

The Role of the Educational System in Controlling and Managing Vandalistic Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Juvenile delinquency is a complex and concerning issue that has attracted the attention of numerous researchers, sociologists, criminologists, psychologists, and education specialists. Among the various forms of juvenile delinquency, vandalism represents a particularly visible and damaging behavior within school environments. The present study aimed to examine the role of the educational system in controlling and managing vandalistic behaviors among secondary school students in the city of Khamir.

Methods: This study employed a survey research design. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to a stratified proportional sample of 245 secondary school students in Khamir. The validity of the research instrument was established through face and content validity, and its reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

Results: The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between students' socioeconomic status and school atmosphere with vandalistic behaviors, indicating that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and those experiencing a more positive school climate were less likely to engage in such behaviors. In contrast, a significant positive relationship was observed between peer group influence and vandalistic behaviors, suggesting that peer dynamics play an important role in shaping students' behavioral patterns. Additionally, a weak but statistically significant relationship was found between students' academic performance and their involvement in vandalistic behaviors.

Conclusions: Overall, the results highlight the important role of the educational environment in preventing and reducing vandalistic behaviors among students.

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Introduction

Crime and deviance are contingent upon spatial and temporal conditions. In certain historical periods, specific behaviors have been labeled as deviant, reprehensible, or socially unacceptable within various societies. Moreover, new forms of deviant behavior, unique to contemporary societal conditions, have emerged. In other words, with transformations in social structures and relationships, societal norms, standards of social health, cultural values, and individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations have also evolved (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 13). Vandalism is among the forms of deviance and delinquency that have gained prominence in modern societies. The term "vandalism" originates from the word "Vandal." In the field of sociology, vandalism has been defined in various ways. Clarke (1991) describes vandalism as the deliberate, willful, and intentional destruction of public property, facilities, and belongings. Similarly, most definitions within the literature on deviance and social pathologies characterize vandalism as behavior aimed at damaging or destroying public property and infrastructure (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 22). Examples of vandalism include graffiti on walls and trees, tearing bus seats, damaging public facilities, breaking windows, streetlights, classroom desks, and benches. Consequently, vandalism is not only recognized as a delinquent behavior but also as a significant social issue in many societies. In countries with robust systems for recording data, findings indicate that various sectors of society incur substantial financial losses due to vandalism annually, with millions of dollars spent on repairing or replacing damaged items. Official statistics from various countries are staggering: in the Netherlands, damages to public property from vandalism exceed 500 million kronor annually; in Paris, this figure reaches 200 million francs, and in Germany, it surpasses 43 million francs (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 257).

In a 2009 conference on social pathologies in Tehran, a meta-analysis of several social issues in Iran, including vandalism, was presented. The conference highlighted the limited data available on vandalism in Iran. For instance, in 2008, the Tehran Bus Company incurred costs of approximately 300 million tomans due to vandalism-related damages. In the railway sector, approximately 2,500 train windows were reported broken in the same year. In telecommunications, vandalism statistics were limited to the destruction or theft of public telephone booths, with a total of 13,633 cases recorded in 2008, including 120 complete units and 11,000 handsets. In the domain of urban beautification, while no categorized data were available, approximately 2 billion tomans

were spent in 2008 to clean and repair damages from graffiti and vandalism, and an additional 300 million tomans were allocated to restore urban furniture such as trash bins and park exercise equipment. Thus, comprehensive and systematic official statistics on vandalism in Iran remain scarce (Ghara Bolaghi, 2011: 17).

In the city of Khamir, examples of vandalistic behaviors include damaging public and governmental property, such as breaking windows, graffiti, snapping tree branches, tearing or writing on seats in public transportation (buses, minibuses, taxis, and particularly school bus seats), tampering with or destroying traffic signs, and breaking streetlights and lamps. Within schools in Khamir, vandalism manifests as breaking or carving on classroom desks and walls, smashing windows, bending fan blades, damaging water coolers, and other school facilities. Given the significant financial burden imposed on governments and public institutions by such behaviors, this issue warrants substantial attention. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the role of the educational system in addressing vandalism among students in Khamir. In other words, this article aims to answer the following question: What is the role of the educational system in controlling and managing destructive behaviors as a form of delinquency among secondary school students in the city of Khamir?

Niazi et al. (2020) found that socioeconomic status, association with delinquent individuals, family attachment, school attachment, relative deprivation, social isolation, and anomie are among the variables influencing vandalistic behaviors.

Namadari (2018), in a study titled "Examining Factors Influencing Vandalism with Emphasis on the Student Community of Nurabad Delfan," concluded that variables such as feelings of alienation, relative deprivation, academic success, socioeconomic status, and gender have a significant relationship with vandalism.

Sakhaei et al. (2016) determined that variables such as feelings of relative deprivation, anomie, and association with delinquent peers have a significant inverse relationship with students' inclination toward vandalism, while socioeconomic status and socialization have a significant direct relationship. Structural equation modeling results indicated that 24% of the variance in students' inclination toward vandalism was explained by the combined independent variables.

Ghanbari et al. (2016), in a study titled "Investigating Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Vandalism in Urban Furniture," found that socioeconomic status, individual and psychological behaviors, social factors, and spatial conditions influence the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors. Ghara-Gouzi Saghavaz (2016), in a study titled "Examining Factors Influencing Vandalistic Behaviors Among Youth Aged 15–25 in Ardabil," conducted using a survey method and grounded in social control and differential association theories, found that income, family control, peer group association, family attachment, inclination toward antisocial behaviors, education, and family size are related to vandalism.

Shaterian et al. (2013) concluded that there is a significant relationship between variables such as academic performance, social status, family functioning, access to resources and facilities, societal functioning, and students' behavioral disorders, but no significant difference was found between gender and behavioral disorders. Regression analysis showed that the most influential independent variables on students' behavioral disorders were access to resources and facilities, societal functioning, academic performance, social status, and family functioning, with the remaining variables explaining 58.9% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Aliyordnia and Heydari (2012) found that among the dimensions of differential reinforcement, four dimensions—reaction, encouragement, reward, and reinforcement balance—were significant, while deterrence and cost were not. Encouragement was the strongest predictor of vandalistic behaviors, followed by reward, with cost having the least predictive power among the six dimensions of differential reinforcement.

Fathi and Mohammadi (2011) concluded that boys are more likely to engage in vandalistic behaviors, and this phenomenon is more prevalent among children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with limited access to urban facilities. Additionally, destructive and vandalistic behaviors stem from social disconnection and alienation.

Chen and Astor (2012) found that 68% of students experienced some form of violent behavior at least once in the past year, with verbal insults being the most common. Students' personal traits, family factors such as parental supervision, and the intensity of students' interaction with the school influenced the occurrence of violent behaviors.

Afua and Amiri (2011) reported that the most frequent forms of vandalism in libraries included theft, hiding books and magazines, and damaging books. Major causes of library vandalism

included restrictions on book access, limited borrowing periods, high costs of textbooks, and expensive copying fees.

Axion and Huang (2011) concluded that antisocial attitudes, academic success, and lack of parental control and supervision, regardless of gender, significantly increase the likelihood of youth engaging in delinquent behaviors with high confidence.

Atak and Nemligil (2010) found that teachers generally lack the inclination to address vandalism or propose general solutions to reduce it at the societal level. They tend to adopt a conservative approach toward vandalism in schools, followed by a liberal approach involving precautionary measures, and finally, a radical approach.

Sawabieh and Al-Raouf (2010) reported that the most frequent forms of vandalism in schools were writing on doors, walls, desks, and chairs. The primary causes of vandalism in Jordanian schools were communication factors, followed by family and in-school factors.

Yavuz and Kaloglu (2010), in a study titled “An Empirical Study of Vandalism: Trabzon Parks,” examined the effects of vandalism on urban parks in Turkey using an observational method. Their findings indicated: (1) seasonal factors influence vandalism; (2) objects less visible or under less control are more prone to vandalism; (3) items without private ownership are more susceptible to vandalism; (4) vandalism is more prevalent in semi-open spaces than open ones; and (5) insufficient lighting and darkness increase vandalism.

Ball (2005) found that male adolescents have higher rates of crime commission and arrest compared to females. The researcher examined three moderating family effects—family support, discipline or supervision, and the quality of caregiver-child relationships—on delinquents’ lives. Regression analysis highlighted the significant role of caregiver supervision over the other two effects. The study also noted that stress-inducing factors lower the age of delinquency onset.

Huber (1991), Wilkinson (1991), and Goldstein (1998) conceptualize vandalism as a social harm or affliction. They view vandalism, like other forms of social deviance, as stemming from incompatibilities in individual-society relationships, the erosion of moral authority in regulating interpersonal interactions, the instability of social institutions in transmitting societal values, the prevalence of anomic conditions in society, and the hostile or aggressive reactions of some individuals to imposed, unfavorable, or unjust external conditions. Furthermore, they consider vandalism a modern, emergent pathology in contemporary society, representing a hostile and

resentful response to certain forms of external pressures, adversities, deprivations, and injustices (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 31).

As noted, no single theory comprehensively explains juvenile delinquency, particularly vandalism and its contributing factors. Therefore, this study adopts a composite theoretical framework, delineated by the independent variables of the research, to elucidate their relationship with vandalism. This framework is outlined below:

Cohen posits that deviant and delinquent individuals accept the culturally approved goals and aspirations of society but, due to failure or lack of sufficient opportunities to achieve these socially accepted goals, experience deprivation. Consequently, they replace societal success ideals and goals with alternative values and norms to gain status and prestige, leading to the formation of a delinquent subculture. Cohen argues that this subculture is a collective response among individuals sharing similar social positions, where adopting a delinquent culture serves as a group solution to achieve status and self-esteem based on attainable standards. Like Merton, Cohen considers cultural deprivation a key determinant of academic failure among working-class youth. He suggests that working-class boys suffer from a lack of social status and are dissatisfied and angered by their lower social position (Cohen, as cited in Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004).

The strain theory asserts that deviant behavior primarily occurs among lower-class and deprived individuals due to socioeconomic pressures and societal inequalities. Members of deprived classes, often residing in impoverished or marginalized urban areas, experience lower standards of living in terms of housing, nutrition, education, healthcare, literacy, employment, and overall socioeconomic status. Consequently, youth from these classes feel incapable of achieving their goals and aspirations, leading to feelings of frustration and inadequacy. This strain prompts them to engage in behaviors deemed deviant by society to fulfill their psychological, social, economic, and cultural needs.

Sutherland emphasizes the role of association with delinquent individuals in the occurrence of delinquent behavior. He argues that deviant behavior is not rooted in inherited psychological traits but is learned through interactions with others. The direction of this learning—toward law-abiding or law-breaking behavior—depends on the individuals one associates with (Nasseri-Palangard et al., 2013: 92).

Walter Miller contends that attachment to peer groups and adherence to their norms among lower-class individuals prevent these youth from integrating into middle-class society. The broader society restricts their upward mobility unless they break free from these constraints, and it also reinforces this separation. As the lower class performs the undesirable tasks of an industrial society, its members are encouraged to indulge in delinquent behaviors to satisfy their desires (Winfrey, 2009: 238).

According to Tagiuri, organizational atmosphere relatively reflects the overall qualities of an environment that: (1) are experienced by individuals within that environment, (2) influence their behaviors, and (3) can be evaluated based on values and specific characteristics (or attributes) of the environment (Gozli, 1992: 381). Tagiuri identifies four dimensions of organizational atmosphere : (1) **Ecological Dimension** (physical environment): refers to material and physical factors within the organization; (2) **Social Atmosphere** : encompasses the social aspects of the organization, including everything related to individuals within it; (3) **Social System**: pertains to the organizational and managerial structure; and (4) **Culture**: refers to the values, economic systems, norms, and thought patterns characteristic of individuals within the organization.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between academic performance and destructive behavior among secondary school students in the city of Khamir.
2. There is a relationship between school atmosphere and destructive behavior among secondary school students in the city of Khamir.
3. There is a relationship between peer group association and destructive behavior among secondary school students in the city of Khamir.
4. There is a relationship between socioeconomic status and destructive behavior among secondary school students in the city of Khamir.

Material and Methods

The present study is a cross-sectional, applied survey research. The study population consists of all secondary school students in the city of Khamir at the time of the study, totaling 676 individuals. Using Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 245 students was determined based on a pre-test conducted with 30 secondary school students

from Khamir. The sampling method employed was stratified proportional sampling. Data analysis was performed using the SPSS software. The inclusion criteria for the interview were students' consent, being in the second level of high school, and gender. The research tool was a researcher-designed questionnaire, which was used for data collection in the final phase after its validity and reliability were established in the preliminary stages.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, efforts were made to derive items measuring the research variables either from items used in prior studies conducted under the supervision of experienced professors or by selecting the most appropriate items based on feedback from academic advisors, consultants, and other experts. The questionnaire was further refined by presenting it to professors for additional review and corrections, thereby ensuring its face validity, a form of content validity that involves verifying the appropriateness of the research indicators through consultation with experts.

To assess the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized. After collecting the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the entire questionnaire and each of its dimensions using SPSS. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.5 indicates acceptable reliability. The summary of Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the questionnaires is presented in Table 1. Given that the obtained coefficients are greater than 0.5, it can be concluded that the questionnaires demonstrate acceptable reliability, indicating internal consistency among the items and the reliability of the research tool.

Table 1. Reliability Coefficients of the Variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Peer Group	0.77
School Atmosphere	0.76
Vandalistic Behaviors	0.80

Results

Based on the data obtained from the table 2, it can be stated that vandalistic behaviors and peer group relationships are at a moderate level. Additionally, the mean value indicates a low level of socioeconomic status among citizens; however, the mean value of the school atmosphere variable is at a high level.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Vandalistic Behavior Variable

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Vandalistic Behaviors	25.38	8.009	64.155	14	52
School Atmosphere	38.48	7.336	53.831	19	53
Peer Group Relationship	25.65	5.380	28.948	14	39
Socioeconomic Status	17.89	5.077	25.784	8	31

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test Results on the Relationship Between Gender and Vandalistic Behaviors

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Vandalistic Behaviors	Female	122	23.306	-3.398	242	0.133
	Male	122	27.319			

Based on Table 3, the output of the T-test, the significance level of the T-value, and the obtained means indicate that there is no significant difference between students based on gender regarding the tendency toward vandalistic behaviors. Concerning this relationship, with a degree of freedom of 242, the significance level is 0.133, which suggests that there is no significant relationship between gender and the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors ($P > 0.05$). Accordingly, it can be stated that the null hypothesis is confirmed, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected, indicating that gender has no effect on the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors.

Table 4. Results of ANOVA Test on Students' Demographic Variables and the Emergence of Vandalistic Behaviors

Variable	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Educational Level	Between Groups	15.76	33	0.47	0.64
	Within Groups	155.83	211	0.73	
	Total	171.59	244		
Age	Between Groups	67.77	33	2.05	1.15
	Within Groups	374.03	211	1.77	
	Total	441.81	244		
Field of Study	Between Groups	793.31	33	24.04	1.40
	Within Groups	3613.91	211	17.12	
	Total	4407.22	244		
Mother's Employment	Between Groups	32.63	33	0.98	0.89
	Within Groups	233.28	210	1.11	
	Total	265.91	243		
Father's Employment	Between Groups	427.54	33	12.95	1.02
	Within Groups	2556.96	203	12.59	
	Total	2984.50	236		

As observed from the results of Table (4), an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differences in academic level, age, field of study, and parental employment status of students in relation to the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors. With a degree of freedom of 244, the significance level of these variables exceeds 0.05. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between academic level, age, field of study, parental employment

status, and the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors ($p > 0.05$). Based on this finding, it can be stated that the null hypothesis is confirmed, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 1: It appears that there is a relationship between academic status and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir.

Table 5. Examining the Relationship Between Academic Status and vandalistic behavior

Variable	vandalistic Behavior	Academic Status
Vandalistic Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-0.102
	Significance Level	0.011
	N	245

Based on the above table, the significance level (Sig) of the test indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the academic status and vandalistic behavior of secondary school students in Bandar Khamir at a 95% confidence level and an error rate of less than 0.05. In other words, it can be stated that there is a significant and inverse relationship between academic status and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir. The correlation coefficient obtained from the Pearson test for these two variables is -0.102. Therefore, it can be concluded that the better the academic status of students, the lower the incidence of vandalistic behavior among them.

Hypothesis 2: It appears that there is a relationship between school atmosphere and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir

Table 6. Examining the Relationship Between School atmosphere and vandalistic Behavior

Variable	Vandalistic Behavior	School atmosphere
Vandalistic Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-0.213
	Significance Level	0.001
	N	245

Based on Table (6), the significance level (Sig) of the test indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between school atmosphere and vandalistic behavior among students at a 95% confidence level. In other words, it can be stated that there is a significant and inverse relationship between school atmosphere and the extent of vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir. The correlation coefficient obtained from the Pearson test for these two variables is -0.213. In other words, the more the school atmosphere fosters life and social skills training, increases participation and social responsibility, and promotes the teaching and demonstration of friendly relationships within the school environment, the lower the incidence of

vandalistic behaviors among students, and vice versa. Therefore, the above hypothesis is confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: It appears that there is a relationship between peer group relationships and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir.

Table 7. Examining the Relationship Between Peer Group and vandalistic Behavior

Variable	Vandalistic Behavior	Peer Group Relationship
Vandalistic Behavior	Pearson Correlation	0.205
	Significance Level	0.001
	N	245

Based on the above table, the significance level (Sig) of the test indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between peer group relationships and vandalistic behavior among students at a 95% confidence level. In other words, it can be stated that there is a significant relationship between peer group relationships and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir. The correlation coefficient obtained from the Pearson test for these two variables is 0.205. The relationship between the two variables is direct and positive, indicating a correlation between peer group relationships and vandalistic behavior among students. Consequently, it can be concluded that secondary school students in Bandar Khamir who frequently associate and interact with vandalistic peers exhibit more vandalistic behaviors, while students who have less association and interaction with such peers exhibit fewer vandalistic behaviors. Based on the obtained results, the above hypothesis is confirmed.

Hypothesis 4: It appears that there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir.

Table 8. Analysis of the Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status and vandalistic Behavior

Variable	Vandalistic Behavior	Socioeconomic Status
Vandalistic Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-0.222
	Significance Level	0.001
	N (Sample Size)	245

The findings of Table (8) indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic status and vandalistic behavior among students at a 95% confidence level. In other words, it can be stated that there is a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and vandalistic behavior among secondary school students in Bandar Khamir. The correlation

coefficient obtained from the Pearson test for these two variables is -0.222. This negative relationship indicates an inverse correlation between socioeconomic status and vandalistic behavior among students. This means that the higher the socioeconomic status of secondary school students in Bandar Khamir, the lower the incidence of vandalistic behaviors, and vice versa. Therefore, the obtained results confirm the above hypothesis.

Based on the previously presented hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the relationship between socioeconomic status, school atmosphere, and peer group relationships with vandalistic behaviors. This analysis indicates the extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be predicted.

Table 9. Coefficient of Determination for Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Vandalistic Behaviors

Correlation Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Adjusted Coefficient of Determination
0.407	0.165	0.148

According to the results of Table (9), the correlation coefficient between socioeconomic status, school atmosphere, and peer group relationships with vandalistic behaviors is 0.407, and the coefficient of determination is 0.165. This indicates that the independent variables collectively account for 16.5% of the variance in the vandalistic behaviors of students.

Table 10. Regression Results for the Occurrence of Vandalistic Behaviors

Components	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	42.834	4.934		8.666	0/000
Socioeconomic Status	0.192	0.095	-0.185	3.087	0/002
Peer Group Relationship	-0.190	0.091	0.129	-1.026	0/036
School Atmosphere	-0.037	0.066	-0.174	-0.559	0/004

To determine the impact of socioeconomic status, school Atmosphere, and peer group relationships as predictor variables on the vandalistic behaviors of secondary school students in Bandar Khamir as the criterion variable, a multiple regression analysis using the enter method was conducted. As observed in Table (10), the p-value for the variables is significant, and the results indicate that the variables socioeconomic status ($\beta = -0.185$), peer group relationships ($\beta = 0.129$), and school Atmosphere ($\beta = -0.174$) predict vandalistic behaviors. The highest beta value is associated with socioeconomic status at -0.185, while the lowest beta value is associated with peer group relationships at 0.129.

Discussion

Vandalism is a form of delinquency that is currently recognized as a significant social issue in various societies. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among adolescents and young adults. The destruction of public property, such as bus seats, urban green spaces, school desks and benches, streetlights, and public signs, by these individuals causes substantial damage to society, some of which is irreparable.

One of the contextual variables frequently examined in various studies for its impact on delinquent and vandalistic behaviors is gender. The results of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between gender and the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors. However, deviant behaviors differ quantitatively and qualitatively between males and females, with males generally exhibiting such behaviors more frequently. Among students in Bandar Khamir, differences in vandalistic behavior are observed between boys and girls. This finding can be attributed to the personality and psychological characteristics of boys. Boys typically enjoy greater freedom of action compared to girls and are likely less reprimanded for vandalistic acts. In other words, boys may engage in vandalism to demonstrate physical strength and bravery. Conversely, girls, due to their physiological characteristics, are generally less prone to violence and destruction and are more successful in controlling their anger. These findings are inconsistent with the results of studies by Fathi and Mohammadi (2011) and Ball (2005).

Additionally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differences in academic level, age, field of study, and parental employment status in relation to vandalistic behaviors. The results showed no significant relationship between these variables and the occurrence of vandalistic behaviors. The results of the hypothesis testing revealed a weak relationship between academic status and vandalism. In other words, it can be stated that the better the academic status of students, the less likely they are to exhibit vandalistic behaviors. The hypothesis testing also indicated a significant and positive correlation between peer group relationships and vandalistic behaviors among students. Consequently, students who frequently associate and interact with vandalistic peers exhibit more vandalistic behaviors, while those with less interaction with such peers display fewer vandalistic behaviors. To explain this hypothesis, Sutherland's theory posits that deviant behavior, like other social behaviors, is learned through interaction with others. Individuals who associate with those who respect social norms are

encouraged to adhere to them, while those who associate with deviant individuals are drawn toward deviant behaviors. Edwin Sutherland, in his differential association theory, argued that deviant behavior is learned through socialization and interaction with like-minded individuals, leading to norm violation and deviant behavior. He believed that deviance is transmitted culturally within social groups. Thus, individuals learn values and norms through their interactions with others, and the direction of this learning (adherence to or violation of norms and laws) depends on whom they learn from. The results of this hypothesis align with studies by Ali Verdi Nia and Heidari (2012), Sakhaei et al. (2016), and Gharehgozi Saghavaz (2016). The findings also showed that variables such as relative deprivation, anomie, and association with delinquent peers have a significant and inverse relationship with vandalistic behaviors among students.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed an inverse correlation between school Atmosphere and vandalistic behaviors among students. This means that the more the school Atmosphere promotes life and social skills training and increases students' participation and social responsibility, the lower the incidence of vandalistic behaviors. To explain this hypothesis, Tajiyuri suggests that school Atmosphere is a key element of schools with strong implications for the social and cognitive development of youth. When individuals feel a sense of belonging to a school environment, their behavioral problems decrease. School Atmosphere is reflected in the emotions and attitudes expressed by students, teachers, and staff about the school, representing the feelings students derive from their daily school experiences. These feelings can influence the extent of students' vandalistic behaviors. Cohen argues that children from lower socioeconomic classes who attend school alongside peers from middle-class backgrounds and are exposed to middle-class values, aspiring to socially acceptable statuses (and pursuing legitimate social goals as per Merton), often fail in competition with their higher-class peers, leading to frustration, humiliation, and defeat. According to Cohen, these "failed" children from disadvantaged schools return to their deprived neighborhoods and establish a delinquent "subculture" to compensate for their failure in achieving status, with a value system opposite to that of the privileged classes, where competition and activity yield results for them. Additionally, the physical ecology of the school also affects the intensity of vandalism. Factors such as the age of the school (reflected in the deterioration of its assets), the size of the school (more prevalent in larger schools), the physical appearance of the school, school density (limited per capita space for students), and unoccupied

public spaces in the school contribute to increase per capita delinquency. Therefore, from an ecological perspective, the school is the primary environment conducive to vandalism, not only due to the presence of a large number of adolescents who are highly prone to vandalism. The results of this hypothesis align with studies by Mayer et al. (1987) and Lunstein (1986), who believe that the school environment and the way school authorities interact with students have a direct relationship with students' destructive behaviors. These studies demonstrate that as education levels increase, adolescents' destructive behaviors significantly decrease. During their study, school staff conducted workshops and behavioral strategies for students, and the post-test results showed a 78.5% reduction in vandalistic behaviors among students. Moreover, the prevalence of antisocial behaviors, particularly vandalism, is higher among students who are members of delinquent groups compared to those who are not. Therefore, it is recommended that schools employ qualified counselors to reduce vandalistic behaviors, implement programs like the "school mayor" initiative to supervise students' activities and involve them in positive activities to protect school facilities, and strengthen students' academic foundations to prevent academic failure and aggression toward school and community property, thereby contributing to the reduction of vandalism.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical and research-oriented suggestions can be proposed. School authorities are encouraged to implement programs such as the "School Mayor" initiative, which can help supervise student activities while actively involving students in positive efforts aimed at preserving and protecting school facilities. In addition, seeking the assistance of qualified school counselors may play an important role in identifying the underlying causes of vandalistic behavior and providing appropriate guidance to reduce such behaviors. School officials should also pay greater attention to students' criticisms, complaints, and opinions, as listening to students and acknowledging their perspectives can strengthen their sense of belonging and responsibility toward the school environment. Furthermore, creating a supportive and emotionally positive atmosphere within schools, alongside emphasizing students' educational and personal development, may contribute to reducing destructive behaviors. For future research, it is recommended that further studies examine students' academic motivation and the factors influencing it, as well as conduct comparative investigations between girls' and boys' schools to better understand potential differences in the occurrence and determinants of vandalistic behavior.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of University of Hormozgan. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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