

The Relationship between Self-Control and Vandalism among the First- and Second-Year High School Students at Yazd City

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ABSTRACT

Vandalism is one of the most complicated human behaviors which can be regarded as a fruit of different personal, social, and familial conditions. Sociologically speaking, vandalism is possession of a pathological behavior and a vandal might incur substantial annual damages to national capitals, resources and facilities. One of the variables which can influence vandalism is self-control; therefore, the present paper is intended to explain the relationship between self-control and vandalism among the first- and second-year high school students in Yazd City. This research is a survey in which data was collected using questionnaires and multi-stage cluster sampling from 635 Yazd City first- and second-year high school students. Self-control was measured in five dimensions: anger, Impulsive, egocentrism, verbal response, and persistence. Instruments are verified in a content-based manner, and Cronbach's alpha is used to evaluate reliability of the study. SPSS 20 was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that there is a significant, inverse relationship between self-control and vandalism. In other words, as self-control decreases, vandalism is increased. In addition, there was a significant difference among first- and second-year high school students in terms of their self-control levels. Concordance between results of this study and those obtained by Gottfredson, Hirschi, and Reckless in explanation of the relationship between self-control and vandalism illustrates the necessity of improving self-control among society's individuals, particularly the youth and adolescent.

KEY WORDS: Vandalism, self-control, first-year high school students, second-year high school, students, Yazd City

INTRODUCTION

At all historical periods, there were special types of social disorders and aberrations. As social structures and relationships altered, there were not only new types of disorders, but also changes in their meanings and conceptions (Sotoudeh, 2001: 205). Disorders appear in different shapes in the society. One of such disorders is vandalism or destruction. As an emanation of social life in the modern and machinated world, vandalism is a tangible phenomenon and a bitter, inescapable reality. It is interpreted as the youth's incompatibility with their social atmosphere. In other words, vandalism means anti-urban anarchism and destruction of public and private assets (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 22). It is a global issue whose purposes and performances are much similar, disregarding where it happens. In most countries, million-dollar damages are annually incurred to governmental assets by children and adolescents through causing harms to street lightings, roads, public buildings, public parks seats, glasses and windows of vacant buildings, traffic signs that are designed to protect the lives of pedestrians and passengers, buses' and minibus' seats, etc. (Shambayati, 1994: 123). In developing countries, however, both importance and variations of vandalism are on an increasing rise. In such countries, vandalism can be imposed as an important hindrance in achieving development. Therefore, vandalism is not far from becoming a social issue (Mortezaei, 2005: 12). Destruction of public assets is an irrecoverable problem to social resources and facilities, incurring considerable damages to national and public capitals. A major part of such damages is incurred by students to not only educational environments such as schools' doors, tables, and chairs, but also outside capitals at the society. This problem—posed as a threat to social coherence—is rectified consuming large-scale expenses, leaving mental negative impacts over people and officials (Mohammadi Bolban Abad, 2005: 3). Vandalism is brought about in different social groups at various ages, from among which teen vandalism is a remarkable type. School is the first official institution in which children learn to deal with their social life. It is an agent appointed by the society as responsible for socializing the youth with certain skills and values. Inability of the value system in internalizing societal norms orients individuals' sociability into de-normalization of the social system (Rafi Pour, 1998: 394). Destructions made by students on school facilities cause outwearing of educational instruments and create unbeautiful scenes, which in turn provoke further obliterations. With their negative impacts, such behaviors lower markedly students' preparation spirit and learning level, derailing training processes at schools and making vandalism indispensable. Effects of such behaviors both threaten families and leave negative impacts on the societal health and safety. Consequently, studies of this type can make preparations for a comeback of the vandal to the society through deciphering vandalism and demonstrating the necessity for promoting scientific encounters. Individually speaking, therefore, scientific handling of vandalism is in favor of the individual and his/her family at the first place. A level of infringements and aberrations is quite natural at all societies; and, what is important is the manner to deal with

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them. Determinants of a society's success are its ability to identify aberrations and causes thereof and making decisions for controlling them. In case nothing is done to resolve the teenagers' "anti-social behaviors," then today's young offenders would be the tomorrow's lawbreakers (Ahmadi, 1998: 12).

Various studies conducted all over the globe show that vandalism is of importance from some aspects: reasons and roots of teen vandalism at homes and schools are not clear. Such behaviors are modifiable at early ages, but they would be changed into personality disorders after repetitive inattentions with emanating their repercussions at the society. The teenagers who are involved in vandalism have most often lost their education and occupation opportunities and are confronted with irretrievable impacts on their future lives. Marred by numerous problems, such persons are deprived of educational and occupational chains, the fact that creates several problems for upcoming generations, paving the way for additional obstacles and perdition of more children at the society (Mohebbi, 2003: 39). Damages felt by young criminals are considerable from the aspect of social health and can generate tensions among families, neighbors, and others (Kaplan and Sadock, 2003: 1). Indirect impact of vandalism on other iniquitous behaviors is another reason to deal with the issue of vandalism. Putting it differently, importance of this issue is more pronounced upon paying attention to the reality that orientation toward criminality is more powerful in vandals than other young people and nefarious behaviors are potent provokers for wicked behaviors. Unhappily, there are no precise statistics available on expenses, behaviors, and samples of vandalism in our country, and insufficient insights into this social phenomenon have caused many officials and educational planners to fail to prevent or treat vandalistic behaviors (Mohebbi, 2003: 39). The present research is intended to find the relationship between self-control and vandalism among Yazd city students from the general viewpoint toward crime (self-control), and provide answers to the following questions:

1. How is the condition of first- and second-year students respecting self-control and vandalism?
2. How is the vandalism level explicable with regard to the self-control variable?

METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey-type, cross-sectional, and practical research, whose statistical population contains first- and second-year high school students in Yazd City. According to the Cochran's theorem and the dispersion obtained in pretest, the sample was determined to include 317 first-year and 318 second-year students with a confidence interval of 95 percent and possible accuracy of 5 percent. The sampling method was a combination of stratified and clustered methods. Author-designed questionnaire was the instrument which was used in this study. After their creditability was verified at the early stages of the study, questionnaires were utilized to gather the required data. To do so, attempts were made to make use of researchers' and scholars' contributions for selection of the best items. Finalized questionnaires were delivered to experts and professors, whose opinions were applied to rectify the mistaken parts. Therefore, creditability of this study is content-type.

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate reliability of above variables. Alpha amounts were 0.706 and 0.777 for self-control and vandalism items, respectively. The fact that alpha amounts are higher than 0.7 indicates that is a powerful correlation between questionnaire items and reliability of the research instrument is desirable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responsibility percentage of the research was 48.5 for females and 51.5 for males.

Table 1: distribution of respondents' characteristics

Gender	No.	Percentage	Gender	Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Females	308	48.5	Female	First-year high school	147	46.4
				Second-year high school	161	50.6
Males	327	51.5	Male	First-year high school	170	53.6
				Second-year high school	157	49.4

From among 308 female respondents, 46.4 and 50.6 percent were first- and second-year high school students, respectively. Moreover, from among male respondents, 53.6 and 49.4 percent were first- and second-year high school students, respectively.

According to table 2, there is no significant difference between averages of the males' self-control scores (35.91) and those of the females' vandalism scores (36.51), since the T-test significance level for comparison of males' and females' self-control scores was higher than 0.05 (sig=0.329).

Table 2: outputs of T-test to compare self-control scores at different groups

Variable	Groups	mean	S.D.	T	Significance level
Gender	Males	35.91	7.769	0.978	0.329
	Females	36.51	7.731		
Educational level	First-year high school	35.57	7.895	-2.068	0.039
	Second-year high school	36.84	7.564		

There is, however, a significant difference (sig=0.039) between first-year (35.57) and second-year (36.51) high school students in terms of self-control averages.

Table 2: outputs of T-test to compare vandalism scores at different groups

Variable	Groups	mean	S.D.	T	Significance level
Gender	Males	43.44	12.964	-5.194	0.000
	Females	38.83	11.319		
Educational level	First-year high school	41.52	12.905	1.024	0.306
	Second-year high school	40.51	11.955		

According to Table 3, there is a significant difference between averages of the males' vandalism scores (43.44) and those of the females' vandalism scores (38.43) ($P < 0.001$). In other words, vandalism is more likely to be witnessed in boys than girls. In addition, since significance level of T-test to compare vandalism scores among first- and second-year high school students is higher than 0.05 (sig=0.170), there is no significant difference between vandalism scores witnessed between first-year and second-year high school students.

The independent variable of this study is self-control and the dimensions thereof. Pearson correlation test was used to investigate the relationship between this variable and vandalism, as follows:

Table 4: zero-order correlation matrix between self-control and vandalism dimensions

	Anger	Impulsive	Egocentrism	Verbal response	Risk-taking attitudes	Self-control	Intra-school vandalism	Extra-school vandalism
Anger	1							
impulsive	0.309***	1						
Egocentrism	0.146***	0.423***	1					
Verbal response	0.070	0.253***	0.227***	1				
Risk-taking attitudes	0.110***	0.241***	0.439***	0.045	1			
Self-control (general index)	-0.625***	-0.732***	-0.686***	-0.340***	-0.584***	1		
Intra-school vandalism	0.053	0.150***	0.203***	0.174***	0.204***	-0.227***	1	
Extra-school vandalism	0.131***	0.110***	0.203***	0.153***	0.228***	-0.270***	0.559***	1
Vandalism (general index)	0.182***	0.195***	0.282***	0.199***	0.317***	-0.368***	0.751***	0.794***

*** Significance at $p < 0.001$

According to the table, there is an inverse and significant difference between vandalism and its sub-dimensions, on the one hand, and self-control, on the other. As observed, the existing correlation between vandalism index and general self-control index is -0.368. A consideration of measured correlation coefficients among students for each self-control and vandalism dimensions indicates that risk-taking attitude has the highest correlation with vandalism (0.317), followed by egocentrism (0.282) and verbal reaction (0.199). All in all, measured coefficients are illustrative of the fact that a reduction in self-control level causes an increase in vandalism amounts. A consideration of the relationship

among vandalism's bilateral dimensions and self-control index also shows that extra-school vandalism possesses the most powerful correlation with general self-control index and also its other main components.

SEM Approaches

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approaches help the researchers perform a simultaneous causal analysis of latent and observed variables (Bollen Kenneth, A. and J. Scott, 1993). This is important to note that the two variables discussed herein are of latent type.

Using Amos software, structural equation model for the relationship between self-control and vandalism was designated (Diagram 1). As observed, the most important determinants of latent self-control structure are egocentrism and conformity to immediate desires. Moreover, the impact of social alienation on vandalism is -0.39, which indicates that there is an inverse relationship between the two: an increase in self-control provokes a reduction in vandalism.

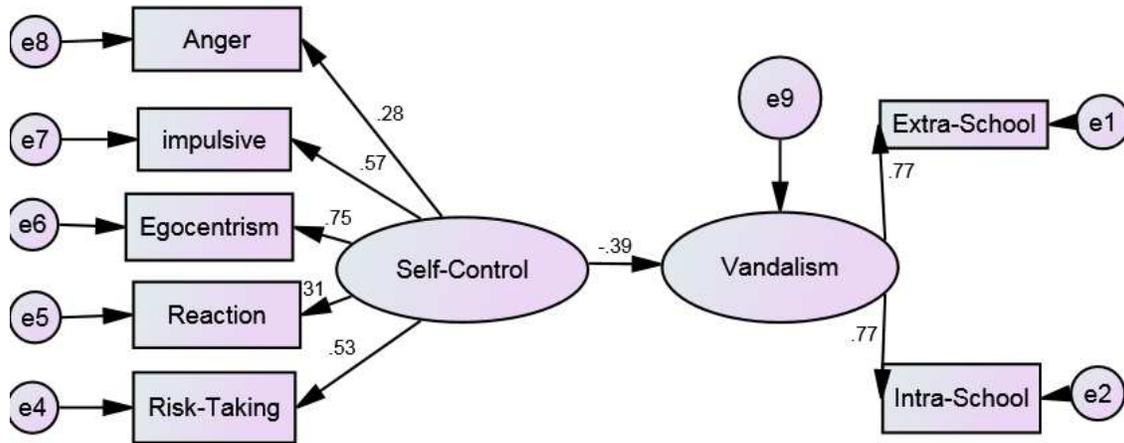


Diagram 1: SEM for impact of self-control on vandalism

The above diagram shows that there is a significant and inverse relationship between self-control and vandalism. In other words, the more the heightened self-control in one person, the lower the vandalism levels would climb.

Table 5: goodness of fit indices

goodness of fit	IFI	NFI	AGFI	GFI
Amounts	0.905	0.890	0.926	0.966

Different indices were used to evaluate the model's fitness. Table 5 shows that fitness of the model is suitable: NFI, AGFI, IFI, and CFI indices should be higher than 0.9, as they all are.

CONCLUSION

The present study was aimed at the investigation of the relationship between vandalism and self-control. As a traditional type of criminality, vandalism has since long ago been considered by scholars and thinkers, who have discussed the issue from their different vantage points. Criminality is not an innate phenomenon, and no child is a naturally-born criminal. Rather, there are several factors which lead individuals toward crimes and misdemeanors.

Most psychologists assert that the most important reason for adolescent criminality is personal factors; however, social disorders, as suggested by sociologists, constitute the major cause of such crimes. In other words, *self-control* and *lack of social control* are regarded as the roots of criminalities by psychologists and sociologists, respectively. The source of weak self-control should be sought in family, childhood, and inefficient socialization.

Vandalistic actions are more likely to be committed by adolescents and the youth. Thereupon, to investigate the relationship between vandalism and self-control, a sample including 635 first- and second-year Yazd City high school students were selected. Opinions made by Gottfredson, Hirschi, and Reckless were used to theoretically explain this relationship.

One chief achievement of this study was its certain innovative contribution in measuring the complex concept of vandalism in such a ground-breaking way. Gender is a context variable whose impact on peoples' orientation toward vandalism and criminality is affirmed in several studies. Put it differently, defluctive actions are dissimilar in males and females from both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The results of this study indicated that there is a significant difference among Yazd female and male students in terms of their vandalistic levels—the outcome that can be associated with personality and mental characteristics of boys.

The T-test results, in addition, showed that girls are more powerful in self-controlling than boys. According to their physiological peculiarities, females are more successful in controlling themselves and more forward-looking. The youth with weak self-control are more likely to commit vandalistic actions. Such people seek to hurriedly satisfy their

needs by means of the most easily accessible solutions and are more wavering, less powerful to make plans, more ego-centered, more indifferent to others, and more likely to display physical reactions to their surroundings.

Gottfredson and Hirschi declared that self-control is the most important source for resistance against criminal inclinations. An individual's training by his/her parents and schools teachers overshadows self-control. The results of this study showed that there is a significant, inverse relationship between vandalism and its bilateral dimensions, on the one hand, and self-control and its different dimensions, on the other. An increase in vandalism is accompanied by a reduction in self-control. In fact, self-control shapes an individual's ability in getting successful in social institutions and social bonds. As a matter of fact, the relationship between social failure and crime is less causal than feigned. In their opinion, people with low levels of self-control are confronted with more problems in establishing and maintaining a friendship relation, are inclined to make relationships with those who have even less self-control, are criminal, are tending to wander in streets, and have experienced occupational instabilities. This is of prime importance as many of such outcomes are related to criminal behaviors (Baron, 2003: 404-5). In addition to having such characteristics as being instantly satisfied, simple, and crime exciter, people with low levels of self-control are hurried, ego-centered, physical job seeker, adventurer, and short-sighted. This is exactly because of such characteristics that crime appears attractive for those who have little power to contain themselves. Therefore, people with low levels of self-control are inclined to consider the instant pleasures achieved by criminality, failing to calculate the long-run repercussions followed by their deflections.

Gottfredson and Hirschi are resolute to emphasize on the *family* as a determining factor in improving self-control levels, since parents are of paramount effects in coordinating their children through supervision over their emotional bonds (AliverdiNia and SalehNejad, 2011: 22). Therefore, that part of the Gottfredson's and Hirschi's ideas which indicates that: "the more powerful one person in his/her self-control ability, the more resistant he/she would grow against deflective actions," was affirmed in this study. Here, vandalism was more intelligible where self-control was pallid. Results of this study were aligned with Cheung (2010), who considered self-control as a variable with a central role in reducing deflective behaviors. Moreover, this variable (self-control) was found to reduce the impact of daily pressures and tensions in appearance of deflective behaviors. Results of this study were lined up also to AliverdiNia and SalehNejad (2011) and SalehNejad and Hemmati (2013). To wrap up, vandalism is a global social issue confronted by all communities with their special economic, social, and cultural circumstances. As a challenging matter, vandalism requires scientific, practical, and updated policies.

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