

Vanishing vandalism at schools

Vandalism has become a big problem at schools, with students drawing on classroom walls to breaking windows, there aren't many things students aren't willing to do. Property crimes such as vandalism and theft are at a moderate rate in Malta.¹ There were about 30 cases of serious vandalism against heritage and ecological sites or against authority since 2001-2006, according to an analysis carried out by The Times of Malta.² But what is the incentive of all this, and what can we do to vanish vandalism at schools?

The motive

Sometimes it is revenge (primarily against the authorities), but other times it is simply senseless acts of vandalism.³ Social media could be another big factor as recent TikTok trend are encouraging school vandalism and theft⁴. Other reasons for vandalism may also be peer-pressure, boredom or frustration.

Opinions from the students themselves

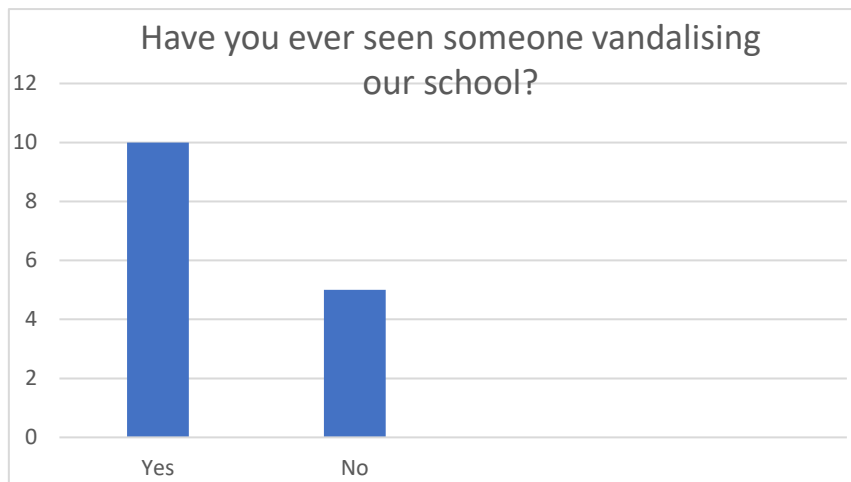
In the survey I conducted where I asked 15 year 9 students on their views about vandalism at our school, the first question I asked was, "Have you ever seen someone vandalising our school?" 10 out of 15 students answered yes.

¹ https://www.numbeo.com/crime/country_result.jsp?country=Malta

² <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/vandalism-a-record-of-shame.12117>

³ <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2006-12-09/newspaper-leader/Curbing-Vandalism-166269>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/learning/is-vandalism-a-problem-in-your-school.html>



The second question I asked was, “What type of vandalism have you seen at school?” The majority of students answered:

- Writing on desks, walls, and bathroom cubicles.
- Broken chairs and tables.

The final question I asked was, “How can we stop vandalism at our school?” Most students answered:

- Consequences (ex. suspension, break in)
- CCTV cameras

“By talking to students in a calm way, not in an angry way”, answered one student. A few students said that “the school is already strict enough” and nothing else can be done.

The Head of school’s view on vandalism at our school

After hearing the students’ opinions, I interviewed the Head of school, who gave similar answers to the students.

For the first question, Mr Galea said that he has seen drawings with markers on toilet cubicles, drawings on walls and soap all over the

floors. As a consequence for drawing on the walls, “the students had to repaint the walls”.

The second query I asked him was “Throughout the years has vandalism decreased or increased at our school?”, to which he answered that from the 2 years he has been Head of school, “vandalism has increased”.

Lastly, I asked Mr Galea “What more precautions can our school take to stop vandalism?”. He suggested that students should be taught more on vandalism and “more CCTV cameras should be installed”.

Another school’s take on vandalism

Are other schools’ experience with vandalism like my school’s? I interviewed a student who goes to an independent school and who is in year 9 to find out.

First, I asked her “Is vandalism present at your school?” and “What type of vandalism have you seen at your school?” “Yes, it is present, especially on the tables, sometimes in the bathrooms and students write on notices hung up on the walls. There are usually teachers who are supervising so we don’t really have much vandalism”, she answered.

Then I asked her, “What precautions is your school taking to stop vandalism?” According to her, the school tries to find who did the vandalism and “tell them why it’s wrong”.

From this interview I have concluded that for the most part, vandalism in different schools and the consequences for it are alike.

The solution

From the research I have done on vandalism at schools, the solution seems to be to raise awareness and educate students on it. “There has to be more emphasis on environmental education and the adverse impact of vandalism”, Maltese politician Roderick Galdes told Times of Malta⁵. According to some of the students who took part in the survey, the consequences shouldn’t be harsh as students would rebel more. Students should be taught from an early age that vandalism isn’t a form of art, but damage to property!

⁵ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/vandalism-a-record-of-shame.12117>

Bibliography

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