) in his research pointed out several factors of vandalism behaviors and the most common one is attracting attention because of the feeling of oppression and revenge and antisocial character (John Hasani, 2008:28-27).

2-3. Examples and impact of vandalism behavior in public urban realm

Mohseni Tabrizi, a professor of University of Tehran (2010) conducted a comprehensive research about vandalism in the city of Tehran and has stated the most important instances of vandalism as such:

1. Writing graffiti or names on historical monuments and religious places, sculptures installed in squares, parks and public places, cinemas, lifts, parks and public green spaces, bus and subway seats, books of libraries, public phones, post boxes.

2. Removal of traffic signs, bending or breaking the traffic light and even ignoring the traffic light. If at an intersection you wait for the green pedestrian light, there are many youngsters that make fun of the people or their friends who are waiting for the green pedestrian light. This behavior is also a kind of vandalism.
3. Damaging the body of a car with sharp tools machines such as knives and scissors and tools such as wrenches, brass knuckles, keys, nails, nail clipper, stone, colored materials, ink, color spray, slingshot, gun, chemicals, bitumen, glue, drill, puncturing car tire, breaking the car windows and mirror. All kinds of damages are possible for all personal cars parked in the streets and alleys but expensive cars are more prone to this behavior of vandals because one reason is the wealth denied to the vandal person who believes the rich is the cause of his poverty.
4. Another example of the vandalism behavior is observed in the football teams' fans and the people like Juliana, Marsh *et al.*, Ramon Spaij, and ... call the behavior of this group a kind of vandalism and lumpenism.
5. Tearing down promotional banners and posters and scattering them on the ground, writing and installing ads on the walls of homes, public places and public buildings ignoring special places dedicated to install advertising; in many cities there are places dedicated to post advertising and some people install their banners at the closest location disregarding those spots (Faramarzi, 2014:59).
6. Breaking and damaging the trees.
7. Graffiti.
8. The destruction of benches, shades, picnic tables, lighting equipment in parks, picking flowers in parks, hurting animals in wildlife parks or public resorts.
9. Blocking and destruction of fountains and dropping litter in waterscape.
10. Destruction of lighting equipment in the streets and alleys.
11. Destruction of, or writing on the bus station shelter, writing on the body of the bus or its seats, carving out a portion of the body of the bus seat, removing and taking away the bus logo.
12. Writing obscene words in public places like buses, public toilets, walls, chairs and walls of the university classroom.
13. Removal of public telephone, breaking the telephone kiosk glass pane, graffiti on telephone kiosk.
14. Putting obstacles on the railroads and throwing stone at train windows.
15. Damaging sports equipment and spaces.

16. Breaking glass, breaking the door of store, using explosive and incendiary materials.
17. Breaking and stealing trash can.
18. Installing boards and flags with nail or wire and cable to the street trees and walls in the town.
19. Tearing up the seat in cinema or metro.
20. Loosening the bolt and nut of bus seat and park bench.
21. Destroying the statues and panels installed inside parks and green spaces.
22. Arson in parks and in particular wildlife parks.
23. Destroying the toilet and wash bowl inside the park and green spaces.
24. Destroying the water faucet and water cooler inside the park and green spaces.
25. Destroying the children's playground equipment (quoted from Davari Ahd, 2011:98-99).

Research methodology

3-1. Research methods and tools

This study is a quantitative research conducted using the survey technique. The data collection tool is a prefabricated questionnaire provided by Mohseni Tabrizi in 2010. This questionnaire has 44 questions in two sections of demography (questions related to the general profile of the person and family) and the main questions (questions about causes and instances). The aforementioned questionnaire was updated for the present study with minor changes according to the statistical population and the scope of research. Validity and reliability of the research tool was tested by the original designer and was evaluated as suitable. The final reliability of the questionnaire was 0.81 and since it was above 0.70 based on convention, it was evaluated as suitable.

3-2 Statistical population, sample size and sampling method

The sampling method of the present research includes all of the teenagers between 12 to 20 years of age residing in Parsabad County in 2017 with a size of 33922 persons (according to the county health center statistics). The total population of the county is 180456. The sample size was calculated as $n=379$ based on the standard Morgan table. The sampling method was simple random sampling method. With paying a visit to five crowded centers in the city, by obtaining verbal consent, the questionnaires were completed for the qualified

samples. The criterion for inclusion in the study included 12 to 20 years-old persons who were willing to participate in the study and also the exclusion criterion was reluctance to participate in the study and the lack of sound mental and psychological health.

3-3 Data analysis method

Data analysis was carried out in two descriptive and inferential sections with SPSS software. The descriptive section provided the data relating to the general particulars of respondents and their families. In the inferential section, according to the research goals and hypotheses, the t-test (to show the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness) and Friedman's test (to rate effective factors) were used.

Research findings

The profile of respondents was as follows:

Male	Female	High school student	University student	Drop outs	Lower social class (self-reported)	Middle social class (self-reported)	Top social class (self-reported)
81%	19%	71%	11%	18%	27%	51%	22%

Writing, tearing down, setting at fire, ripping off and breaking the public property were some instances of vandalism in the city of Parsabad. Based on the results of the statistical tests (which were obtained using the t-test and at the significance level of less than 0.05 and in the table 1), factors such as taking revenge against injustice, to prove oneself and show off, amusement and entertainment, fight against the existing social order, hanging around with vandals, and claiming power and prestige in the gang were the most important causes of vandalism in the city of Parsabad.

Table 1 – T-test results

Hypotheses number	T-test results		Hypothesis testing
	Coefficient	Significance level	Level of hypothesis confirmation
1	0.84	0.029	0.95%
2	0.80	0.031	0.95%
3	0.78	0.034	0.95%
4	0.75	0.037	0.95%
5	0.73	0.040	0.95%
6	0.71	0.043	0.95%

According to table 2, which is the Friedman's test output, since the significant level of the test, i.e. 0.031, is less than the standard level, as a result these factors do not have the same rating.

Table 2 – Rating of factors

No. of observations	Significance level	Degrees of freedom	Chi-square
379	0.031	5	80.398

In the following, the Friedman table below is provided to determine the exact ratings. Taking revenge against injustice, to prove oneself and show off, amusement and entertainment, fight against the existing social order, hanging around with vandals, and claiming power and prestige in the gang occupy the first to sixth place in the ranking of effective factors.

Table 3-Exact rating of the factors

Strategies	Chi-square	Significance level	No. of observations
taking revenge against injustice	80.532	0.270	30
to prove oneself and show off	81.459	0.029	30
amusement and entertainment	81.763	0.032	30
fight against the existing social order	81.931	0.035	30
hanging around with vandals	82.106	0.038	30
claiming power and prestige in the gang	82.161	0.040	30

Conclusion and recommendations

The phenomenon of vandalism like other social deviations has many hidden and obvious outcomes. Vandalism is a kind of youth crime that is detrimental to public order. Vandalism lowers the quality of urban life and with increasing aggression and violence in cities, not only disturbs business activities and the use of public recreational spaces; but it also affects the soaring feelings of fear and unrest and abnormality as well.

The economic loss is one of the most important and prominent damages of vandalism and every year a huge portion of the budget of countries is spent on repair and restoration of destroyed equipment. In addition to incurring a lot of economic cost, the citizens might be deprived of public facilities for a long time until the public equipment are returned from repair and restoration centers and the citizens can use them again. This missing time of the loss of exploitation of public facilities would lead to dissatisfaction and distrust of people towards urban management and social capital.

The psychological dimension is another result of vandalism. Defacement of urban landscapes also destroys the citizens' morale and will generate more motivations for vandals to increase the devastation.

One of the most important results related to vandalism is the point that the ancient Vandals (5th century A.D.) destroyed the lands of others, i.e. with their fierce onslaught destroyed something that was made by another country but did not harm the economy of their own country. But "modern vandals" destroy something that belongs to their society, i.e. its losses return to themselves, but they are not aware of it. Of course, this point should be noted that any individual in any country, should not choose the path of destruction, regardless of his/her origins. Vandals are not restricted to a particular group, or class, a specific level of education, etc.

To stop and prevent the occurrence of such a phenomenon in a given society, there are a lot of requirements, some of which are indicated in the following and can be used as a suitable strategy:

Family upbringing, raising social-consciousness and manufacturing culture, increasing participation in the community, careful use of potential spaces prone to vandalism, increased social surveillance, increasing the public and semi-public and private spaces, re-design of urban planning for the proper use of spaces, attending to urban beautification and aesthetics, planning for good strength and physical shape in the construction of urban spaces and structures, and so on.

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