

Perceptions Of Vandalism Among Form Five Students: A Case Study and its Implications for Educational Governance

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Abstract—This qualitative case study explored Form Five students' perceptions of vandalism and its implications for educational governance in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, Tanah Merah, Kelantan. Two students aged 17 were purposively selected to represent diverse backgrounds and leadership experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. Findings revealed that Sarah viewed vandalism as deliberate damage requiring teacher supervision and parental involvement, while Hamid perceived it as a social behaviour rooted in peer influence, advocating counselling over punishment. The study integrates Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, highlighting that vandalism is shaped by environmental systems and peer modelling. Implications emphasise re-evaluating punitive disciplinary frameworks, integrating restorative justice, strengthening teacher accountability, enhancing home-school partnerships, and contextualising policies to school realities. This study recommends holistic, student-centred governance models to foster safe, supportive, and morally grounded learning environments in line with Malaysian educational law and policy frameworks.

Keywords: Vandalism; Educational Governance; Student Perceptions

1. INTRODUCTION

Vandalism in schools has become a pressing issue that not only affects the physical environment of educational institutions but also reflects deeper behavioural, social, and governance-related concerns. It refers to the intentional destruction or defacement of school property and is often linked to negative student behaviour, lack of supervision, or insufficient disciplinary strategies. Understanding the root causes of vandalism from the students' perspective is essential for developing effective interventions within the framework of educational law and governance.

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore and understand the perceptions of vandalism among Form Five students and to analyse its implications for educational governance in schools. The research was conducted in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, a secondary school located in Tanah Merah, Kelantan.

Purposive sampling was used to select two respondents, both aged 17, who are current Form Five students from different classes within the same school. The respondents were chosen to represent diverse student backgrounds and involvement in school activities, aiming to provide rich, contextual insights into their perceptions of vandalism.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility to probe deeper into students' views, experiences, and suggestions. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in a quiet setting within the school to ensure comfort and confidentiality for the respondents. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure accuracy during transcription and analysis.

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically to identify emerging patterns, meanings, and implications related to vandalism in schools. This methodological approach enabled an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences and personal interpretations, which are critical in formulating practical recommendations for improving educational governance and disciplinary strategies.

To frame this study theoretically, two psychological and educational models were used: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), an individual's behavior is shaped by multiple layers of environmental influence, ranging from immediate settings, such as home and school (microsystem), to broader societal values and policies (macrosystem). In the context of this study, students' engagement in or exposure to vandalism can be analysed through the interaction of these layers. For example, peer influence within the school (microsystem), the relationship between teachers and parents (mesosystem), school disciplinary policies (exosystem), and cultural norms related to respect for public property (macrosystem) all play a role in shaping how students perceive and respond to vandalism.

In addition, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) emphasises that individuals learn behaviours by observing others, especially in social contexts. This theory is relevant when considering how students may imitate vandalistic behaviour if it is modelled by peers and goes unpunished. The theory emphasizes the significance of reinforcement, modeling, and environmental context in influencing student behavior.

By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this study aims to gain a holistic understanding of vandalism as a behavioural and social phenomenon within the school ecosystem. The findings will help inform strategies that are not only disciplinary but also preventive and supportive, in line with principles of educational governance and legal compliance. This research aims to provide insights into the underlying factors that contribute to acts of vandalism and suggest practical recommendations for school administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The two Form 5 students interviewed in this study, Sarah and Hamid, present distinct yet insightful backgrounds that shape their perceptions and experiences in school, particularly regarding issues of vandalism. Table 1 summarizes the findings for Section A: Students' Background.

Table 1. Summary for Section A: Students' Background

Aspect	Student 1: Sarah	Student 2: Hamid
Age & Form	17 years old, Form 5 (5 Anggerik)	17 years old, Form 5 (5 Bistari)
Stream	Social Science (Sains Sosial)	Arts (Sastera)
Family Background	Father works as kampung labourer; mother is a housewife; 4th of 5 siblings	Both parents are teachers; lives in a conducive academic family; has 4 siblings
Academic Achievement	High-achieving (pelajar cemerlang)	Good performance (agak baik)
Leadership Roles	None	Multiple roles: Chairperson of a club, Prefect of Resource Centre, Battalion Leader (Scouts)
Co-curricular Activity	Member of Scout movement (Pengakap) without leadership role	Active in Scouts as Battalion Leader (Ketua Batalion Pengakap)
Leadership Approach	Relies on teacher authority for school issues	Emphasises peer counselling, empathy, and understanding causes

Sarah is a 17-year-old student enrolled in the social science stream (*aliran sains sosial*) in class 5 Anggerik. She comes from a modest rural family background, where her father works as a kampung worker (implying daily wage or informal agricultural/labour work) and her mother is a housewife. Sarah is the fourth child out of five siblings, indicating her experiences growing up in a relatively large family, which may influence her sense of responsibility, resourcefulness, and awareness of shared resources. Academically, Sarah identifies herself as a high-achieving student (*pelajar cemerlang*). However, she does not hold any formal leadership positions within the school. In terms of co-curricular involvement, Sarah is a member of the Scout movement (*Pengakap*), indicating exposure to teamwork, discipline, and outdoor skills, though without leadership responsibilities within that unit.

Her background suggests a student who focuses strongly on her studies and upholds discipline in daily life but remains relatively quiet in school leadership structures. Her responses later in the interview reflect this background, as she often refers to teacher authority and systematic monitoring to solve issues such as vandalism, rather than peer-driven initiatives.

Hamid, also 17 years old, studies in class 5 Bistari under the arts stream (*aliran sastera*). In contrast to Sarah, Hamid holds multiple leadership positions within the school, including as the Chairperson of a club, Prefect of the Resource Centre, and Battalion Leader of the Scout movement (*Pengakap*). These roles demonstrate his active involvement in school administration, student welfare, and co-curricular development, cultivating his skills in management, peer guidance, and responsibility.

Hamid comes from a family with a professional background; it is mentioned that both his parents are teachers ("*mak dengan ayah cikgu*"), and he lives in a conducive learning environment with four siblings. His academic performance is described as 'quite good' (*agak baik*), indicating consistent but perhaps not top-tier academic achievements. However, his leadership engagements compensate by providing him with maturity and interpersonal skills, as reflected in his thoughtful and empathetic approach when discussing disciplinary issues. He tends to prioritise understanding the underlying causes of student behaviour over punitive measures, consistent with his upbringing in an educator household and his leadership experiences that expose him to diverse student attitudes.

2.1 Comparative Insight

Sarah and Hamid share similarities as Form 5 students of similar age groups, but differ significantly in family socio-economic background, academic streams, school roles, and perspectives shaped by these contexts:

- Family and Socio-economic Context:** Sarah comes from a rural, low-income family with minimal parental educational exposure, while Hamid benefits from an academically inclined household with both parents as educators.
- Leadership Roles:** Sarah focuses on studies with passive co-curricular participation, while Hamid is actively engaged in school leadership, fostering confidence in peer management and problem-solving.
- Academic Orientation:** Sarah is a top academic performer in social sciences, whereas Hamid maintains an above-average performance but complements it with high leadership involvement.
- Co-curricular Involvement:** Both are scouts, but Hamid's role as Battalion Leader indicates significant responsibility and exposure to student discipline matters.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an in-depth discussion and interpretation of findings derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with two Form Five students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, Tanah Merah, Kelantan. The

objective is to explore their perceptions of vandalism and examine the implications of these perceptions on educational governance within Malaysian schools. The findings are thematically organised based on each student's responses to allow a deeper understanding of how individual backgrounds, experiences, and roles within the school influence their views on vandalism.

By critically analysing their narratives, this discussion seeks to uncover underlying factors contributing to vandalism, evaluate existing disciplinary governance mechanisms, and relate these findings to relevant educational laws and policies in Malaysia. The analysis is divided into two parts, focusing first on Student 1 (Sarah), followed by Student 2 (Hamid), to ensure comprehensive coverage of their unique perspectives within the educational governance context.

3.1 Perception of Student 1: Sarah

Sarah, a Form Five student from the social science stream in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, perceives vandalism primarily as an intentional act of damaging public property within the school environment. She describes vandalism as "*kerusakan harta benda awam di sekolah ataupun di tempat awam,*" reflecting a clear understanding that vandalism involves physical destruction that affects communal assets. This aligns with Scribner (2023), who defines vandalism as any deliberate act that damages property, leading to a loss of utility and increased maintenance burden within educational settings.

A significant finding in Sarah's narrative is her observation that teachers appear disengaged from addressing vandalism cases. She remarks, "*Saya nampak macam cikgu tak kisah dan tak ambil tahu sangat dengan kes-kes vandalisme di sekolah saya...tak ada masa nak perhatikan.*" This reflects a gap in school governance and teacher supervisory roles as mandated under Peraturan 3, Peraturan-Peraturan Pendidikan (Disiplin Sekolah) 1959, which requires teachers to maintain student discipline and protect school property. Husin (2020) and Nor et al. (2020), in their study on school discipline in Malaysia, emphasised that teacher negligence in supervising student behaviour contributes significantly to increased disciplinary problems, including vandalism, as students perceive a lack of monitoring and enforcement.

Sarah's perception that vandalism is fuelled by peer influence and lack of ownership is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which asserts that adolescents often model behaviour observed in peers, especially when such acts are unpunished or normalised. She narrates an incident where a high-achieving student, influenced by peers, vandalised science lab equipment, resulting in a mercury spill, leading to lab closure and emergency intervention by the fire department. This incident demonstrates the potential hazards of vandalism beyond property damage, highlighting risks to student health and safety. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (Act 514) and a recent study by Mallow (2022), school administrators are legally bound to ensure a safe learning environment, and failure to prevent such acts could result in legal and governance implications for the school.

Sarah's understanding of vandalism, as intentional damage to public property, and her emphasis on teacher authority and parental involvement, can be critically examined through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). This theory suggests that human development is influenced by multiple interacting environmental systems that include:

- a. **Microsystem:** Sarah's immediate environment includes her family and school. Her family background, with a father working as a kampung labourer and a mother as a housewife, shapes her values of respecting public property due to limited household resources. At school, her perception of teacher disengagement reflects a breakdown in microsystem support, where teachers (proximal influencers) fail to enforce behavioural norms effectively.
- b. **Mesosystem:** The interaction between her family and school is limited, as seen in her view that involving parents would be more effective. This suggests that stronger mesosystem linkages (parent-teacher collaboration) could reinforce anti-vandalism norms.
- c. **Exosystem:** School disciplinary policies indirectly affect Sarah, as inadequate punishment for vandals reduces her trust in school governance structures. Her concern aligns with Bronfenbrenner's assertion that policies in the exosystem influence students' lived experiences, even when they are not directly involved in policy-making.
- d. **Macrosystem:** Cultural values in her rural community, which may emphasise deference to authority and shared responsibility, shape her belief that teachers and parents should enforce discipline strictly.

Furthermore, Sarah expresses her belief that existing punishments are inadequate and ineffective. She states, "*Kalau ada pun biasanya tindakan tidak setimpal dengan perbuatan pelajar tersebut.*" Her view is supported by Wilson et al. (2024) and Rahim et al. (2020), who found that punitive measures in isolation do not address the behavioural roots of vandalism in Malaysian schools. Sarah proposes parental involvement as a more effective disciplinary strategy, suggesting that schools should summon parents to address such issues collaboratively. This recommendation aligns with Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025, which advocates for increased parental engagement in student discipline and holistic development to instil accountability and moral responsibility in students.

Sarah also notes that her peers often react with fear and panic upon witnessing acts of vandalism, indicating that such incidents disrupt psychological safety and learning focus within the school environment. As Yusoff (2025) argues, school climate significantly influences student learning outcomes, and the presence of vandalism contributes to a negative school climate that undermines educational objectives.

In summary, Sarah's insights reveal a perception of vandalism as deliberate and harmful, compounded by insufficient teacher supervision and inadequate punitive measures. Her emphasis on parental involvement and structured teacher monitoring reflects governance principles under Malaysia's Education Act 1996 (Act 550), which mandates

schools to provide a safe and conducive learning environment through effective enforcement of discipline. Her views suggest an urgent need for holistic governance strategies, integrating teacher vigilance, parental collaboration, and student moral education to address vandalism comprehensively.

3.2 Perception of Student 2: Hamid

Hamid, a Form Five student from the arts stream in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, perceives vandalism as a social problem rooted in behavioural and psychological factors rather than mere disciplinary disobedience. He defines vandalism as *“masalah sosial macam rosakkan harta awam dan mengganggu ketenteraman awam yang biasanya berpunca daripada masalah sosial,”* highlighting his understanding of vandalism as a symptom of deeper social issues. This perception aligns with Nor et al. (2020), who argued that acts of vandalism often stem from social marginalisation, lack of engagement, and the need for recognition or control among youths.

Hamid’s narrative reveals an empathetic and mature approach towards understanding student behaviour, likely influenced by his leadership roles as Chairperson of a club, Prefect of the Resource Centre, and Battalion Leader of the Scouts. Unlike Sarah, who emphasises teacher authority and punishment, Hamid proposes an alternative governance approach grounded in restorative discipline and counselling. He states, *“Saya lebih suka kalau sekolah cuba untuk siasat kenapa pelajar melakukan vandalisme daripada hanya memberikan hukuman,”* advocating for identification of root causes before imposing punitive measures. This is supported by Yusoff (2025), who emphasised that restorative approaches, including counselling and mediation, are more effective than strict punishment in changing behavioural tendencies among Malaysian adolescents.

Further, Hamid identifies peer influence and the desire for attention as primary motivators of vandalism, noting that such behaviours often emerge from immature attempts to impress friends. He explains, *“Kadangkala semata-mata untuk dapatkan perhatian, anggap sebagai gurauan sehingga mereka tak sedar kadangkala gurauan jadi terlalu ekstrim.”* This insight aligns with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), similar to Sarah’s observation, reinforcing the idea that vandalism is often a learned behaviour influenced by peer dynamics rather than innate delinquency.

Hamid also advocates for a restorative, counselling-based approach rather than immediate punishment, reflecting his broader understanding of students’ behavioural motivations. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, specifically:

- a. **Microsystem:** Hamid’s immediate environment, including his family (both parents are teachers) and his leadership roles in school, has fostered an empathetic and understanding perspective. His family background influences his inclination towards counselling over punishment.
- b. **Mesosystem:** Hamid acknowledges the importance of teacher-student dialogue and home-school collaboration, emphasising that understanding the student’s home environment (family-school link) is crucial before giving out punishment.
- c. **Exosystem:** He critiques existing school disciplinary systems (e.g., demerit marks) as ineffective in his small rural school context, indicating that school policies indirectly impact his perception of their usefulness.
- d. **Macrosystem:** Hamid’s views also reflect broader societal and cultural expectations embedded in Malaysia’s education system under the Education Act 1996, where holistic student development is prioritised over punitive measures.

Importantly, Hamid critiques the effectiveness of punitive governance structures in small schools like his, where systems such as demerit marks are underutilised due to small student populations and close teacher-student relationships. He states, *“Penggunaan sistem semua ni macam tak perlu dan tak boleh nak apply di sekolah kampung macam sekolah saya ni.”* This highlights a governance issue where one-size-fits-all disciplinary systems may be ineffective in rural school contexts, suggesting the need for more contextually adaptive governance strategies.

As a student leader, Hamid feels a personal responsibility to address vandalism by advising peers and fostering awareness of the consequences. He mentions, *“Saya akan cuba untuk berikan pandangan dan buat mereka faham kesan akibat perbuatan mereka nanti,”* reflecting a proactive leadership style that aligns with PPPM 2013–2025’s student leadership empowerment initiatives, which aim to develop students’ sense of action and moral leadership in maintaining school discipline.

Moreover, Hamid emphasises restorative justice over punitive measures, suggesting that harsh punishments may worsen rebelliousness among students. He states, *“Kalau kita duduk bersama pelajar itu dan cuba faham secara mendalam tanpa terus menjatuhkan hukuman, ia akan jadi lebih efektif.”* This approach is supported by Braithwaite’s Reintegrative Shaming Theory (1989), which suggests that discipline focusing on reintegration rather than stigmatisation leads to better behavioural reform among youth offenders.

From an educational governance perspective, Hamid’s perception highlights the need for inclusive, student-centred disciplinary frameworks that integrate counselling, peer mentoring, and moral education rather than relying solely on top-down punitive measures. His views are consistent with the Education Act 1996 (Act 550), which mandates the holistic development of students in both academic and moral dimensions, and with Section 18, Child Act 2001, which promotes the welfare and best interests of the child in all institutional actions, including discipline.

In summary, Hamid perceives vandalism as a behavioural issue requiring understanding, guidance, and counselling-based interventions. His leadership perspective underscores the importance of restorative educational governance approaches that focus on root causes and student wellbeing, complementing Sarah’s emphasis on stricter enforcement and parental involvement. Together, their insights suggest that effective governance in addressing vandalism

requires a balanced approach combining authoritative supervision, parental collaboration, peer leadership, and restorative disciplinary practices to foster a safe, respectful, and conducive school environment.

3.3 Implications of the Findings

The contrasting backgrounds enrich the study with diverse perspectives. Sarah's responses reflect the lens of a high-achieving student from a modest background who relies on teacher authority and institutional enforcement to curb vandalism. Hamid's responses highlight leadership-oriented, empathetic, and preventive approaches, viewing student misbehaviour as rooted in social and psychological factors rather than mere indiscipline.

Both Sarah's and Hamid's perceptions demonstrate that Bandura's Social Learning Theory underpins their recognition of peer influence and modelling as root causes of vandalism. Students observe, imitate, and normalise peer behaviours, especially when governance mechanisms do not enforce clear consequences or moral education.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a more holistic lens, explaining how Sarah's reliance on teacher authority and parental involvement and Hamid's preference for counselling and understanding root causes are shaped by their family structures, teacher-student relationships, school policies, and broader community values. Their experiences reinforce the importance of integrated, multi-level governance approaches in schools, ensuring that interventions address not only individual student behaviour but also family, peer, institutional, and cultural influences shaping such behaviours.

The findings from this study provide critical insights into how student perceptions of vandalism can inform, challenge, and transform educational governance practices in Malaysian secondary schools. Both Sarah's and Hamid's narratives reveal that vandalism is not merely an act of physical damage but a behavioural manifestation influenced by multi-layered socio-ecological and cognitive factors. The implications of these findings can be discussed across several governance domains:

3.3.1 Re-evaluating Disciplinary Governance Frameworks

Sarah's emphasis on teacher disengagement and insufficient punishment underscores a systemic governance gap in the enforcement of Peraturan-Peraturan Pendidikan (Disiplin Sekolah) 1959, which mandates teacher supervision and student discipline as essential components of school management. Her perception implies that educational governance must reconceptualise disciplinary frameworks, shifting from tokenistic punitive measures to structured, transparent, and consistently enforced disciplinary policies. This calls for the implementation of clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for vandalism cases to ensure timely and appropriate interventions, enhancing trust in institutional authority among students.

3.3.2 Integrating Restorative Justice Approaches

Hamid's advocacy for understanding the root causes of vandalism before imposing punishment suggests the need for governance models that integrate restorative justice principles. Traditional punitive systems, while legally sanctioned, often fail to address the underlying behavioural drivers and can inadvertently reinforce student resentment and rebellion, as highlighted by Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming Theory (1989). Governance reforms should incorporate counselling, mediation, and behavioural intervention programs as core disciplinary tools, aligning with Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025's emphasis on holistic student development and moral education.

3.3.3 Strengthening Teacher Accountability and Professional Development

Both respondents' insights reveal a perceived lack of teacher vigilance in supervising student behaviour. This finding has profound implications for educational governance, suggesting that teacher accountability mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure proactive supervision and intervention in disciplinary issues. Governance reforms could include continuous professional development (CPD) in behavioural management, mandating teachers to undergo training on identifying early warning signs of deviant behaviour and effective intervention strategies. Such measures would operationalise Section 3 of the Education Act 1996, which obligates schools to provide safe and conducive learning environments.

3.3.4 Enhancing Home-School Governance Partnerships

Sarah's recommendation for parental involvement in disciplinary actions highlights the critical role of mesosystemic linkages in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Educational governance must institutionalise structured home-school collaboration frameworks, such as mandatory parental conferences for disciplinary cases, parent education programs on adolescent behavioural development, and shared decision-making committees on school discipline policies. This aligns with PPPM's School-Based Management (SBM) model, which advocates for community and parental engagement in school governance to foster collective accountability.

3.3.5 Contextualising Governance Policies to School Realities

Hamid's critique of rigid disciplinary systems like demerit marks in small rural schools indicates a misalignment between policy design and contextual realities. Educational governance reforms must adopt differentiated policy models, enabling schools to adapt disciplinary approaches based on student population, community socio-cultural contexts, and resource

availability. This flexibility echoes Decentralisation Theory in Education Governance, where policy autonomy at the school level enhances responsiveness and effectiveness.

3.3.6 Integrating Peer Leadership in Governance Structures

Both students' experiences emphasise the influence of peer dynamics on vandalism. Governance frameworks should therefore integrate student peer leadership programs, equipping prefects, club leaders, and uniformed unit leaders with skills to mediate, counsel, and model positive behaviours among peers. This operationalises Bandura's Social Learning Theory, leveraging observational learning for positive behavioural reinforcement, and aligns with PPPM's student leadership empowerment objectives.

3.3.7 Addressing Legal and Safety Implications

Sarah's account of vandalism resulting in hazardous mercury spillage in the science lab raises significant legal liabilities under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (Act 514). Educational governance must prioritise risk management policies, including routine safety audits, strict inventory controls, and immediate hazard response protocols, to protect student and staff safety and avoid legal repercussions for negligence.

In sum, the findings of this case study imply that educational governance must transcend punitive, teacher-centred disciplinary systems towards holistic, student-centred, and contextually adaptive governance models. Integrating restorative justice, enhanced teacher accountability, structured parental involvement, differentiated policies, and peer leadership are crucial strategies to address vandalism effectively. Such multi-layered governance reforms would fulfil Malaysia's educational mandate of not only academic excellence but also the moral, social, and psychological development of students within safe and supportive school environments, as envisioned in the Education Act 1996 and PPPM 2013–2025.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions of vandalism among two Form Five students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Belimbing, Tanah Merah, Kelantan, revealing critical insights into the behavioural, social, and governance dimensions supporting vandalism in Malaysian schools. The findings revealed that Sarah perceives vandalism as a deliberate act requiring authoritative supervision and parental involvement, while Hamid views it as a social and behavioural issue rooted in peer influence and the need for attention, advocating restorative approaches over punitive measures. The theoretical integration of Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory underscores that vandalism is not an isolated disciplinary breach but a manifestation of multi-layered environmental and cognitive interactions. Peer modelling, inadequate teacher vigilance, and weak mesosystemic linkages between home and school emerge as key contributing factors. These insights challenge the prevailing punitive disciplinary paradigms, highlighting the urgent need for transformative educational governance reforms. The implications are profound. Schools must re-evaluate their disciplinary frameworks to incorporate restorative justice principles, prioritising counselling, peer mentoring, and behavioural interventions alongside structured enforcement. Teacher accountability must be strengthened through continuous professional development in behavioural management, while home-school partnerships should be institutionalised to foster collective responsibility for student discipline. Furthermore, governance policies must be contextualised to school realities, adopting differentiated disciplinary models that reflect community, demographic, and resource variations. Integrating peer leadership within governance structures is also essential, leveraging observational learning to model positive behaviour. In light of these findings and implications, this study recommends that Malaysian educational governance systems shift from reactive, punitive approaches towards holistic, proactive, and student-centred models. Schools must operationalise existing legal frameworks, such as the Education Act 1996, Child Act 2001, and Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, with fidelity, ensuring safe, supportive, and rights-based learning environments. Equally, the implementation of Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025 objectives on moral education, parental engagement, and student leadership should be prioritised to build resilient, responsible, and morally grounded student communities. In conclusion, addressing vandalism effectively requires educational governance that is integrative, empathetic, and justice-oriented, recognising that students are not merely subjects of discipline but active agents shaped by and shaping their environments. By embedding these insights into policy and practice, Malaysia's educational institutions can nurture schools that are not only academically excellent but also socially just, safe, and transformative for all learners.

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