Vandalism Roots among Juveniles and Youths in Public Spaces of City (Case Study: Amol City)

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Abstract

Urbanism in third world and developing countries compared to that of developed countries has been increased with much more speed. From consequences of the population increase and accelerated growth of population in cities, reference can be lead to many problems such as increase of unemployment rate, housing problems, social anomalies, increase in crime and delinquency. Vandalism in public spaces is from among undesirable social phenomena in most of the cities in the country, followed by serious damages. The research has been necessary to be performed as for identifying the roots of vandalism among juveniles and youths between 13 to 34 years of age. The research is an analytical descriptive study; and, data have been collected through questionnaire. Statistical population of the research in 2016 included 13 to 34 years old juveniles and youths in Amol City (271169 individuals). Through usage made of Cochran's method, 400 juveniles and youths from among them have been selected as sample size to fill the questionnaire through simple random sampling method. To analyze data, independent t-test and path analysis have been applied. According to the findings there is significant relationship between contextual variables, socio-economic status, cultural status, environmental factors and vandalism among juveniles and youths. As a result, taking action in the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental fields can be resulted in reduction of damages caused by vandalism.

Keywords: Vandalism, Environmental design, Juveniles and youths, Public spaces, Amol City.

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1. Introduction

Vandalism is an intentional and conscious action taken mostly aimed at public and still life, and an indirect form of physical aggression as well as a relieve to reduce feeling of failure and/or a way to fulfill the wishes of the person. Vandalism is from among crimes less being prone to legal or criminal punishment; and, breaking the norms that creates some losses to government and shows bigger and more important problems in future society. Our country with more than half of the population being juveniles and youths is from among those countries prone to early social harms, including vandalism phenomenon. Most vandals are juveniles and youths between 10 to 25 years old; and, they do vandalism due to crisis arisen from sexual instincts, rebellions, as well as generation conflict, etc. (Bahrami Mehna, 2005, p. 25). Vandalism is deliberately damaging public or private properties. This is one of the problems in urban societies created along with accelerated growth and development of city and urbanization culture not being internalized among different communities (Fadaie, 2008, p. 14).

Living in the society requires social norms and behaviors to be observed. Social norms are certain behavioral methods formed based on social values; and, their observation would be resulted in creation of order in society. In fact, sociologists consider norms as "standardized patterns of behavior and action" which shows ideal or desirable behavior of society members. However, many factors combined with each other will lead to social deviations and crimes. In general, these factors can be categorized in three economic, political, and social groups. Defect in any of these factors can pave the way for various types of social deviations and harms in society (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004, p. 35). Vandalism is one of these behavioral deviations emerged in new societies and considered by experts as some kind of social problem.

The anomie mostly addresses public telephone booths, school benches, urban buses, metro, trains, post, telegraph and telephone booths and such. Vandalism appears on walls in the cities, cinemas, elevators, public parks, telephone kiosks, and widely in schools. This emerging phenomenon not only imposes high costs to people residing in cities; but also, it endangers health and security of these communities (Mohammadi Bolban Abad, 2005, p.1).

According to university Professor Gabriel Mozer (sociopsychology-*René* Descartes University), vandals have proved through their actions that feeling extortion and injustice are two important motivation for sabotage and their destructive behaviors (Tabrizi and Safari Shali, 2007, p. 3). Nowadays, managers and planners in urban environments are confronting with many social and environmental problems and implications. In their geographical studies on various types of urban abnormal behaviors and crimes, experts consider several key factors such as law, criminal, victim, time, and location of occurrence of crime, from among which the role played by conditions of location and factors leading to emersion of behavioral anomalies has to be specifically taken into consideration in terms of necessity for adopting preventive measures in environmental planning and management (Brown, 2000). Combining all of these views, four main groups of social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors will be obtained (Salehi, 2006).

Public urban spaces are the most important means of strengthening civil society as the ground for contribution of all male and female groups, due to their physical structure and social functions (Rezazadeh and Mohammadi, 2009, p. 21). Recent studies show that vandalism is considerably leading to damages in public spaces and has to be investigated as a risk for cities and their residents (Yavez and Colgloo, 2011, p. 17). From sociologists' perspective regarding social deviations and pathology, tendency towards creating damage in vandals is conscious and voluntary. Some of them instead take a positive look at some of vandalism behaviors and consider them as some kind of objection and freedom of speech (Armestrong, 2002, p. 12). According to the sociologists, criminal behaviors are rooted in social and cultural structures, and vandalism is effective on reduction of quality in urban life; however, increase of aggression and violation in the cities not only will lead to reduction of work efficiency and the public using public entertainment places, but also it will be effective on increase of fear and unrest and anomalies (Bina, 2013, p. 18). Considering initial field studies and interviewing people in public spaces of Amol, vandalism exists as a phenomenon. Damaging sports equipment, children's' playground equipment, trees and green spaces in parks, destruction of public WCs sanitary faucets, damaging roads and street lights, different

kinds of graffiti, destruction of trash bins, digging up saplings in sidewalks and parks, damaging bus seats and sometimes taxis working in the city are from among examples of vandalism in cities. Considering continuation of the vandalism phenomenon in city, the research through scientific recognition of vandalism phenomenon and presentation of theoretical model in this respect is looking for a scientific answer to the following questions: "How much various factors affect vandalism in public urban spaces?"; "Whether socio-economic status of people is effective on vandalism or not?"; "Whether age and gender have any role in vandalism?"; "Does cultural status of people has any effect on vandalism?"; and, finally "Whether environmental factors are effective on vandalism or not?" Considering the above questions, following hypotheses can be suggested: 1- There is a significant relationship between socio-economic status of people and their tendencies towards vandalism; 2- There is a significant relationship between contextual variables (age and gender) and tendency towards vandalism; 3- There is a significant relationship between cultural status and tendency towards vandalism; and, 4-There is a significant relationship between environmental factors and tendency towards vandalism.

2. Review of the Literature
2.1. Theoretical Foundations
The term public space is used to describe those categories of urban spaces like streets, parks, squares, and public buildings freely accessed to by people (Grandstorm, 2006, p. 11). According to Kon, people have to make free, legal, and 24 hours access to all public spaces. Also, according to Katherine Shanfield, as far as the time passed outside home is a public time, all places in which public time goes by are considered as public place (Kon, 2005, p. 312). According to Tibaldez, these spaces are places in which most of interactions between people occur and include all places in the city visually or physically accessible by people (Tibaldz, 2006, p. 1). In lexical term, vandalism means destruction of public urban properties and facilities (Longman Dictionary, 2003); however, in sociological literature related to social deviation and pathology, there are many definitions provided for the term. Vandalism has been used as having a kind of pathological spirit and explains tendency towards

deliberate, voluntary and conscious destruction of public properties, facilities and what belongs to it (Ghasemi et al., 2009). Also, it can be considered as a minor crime from the type related to the youths (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2009). According to psychologists, vandalism can be considered as some kind of emotional and mental discharge. Contrary to many crimes and social deviations, effects of vandalism are very obvious and modern vandals contrary to traditional ones destroy anything belonging to their society; because, visual effects and consequences of vandalism especially in public places and historical monuments can be observed, in addition to those places design of which forms many hidden and explicit spaces, and those places in which more young people are referring to, or where something damaged before would be less taken care of and protected. Deviation Theory developed by Robert K. Morton can explain deviation and destruction of public properties in such countries like Iran, as well. According to Morton, deviations are rooted in structural conditions in society and contrary to Dorkim, he believes that person in society pays not enough attention to values and norms; instead, he criticizes the norms (Azad Armaki, 2010, p. 98). Morton is from among those theorists with its Deviation Theory being of special reputation in sociology. Upon the theory, factors related to functional analysis are used by Morton. Here, he takes cultural goals and institutional norms into consideration and uses anomie as an independent variable. Definition provided by Morton for anomie is lack of homogeneity between cultural goals and normative as well as legal methods of goal achievement (Momtaz, 2000, p. 22).

According to Feyz, the reason for occurrence of vandalism is divided into two external and internal factors. By external factors, he means intrinsic characteristics of urban environments and subjects prone to vandalism behaviors; and, internal factors are individual and personality traits of vandals (Feyz et al., 2009). Weinmayer believes that urban architects have to be considered as main vandals in cities as through inappropriate design provide the ground for occurrence of vandalism (Weinmayer, 2002). Low social contribution is one of the other social factors in destruction of urban environments (Cook and Kotri, 2001). According to Troy in his book "crime imagination", vandalism is not considered as an immediate criminal

motivation; but, it is a set of environmental factors and behaviors creating background of vandalism occurrence in city (Razzaghi Asl, 2009, p. 105). According to Professor Mozer, feeling extortion and failure or the same feeling of lack of success in actions are two important motivations in vandalism and vandalism behaviors (Mirfardi et al., 2012). From Hershey's point of view, vandalism like other types of crimes is caused by reduction and/or lack of social supervision and control (Razzaghi Asl, 2009, p. 105). According to Newman, social harms in general occur in those places being potentially vulnerable (Faezi, 2008, p. 14). According to Ross, preventing the phenomenon in cities is mostly dependent on two viewpoints: position components with consideration of the grounds for occurrence of vandalism in physical environment of cities; and, motivational components dealing with personal traits and value systems of people (Ross, 2010). According to Kekaro and Hinning, vandalism occurs more in public places of the cities (Kekato and Hinning, 2005).

2.2. Research Background

In a research performed by Nik Akhtar (1999) titled "Studying Socio-economic Factors Effective on Vandalism", a kind of criminal behavior among high school students in Shiraz has been dealt with to study vandalism. The research findings show that people interacting with criminal friends have been prone to the vandalism. Ahmadi and Jan Hassani (2010) have studied effect of untruthful happiness of youths on their tendency towards vandalism in Mazandaran Province. According to their results, there is a direct relationship between individual factors and vandalistic behaviors. Also, there is a positive relationship between psycho-social factors and economic factors and occurrence of vandalistic behaviors. In research performed by Hosseini (2010), it was concluded that public spaces in urban design have to be created in a way that the ground for occurrence of crime and vandalism would be minimized. According to Ghayoomzadeh's research results; there is a significant relationship between social and economical variables having effect on tendency towards vandalistic behaviors (Ghayoomzadeh, 2011). The findings by Jalali et al. (2012) showed that there is a relationship between age and socio-economic status of people and occurrence of vandalism. In research

performed by Khakpour and Hosseini (2014) about causes of vandalism, it was found that: individual and family factors, socio-economic factors, in addition to environmental factors and urban design are effective on vandalism. Significant relationship existing between cultural capital and moral intelligence and vandalism has been confirmed by Rahimi et al. (2014). In a research performed by Cresole (2005), the role played by dependence on parents, socio-economic status of family, and behavioral deviation of youths and their peers as well as their involvement in risky and criminal behaviors have been counted as factors leading to tendency towards vandalism. In research performed by Bale (2005), it was concluded that crime among youths is a growing, serious, and costly social problem in USA. According to Gidcar et al. (2013) and discovering the most important vandalistic library behaviors in their research, these behaviors have been divided into two internal and external behaviors. In study titled "destruction of public phones with emphasis put on social control theory", it was concluded by Mozer (1998) that streets not being crowded is one of the important considerable reasons for vandalism. Destruction of green spaces, statues in parks, public places and squares, damaging urban telephone booths and so are all samples of vandalistic behaviors mostly done by street youths.

None of the above viewpoints seem to be able to explain vandalism causes and factors, by themselves; and, a combined viewpoint has to be used. Miller Theory in relation to socio-economic status presents good variable. Components of income and relationship with criminals can be directly and/or indirectly extracted from Merton's viewpoints. Briefly speaking, theoretical research model is shown in figure 1.
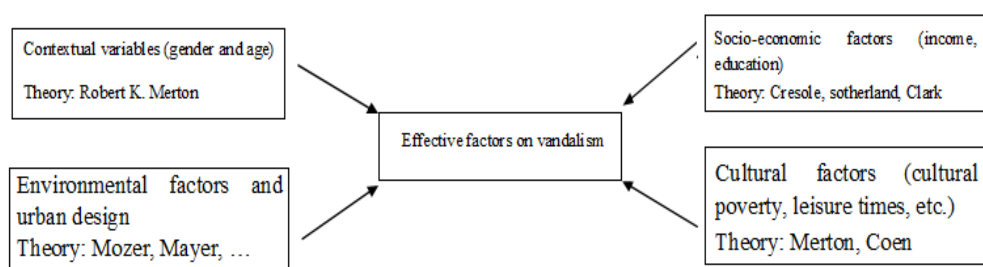
Contextual variables (gender and age) Theory: Robert K. Merton		Socio-economic factors (income, education) Theory: Cresole, sotherland, Clark
	Effective factors on vandalism	
Environmental factors and urban design Theory: Mozer, Mayer, …		Cultural factors (cultural poverty, leisure times, etc.) Theory: Merton, Coen

Figure 1: Conceptual model of vandalism factors in public spaces of the city

3. Research Methodology

This is an analytical-descriptive survey performed in a certain period of time. Statistical population includes juveniles and youths between 13 to 34 years of age in Amol City (271169 individuals). Simple random sampling has been done and 386 persons have been selected as sample size; however, for more assurance to be made of the research results, numbers of samples have been increased to 400. Research measurement tools have been questionnaire and interview; and, documents have been used in theoretical framework. To verify reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been used; and to verify validity of questionnaire, content validity has been used. In the research, alpha value has been obtained equal to 0.721 which is a desirable value and shows required accuracy of structures' reliability. Then, data obtained have been coded and analyzed in two descriptive and analytical as well as statistical analyses through Pearson and independent t-test. Also, using path analysis, effective level of each of variables has been specified.

4. Research Findings
4.1. Descriptive Findings

From among total number of respondents to questionnaire, 21% have been between 13 to 16 years old; 27.5% between 16 to 18 years; 30% between 18 to 25 years; and, 21.5% between 25 to 34 years old. 66.5% of respondents have been male and 33.5% have been female. In terms of education of their fathers, from total research population, 14.24% have declared their father to be illiterate, 26% primary and middle school, and 20.31% high school diploma, and 23% declared their fathers to have been educated higher than diploma. In terms of occupation of their fathers, from among total number of respondents, 9% declared him to be unemployed, 23% worker, 38% self-employed, 12.5% employee, and 17.5% declared other jobs. In terms of family income level: 22% declared it to be 1500000 Tomans and lower, 31% of them 1500000 to 2000000, 25% of them 2000000-2500000 Tomans, 9% of them between

2500000 and 3000000 Tomans, and 13% higher than 3000000 Tomans. In 4% of respondents parents have been divorced, and 3.4% had no parents at all. In terms of component of socializing level with criminal friends, 13% responded it as low, 37% average, 32% high, and 18% very high. In response to level of planning for leisure times: 38% have had low level of planning, 30% average, 21% high, and 11% very high level of planning. The research result showed that in general 19.4% of respondents have had high level of tendency towards vandalism, 62.8% average, and 17.8% low level of tendency towards vandalism.

4.2. Inferential Findings

4.2.1. The relationship between Contextual Variables of Vandalism

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between age and gender of people and tendency towards vandalism.

According to the results from Pearson test, a significant relationship is shown between two variables of age and vandalism. In this respect correlation coefficient is equal to 0.229 and its significance level is 0.027. So, it can be concluded that age has direct and somehow little effect on tendency towards vandalism. Also, considering age of respondents to the questionnaire (13-34) and tendency of 19.4% or them to high level of vandalism and 62.8% of them to average level of vandalism; it can be suggested that highest level of vandalism occurs in juveniles and youths. So, vandalism has significant relationship with age of people.

Table 1. The results from Pearson correlation test between age and vandalism

Statistical test	Vandalism and age
Pearson correlation coefficient	0.229
Significance level	0.027
Number of respondents	400

(Significance level: 95%)

According to the results from present research, tendency level towards vandalism in girls and boys is different. The results show that boys have more

tendencies towards vandalism. According to the findings, t-statistic is equal to 0.9 and significance level equal to 0.000. So, first hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2. The results from Pearson correlation test between gender and vandalism

Vandalism	Number	Mean	Mean deviation	Mean error	Statistical test
Boys	260	9.18	5.28	0.35	T=0.9
Girls	140	34.2	6.63	0.47	Significance=0.000

4.2.2. Relationship between Socio-economic Status and Vandalism

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between socio-economic status of people and their tendencies towards vandalism.

Socio-economic status is affected by such indicators as interaction and socialization, parents' status, income, family, friends, peer group, school, and etc. The results from Pearson test show a significant relationship between the two variables of socio-economic status and vandalism. In this respect, Pearson coefficient value is -0.334, and significance level equal to 0.01. Since the coefficient value is negative, there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. That is, the higher would be socio-economic status of person; the less would become his/her tendency towards vandalism.

Table 3. The results from Pearson correlation test between socio-economic status and vandalism

Statistical test	Vandalism and age
Pearson correlation coefficient	-0.334
Significance level	0.01
Number of respondents	400

(Significance level=99%)

4.2.3. The Relationship between Cultural Status and Vandalism

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between cultural status of people and vandalism.

The results from Pearson test show significant relationship between the two variables of cultural status and vandalism. In this respect Pearson coefficient value has been -0.273 and its significance level equal to 0.000. So, it can be suggested that, cultural status of people has effect on tendency towards vandalism; and, there is an inverse and significant relationship between the two. That is, the higher would be cultural status of people; the less would become their tendencies towards vandalism.

Table 4. The results from Pearson correlation test between cultural status and vandalism

Statistical test	Vandalism and age
Pearson correlation coefficient	-0.273
Significance level	0.027
Number of respondents	400

(Significance level=99%)

4.2.4. The Role Played by Environmental Factor and Vandalism
Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between environmental factors and vandalism.

The results from Pearson test showed significant relationship between the two variables of environmental factors and vandalism. In this respect, correlation coefficient value is equal to 0.021 and its significance level equal to 0.000. Since the coefficient is negative, there is an inverse relationship between the two variables i.e. the higher would be desirability of environmental factors; the less would become vandalism. Correlation coefficient of the variable is low; however, according to the results, surely the variable is effective.

Table 5. The results from correlation test between environmental factors and vandalism

Statistical test	Vandalism and age
Pearson correlation coefficient	0.21
Significance level	0.000

Number of respondents	400

(Significance level=99%)

5. Final Analysis

In final analysis and in response to the main question of the research i.e. "How much are effective each of different factors on vandalism?", path analysis has been used as a method of studying direct and indirect effect of independent variables on dependent variable as a causal mechanism. In theoretical model of the research, intermediary variable has not been predicted; however, to study overlapping effects (increasing or decreasing) of some variables on relationship between other independent and dependent variables, path analysis is used so that overall effect of independent variables would be achieved. Socio-economic status is one of variables directly effective on vandalism with coefficient value of 0.64; and, its indirect effects on cultural status with coefficient value equal to 0.87 have direct and explicit effect on vandalism. Cultural status with coefficient value of 0.16 directly affects vandalism and indirectly affects the contextual variable. Contextual variables with coefficient value of 0.103 have direct effect on vandalism; and, environmental factors with coefficient value of 0.102 have direct effect on vandalism.

6. Conclusion

Vandalism in public urban spaces has been always considered as a social problem i.e. a serious type of social problem among outstanding societies and mostly prevailing among juveniles and youths. Due to vandalism in urban space, many damages incur to society such as damages to car seats, breaking road and street lights, graffiti, writing memorials on walls, damaging telephone booths, breaking branches of trees, etc.; and, these damages are sometimes irrecoverable. The research has been performed to the aim of studying contextual, economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors in occurrence of vandalism in public urban spaces and its reasons among citizens in Amol. After preliminary stages and overview made on related viewpoints from inside and outside the country, through a combined approach, process of selecting research variables has been dealt with based on different theories. To reject or

confirm research hypotheses, data have been collected through questionnaire distributed among a sample group of 400 juveniles and youths in Amol.

It was concluded by Cresole, Bale, Haley, Powel Wilson, and Philip in their researches that vandals are usually from male groups. The results from studying the relationship between gender and vandalism in Amol confirms their results and shows that boys have vandalistic thoughts and/or are involved in vandalism more than girls. In a research performed by Philip titled "Vandalism in University Faculties with Reliance on Graffiti", variable of socio-economic status is considered as effective factor on vandalistic actions. The results from test performed on the two variables of socio-economic status and vandalism show significant relationship. The research results are in line with those of Mirfardi et al. (2012), Motlagh and Naderi (2013), as well as Khakpoor and Hosseini (2014). The results obtained from test performed on two variables of cultural status and vandalism showed significant relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that cultural status of people is effective on vandalism. That is, the higher would be cultural status of people; the more decrease would be made in their tendencies towards vandalism. In this respect, some researches put high emphasis on cultural management. The results from present research are in line with those of Azizabadi and Ebtehaj (2012). Some experts consider vandalism as direct result of low quality of urban programs, services, and structures and put much emphasis on important effect of them on occurrence of vandalism. Urban design has not to be at service of vandalism, making the users excited and stimulated. The results from testing the two variables of environmental factors and urban design and vandalism show significant relationship. As far as the coefficient value is negative, there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. The results from present research are in line with the findings of Yavez and Caleglo (2011); Iran Manesh and Bigdeli (2013); Mousavi et al. (2014); Fayzi et al. (2018).

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