



ANALYZING URBAN VANDALISM THROUGH THE LENS OF ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY IN DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between urban vandalism and routine activity theory in Davao City and analyze if the results would reduce the prevalence of Urban Vandalism. The survey respondents were 400 randomly selected locals in Matina Crossing 74-a, Davao City. The researchers employed a quantitative research method, and a researcher-made survey questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. Non-experimental research utilizing the descriptive correlation technique was employed in this study. Using a random sampling technique, researchers gather information from locals in Matina Crossing, 74-A, Davao City. The data underwent inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, to establish relationships between variables. Findings revealed a positive relationship between urban vandalism and routine activity theory in Davao City. The study's null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship between Urban Vandalism and Routine Activity Theory. Furthermore, researchers encourage community involvement and implement efficient law enforcement procedures to aid urban vandalism. Also, researchers suggested that the government must make the urban settings more lively, inclusive, and resilient for all citizens by addressing the root causes of routine activity and vandalism.

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1. Introduction

Vandalism in public property and possessions was one of the social risks that consistently puts municipal furniture, facades, and public places in grave danger and degrades the

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aesthetics of the city. In this regard, the present study analyzes vandalism and its impact on the city's urban aesthetics. Vandalism's effects on public areas and properties include graffiti writing, demolition, arson, and breaking of property. Most urban vandalism was rooted in social behavior. These behaviors take various forms, including environmental, cultural, physical, and economic (Bostani Karimian *et al.*, 2019).

The rise of cities has brought about numerous changes, including vandalism. Human actions and behaviors are partially blamed for some of these changes. When these actions are compounded, a pattern of harm is produced, affecting the city's sustainability and growth. Vandalism in urban environments affects the developed environment, which includes open places like parks and gardens as well as fences, terminals, stadiums, hospitals, and schools. The political and cultural elements of certain urban vandalism, which occasionally contribute to forming urban identities, such as graphic maps, now widely acknowledged as urban emblems worldwide, are another distinctive characteristic (Heron, 2020).

Vandalism was a widespread, worldwide phenomenon that can take many forms, especially in urban settings and many modern civilizations, from developed, industrialized nations to impoverished localities. The information provided indicates the breadth, intensity, and diversity of vandalism in these sectors in the countries that have an information recording system in place regarding the scope, dimensions, and extent of the damage caused by vandalism in various sectors, such as services, environment, health education, recreation, and the like (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2020).

Based on the factors mentioned above, this study was noteworthy because, in contrast to other forms of juvenile criminality that can have distinct motives, it was more complex, and the underlying causes of this mindset are less clear. Every year, the loss of public property results in enormous losses to public coffers and magnificent damages to the nation's capital, an irreversible burden on the resources and infrastructure of modern communities. However, since adolescence is a critical life stage for every individual and one of the most vulnerable periods for the community as a whole, engaging in such behavior during this period may pave the way for further social deviations as well as various perversions in the individual's personality and social role in society. For this young demographic, the fact that they would soon manage the population's business poses a severe problem. The government needed to spend much money, time, and effort trying to solve this issue (Stodeh, 2019).

A crime happens when three things happen simultaneously: an accessible target, which is a person, an object, or a location. Next, if there was no suitable guardian available to step in, a capable guardian typically possesses a human element, a person who, by their very presence, would discourage possible criminals from committing a crime. CCTV footage or cameras serve as capable guardians and security officers; others are unofficial and unintentional, like neighbors.

It is also possible that a guardian was there but ineffective. For example, a CCTV camera is only a good guardian if it is being monitored or installed correctly. Employees may be present in a store, but their knowledge or expertise may need to be improved to

act as a deterrent. The motivated offender routine activity hypothesis was the final theory that looked at crime from the viewpoint of the offender. A crime could only be perpetrated if no capable guardian was present and the prospective criminal thought the target was suitable. Whether a crime was committed depends on how the perpetrator interprets the circumstances.

Vandalism explanations frequently rely on motivational theories that examine what makes offenders different from non-offenders. Most young males admit to occasional vandalism, which complicates these answers. On the other hand, the routine activities approach emphasizes the proximity elements of available targets and unsecured access that allow potential offenders to turn their dispositions into action, pointing out that motivation alone is insufficient to cause criminal occurrences (LaGrange, 2019).

The word vandalism refers to a variety of situations where property damage occurs. The vandals' actions in terms of culture included criminal damage, defacement, and graffiti. The Romans accused them of recklessly destroying or corrupting anything beautiful or venerable. The concept of vandalism depends on the social context of the conduct and the jurisdiction in which it takes place. Although definitions of the same acts can differ significantly between countries, vandalism is widely understood to be the willful or malicious damage or defacement of any public or private property without the owner's or those in control's approval (Dumlu, 2020).

Vandalism was defined as intentionally or recklessly destroying or damaging any property belonging to another without lawful excuse in English Law's Criminal Damage Act of 1971, chapter 48. One of the most apparent forms of disrespectful behavior and the most widely regarded type of disorder, vandalism, was a constant problem for cities, taking up much of people's time and energy. Both financial and societal costs are involved in undoing such harm. Vandalism damages can have uncomfortable side effects and pose a direct or indirect risk to public safety.

Furthermore, the consequences of vandalism vary depending on the society. Vandalism refers to relatively small-scale, legitimate, nonviolent acts that endanger people's sense of safety and well-being in a community and may even foster an atmosphere that inspires more severe crimes. The majority of offenses consist of vandalism and other annoying behaviors. People's opinions about public places greatly influence how uneasy and afraid they are of crime, according to studies on the relationship between community safety and the built environment (Dumlu, 2020).

Moreover, intentional and purposeful destruction or damage to private or public property was vandalism. It is one of the most expensive crimes against property and the clearest example of delinquent behavior. Regarding culture, vandalism refers to the acts that the Romans identified with the Vandals: the willful destruction or degradation of everything beautiful or holy. These include acts of criminal destruction, defacement, graffiti, and the willful creation of an eyesore. In addition to posing a genuine risk to the public, vandalism damages also inflicted suffering, directly or indirectly.

The damages must be repaired in a substantial amount. Vandalism often encourages residents to be even more neglected, which heightens their dread of becoming victims and their anxiety about crime. These are the recognized repercussions of vandalism, which are felt throughout all societies. Finding practical solutions to lessen the frequency and occurrence of vandalism in urban areas was warranted by the high expense of restoring vandalism-related damages and the human cost of inconvenience and ensuing annoyance. Vandalism over vandalism was a common occurrence these days. Ultimately, it takes the form of divergent communication modalities (Rezaee, 2019).

All sentient life, whether consciously or unconsciously, was concerned with ownership and had a range of demands to express concerning property. Subcultures that function within the legal system but outside the confines of legitimacy also use the creative and cultural domain to discuss and express societal issues related to personal difficulties, transforming the city into a playground, primarily in urban settings, such as train stations, subways, empty walls, and bridges. Graffiti has become one of the most significant areas for the subculture's surface-level visual production (Gucuk, 2019).

According to proponents of the lifestyle-routine activity theory, an individual's regular behaviors either progressively raise or lower the chance of a criminal incident (McNeeley, 2019). A person is likelier to become a victim if they work in a lower-class neighborhood, travel through high-crime areas, or leave their residence daily. The Lifestyle-Routine Activity Theory further supports the idea that crime is more likely to occur at non-household events that take place outside of the home.

The proverb opportunity makes the thief also emphasizes the idea that a willing perpetrator is not necessary for a crime to happen—even the most motivated criminal cannot commit a crime until he witnesses one. As a result, the concept of opportunity was essential to understanding why crimes against individuals and their property occur. Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson's theory of routine activity explains how criminal possibilities arise from people's everyday actions to meet their needs. Everybody commutes to and from work, attends religious services or school, shops, and communicates through various electronic gadgets.

This theory was anchored to the Routine Activity Theory, which emphasizes how criminal chances emerge when suitable targets, motivated offenders, and the lack of qualified guardians come together. This theory was applied to urban vandalism to better understand the behaviors and practices of individuals and groups involved in different types of vandalism. It helped to identify the vulnerable areas of vandalism, including littering, removing signs or ornamentation, and other crimes related to vandalism (Cohen, 2018).

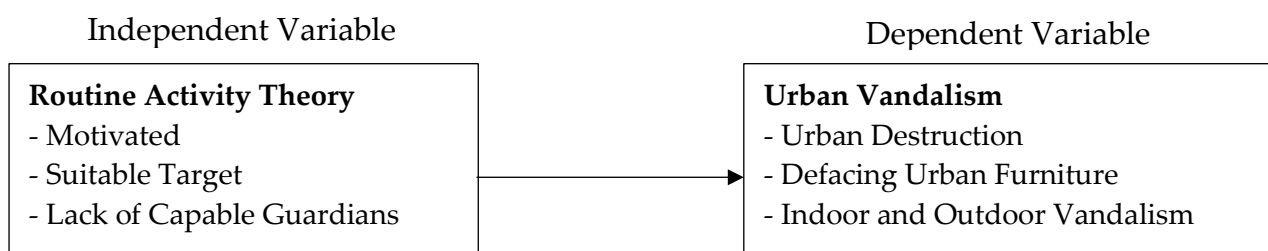
Vandalism in urban areas can take many forms, such as taking advantage of environmental, cultural, economic, and physical opportunities. Human behavior and habits, which worsen because people are motivated and given opportunities, are partly to blame for these developments. When these actions are compounded, a pattern of harm is produced, affecting the city's sustainability and growth. In addition to urban fixtures and equipment, vandalism in urban settings can affect physical environments, including

stadiums, fences, terminals, hospitals, schools, and open spaces like parks and gardens (Giusti *et al.*, 2020).

Understanding and resolving the issues related to vandalism and urban sustainability can be seen from a different angle when Routine Activity Theory was applied to the problem of urban vandalism. It helps to assist in comprehending and lowering the number of vandals in Davao City's metropolitan regions. Routine activity theory highlights how to analyze why people commit vandalism and gives an idea to reduce vandalism in urban areas in Davao City (Schaefer, 2021).

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework, which consists of independent variables. The independent variable was the routine activity theory, which consists of three components: a motivated offender was the person who commits the act, a suitable target of a person, an item, or a location, and the absence of a capable guardian was someone or something that would deter potential offenders from committing a crime.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



On the other hand, the dependent variable was urban vandalism, which includes urban destruction, defacing urban furniture, and indoor and outdoor vandalism. This alludes to the erasure of the city's culture and social environment, diminishes the level of competition within the region, and impacts both the residents of Davao City.

The purpose of this study was to figure out how routine activity theory influences the issue of vandalism in urban areas in Davao City. To analyze the behavior of people who commit urban vandalism through routine activity theory. Also, it is essential to know how routine activity theory factors affect people's behaviors towards vandalism in urban areas in Davao City.

The primary objective of this study was to help Davao City, specifically the locals in urban areas, with the issue of urban vandalism. Some locals commit vandalism in urban areas because of the lack of opportunities to do it and the lack of guardianship in specific areas. The study aims to analyze the following objectives: first, to analyze the relationship between urban vandalism and routine activity theory. Second, to analyze the prevalence of urban vandalism in Davao City utilizing routine activity theory. Moreover, lastly, to analyze the influence of routine activity on urban vandalism.

Furthermore, the formulated null hypothesis was tested for a significance of 0.05. It assumes no significant relationship exists between urban vandalism and routine activity theory. The significance of this study was to analyze urban vandalism and how

routine activity theory influences people's actions when they commit vandalism. It was essential to analyze the behavior of people committing urban vandalism and how routine activity theory affects their situation in committing vandalism. Locals, especially parents in Davao City, could help motivate their children not to commit vandalism in urban areas. Government officials in Davao City will benefit from this study by improving their knowledge of how urban vandalism affects the beauty of cities. 9 Moreover, how routine activity theory influences people's behavior. The University of Mindanao, especially its professors, students, and staff, can share their ideas and opinions about urban vandalism. The result of this study may give them the knowledge to address issues related to urban vandalism through routine activity theory. The future researchers may use this research as a related literature. Moreover, to find answers and information from this research to help improve their study.

2. Method

This section presents methods used in this study, such as study research respondents, materials and instruments, design, and procedure, as well as the statistics.

2.1 Research Respondent

The study concentrated on gathering data from locals of Davao City, specifically in Matina Crossing, 74-A, who had either experienced or witnessed vandalism. Also, people often have direct interactions or encounter vandalism incidents. Additionally, those who commit vandalism without knowing it was an act of vandalism. The research utilized a simple random sampling technique to select respondents from the pool of available and willing residents of the city who have firsthand experience or witnessed incidents of urban vandalism. To ensure a representative sample, the researchers plan to include approximately 400 locals as respondents for the study.

2.2 Materials and Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two variables adapted from their sources, one for each variable. The independent variables in this research were adapted from Tewkesbury & Mustaine (2012), and the dependent variable was from the research of Arisoy (2020) and De Wet (2016). The preliminary draft was forwarded to the research adviser for checking and possible suggested enhancement, and then it was forwarded to the validating panels to check its reliability and validity. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I was the independent variable routine activity of locals in Davao City with indicators of motivated offenders, 11 suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. Part II was the dependent variable of urban vandalism of locals in Davao City, with indicators of urban destruction, defacing urban furniture, and indoor and outdoor vandalism. This straightforward format facilitates a compelling exploration of the study's objectives. A 5-level Likert scaling system was employed to rate the study variables. The researchers assessed urban vandalism manifestation through routine theory using the

following scale: a score of Five (4.20-5.00) indicates a Very High level, signifying consistent and always present manifestation, implying that vandalism was always consistent in Matina Crossing, 74-A, Davao City; Four (3.40-4.19) suggests a High level, indicating frequent manifestation; Three (2.60-3.39) indicates a Moderate level, suggesting occasional manifestation; Two (1.80-2.59) reflects a Low level, denoting rare manifestation; and One (1.00-1.79) represents a Very Low level, implying that urban vandalism was never or exceptionally rarely manifested.

2.3 Design and Procedure

Quantitative non-experimental research utilizing the descriptive correlation technique was employed in this study. Descriptive correlational design was used in research studies that provide static pictures of situations and establish the relationship between different variables (McBurney & White (2019)). This design was suitable for analyzing urban vandalism through the lens of routine activity theory in Davao City. The survey questionnaire was distributed among the randomly selected respondents, ensuring a representative sample. We researchers gather 12 pieces of information from locals in Matina Crossing, 74-A, Davao City, using a random sampling technique. Every person in the population has an exactly equal probability of getting chosen using this sampling technique (Thomas, 2023). To reduce bias and improve the reliability of the results, the data collection procedure was conducted methodically, and respondents were given clear instructions. Ethical issues were also incorporated into the research protocols, such as getting participants' informed consent and guaranteeing the privacy of their answers. The quantitative survey data was subjected to a comprehensive statistical analysis. The frequency and percentage of urban vandalism were summarized using descriptive statistics. We researchers utilize inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, to examine relationships between everyday activities and the likelihood of seeing graffiti. This statistical method provided a solid foundation for insightful findings and assisted in identifying strategies to address urban vandalism in Davao City.

3. Results and Discussions

This section presents the results from the collected data and its quantitative interpretations, as well as a discussion after thorough analysis and interpretation.

3.1 The Level of Routine Activity among Locals in Davao City

The findings from Table 1 illuminate the significant role of routine activities among residents of Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City, as a predictor of urban vandalism. With an overall mean score of 3.8102 (SD= 0.90179), the data underscores a high prevalence of vandalism in the area, suggesting that routine activities and environmental conditions contribute to an environment conducive to such behavior.

Table 1: Level of Routine Activity among Locals in Davao City

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Descriptive Level |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Lack of Capable Guardians | 3.9300 | .91684 | High Level |
| Suitable Target | 3.8520 | 1.07068 | High Level |
| Motivated Offender | 3.6485 | 1.08992 | High Level |
| Overall | 3.8102 | .90179 | High Level |

Among the factors analyzed, the Absence of Capable Guardians scale scored the highest, with a mean of 3.9300 (SD = 0.91684). This indicates that the lack of capable guardians is critical in enabling vandalism. The absence of individuals who can deter potential offenders significantly increases the likelihood of vandalism.

The Suitable Target scale followed closely with a mean score of 3.8520 (SD = 1.07068), indicating that vandalism is more frequent when suitable targets are available. The presence of attractive targets appears to encourage vandalistic behaviors among offenders.

The Motivated Offender scale also showed a significant presence with a mean score of 3.6485 (SD = 1.08992), highlighting the high motivation among offenders in the area. This suggests that many individuals are willing and ready to engage in vandalism.

Overall, the results underscore that a high level of vandalism occurs when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. Our yields related results to those observed in Tesser and Schwarz (2021), which show that the motives behind vandalism and situational factors facilitate it, including the presence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. It supports the idea that these elements contribute to the occurrence of vandalism.

3.2 The Level of Urban Vandalism among Locals in Davao City

Table 2 presents various dimensions of urban vandalism, emphasizing the prevalence and nature of antisocial behavior within urban settings. The highest mean score, 4.0356 (SD = 0.93297), is associated with Indoor and Outdoor Vandalism, highlighting the widespread occurrence of vandalistic acts both inside buildings or establishments and in open urban spaces. This suggests that urban environments or even private spaces, regardless of being indoors or outdoors, are significantly affected by such destructive behaviors.

Table 2: Level of Urban Vandalism among Locals in Davao City

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Descriptive Level |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Indoor and Outdoor Vandalism | 4.0356 | .93297 | High Level |
| Urban Destruction | 4.0146 | .89346 | High Level |
| Defacing Urban Furniture | 3.9941 | .89346 | High Level |
| Overall | 4.0139 | .80212 | High Level |

The second dimension, Urban Destruction, has a mean score of 4.0146 (SD = 0.88239), indicating a considerable extent of physical damage and deterioration within urban areas. This finding points to the severe impact of vandalism on the structural integrity and aesthetic quality of urban infrastructure.

The third dimension, Defacing Urban Furniture, shows a mean score of 3.9941 (SD = 0.89346). This suggests that urban furniture, such as benches, public seating, and other fixtures, is particularly vulnerable to damage. The findings indicate a high likelihood of people defacing or damaging these elements, further contributing to the degradation of urban spaces.

Overall, the total result infers that these indicators of indoor and Outdoor Vandalism, Urban Destruction, and Defacing Urban Furniture significantly affect the urban spaces, areas, and furniture as well as those of private or personal property, with a total mean of 4.0139 (SD= .80212). This shows the importance of having passive recreation facilities in urban areas, similar to Yuchel (2017), wherein it enhances the quality of life in the cities.

3.3 The Relationship of Routine Activity and Urban Vandalism

The correlation matrix provided crucial insights into the relationship between routine activity and urban vandalism. Firstly, the strong positive Correlation (Pearson Correlation = .727) between routine activity and urban vandalism underscores the pivotal role that routine activity plays in shaping urban vandalism. This significant association, supported by a low p-value of .000, leads to rejecting the null hypothesis since $p < .05$. This indicates that routine activity influenced urban vandalism.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of the Variables

| | Motivated Offender | Suitable Target | Absence of Capable Guardian | Overall |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Urban Vandalism | .566 | .634 | .731 | .727 |
| | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

These findings hold significant awareness of illegal activities, such as vandalism. It was related to the findings of Tewksbury & Mustaine (2020), stating that if illegal activities are rampant in localities, such as vandalism, there are no barriers, such as community structures, conditions, and security precautions in a community. There was a huge possibility that routine activity would occur. It also aligns with the finding of Miller (2018), who said that routine activities, such as hanging around at night doing nightlife, and having associations with offending. It was possibly associated with illegal activities such as urban vandalism.

Additionally, the findings of Linden & Choy (2023) stated that in a case involving routine activity and vandalism, vandalism increased in areas where there was a lack of surveillance or supervision, making it easier for the offenders to commit acts of vandalism without fear of being caught. Similarly, areas such as deserted neighborhoods or vacant properties may be more susceptible to vandalism as fewer people are present

to deter potential offenders. In addition, the presence of suitable targets, such as unsecured buildings or public spaces with limited security measures, can further contribute to vandalism.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

After gathering and analyzing data, the researchers came up with the following conclusions, wherein the problem statement was answered. The presented data underscores the critical role of routine activity in shaping urban vandalism in Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City. The findings reveal a consistently high level of routine activity across various indicators, indicating a positive influence on occurring vandalism among localities in Davao City.

The level of routine activity was described as very high, and the routine activities in shaping vandalism in Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City, were always manifested, indicating a positive influence on occurring vandalism among localities in Davao City. Urban vandalism was described as Very High, and the vandalism of locals in Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City, is rampant. This means the locals in Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City, violate urban settings and commit vandalism in the area. The results of the locals' routine activity were very high in terms of vandalism. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a strong correlation between routine activity and urban vandalism.

Our findings suggest that targeted interventions addressing these factors, such as improving urban design for surveillance and increasing community engagement in public spaces, are crucial in mitigating urban vandalism. This study also highlights the importance of community involvement and awareness in tackling urban vandalism. Promoting responsible use can significantly contribute to reducing instances of vandalism. Additionally, policies that enhance urban surveillance systems and implement targeted interventions in high-risk areas are essential for effective crime prevention strategies.

Local authorities and urban planners must collaborate closely with community stakeholders to implement evidence-based solutions. This includes leveraging technology for enhanced monitoring and reporting of vandalism incidents and investing in educational programs to cultivate respect for public property. By adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses urban vandalism's environmental and social determinants, cities like Davao can create safer and more vibrant urban environments for their residents.

Additionally, for parents, since most of the offenders are youth, the information emphasized how necessary parental guidance is towards the issue of urban vandalism. Children should be taught by their parents the adverse effects of urban vandalism on the neighborhood, focusing on the monetary losses, security risks, and harm to public areas. Assist them in realizing the value of honoring urban ecosystems. In addition, parents ought to inspire their kids to get involved in neighborhood beautification and cleanup

initiatives. Children who actively participate in constructive activities grow to feel pride and ownership in their neighborhood, which lowers the risk of vandalism.

To create an atmosphere that supports the avoidance of vandalism, society must organize meetings where residents can come together to discuss the incident, express concerns, and brainstorm solutions. This could promote group effort and foster a sense of solidarity. Arranging projects to remove graffiti or community cleanup days to help the afflicted neighborhoods look better. Fostering a sense of pride among locals can deter vandalism and foster a feeling of community ownership.

For government officials in Matina Crossing, 74-A Davao City, in order to create a better avoidance of vandalism in the community, support and cooperation are essential. Government representatives must set a good example and act responsibly in urban areas, encouraging people to treat public property respectfully. The government needs to urge residents to report any cases of vandalism to the appropriate community organizations or the authorities as soon as possible. Reporting makes it possible to take the necessary action and helps document the issue's scope.

Additionally, it was preferable to give young people in the area the chance to participate in constructive projects and activities that enhance and beautify the neighborhood. Offering kids productive ways to express their enthusiasm and creativity will help deter them from committing vandalism. Additionally, in vandalism-prone locations, push for installing security cameras, better lighting, and other steps to deter crime. Increasing monitoring can assist in detecting and apprehending vandals and serve as a deterrent.

For future researchers, it would help them investigate how people and communities modify their daily routines and guardianship tactics in reaction to evolving urban environments and growing vandalism risks. The results of this study may be used to guide the creation of focused interventions, methods for urban planning, and neighborhood-based programs that try to stop and lessen vandalism in various urban settings. Moreover, by improving our comprehension of routine activity theory in modern urban contexts, the research may enhance theoretical developments in criminology.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The authors are dedicated to upholding the highest ethical and research standards. Per these standards, any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the study will be promptly disclosed and managed to ensure the impartiality, transparency, and integrity of the research outcomes. This declaration is intended to underscore our commitment to transparency and maintaining research integrity throughout the study.

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