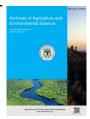This content is available online at AESA

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CASE STUDY

Measuring students' preferences for urban furniture vandalism in Selçuk University Campus in Turkey: A case study

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ABSTRACT

Vandalism is a phenomenon that we can encounter in any circumstances to public or private property. The vandalistic behaviors depend on the individuals' perception and public tolerance; also the human intolerance and their behavior are the factors which might influence the vandalistic acts. To understand the individuals' perception of the vandalism issue, it is necessary to get the correct information, reason, and dimension of the act. The purpose of this research is to identify and understand the perception, thoughts, and attitudes of the students from Selçuk University toward the concept of vandalism. According to the questionnaire conducted for this purpose, 82.3% of the participants were reported to have aggressive behaviors against urban elements, and the damage to urban furniture was mostly done by writing (66.2%). The survey-research revealed that gender, which mostly involved in vandalism are males. Also, the timing of vandalism is observed at 21:00 (49%). The rate of those participants who said that they harmed the urban furniture is 15.6%, consciously stated that they had damaged the picnic table (55.1%) by writing or drawing (40%), and they had done it because the urban furniture was already vandalized (44.6%). This study will provide guidance on solutions by finding the causes and types of vandalism acts on urban furniture, which is a serious but not undetected problem in university campuses. The research indicated that people perceived vandalism as a lack of consciousness, sanction, and quality of the material and affects the quality of life. While, if enough people are aware of the problem, then the incident rate will decline, simultaneously.

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INTRODUCTION

Vandalism is the biggest problem which we frequently encounter in urban areas. It is the subject of many disciplines, from sociology to psychology, as well as, from architecture to urban design. It is a violent form of rebellious behavior that involves deliberate or malicious damage to all the physical elements of the city (Ceccato and Haining, 2005). Vandalism has several effects, such as urban life, the destruction of public goods, accidents, crimes, visual pollution, socio-psychological effects, and cost. Although the act of vandalism, on which countless studies have been conducted in the literature, is a common

situation, it is perceived as a problem in the city (Pfattheicher *et al.*, 2019; Gomes *et al.*, 2017; Khalilikhah *et al.*, 2016; Ghanbari *et al.*, 2017; Atilla, 2016; Yavuz, 2011), while it is not perceived as a serious problem in university campus areas. For this reason, vandalism continues to wear down universities financially. When effective measures are not taken against this degradation process, it will trigger other violent incidents (Doğan, 2011). Vandalism is an activity that is primarily engaged by young people (Ceccato and Haining, 2005; Potas *et al.*, 1990; De Wet, 2005). Therefore, the rate of vandal actions and the opinions of the young people on these issues are important in terms of providing suggestions for preventing vandalism.

Human being shapes their environment with the effect of their culture and continues their life as a part of that environment. The urban spaces where human beings are used to live and spend time are intensive use areas. In public spaces, an artificial environment is created and the items that meet the simple needs of people are urban furniture. Urban furniture is a phenomenon that encompasses a whole range of functional and aesthetic/visual objects from the information communication board to the trash bin, from the staircase to the statue, and from the fountain to the telephone booth in urban design (Ilgın, 2001). Urban furniture is very important in increasing the quality of urban life and increasing the time usage of outdoor users. Urban furniture is the element that makes urban life enjoyable and meaningful. It creates comfort and aesthetics for the city, and contribute positively to the life of the city. Urban furniture is designed and placed to organize the functions of users in any landscape or urban space, such as comfort, transportation, recreation, entertainment, and protection from external influences.

People's perception of space and their connection with the elements affect their behavior and approaches. Previous studies suggested that the causes of vandalism were related to social and physical absences, while another study suggested that the physical environment and structures were found to be related to size, shape, type, and social control (Dinçtürk, 2007; Tarakcı, 2003; Akyol, 2006; Feyzi *et al.*, 2008; Shachaf and Hara, 2010; Goldstein, 2013).

Public spaces are areas which are open to the common use of the society. Therefore, with the phenomenon of using common areas, the concept of abuse or harm should always be considered. Besides, the concept of abuse raises the question of vandalism. The spacing in the open campus is defined as structured public spaces, but it is emphasized as a more complex structure than other types of public spaces in terms of their functional qualities (Richard, 2000). Potentially, vandalistic acts are likely to occur in communities with greater population density, such as near a college campus (Tewksbury and Mustaine, 2000; Nobles *et al.*, 2013; Badiora, 2017). Therefore, the relationship between urban furniture and the user in public space is also important in these spaces. The availability of urban open green spaces depends only on the sustainability of urban furniture. In this literature survey, the problem of vandalism on urban furniture in the campus area is focused. We identified the students' behavior and their justification toward vandalism.

The behaviors of students and their social activities are important in determining the vandalism. Thus, the questions were asked about their social activities and areas to be used. In the field study method, which is based on the determination of the effects of vandalism in the urban furniture located in the Alaeddin Keykubat Campus of Selçuk University (Turkey), data were obtained after a brief survey. These data were evaluated, then the suggestions were tried to be brought.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The urban furniture vandalism was investigated taking 96 students as a participant from Selçuk University Campus in Konya, Turkey. The main material of the study is a face-to-face questionnaire survey with students in the campus area. The purpose of this study is to focus on the analysis of the relationship between vandalism, human behavior, and urban furniture. The field study method is employed to determine the effects of vandalism in urban furniture from Alaeddin Keykubat Campus, Selcuk University. The data were obtained from the survey (n=96) Since it enables both quantitative and qualitative measurements (Arıkan, 2018). The questionnaire for the survey-research included questions to collect the opinions, feelings, and perspectives of a group of selected students about vandalism issue and its reasons. The evaluation of the questionnaires is based on the two variables, objectives, and environmental, in order to determine the measurement of the effects and causes of vandalism in urban furniture. The objective of the variables contains information about user characteristics and time usage. The environmental variables include information addressed to emotional and behavioral characteristics. The questionnaire was planned to implement in the selected region in order to establish a reliable database; therefore, the survey-research was conducted via a face-to-face analysis with the students who have comprehensive information about the region and approach to use this area intensively. The neutral behavior was maintained with all participants, and they were not asked any personal data during survey-research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The lifestyles and psychological conditions of students with different organizations within the campus area reflect the space and create the usage of empty spaces in different forms. During our survey-research, 54-females and 42-males participants went through the face-to-face survey study at Alaeddin Keykubat Campus, Selcuk University. This method was employed in order to determine the attitudes and behaviors of students in the act of vandalism. Among them, 82.3% of the participants stated that there is aggressive behavior on urban furniture, while 15.6% of them were supposed to consciously damage the urban furniture. The male participants (87.5%) were found to be mostly involved in the vandalistic acts in comparison to the female participant. Henceforth, 73.3% of males participant, and 26.7% of female participants have performed vandalism action (Table 1). The results of survey are similar to those carried out in other studies; these rates are 27% males and 8% females in Swedish adolescents (Nordmarker *et al.*, 2016), 32.3% males and 22.2% females in Akdeniz University (Olgun *et al.*, 2017). The question based on whether the action of vandalism is being carried or not explore that 83.3% of the participants replied positively that it happens. The participants who did not respond to the answer to

Table 1. Gender according to the action of vandalism.

Gender	Not involved in vandalism		Involved in vandalism		Respondent	Vandalism	
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)	Total	Exist	Nonexist
Girl	50	52.1	4	26.7	54	43	9
Boy	31	32.3	11	73.3	42	37	7

Table 2. Preferred usage area rate.

Usage Area	Total		Involved in vandalism	
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)
Recreation Areas	32	33.3	3	20
Departments' open areas	27	28.1	6	40
Common waiting and meeting areas	21	21.9	4	26.7
The environment of dormitories	16	16.7	2	13.3

Table 3. Vandalized urban furniture type.

Urban Furniture Type	Not involved in vandalism		Involved in vandalism	
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)
Lighting	-	-	1	6.7
Bench	13	20	3	20
Canopy	3	4.6	-	-
Sculpture	-	-	-	-
Picnic Table	41	63.1	8	53.3
Direction plate	1	1.5	1	6.7
Trash can	7	10.8	2	13.3
Billboard	-	-	-	-

the questions on action type and furniture type, considered under vandalism. While 62.5% of the questionnaire respondents agreed with the statement that "Vandalism affects the quality of life". The questions based on the areas they are using during the vandalistic act explore that those who engage in vandalistic actions, use the department open areas with a maximum of 40% and dormitories and its environment with a minimum of 13.3% (Table 2).

It has been evaluated as 33.3% of participants, who were engaged in vandalistic action, spend 30–60 min, and 53.3% of participants spend more than 60 min in open areas. The percentage of those who stay outside for a shorter duration is less. According to this result, the rate of vandalistic action increases as staying time gets longer. The question based on the time spent during campus explore that 81.25% of participants spent their time with their friends. Among them, the participants who were alone engaged in vandalistic actions is 11.1%, while 16.7% were spent time with their friends. Hence, this survey-research explores that being with friends does not revoke either provoke the vandalistic action. The research done in Ontario stated that much vandalism is done while young people are in groups, which is obviously in support of this study (General, 1981). The question based on the most damaged urban furniture was asked to the participant with no vandalism activity, and it explores that the vandalism action damages the 55.1% picnic table and 21.7% benches of the campus. Similarly, the participants involved in the vandalism action answered the picnic table with 34.4% (Table 3). In Olgun *et al.* (2017) study, those who participated in the vandalism action stated that they damaged the tables the most. The question based on the action, which is most damaging to urban furniture, explores that the act of writing (66.2%) is the most damaging action in comparison to the act of drawing (40%)

and its harm to urban furniture. Table 4 shows the proportion of other action types. While the question based on the time of the vandalistic act indicated that most of its harmful actions were done after 21:00, and it was answered by 49% of the participants among all. Also, participants think that the frequency of maintenance and repair should be done regularly. The questions based on the causes of harm explores that the psychological reasons, such as boredom (20%) and anger (46.6%) are the main factors which influence the act of vandalism to the urban furniture at its worst (Table 5).

While 42.7% of the participants thought that the individuals need to be raised awareness on vandalism issues and 28.1% of the questionnaire respondents thought that such cases would decrease if legal action is taken (Table 6). Besides, 46.2% of the participants think that people should be made conscious to the question of what measures should be taken to eliminate the damage caused to urban furniture, while 33.54% of them think that if legal action is taken, then it will decrease the act of vandalism toward urban furniture.

In other words, we can say that where there is vandalized urban furniture, the possibility of the vandalism act is more to happen again and again. The higher vandalism in the evening is due to the less supervision and the effect of darkness. Lights that illuminate vulnerable areas prevent vandals from reaching there. Our survey-research explores that precaution is a necessary step to decrease the act of vandalism, further concluded that the people should be educated on this issue. Looking at the majority of those who answered that legal action should be applied; we observe that the handling of vandalism within the scope of crime and the application of criminal sanctions on this issue will prevent the act of vandalism.

Table 4. Types of Vandalism Action.

Types of Vandalism Action	Not involved in vandalism		Involved in vandalism	
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)
Scratching	18	27.7	6	40
Breaking	1	1.5	1	6.7
Burning	2	3.1	2	13.3
Disassembling	1	1.5	1	6.7
Writing	43	66.2	5	33.3

Table 5. Cause of vandalism action.

Cause of Vandalism Action	Number	Percent (%)
I was angry	3	20
Boredom	3	20
For Protest Purposes	1	6.7
For relaxing	1	6.7
It was previously vandalized	7	46.6

Table 6. Type of measure to be taken during the study.

Measures	Number	Percent (%)
Durable material should be chosen	15	15.6
Legal action should be applied	27	28.1
Reinforcement should be maintained and repaired.	2	2.1
Be warned	11	11.5
Should be raised awareness	41	42.7

Conclusion

Youth vandalism has been the subject of many studies. Youth who understand the effects of vandalism are less likely to vandalize and less likely to tolerate the action of vandalism.

As a result, the research indicated that people perceived vandalism as a lack of consciousness, sanction, and quality of the material. Males are most likely to vandal than females. Vandalism appears as behavior that a student feels boredom. Vandals have no condemnation by other students. Therefore, they do not see any reservation fort his act. If the actions of vandalism are ignored, then it increases the act of vandalism continuously. Educating people about the vandalism is extremely important in order to raise awareness about its harmful effects. For this, some social training and projects can be developed. Young people can be directed to other activities so that they can do it in their spare time. The visibility has direct effect on the degree of damages as vandalism occurs after nine p. m. Poor lighting should be strengthened by a good arrangement of extra lighting elements. However, according to those involved in vandalism, this behavior emerged as a form of relaxation in reducing some form of personal stress. Approaches and units should be suggested to people to deal with their personal stress. As a result, vandalism, with its sociological, psychological, and economic dimensions, is a problem that causes social damage and threatens tomorrow, if measures are not taken. While, if enough people are aware of the problem, then the incident rate will decline, simultaneously.

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