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**TEENAGE VANDALISM: MOTIVES
AND POSSIBLE PERSONAL DETERMINERS**

SUMMARY. The problem of teenage vandalism is examined through a study of motivational reasons for vandalism and personal factors as possible prerequisites for such behavior.

KEY WORDS. Vandalism, motives of vandal behavior, personality determinants.

Research topic. Vandalism as a combination of social and psychological problems of Russian society formed in the 20th century in response to complex crisis conditions, which have not been properly examined. Teens' inclination to commit such actions has been statistically recorded, and experts explain it by the pubertal changes and the general tendency of this age group to exhibit deviant behavior. Vandalism can indeed be attributed to one of the types of behavior deviating from legal and social norms, but it is more specific. Thus, L.S. Vatova defines youth vandalism as a form of deviant behavior which is manifested in the deterioration of cultural values, the reasons for which are the imitation of destructive tendencies that exist in society, and protests against rules.

In the Russian Criminal Code this type of action was not designated as a crime until 1996; later vandalism was defined as a "desecration of buildings or other structures, damage to property in public transport or in other public places" [3; 39]. It should be noted that the Criminal Code contains several articles related to the destruction or damage of material and cultural assets and property. In addition to "vandalism", there are also signs of "hooliganism", "intentional destruction", "destruction or damage of monuments of history and culture", "deliberate destruction or damage of property". [4]

Despite the fact that such acts are also committed by adults, teenage vandalism deserves more attention, because these actions very often lead to more serious offenses. According to the results of foreign studies, more than 50% of adolescents who committed acts of vandalism demonstrate delinquent behavior later on (D. Elliott, L. Shannon). The other features of adolescents' vandalism can be attributed to the fact that it is most often committed during the periods of 11-13 and 14-16 years old. However, there are no fundamental differences in the propensity for such behavior among boys and girls (P. Richards, S. Tygart, etc.).

Teens who commit such offenses, according to various studies, have some specific characteristics. In general, they do not differ as to their level of general intelligence, but still have lower school performance and possibly lower social status in the group (C. Tygart, A. Hauber). The results of national studies show a direct connection between this kind of deviant behavior and an adverse family environment (HP Vatova), as well as low social competence.

An important characteristic of teenage vandalism is the presence of accomplices. There are usually 3-4 of them, they are of the same age or the age-gap is no more than 1-2 years. Modern vandalism groups have specific differences: in general, they have one focus—graffiti or damage of property—whereas previously groups we employed in mixed kinds of activities. Members of the group are classified by the role they perform (artist etc.), however, earlier the division was made in accordance with members' status, ranging from the professional to the beginner. "Professionals" in turn are a lot more appreciated by others nowadays, in comparison with those possessing certain emotional qualities [2].

No less controversial in understanding teenage vandalism is its motivational framework. The motives of such actions have been examined by foreign researchers, including F. Gladstone, S. Cohen, J. Tsaysel, F. Caufield, J. Martin, B. Venmaeyr and others, and Russian experts: A.M. Bandurka, A.F. Zielinski, E. Evmenova, A.S. Skorokhodova, etc. On the basis of their work and our own research, we have developed a technique which determines motivational readiness in general and a possible motive for committing the greater part of actions detrimental to public or private property [5]. Thus, the factors of vandalism are: the motive of gains (money-related vandalism), the response to an insult or offense (aggressive vandalism), the motive of making other people participate in vandalism (tactical vandalism), the matter of curiosity (curiosity vandalism), the need for creativity (aesthetic vandalism), motives of self-affirmation (existential vandalism), protest against social and cultural norms of the adult world (protest vandalism), the pressure of the social environment (conformal vandalism), the perception of the environment as uncomfortable (vandalism caused by an inappropriate environment), the search for new experiences (vandalism caused by boredom). It is these reasons that teenagers themselves name to speak about situations allowing for the possibility of committing vandalism.

One of the least studied aspects is the relationship between personal characteristics and the tendency for teenage vandalism, however, these characteristics have a strong influence on behavior and seem to be one of the most promising areas of influence in correctional work and prevention of behavioral deviation. Apart from the scientific aspect (lack of effectiveness of existing theories describing the phenomenon) and the practical aspect (lack of systematic efforts to prevent vandalism in schools), there is another important point, aggravating the situation: vandalism is widely publicized in the media. That, on the one hand, promotes the activity of public institutions in the prevention of vandalism, on the other hand, it translates negative patterns of behavior for the teenage and adolescent audience, thus contributing to its even greater manifestation.

The organization and methods of empirical research

The incidence of vandalism committed in an educational institution is an acute problem of the administration and teaching staff. The common way of responding to this is punishing participants in such activities, whose complicity must be proved indisputable, but in most cases the perpetrators are seldom found. The identification of possible personal reasons helps to prevent crime through timely corrective and preventive measures, which will not only keep school property safe, but also will help to build a program of individual work with teenagers who are subject to committing vandalism.

The purpose of the research was to define the individual psychological characteristics of adolescents potentially predisposed to commit vandalism. The main proposition is the allowance for the possibility of a connection between highly motivated teenage vandal behavior and such psychological phenomena as: neuro-psychological stability, self-attitude, level of aspiration, aggressiveness, sovereignty of psychological space. Sex and age factors have also been studied as factors possibly influencing motivation to vandalism.

To examine possible determinants of teenage vandalism, individual psychological characteristics and probable motives of vandalism were considered among 218 secondary school students (93 boys and 125 girls) from the age of 11 to 16.

Methods: Shvartslander's motor test, Stolin Panteleeva's test-questionnaire, Bass-Dark's questionnaire, "Prognoz-2" technique, "The sovereignty of psychological space" questionnaire, "Motives of vandal behavior" questionnaire (developed by S.A. Ostrikoval, O.V. Kruzhkova, I.V. Vorobiev). As well as the method of experts' analysis, with teachers themselves being experts.

To single out the most important personal factors resulting in teenage vandal behavioral patterns and in conscious readiness to commit crime and damage private or public property, the multisided method (MANOVA) in the statistical package SPSS 20.0 was used. Resorting to dispersal analysis was justified by certain parameters (the parameters of M-text by Boks and Liven appear to be statistically insignificant) Eligibility of the ANOVA confirmed the compliance criteria (M-Box test and Lieven statistically unreliable).

Results and commentary

Initially, the respondents were assessed by their propensity for committing vandalism, which was studied on the basis of how vivid their motives seemed to be expressed, and on the basis of experts' evaluation. 27% (47 people: 24 boys, 23 girls) out of 218 teenagers were assessed as those subject to committing vandal actions.

The differentiation showed the prevalence of the following types of vandal actions: existential vandalism, vandalism out of curiosity, vandalism as protest and vandalism caused by boredom. In the first place there are motives of self-affirmation among peers—10% of respondents had high rates, 90% average. Besides, the significant causes were those of protest and dissent, curiosity and desire to explore the subject, as well as desire to have fun and experience the thrill. The least important motives for vandalism are aesthetic (the desire to change the environment in such a way as to

get aesthetic pleasure) and the inconvenience of the environment (the need for a more convenient organization of the space).

Dispersion analysis revealed the determinants among individual psychological characteristics. The most significant factors are neuro-psychological stability, sovereignty of psychological space, hostility and aggression. (Pillay's result is $p = 0.001$, the coefficient of determination explains 31.2% of the total variance). The results of the descriptive statistics for these factors are presented in the table.

Table 1

**Results of the descriptive statistics
for the statistically significant personal determinants**

Parameters	Statistical value	High motivation for vandalism		Low (within the norm) motivation for vandalism	
		X_{cp}	Σ	X_{cp}	σ
Neuro-psychological stability	0.016	32.57	9.63	28.67	11.39
Sovereignty of psychological space	0.000	5.36	19.88	17.13	19.09
Hostility	0.027	10.11	2.98	9.08	3.03
Aggressiveness	0.001	20.72	5.01	17.79	4.91

Based on these findings, we can talk about certain personality traits that are highly vandalism-provocative for teenagers. Therefore, they have lower level of neuro-psychological stability, and cannot always adequately act in emotionally stressful situations, make decisions under physical or psychological pressure. In addition, this category of young people does not have high levels of psychological space sovereignty, which may indicate their inability to control, protect and develop their psychological space and their failure to behave autonomously. Teenagers who are prone to vandalism are reported to show more aggression and hostility. One can assume that such behavior is a way of expressing a negative emotional state.

It should be mentioned that the impact of age covariates increases interaction between the factors. The tense dynamic of vandalism should be taken into consideration when working with the age group of teenagers.

The gender factor, as mentioned in the previous surveys, has not been included in the model due to lack of proof. However, comparative analysis done with the help of the Mann-Whitney U-test, identified some of the necessary features. For example, boys are rated higher by such motivators of vandalism behavior as aggression ($p = 0,024$), search for self-expression ($p = 0,05$), protest ($p = 0,005$), conformity ($p = 0,039$) and the motive of boredom ($p = 0,024$). Thus, boys are more likely to show their dissatisfaction with the situation in a destructive form, destroying or damaging some items. The explicit form of self-expression, the urge to stand out and conformism are closely linked to the values in male adolescent groups. The ability to take risks, to commit an offense is treated as a courageous deed and is positively evaluated. Thus, the desire to "fit in" with a peer group, attempts to confirm/improve their status prompt

adolescents to commit vandalism. Vandalism for fun among boys is mostly connected with risk taking and thrilling experiences.

Conclusions

1. The empirical study of motives and possible determinants of teenage vandalism showed that such behavior is characteristic for one third of pupils. The great number of pupils "at risk" may be associated with natural pubertal changes, the modern social and informational environment, and the lack of a comprehensive system of prevention of this type of deviant behavior.

2. The most common reasons for vandalism behavior in teenagers are the desire to prove to others courage, determination, etc., the desire to express disagreement with something, or to check their abilities; and the lack of involvement in any activity or the lack of any hobbies.

3. A significant impact on the readiness of people to harm someone else's property is determined by certain personality traits and psychological states: low stability of the nervous system, the inability to adequately act under excessive physical or psychological pressure; as well as vague boundaries of psychological reality and experiencing strong negative emotions.

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