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VANDALIZATION OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE PROPERTY BY YOUTHS: IMPLICATIONS ON SECURITY IN SOUTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF TARABA STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The provision of adequate security is a social necessity for the smooth running of every society. The foremost social problem inhibiting security and developmental progress in Nigeria over the decades is the considerable increased rate of criminal activities among youths. Vandalization is one of the most popular crimes committed by youths in contemporary Nigerian society. This paper examined the repeated vandalization of public/private properties as a dimension of criminal activity among youths and its implication on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. The study was hinged on the Routine Activity Theory (1979) and Merton's Social Structure and Anomie Theory (1968). The study used qualitative method of data collection based on secondary data to explore the root causes and implications of vandalization among youths. Findings revealed that youths are largely involved in vandalization and other crimes majorly as a result of lack of supervision by parents, ineffectiveness of security agencies, unemployment and religious intolerance. This has given rise to insecurity of lives and property of citizens. The study recommended that a multi-pronged approach is needed to curb the menace of vandalization in Nigeria, which include among others addressing socio-economic and political factors such as unemployment, ethnicity, poverty, etc. through skills acquisition and increased funding towards alternative means of subsistence by government like farming, rearing of animal and others. There should be a ban on the activities of scavengers popularly called 'baban bola'. Lastly, community-based security frameworks should be strengthened to tackle cases of vandalization.

Keywords: Vandalization, Youths, Security, Insecurity, Public/Private Property

1 INTRODUCTION

The provision of adequate security is a social necessity for the smooth running of every society. Durkheim (2014) asserted that security is so central for the survival of man that its absence makes crime possible, which triggers the common conscience of community members. Security as averred by Onifade (2013) has to do with a situation where people can travel around within a given natural space or elsewhere, and sleep with their two eyes firmly closed without any real or imaginary threats to their lives or properties. Globally, security is being undermined as a result of crime among youths which manifests in vandalization, armed robbery, kidnapping, ethnic violence, and the likes. Hardly would a day pass by without one hearing about incidences of vandalization in any given society, and the rate is increasing daily especially among youths. Vandalization is the act of willful or malicious destruction, stealing, injury,

disfigurement, or defacement of private/ public property without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control. It can take the form of arson, removal or destruction of electric transformers, street lights and host of others through riots, ethnic/religious crisis, organized or individual theft, and others. David and Doutimiye (2020) asserted that the increasing rate of vandalization especially of public properties is alarming and has great implication on security but more worrisome is the involvement of youths that constitute a large percentage of the world population and generally, the leaders of tomorrow. Mugo (2011) sees vandalization of properties among youths as a violation of societal laws which has become a world wide security threat. It constitute actions, behaviours and conducts which are socially unacceptable and unwholesome in the society often linked with unemployment, disillusionment, poverty, lack of family control, ethnic/religious conflicts, and others.

In recent times, the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity through the vandalization activities of youths resulting in security threat (Nasiru, 2020). The Senatorial District in the recent past was known for peaceful and tranquil atmosphere with adequate protection of lives and properties. Government has made great efforts towards tackling this challenge in Taraba State and especially the southern senatorial district through huge budgetary allocation of billions of Naira to the security sector. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of government, the problem seems to persist especially in the past five years. From the year 2021, there has been an upsurge in the spate of vandalization of both public and private properties resulting in insecurity of lives and property. It is on this premise that this research was undertaken to examine the causes of vandalization of public/private property among youths and its implication on security in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. A broader understanding of the causes of vandalization of public/private property would help curb the menace. In particular therefore this research seeks to address these main objectives.

- Identify the causes of vandalization among youths in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.
- Examine the nexus between vandalization of private/public property and security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.

1.1 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- **H_0:** Vandalization of public/private property has no significant influence on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State
- **H_1**: There is a significant influence of vandalization of public/private property on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Vandalization

Vandalism is the act of willful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement, or defacement of or carting away of private/ public property without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control. It can take the form of arson, theft, destruction of electric installations, street lights and host of others. Security outfits such as police stations which house police personnel and their equipment for security operations, CCTV cameras, street lights, social amenities, just to mention a few are most often targets of vandalization and are either carted away or destroyed at will at slight provocation by youths. This often led to loss of lives of police personnel and even members of the public. If police station can be set on fire, then who is safe and which location is free from the activity of vandals? Okoli and Orinya (2013) view vandalism as willful destruction of or carting away of private/public or government property in keeping with criminal or political intent.

2.2 Vandalization among youths and its causes

Several scholars have given different reasons why youths engage in vandalism. These may range from individual to societal factor. Thomas (2021) opined that the lack of supervision, coupled with exposure to social media, was seen to be putting young people at risk. Wilson (2023) opined that the root cause of vandalization is based upon various values and beliefs for what is acceptable behaviour as captured by culture of an ethnic group. Oyinlola (2022) allured that many families have failed in performing their major role of protection, provision for their members, socializing their members and ensuring they conform to the socially acceptable patterns of behaviour in society, thereby increasing the rate of adolescent crime in society. Furthermore, religious intolerance and practices has also been considered as one of the causes of vandalization. The relationship between religion and crime is not however as straightforward. Research on this topic since the 1960's has yielded widely varying results. Whereas many studies have found that religion is significantly related to a host of crime-related factors, others have found no relationship. All these researches identified a significant relationship between religion and a wide range of attitudes, behaviours, and life events. Religion could

serve, and has indeed served as an instrument of social harmony in many civilisations. Paradoxically, however, it has also served as a motivation for violence, hence its indication in some literature as a 'double-edged sword. Srijan (2022) stated that instead of imparting fear of hellfire or guilt, religion gains power over the individual as a community component and influences its adherents. Even though millions of people are utterly unaware of this, hundreds of crimes are perpetrated every day tied to religion.

Macpherson (2023) opined that youths under the almajiri system roam the streets, constituting public nuisance and consequently are predisposed to antisocial conducts thereby inadvertently making themselves ever readily available agents of vandalism in the name of 'baba bola'. Because they are exposed to criminogenic needs and factors and are routinely found or reside in deviant/criminal neighbourhoods where there is an absence of capable guardianship, these particular youths become suitable targets of being recruited into agents of vandalization and other criminal activities as kidnapping, armed robbery, religious wars, burglary, and so on as witnessed all over the country.

On the other hand, the alarming increase in youth unemployment is one of the causes of youth crime. Okafor (2010) observed that unemployment is a global trend, but occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Lawi, Chinwokwu, and Adaka (2026) opined that Unemployment leads to loss of personal values and self-esteem. It makes the individual vulnerable and often creates room for manipulations by criminally minded individuals of the society. They asserted further that, indeed chronic youth unemployment is evident in thousands of graduate youths produced every year with no jobs for majority of them. The inability to be gainfully engaged has turned many youths to devil's workshop. As a result, some of them opt to perpetrate various crimes because according to them, joblessness is connected to criminality as the time spent in genuine work decreases the chance of illegal work. According to the popular maxim "The situation whereby majority of the people are poor and hungry and a lot of youths are jobless and unemployed will, doubtlessly, engender high insecurity in the society. Thus, unemployment has driven many youths into various criminal activities such as vandalization to make ends meet.

Ineffectiveness and complicity of security agencies is also seen as one of the causes of vandalization. Thus, vandalization in Nigeria is rife and the fight against it is reported daily, Kingsley, Ebele & Chidi (2023) emphasized that the Nigerian security agencies have largely been ineffective and complacent in fighting the crime, which has led to a colossal amount of insecurity, loss and violence. This, Ezemenaka (2018) said is especially true of Nigeria where there are frequent incidences of particular crimes, such as vandalization, armed robbery, ransom kidnapping, to campus cultism. The ineffectiveness of Nigerian security agencies leading to the prevalence of crimes such as vandalization, armed robbery and kidnapping has multi-causal connotations; among these causal variables, corruption and complicity are salient in the reasons and explanation of ineffective security. Ishola (2025) opined that the National Public Security Communication System (NPSCS) project of 2010 became a cautionary tale of poor procurement, weak oversight, questionable technical choices, corruption, vandalism, and the political churn that turned a strategic security asset into expensive scrap. The NPSCS was a modernizing dream, a single backbone to secure voice trunking for security services, CCTV coverage of major cities, video conferencing for commands, e-policing databases and an emergency dispatch network. But corruption and incompetence broke the project.

2.3 Implication of vandalization on security

The security of life and property remains significant to the socio-economic survival of any given society. To achieve that, the government owes the responsibility of adequate provision of security in any given social formation. Security is the most vital element in human life. Without it, social, economic, and political achievements cannot be attained. Nasiru (2020) averred that it will be difficult for individuals within a state to participate in productive activities without security. But unfortunately the security of individuals and property in the society are being undermined by acts of vandalism. Okoroafor (2021) posited that youth vandalism can result in several negative outcomes in both the social, political, and economic development of a society. It is also a substantial problem to national security and will continue to be a threat if not handled properly. Police stations which house police personnel and their equipment for security operations are most often destroyed at slight provocation by youths. This often led to loss of lives of police personnel and even members of the public. Okoli and Orinya (2013) posited that vandalism is a threat to Nigeria's national security in view of its adverse impacts as exemplified in loss of life and economic losses. Vandalism portends serious danger for national sustainability of Nigeria. Jan (2015) allured that vandalism of either public or private property is a universally frequently occurring type of property crime with high impact on the victims. The consequences of vandalism in terms of monetary value may vary widely in different contexts. While in industrialized world vandals frequently steal objects of a high value, such as audio/video equipment, car audio systems, computers, vandalism in developing countries is often aimed at stealing house appliances, vandalizing electricity cables, transformer accessories, street lights, and others. Regardless of the economic losses, victims, either individuals or government, regard vandalization as very serious threat since it is a violation of their privacy and security in the domestic sphere.

Ngboawaji, et.al (2023) posited that a key hazard to any nation is the insecurity of life and property because of vandalization, political brigandage, armed robberies, kidnappings, and other crimes which made Nigerians lost confidence in the power of their government in protecting them. According to Udeoba and Eze, (2021), vandalization of private/public property has resulted to fear, anxiety, and unpleasant emotions. They stated further that repeated and high level of vandalization in an area is a high security threat which can result in migration to a safer environment because of the feeling of insecurity.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on the Routine Activity Theory (1979) and Merton's Social Structure and Anomie Theory (1968). The routine activity theory is a crime opportunity theory that focuses on situation of crimes, first proposed by Cohen and Felson in 1979. The theory has its foundation in human ecology and rational choice theory. The theory identifies three key conditions for crime – a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian – all of which must coincide. The theory explains that crime happens when these three conditions come together in time and space. The motivated offender is a person who is ready and able to commit crime. That is, an individual who is not only capable of committing criminal activity against an individual or property, but also willing to do so. The suitable target is an object or person that looks easy to attack, steal, or harm. The suitable target is also any property that the motivated offender can damage, steal, or threaten in the easiest way possible. While absence of a capable guardian is a missing person or safety tool like the police, a neighbour, a lock, or a camera that could stop the crime. The capable guardian can also be a person or an object that is effective in deterring criminal activities. Sometimes crime is stopped by simple presence of guardianship in space and time. The guardian must not necessarily have to be a police man or a security guard but rather a person whose proximity or presence would lower the chances of a crime happening. The presence of a guardian has a powerful impact on the likelihood of a crime to take place. Thus when the guardian is not within the vicinity of the target, the likelihood of a crime to occur is significantly higher. The theory is not just about who wants to commit crime, it is also about opportunity. By changing our routines or adding protection, we can reduce the chances of crime occurring.

This theory can be applied to understand a wide range of behaviors, including criminal activity such as vandalization, burglary and a host of others. In the context of vandalization, criminals may see opportunities to exploit the vulnerability of targets (private/public property) such as personal domiciles, businesses, police stations, hospitals, roads, electric installations, for financial gain. Vandals often target these properties due to their perceived vulnerability. Offenders target these properties because they carry value when sold. Adequate security measures, visible law enforcement, and surveillance can deter criminals from targeting these properties and thus enhance sustainability of security. For Example the presence of police and other security agents in popular black spots, such as electric installations, social amenities and in residential and business areas can create a visible deterrence to potential vandals, reducing the likelihood of vandalization. Citizens themselves may apply routine activity principles around their vicinities or when making security decisions. According to this theory, security sustainability depends on effective crime prevention strategies. Areas that invest in crime prevention, including community engagement, education and local employment, can reduce the incentives for criminal behaviour, hence promoting long-term security sustainability.

While routine activity theory x-rays into human decision-making, critics argue that it overlooked social causes of crime, such as inequality or motivation, by focusing mainly on environmental and situational factors. Secondly, critics argue that it is mainly a macro theory of crime and victimization that requires motivated offenders, but does not explain how such offenders become motivated. The theory was also criticized for focusing on everyday routines instead of an offender's deep personal motives.

Similarly, Merton in 1968 propounded the Social Structure and Anomie Theory to explain the relationship between social structure and deviance or crime. The main tenet of the theory is that deviant behaviour is a normal, systemic response to a disconnect between the culturally defined goals (such as monetary success) and socially structured, legitimate means available to achieve them. According to Merton, when individuals are unable to achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behaviours as a way of achieving those goals. The desire to overcome poverty and become successful without matching it with hard work and creativity can only heighten the tendency for complicity and increase in crime in the society. Ritzer (2008) argued that when culture places much emphasis on material success, while preventing some people or individuals from achieving such success, innovative behaviour, howbeit, criminality may be devised. Under such circumstances anomie is said to exist, and as a result there is a tendency toward deviant or criminal behaviour. In the context of this study, criminal behaviour (vandalism) takes the form of alternative, unacceptable and illegal means of achieving economic success. This theory is appropriate and related to the study of youth crime in Southern Senatorial District in particular and Taraba State in general because material wealth is given great recognition irrespective of the means and methods of acquisition. In this context, many criminally minded individuals and groups have found vandalization as a sure means of getting wealth. Some of these vandals are being used by others and promised financial rewards when the deal is done. The desire to overcome poverty and become successful without matching it with hard work and creativity can only heighten the tendency for complicity

and increase in vandalization of public/private property in the society. As people deviate from acceptable norms and means with active collaboration of some members of the security agencies, vandalization thrive, and it is creating adverse consequences in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. The theory has been criticized for focussing almost exclusively on lower class crime, seeing crime as a consequence of inequality in the distribution of material resources thereby giving a stereotypical view of crime and criminals which associates being a criminal with being a member of the lower class.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This involved the use of quantitative data collection methods in order to have systematic, intense, accurate opinions and to describe same as precisely as possible. Questionnaire was employed to collect data from the target population which comprised the total number of the general adult population in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. The Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria located at the southern part of Taraba state is made up of five local government areas namely Wukari, Takum, Donga, Ibi and Ussa plus a development area called Yangtsu, with a population of 1,989,881 people. This figure is based on the 2022 projected census figures from the National Population Commission (NPC). The Taro Yamane's statistical tool was used to determine the total number of questionnaire distributed. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select our sample. A total of six hundred and eighty eight (688) respondents were issued the questionnaire to fill and return. The quantitative data collected was analyzed with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses raised using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMC) and multiple regression respectively.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Socio- demographic characteristics of respondents

The socio-demographic data presented in table 1 found that (32.9%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18 - 25 years, with a mean age of 33.6 years and a standard deviation of 13.9. This indicated that most of the participants were young adults, representing the age group most prone to involvement in crime, either as perpetrators or victims. Respondents aged between 26 and 33 years constituted 25.3%, those between 34 and 41 years made up 23.3%, while 18.4% of the respondents fell within the age bracket of 42 years and above category. This age distribution reflected a predominantly youthful population, which is significant for understanding the dynamics of vandalism among youths and its implications for community security.

The sex distribution showed that 58.5% of the respondents were male, while 41.5% were female. This gender imbalance indicated that men are more represented in the study, which may reflect the higher involvement of males in vandalization activities as well as in security-related issues in society. In terms of marital status, 45.6% of the respondents were married, 41.9% were single, while 7.5%, 2.3%, and 2.6% were separated, widowed, and divorced respectively. The relatively high percentage of married respondents suggested that marital responsibility may play a role in reducing youth engagement in criminal behaviour. More so, the significant percentage of single respondents implied a population that may be more exposed to risky behaviours due to limited family responsibilities and supervision.

Regarding educational attainment, 29.0% of the respondents had secondary education, 27.8% had primary education, 25.0% had no formal education, and only 18.1% attained tertiary education. This showed that most respondents had low educational qualifications, which may contribute to youth involvement in vandalization due to limited access to formal employment opportunities. The occupational distribution indicated that 60.1% of the respondents were farmers, 18.1% traders, 12.0% civil servants, and 9.8% students. The dominance of farming as an occupation implied that the population is largely rural. This rural setting could experience unique security challenges, such as farmer-herder conflicts and theft of agricultural produce, which may push some youths into crime due to economic frustration or loss of livelihood. In terms of religion, 66.8% of the respondents were Christians, 26.4% were Muslims, 2.9% were adherents of African traditional religion, and 3.8% belonged to other faiths. Religious institutions can therefore play a crucial role in promoting moral discipline among youths and supporting security initiatives.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio- demographic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Std
Age			
18-25	214	32.9	33.6 13.9
26-33	165	25.3	
34-41	152	23.3	
42- years and above	120	18.4	
Sex			
Male	381	58.5	
Female	270	41.5	
Marital Status			
Single	273	41.9	
Married	297	45.6	
Separated	49	7.5	
Widowed	15	2.3	
Divorced	17	2.6	
Educational Level			
No formal education	163	25.0	
Primary	181	27.8	
Secondary	189	29.0	
Tertiary	118	18.1	
Occupation			
Farming	391	60.1	
Trading	118	18.1	
Civil service	78	12.0	
Student	64	9.8	
Religion			
Christianity	435	66.8	
Islam	172	26.4	
Africa Traditional Religion	19	2.9	
Others	25	3.8	

Source: Field work survey, 2026

4.2 Causes of Youth Vandalization

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions on the causes of youth vandalization in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that unemployment was identified as a leading cause of youth vandalization, with 619 respondents representing 95.1% affirming this factor. This suggested that the lack of employment opportunities significantly contributed to youth involvement in criminal activities, as economic hardship and frustration may push young people toward illegal means of survival. Ethnic conflict leading to ethnic violence was also strongly identified as a major cause, with 591 respondents or 90.8% supporting this view. Similarly, struggle over scarce resources recorded 89.9%, showing that competition over limited economic and social resources contributed substantially to criminal behaviour among youths.

The table further revealed that idleness (86.6%), drug use (86.5%), religious intolerance (84.2%), and poverty (84.0%) were widely perceived as important causes of youth vandalization. These findings implied that social disorganization, substance abuse, economic deprivation, and religious tensions created conditions that encouraged criminal tendencies among young people. In addition, get rich quick syndrome (78.8%), marginalization (78.5%), bad government (77.4%), and lack of family control (77.3%) were also identified by a large proportion of respondents as contributing factors. This indicated that weak family supervision, poor governance, feelings of exclusion, and the desire for sudden wealth are viewed as critical drivers of youth criminality.

Table 2: Distribution of response on causes of youth vandalization

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnic conflict leading to ethnic violence	591	90.8
Unemployment	619	95.1
Religious intolerance	548	84.2
Poverty	547	84.0
Drug use	563	86.5
Idleness	564	86.6
Lack of family control	503	77.3
Get rich quick syndrome	513	78.8
Marginalization	511	78.5
Bad government	504	77.4
Struggle over scarce resources	585	89.9

Source: Fieldwork survey, 2026

4.3 Vandalization of Private/Public Property and Security

Table 3 presents respondents' views on the vandalization of private and public property and its implications for security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. The mean and standard deviation values indicated a strong awareness of vandalism and its adverse effects on the community. Awareness of vandalism recorded a mean of 1.17 (SD = .482), showing high agreement that such acts occurred frequently within the area. The mean score of 1.39 (SD = .724) for the question on whether the acts were committed by youths suggested that respondents largely believed young people were the main perpetrators, pointing to youth restiveness and moral decline as driving forces.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents on Vandalization of private/public property and security

	Yes	No	Not sure	Mean	STD
Are you aware of any act of vandalism in your area?	568(87.3%)	54 (8.3%)	29 (4.5%)	1.17	.482
Was the act committed by youths?	490(75.3%)	68 (10.4%)	93 (14.3%)	1.39	.724
Does the act result in destruction of lives and property?	529(81.3%)	33 (5.1%)	89 (13.7%)	1.32	.702
Do you think the act has caused people to live in fear?	580(89.1%)	23 (3.5%)	48 (7.4%)	1.18	.545
Does the act lead to relocation of people from your area?	549(84.3%)	52 (8.0%)	50 (7.7%)	1.23	.577
Do you think vandalism deprives citizens of public utility	541(83.1%)	40 (6.1%)	70 (10.8%)	1.28	.645
Has vandalism caused insecurity in your area?	535(82.2%)	60 (9.2%)	56 (8.6%)	1.26	.606
Has vandalism disrupted people's social life?	219(33.6%)	316(48.5%)	116(17.8%)	1.84	.700
Have security agents done enough to protect properties?	341(52.4%)	240(36.9%)	70 (10.8%)	1.58	.677

Source: Fieldwork survey, 2026

Similarly, the mean of 1.32 (SD = .702) for destruction of lives and property indicated strong agreement that vandalism often led to significant damage, contributing to insecurity and loss of public trust. The perception that vandalism caused

people to live in fear (M = 1.18, SD = .545) and leads to relocation (M = 1.23, SD = .577) demonstrated that the crime undermined community stability and weakened social cohesion.

Respondents also agreed that vandalism deprived citizens of access to public utilities (M = 1.28, SD = .645) and contributed to insecurity in their area (M = 1.26, SD = .606), showing that the destruction of public infrastructure disrupted essential services and heightened vulnerability. However, opinions were more divided on whether vandalism disrupts people's social life (M = 1.84, SD = .700), suggesting that while some perceived a major social impact; others may see it as less direct. The mean of 1.58 (SD = .677) for the adequacy of security agents' efforts indicated moderate dissatisfaction, implying that residents doubt the effectiveness of existing security measures in preventing or responding to vandalism.

4.3.1 Test of Hypothesis:

- **H_0:** Vandalization of private/public property has no significant influence on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.
- **H_1:** Vandalization of private/public property has significant influence on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.

4.4 Analysis of variance on Vandalization of private/public property and security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria

The result of the analysis of variance in table 4 showed that there is no significant relationship between vandalization of private and public property and security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.439. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.192. The adjusted R^2 of 0.180 further supports the model's reliability after controlling for the number of predictors.

Data generated and analyzed in this study suggests that although vandalization of public and private property is evident and has effect on security but not too significant as to grossly affect security. Based on the statistical evidence, the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that vandalization of private and public property has no significant influence on security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State is accepted. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is rejected; indicating that vandalization of private and public property has no significant influence on security in the area.

Table 4: Analysis of variance on Vandalization of private/public property and security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.

Model	**R**	**R2**		**Adjusted R**	**Std. Error**	
1	.439[a]	.192		.180	.699	
2	Sources of variance	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Regression	74.483	10	7.448	15.255	.000[b]
	Residual	312.479	640	.488		
	Total	386.962	650			

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	1.163	.207	5.623	.000
Are you aware of any act of vandalism in your area?	-.114	.065	-.071	-1.758	.039
Was the act committed by youths?	.140	.042	.131	3.362	.001
Does the act result in destruction of lives and property?	-.053	.041	-.048	-1.272	.204
Do you think the act has caused people to live in fear?	-.071	.044	-.064	-1.597	.111

Does the act lead to relocation of people from your area?	.180	.061	.127	2.968	.003
Do you think vandalism deprives citizens of public utility	.122	.051	.091	2.387	.017
Has vandalism caused insecurity in your area?	-.050	.053	-.042	-.954	.340
Has vandalism disrupted people's social life?	.109	.060	.086	1.821	.049
Have security agents done enough to protect properties?	.112	.044	.101	2.569	.010
Has government put any measure in place to curb the act?	.395	.051	.347	7.675	.000
a. Dependent Variable: What is your assessment of the security situation in your area?					

Source: Field work survey, 2026

5 DISCUSSIONS

The findings from this study indicated that majority of respondents were aware of acts of vandalization of both private and public properties within their communities. This reflects a growing concern about the prevalence of vandalism and its implications for community safety. The result aligned with the study of Okonkwo and Nwankwo (2023) in their study on vandalism and community insecurity in South Eastern Nigeria, Anambra State, which found that community members were highly aware of recurrent acts of vandalism, particularly those targeting public utilities such as electricity transformers and water pipelines. Their study emphasized that such acts contribute to a decline in the quality of life and an increase in fear among residents. The study further showed that many acts of vandalism were perceived to be committed predominantly by youths especially the scavengers popularly called 'Baban Bola'. This supports the findings of Adebayo (2022) in his study on youth restiveness and public infrastructure vandalization in Lagos State, Nigeria, which revealed that unemployed and idle youths were often recruited or motivated to destroy public property as a form of protest or criminal expression. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Danladi and Musa (2021) who found in their study on socioeconomic drivers of vandalism in Kaduna Metropolis, that vandalism was not limited to youths but also involved adults who engage in such acts for economic gain, such as stealing public cables and pipelines for resale.

The finding of the study also supported the work of Bello and Garba (2022) on community insecurity and the socioeconomic impact of violence in Katsina State, who found that vandalism is a form of insecurity that often leads to financial and emotional stress for victims and their families. The study revealed that acts of vandalism frequently result in the destruction of lives and property. This supported the findings of Ojo (2023) in destruction of lives and property as a consequence of vandalism in Ibadan, Oyo State, where it was established that vandalism-related violence has caused significant loss of property and human casualties, thereby weakening social cohesion and trust within communities. The finding also aligned with Eze and Nnaji (2021) on their work vandalism and its implications for security in Enugu State, which reported that destruction of property through vandalism often destabilized community security and leads to mass displacement. The perception that vandalism has caused people to live in fear corresponded with the conclusions of Abdulrahman (2022) in his study on vandalism and fear of crime among residents in Abuja Municipal Area Council, which found that fear of recurrent vandalism incidents led residents to alter their social behaviour, including avoiding public spaces at night. Similarly, the finding that vandalism led to the relocation of people from affected areas agreed with the study by Ahmed and Suleiman (2023), in Nasarawa State, who found that persistent acts of vandalism and violence have compelled many families to migrate to safer areas.

Furthermore, respondents agreed that vandalism deprives citizens of access to public utilities. This observation is consistent with the work of Adamu and Ibrahim (2021) on the impact of infrastructure vandalization on public service delivery in Kano State, who found that the destruction of public infrastructure, such as power lines and water facilities, severely hampered social and economic development. The present study's finding that vandalism has caused insecurity in the area also aligned with the work of Olorunfemi (2023), in his study of infrastructure sabotage and security challenges in South-western Nigeria, where vandalism was identified as a key contributor to communal unrest and insecurity.

However, the finding that vandalism has not significantly disrupted people's social life diverged from the study by Chukwu (2022), in his study of the social consequences of vandalism on urban communities in Port Harcourt, who found that recurrent acts of vandalism disrupted social gatherings, reduced community trust, and created divisions among

residents. The discrepancy may be attributed to contextual differences, as rural or semi-urban communities may maintain stronger social cohesion despite insecurity compared to urban centres. Lastly, the finding that security agents have done moderately well in protecting properties contrasted with the findings of Mohammed and Bala (2022) in their study on the assessment of security agencies' response to vandalism in Maiduguri, Borno State, where it was found that security agencies lacked adequate manpower and logistics to effectively protect public infrastructure. More so, it supported the perspective of Eze (2024) in his study of community policing and protection of public property in Nsukka, Enugu State, who found that collaboration between community members and local security operatives improved the protection of public assets and reduced vandalism incidents.

The study's findings demonstrated that acts of vandalism affected community security in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State though not significantly, as evidenced by the acceptance of the null hypothesis ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), confirming that vandalization of private and public property has an influence on security but not substantially. The routine activity theory posited that individuals, particularly youths, take advantage of the vulnerability of public/private property and the absence of a capable guardian within their social environment to commit act of vandalization. Similarly, social structure and anomie theory explained that structural strain and limited legitimate opportunities may compel individuals to engage in vandalism as a means of expressing frustration or achieving economic goals. While some respondents reported minimal disruption to social life, the overall impact on security remains significant, highlighting the interplay between motivate offender, suitable target, absence of a capable guardian and structural inequalities in shaping community vulnerability.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Security of life and property is without doubt a major priority for meaningful development in every society in the world. Successive governments both at the federal, state and local levels have tried to strengthen the security architecture, while making efforts to provide new ways of securing citizens' lives and both public and private properties. Despite these efforts, like in many parts of the country, the state of security of both public and private property in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State as found out in this study is not too impressive. Data generated and analyzed in this study suggests that although vandalization of public and private property is evident and has effect on security but not too significant as to grossly affect security. The data generated indicated that the act of vandalization among youths in the study area is significantly a function of unemployment, ethnic conflict, get-rich-quick syndrome that youths face in the area. This happens because some of these youths become frustrated and are pushed toward illegal means of livelihood due to limited access to legitimate employment opportunities. They therefore see vandalization as a form of economic survival. This study therefore recommends as follows:-

- Address socio-economic factors that push youths into vandalism. Government should equip youths with productive skills through skills acquisition programmes and increase funding for alternative livelihoods such as farming and small-scale businesses. Job creation through industrialization and public-private partnerships, alongside poverty alleviation programmes focused on youth empowerment, should be prioritized. NGOs should complement these efforts.
- There should be a ban on the activities of scavengers popularly called 'baban bola' who take advantage of vulnerable public/private properties and vandalize in the name of scavenging.
- Community-based security frameworks should be strengthened to tackle cases of vandalization through stationing security agents around public properties and strategic locations. Also the provision of security gadgets such as CCTVs in communities to help maintain security is paramount.
- Strengthening of family and social interventions. Parents must provide adequate supervision and moral upbringing, discouraging materialistic values and the get-rich-quick syndrome.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study.

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