

*Liana Spytska** <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1801-7907>

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SERIAL SEX OFFENDERS' ACTIONS: THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINE

Abstract. Serial sexual crimes are considered highly dangerous and have lasting effects on both victims and society. As such, the importance of investigating and preventing these crimes is increasingly recognised, with particular attention given to forensic analysis and the study of the perpetrators' *modus operandi*.

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of serial sexual offences, their unique features, and the consequences for both the victims and the society, based on Ukrainian experiences.

The study employed methods such as analysis, generalisation, and the normative-dogmatic method.

The findings indicate that serial sexual offenders can be classified based on their methods of attack into two main categories: the "stranglers" and the "butchers." These groups differ in their approach, motivations, and the nature of the offences. The study also identified four key psychological profiles of serial sexual offenders: "Power–Calming", "Power–Affirmation", "Anger–Vengeance", and "Anger–Arousal", with each of them representing different motivations behind the crimes. Additionally, the study examined the concept of *modus operandi* and ritualistic elements in serial sexual crimes, which play a crucial role in understanding the criminal's profile, motives, and behavioural patterns. The research emphasises the need for developing investigative profiles that consider factors such as location, time of the crime, weather conditions, and movement patterns of victims and perpetrators. Moreover, the study identified significant gaps in Ukraine's legal framework regarding serial sexual offences, highlighting the need for specialised legislation. The consequences of these crimes for victims and the society are profound, underscoring the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to prevention, including education, psychological support, and enhanced cooperation between various societal sectors. The study's findings can inform public awareness campaigns and contribute to the development of strategies to reduce the incidence of serial sexual crimes.

Keywords: series of crime, motives for murder, criminal style, psychological trauma, sexual intercourse

* Kyiv International University; spytska_l@ukr.net

CHARAKTERYSTYKA I KONSEKWENCJE DZIAŁAŃ SERYJNYCH PRZESTĘPCÓW SEKSUALNYCH PRZYKŁAD UKRAINY

Streszczenie. Seryjne przestępstwa seksualne są uważane za bardzo niebezpieczne i mają trwały wpływ zarówno na ofiary, jak i na społeczeństwo. W związku z tym coraz bardziej docenia się znaczenie badania i zapobiegania tym przestępstwom, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem analizy kryminalistycznej i badania *modus operandi* sprawców.

Celem niniejszego badania było zbadanie charakterystyki seryjnych przestępstw seksualnych, ich unikalnych cech oraz konsekwencji zarówno dla ofiar, jak i społeczeństwa, w oparciu o przykład Ukrainy.

W badaniu wykorzystano metody takie jak analiza, uogólnienie i metoda normatywno-dogmatyczna.

Wyniki wskazują, że seryjnych przestępców seksualnych można podzielić na podstawie ich metod ataku na dwie główne kategorie: „dusicieli” i „rzeźników”. Grupy te różnią się pod względem podejścia, motywacji i charakteru przestępstw. W badaniu zidentyfikowano również cztery kluczowe profile psychologiczne seryjnych przestępców seksualnych: „Uspokojenie władzy”, „Potwierdzenie władzy”, „Gniew–zemsta” i „Gniew–podniecenie”, z których każdy reprezentuje różne motywacje stojące za przestępstwami. Ponadto w badaniu przeanalizowano koncepcję *modus operandi* i elementów rytualnych w seryjnych przestępstwach seksualnych, które odgrywają kluczową rolę w zrozumieniu profilu, motywów i wzorców zachowań przestępcy. Badania podkreślają potrzebę opracowania profili dochodzeniowych, które uwzględniają takie czynniki, jak lokalizacja, czas popełnienia przestępstwa, warunki pogodowe oraz wzorce przemieszczania się ofiar i sprawców. Co więcej, badanie zidentyfikowało znaczące luki w ukraińskich ramach prawnych dotyczących seryjnych przestępstw seksualnych, podkreślając potrzebę wprowadzenia specjalistycznych przepisów. Konsekwencje tych przestępstw dla ofiar i społeczeństwa są poważne, co podkreśla konieczność wieloaspektowego podejścia do zapobiegania, w tym edukacji, wsparcia psychologicznego i wzmocnionej współpracy między różnymi sektorami społecznymi. Wyniki badania mogą być wykorzystane w kampaniach uświadamiających i przyczynić się do opracowania strategii mających na celu zmniejszenie liczby seryjnych przestępstw na tle seksualnym.

Słowa kluczowe: seria przestępstw, motyw zabójstwa, styl przestępczy, uraz psychiczny, stosunek seksualny

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the motivations and psychological characteristics of serial sexual offenders is key to identifying their unique behavioural patterns and preventing such attacks in the future. Research on this topic is important for understanding the profound consequences of sexual crimes for victims and developing effective psychological and legal support programmes. The investigation of this issue not only reveals the complex mechanisms of serial sexual crimes, but also contributes to the improvement of security systems and the protection of citizens' rights. As for the situation in Ukraine, statistical data shows a certain dynamic in the number of registered cases of sexual violence. In 2019, 355 cases of rape were recorded, in 2020 – 382 cases, in 2021 – 399 cases, and in the period up to November 2022 – 250 cases. In terms of sexual violence, there is an analogous trend, with

a slight increase in the number of cases. In 2020, 86 cases were recorded, in 2021 – 85 cases, and in the period up to November 2022 – 88 cases (Petechel 2022, 165). These figures show the need to improve measures to control and combat sexual violence. It is also important to remember that statistics may differ from the factual number of cases, as a considerable proportion of sexual offences may go unreported due to various social, cultural, and legal factors. One problem with researching serial sexual offences is connected with limited access to data on serial sexual offences due to their confidential nature or incomplete reports from law enforcement agencies.

O.V. Aleksandrenko and V.I. Zhenuntii (2020, 181) note that serial sexual offences, specifically murder, are complex and reveal unique motives and the specific features of the psyche and psychology of the criminals. Researchers argue that these features complicate the investigation and identification of the killers, which then complicates prompt detection and prosecution of the perpetrators. Considering these factors, researchers believe that it is important to understand that knowledge of forensic techniques and investigative tactics alone is not sufficient for the successful investigation of such crimes.

According to the findings of K.M. Vasyuk (2021, 136), the classification of serial sexual offenders can be divided into two main categories: “compulsive” and “catathymic”. The first category, according to the researcher, is characterised by the organised planning of crime scenes, and the perpetrators of these crimes show pronounced sexual sadism as well as antisocial and narcissistic personality traits, accompanied by emotional alienation and pronounced signs of psychopathy. In the second category, the crime scene is chosen in a disorganised manner, and the perpetrators are characterised by mood disorders and schizoid personality disorders. The researcher is convinced that they may be of a moderately psychopathic type and may have suffered physical or sexual trauma in the past.

R. Campbell and colleagues (2020, 259–260) show that most cases of sexual violence registered in the criminal system are not prosecuted. In order to establish whether additional sexual assaults have occurred, reliable links between two or more cases must be established, making it difficult to identify serial sexual offenders, according to the researchers. While criminal records are typically used to identify repeat sexual offences, biological evidence in rape investigations takes a different approach to examine the frequency of additional sexual offences among the offenders. Furthermore, the researchers have discovered that approximately one-third (35.7%) of unique offenders identified through DNA were found to have two or more sexual assaults linked to each other, which is higher than conventional recidivism rates reflected in court records (8–15%). Scientists emphasise that forensic DNA evidence can link multiple sexual assaults to the same perpetrator, revealing a serial pattern of sexual offences. The researchers point out that forensic DNA testing reveals a more complete picture of the extent of the offenders' sexual behaviour than what is recorded in criminal cases alone.

A.S. Politova (2023, 383–384) emphasises the importance of the priority measures that an investigative officer should take upon arrival at the scene of a sexual assault. These measures, according to the scientist, include securing the scene and identifying all the people present to avoid a distortion of the trace picture. The researcher notes that failure to comply with this condition may lead to an incorrect direction of further investigation. According to the scientist, the detected shoe print allows the establishing of the size and height of the offender, as well as indicates the direction of their movement before and after the crime, e.g. the presence of a shoe print on soft ground makes it possible to roughly estimate the physique and weight of the offender.

According to R. Lovell and colleagues (2020, 477–481), serial sex offenders often have a considerable criminal history and continue to commit crimes even after the sexual assault associated with rape kits. Researchers are convinced that the perpetrators usually have no previous arrests for rape. According to the results of the latent class analysis, scientists have identified three classes of offenders based on their offence history: “Ordinary offenders”, “Minor offenders”, and “Sexual specialists.” Most of them belonged to the category of generalists, and a considerable number had committed many serious crimes.

It is necessary to conduct a more in-depth investigation of the characteristics of serial sexual offences to understand their nature and identify the factors underlying this phenomenon. Particular attention should be paid to aspects of the personality of offenders, including their motivations, psychological characteristics, and the dynamics of criminal activity. It is important to carefully consider the manifestations of seriality in such crimes in order to understand their structure and typology. The purpose of this study was to cover and clarify the unique features of serial sexual crimes, as well as their consequences for victims and the general welfare of society, based on the example of Ukraine.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used various research methods, including analysis, generalisation, and the normative-dogmatic method. Each of these methods had its own unique characteristics and helped to understand the problem of sexual offences, including serial assaults. As a result of using these research methods, a more profound understanding of the problem of sexual offences, including serial assaults, was gained.

The method of analysis was one of the key research methods, which consisted of a systematic consideration of the issue of the specific features of serial sexual offences. Using the method of analysis, the study systematically examined the features of serial sexual crimes. Based on the analysis, a classification of these crimes was developed by time and method of commission, which helped

to distinguish between “stranglers” and “butchers”, depending on their methods and motivation. Four main types of sexual offenders were also identified, reflecting their motivations and psychological characteristics, which made it possible to understand how the type of offender and his (these are predominantly men) psychological characteristics affect the way he commits the crime and the choice of potential victims. Furthermore, this method of research revealed why sadistic actions of criminals pose a serious threat and why this type of criminals enjoy the suffering and punishment of others.

The use of the generalisation method was an important stage of the study, as it helped to systematise the data and highlight key findings. This method helped to cover important aspects, such as the “*modus operandi*” concept and the ritual aspects of sexual offences, which became the basis for understanding the motives and characteristics of the perpetrators. In addition, based on the method of generalisation, the study identified countries where sexual homicide is considered an aggravating circumstance in a murder case. The use of the method of generalisation in the study indicated the importance of compiling search portraits for the effective investigation of serial sexual offences, as well as the specific temporal features in the activities of serial sexual offenders. The generalisation method also confirmed the need for a comprehensive approach to preventing sexual offences, including education, psychological support, and cooperation between different segments of society. The statistical methods used in this study primarily include descriptive statistics to summarise the characteristics of serial sexual offenders, such as offender types and crime methods. Additionally, cluster analysis is applied to explore the relationships between offender motivations, psychological profiles, and the types of sexual crimes committed.

The use of the normative-dogmatic approach helped to systematically analyse the key aspects related to this problem. To determine the regulatory aspects of the fight against sexual crimes, this method of scientific research was applied by examining legislative acts, including the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence.¹ The application of the normative-dogmatic method helped to identify current shortcomings in the legislation relating to the necessary aspects of combating serial sexual offences, which allowed the drawing of conclusions on which concrete aspects need to be improved at the legislative level. The normative-dogmatic method has proved to be an effective tool for analysing legal norms and their practical application in the context of combating serial sexual crimes. This

¹ Responsibility for Committing Violence. 2024. <https://1547.ukc.gov.ua/dovidkova-informatsiya/protydiya-nasylstva-za-oznakoyu-stati/vidpovidalnist-za-vchynennya-nasylstva/> (accessed: 18.09.2023).

Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. 2012. https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_927#Text (accessed: 18.09.2023).

method helped to thoroughly examine the relevant provisions of the legislation and identify problematic aspects that require attention and improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of combating this phenomenon.

3. RESULTS

Serial sexual offences are characterised by systematic and planned commission, and usually include elements of psychological pressure, physical aggression, and control over the victim. Such crimes can take many forms, including rape, sexual violence, sexual assault, and other forms of sexual exploitation. The consequences for victims can be extremely severe, including psychological trauma, health damage, and even death. Serial sexual offences can be characterised by their multiple episodes. The criminals who commit these crimes demonstrate a different frequency of activity, which can range from a few minutes to several years. They point to the possibility of classifying these murders in terms of time, dividing them into three main groups. The first group includes a series of murders that take place one after another with a minimum break of several minutes. These crimes usually take place in urban areas, especially involving children and people with whom the perpetrator is familiar. The second group includes a series of murders that take place at intervals of several days or months, and last for about a year. The third group includes a series of murders that last for several years, with time intervals ranging from a few days to several years. When investigating these murders, it is important to consider that the time intervals between individual episodes vary from subject to subject. However, two features can be identified: an increase in the frequency of homicides over time and the ability of the perpetrator to adjust his behaviour in certain situations. The next element is the method of committing the crime, which considerably affects its investigation and qualification. In the mechanism of the “series” of sexual murders, one can observe the specific features of actions that reflect the “handwriting” of the perpetrator, which arises from the characteristics of his personality.

The classification of serial sexual murders by the method of commission proposed by Y.M. Antonian is of great forensic importance for the organisation of investigating and preventing such crimes. She divides all serial sexual killers into two broad groups: “stranglers” and “butchers”, who demonstrate different methods and motivations. “Stranglers” are characterised by the use of strangulation without causing bodily harm, strangulation with bodily harm in the sexual sphere, or strangulation with bodily harm in the non-sexual sphere. They can be divided into three groups depending on the characteristics of the individual and the victims. Murderers from the first group often have mental illness and lead a secluded lifestyle. They are addicted to collecting and target mostly women over the age of 18. Murderers from the second group have a relatively high level of education

and extensive contacts with their environment. They use vehicles to commit crimes, and their victims are children under the age of 12. Murderers from the third group show non-sexual aggression directed against peers and animals. They have frequent contact with children and arrogant ideas. These offenders typically use strangulation as their primary method of attack, often selecting victims in isolated areas and employing a calculated, deliberate approach. A notable example is the case of the “Green River Killer” (Gary Ridgway), who strangled numerous women in Washington state during the 1980s and 1990s. His choice of strangulation, along with the ritualistic disposal of the bodies, suggests a desire to assert control over his victims, which is consistent with the psychological profile of “Power–Calming.”

The “butchers” criminals can be further divided into two groups, depending on whether they commit crimes involving bodily harm to the victim in the sexual sphere or not in the sexual sphere (Danyliv 2017, 123). In contrast to “stranglers”, “butchers” tend to use more violent, disfiguring methods, often resulting in severe bodily harm or mutilation. The “Zodiac Killer” (whose true identity remains unknown) is an example of this type. His crimes, committed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Northern California, involved brutal attacks on victims, including stabbing and the use of symbolic, ritualistic elements. The disfigurement of victims and the methodical approach to each crime point to a higher degree of rage and a desire to cause suffering, aligning with the psychological profile of “Anger–Vengeance.”

Sexual offences can also be classified into four main types, reflecting the different motivations and psychological characteristics of the perpetrators (Table 1).

Table 1. The classification of sexual offenders depending on the motives for committing the offence

o.	Type	Description
1	“Power–Calming”	It is characterised by the fact that the perpetrator commits a planned rape but does not always try to murder the victim. Such criminals are characterised by fantasies and seeking reassurance from the victim. They seek to control the situation, but they do not always intend to murder.
2	“Power–Affirmation”	It covers killers who commit sexual violence to maintain control over their victims, but do not always intend to commit murder. They view sexual violence as a means of expressing power and dominance.
3	“Anger–Vengeance”	It is defined by the fact that the perpetrators plan both rape and murder, with anger as the main motive. They commit a crime for revenge and they choose a victim with the aim of not only satisfying their needs but also punishing the victim.
4	“Anger–Arousal”	It also includes murderers who plan rape and murder, but who carry out these acts under the influence of anger. They may use torture, mutilation, and other forms of exploitation to express their anger and satisfy their fantasies.

Source: Page 2023, 2928.

These four types of sex offenders reflect different motivations and characteristics of the offenders who commit these crimes. Although each type has its own characteristics, they all represent serious threats to society and require careful investigation and prevention.

Another type of sexual offence is sadistic acts, including murder, of a sexual nature, which are manifested in the physical and psychological suffering of others and which bring the perpetrator a sense of pleasure. A sadist is a person who has learned the habit of achieving sexual satisfaction only through cruelty and punishment. Their behavior is driven by persistent and intense arousal associated with causing pain and distress to others. This type of sex offenders is not only marked by a desire to inflict pain, but also by strongly expressed fantasies and urges to violence. Its gratification is based on subjugating, dominating, and humiliating another person, which leads to suffering and fear in the victim. These acts of sadism may even include sexual violence, but violence itself is not always enough to satisfy the sadist's sexual arousal. Sadists are also characterised by a deviant sexual preference for violence, as they experience sexual pleasure in controlling another person through humiliation and suffering. For a sadist, it is not only the violence itself that is important, but also the emotional subjugation and domination of the victim, which gives him a sense of power and sexual arousal. Thus, sadistic acts of a sexual nature are a serious threat to society and require a comprehensive understanding and counteraction (Chopin, Beauregard 2022, 358; Reale et al. 2022).

There are four main strategies used by criminals to find potential victims of sexual offences. Among them, the most common is the type of offender who can be classified as a "poacher". These individuals tend to commit sexual violence against adult victims that they do not know and may use physical force to achieve their goals. On the other hand, criminals who can be categorised as "trollers" specifically seek out potential victims in concrete locations, and their victims tend to be younger. The "trapper" type does not actively seek out victims in specific locations, but instead targets victims in places that they know and that are well-known. The "hunter" type describes individuals who have acquaintances with potential victims and whose attacks are less random than those of other types of offenders (Ahn et al. 2023).

Historically, law enforcement agencies have often linked crimes based on certain characteristics found in the behaviour of the offender and other aspects of the crime. This approach, commonly known as *modus operandi*, is considered as the way in which a particular offender commits a crime, either used or demonstrated by a concrete offender. The ritual aspects of a sexual offence usually stem from the internal psychology of the perpetrator, which stands in contrast to the situational requirements of the crime. This means that the manner in which a crime is committed, and its ritualistic aspects, often reflects the offender's inner motives and fantasies, as well as his personality traits. The signature left

at a crime scene can be considered as an expression of a highly individualised combination of habitual aspects of criminal behaviour with the imagination and motivation that underpin a series of crimes committed by the same offender. In some cases, psychology and forensic experts may use a signature as an additional element to confirm that a series of crimes, often occurring at different times and in different locations, were committed by the same offender. They analyse various aspects of the signature, such as the style of the crime, the materials used, or specific details that may indicate the uniqueness of the signature of a particular criminal (Hazelwood, Warren 2016). Thus, the concept of *modus operandi* and the ritual aspects of sexual offences are important for understanding the internal motivations and psychological characteristics of offenders, as well as for maintaining law and order by identifying and prosecuting serial offenders.

In some countries, including the USA, Canada, Germany, and England, sexual homicide does not have its own separate status in the judicial system. Instead, the sexual aspect of murder is considered an aggravating circumstance in a murder case. Establishing the sexual nature of the murder is not a priority in the investigations. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States, sexual homicide is defined by the presence of at least one of the following characteristics: the victim's clothing or lack thereof; the exposure of the victim's genitals; the position of the victim's body indicating the sexual nature of the attack; the insertion of foreign objects into the victim's body cavities; the evidence of sexual intercourse (oral, anal, vaginal); and the evidence of substitute sexual activity, interests, or sadistic fantasies. Serial sex offenders are distinguished by the fact that they commit three or more separate murders with a certain time interval between them, when their emotions recede. Murderers of this type tend to think about their crimes in advance, often creating fantasies and planning every aspect of the murder (James, Proulx 2014, 602–604).

In the cases of serial criminals, the formation of a search portrait is of particular importance. In order to create search portraits of serial murderers, it is important to consider the time of the attack on the victim and analyse the day of the week and its features, such as a working day, weekend, or holiday. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish a possible link between the time of the crime and the working hours of the place in question: whether it is the end of school or business hours, and whether the number of people in the place increases or decreases. There is a need to consider aspects such as the weather conditions at the time of the crime, which includes analysing the presence of rain, atmospheric pressure, moon phase, and other weather factors. It is also important to pay attention to the victim's route before the attack, as well as the perpetrator's route, if such information is available. Furthermore, it is recommended to pay attention to the specific features of the offender's contact with the victim. This includes assessing the degree of the nudity of the victim and possible sexual encounters. It is also important to analyse the features of the scene, such as the possibility of access, the availability of bus

stops, and the type of transport used by the population (Husar 2020, 113). The creation of search portraits of serial criminals is complex and requires careful analysis of a range of factors. To effectively investigate such crimes, it is important to factor in many aspects and use them to predict the location of the future crime. Operational officers should be attentive to these details when arresting suspects of such crimes in order to ensure a successful investigation and prosecution.

Some studies confirm the fact that a small proportion of serial sex offenders eventually stop their criminal activity, which can be described as the “natural abandonment” of a life of crime with ageing (Nolan et al. 2023, 249–252; Lindegren 2024). This group has a significant criminal history, including sexual and other offences. However, the majority of offenders explain their refusal by means of cognitive transformations or changes in the way they think. The onset of cognitive transformations can be the result of a variety of factors, such as maturity, experience, social environment, and the availability of psychological or psychiatric support. Such transformations can occur under the influence of individual experiences and internal conflicts of the offender regarding their criminal activity. This indicates a complex and individualised process of abandonment among serial sex offenders and points to the potential effectiveness of psychological and psychiatric support for those seeking to transition to a healthier and more responsible lifestyle.

In Ukraine, there are several forms of sexual crimes, each of which is defined by a different degree of coercion and the nature of the acts involved. Rape is non-consensual sexual intercourse, usually involving the use of force, threats, or violence against the victim. Sexual violence, on the other hand, covers a broader range of non-consensual sexual acts, including unwanted touching or harassment, which are not always related to sexual intercourse but still constitute a serious violation of personal autonomy. Coercion to engage in sexual intercourse includes situations where the victim is manipulated, pressured, or blackmailed into sexual activity without the use of physical force, relying instead on psychological manipulation or threats. Although all of these crimes involve a breach of consent, they differ in the methods and specific ways in which victims are coerced or forced to perform sexual acts.

Ukraine, like most countries, faces the problem of sexual crimes, including serial crimes. There is no special legislation in Ukraine that would concretely define serial sexual offences. However, there are a range of laws and regulations that govern the area of combating sexual offences in general. The Criminal Code of Ukraine contains provisions on sexual offences such as rape, sexual violence, or insult to honour and dignity. These articles establish criminal liability for such actions.² However, the term “serial sexual offence” is not defined in the Criminal

² Responsibility for Committing Violence. 2024. <https://1547.ukc.gov.ua/dovidkova-informatsiya/protydiya-nasylstva-za-oznakoyu-stati/vidpovidalnist-za-vchynennya-nasylstva/> (accessed: 18.09.2023).

Code. Furthermore, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence is in force in Ukraine.³ This Convention obliges the member states to take measures to prevent sexual offences and protect children from them. Combating sexual crimes, including serial crimes, is an important part of the legal system. The need to define and implement special legislation aimed at combating serial sexual offences in Ukraine is urgent, as this would improve the legal mechanism for combating this phenomenon. It is also important to strengthen educational campaigns in order to raise the awareness of the risks of sexual violence and implement effective strategies to prevent these crimes.

Serial sexual offences pose a serious threat to society and their victims, and can have far-reaching consequences. Understanding these implications is important for developing effective strategies to prevent and respond to such events. For victims of serial sexual offences, the consequences can be dramatic. First and foremost, these crimes leave profound psychological and emotional trauma, which can manifest itself in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. Victims may lose faith in themselves, feel guilty, ashamed, and helpless. This can have a serious impact on their mental stability and health. Attacks can also affect the physical health of victims, leading to injuries, sexual diseases, and other medical problems. They can also affect their relationships with their environment, family, and colleagues, breaking down trust and understanding.

For society, the consequences of serial sexual offences can also be serious. They can lead to a general increase in fear and mistrust, and a decrease in trust in security and justice. This can create an atmosphere of tension and instability in society, which can undermine mutual understanding. The effects of serial sexual offences can be felt over a long time. Victims may need long-term psychological support and therapy to recover from their traumatic experience. Furthermore, society may need to make considerable efforts to prevent analogous incidents in the future by improving legislation, enhancing victim support systems, and strengthening the security of public spaces.

Understanding the consequences of serial sexual offences is important for both victims and society as a whole. This helps to formulate effective strategies for preventing such crimes, as well as to provide adequate support and assistance to victims. One of the key strategies is to conduct public education campaigns to raise the awareness of the risks of sexual violence. These campaigns can cover a wide range of topics, from defining sexual violence to teaching safety skills and how to respond to potentially dangerous situations.

³ Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. 2012. https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_927#Text (accessed: 17.09.2023).

The prevention of sexual crimes also involves the availability of psychological support programmes for potential victims. These programmes may include counselling, therapy, and other forms of support for individuals who may be or have been victims of sexual violence. Providing emotional support and assistance in recovering from traumatic experiences can help victims of crime cope with the consequences and restore their mental health. Another essential element is cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective preventive measures. This can include joint projects with law enforcement agencies, developing programmes to improve safety in public spaces, and supporting civil society initiatives to combat sexual violence. Working together with different structures of society allows the creation of a comprehensive system of measures aimed at preventing sexual crimes as well as the ensuring of the safety of the community as a whole. Therefore, considering the recommendations of experts, the prevention of sexual crimes, including serial attacks, requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, psychological support, and cooperation between different segments of society. Only such an approach can help build a safe and harmonious environment for all its members.

4. DISCUSSION

A considerable number of researchers and scientists have investigated the problem of serial sexual offences, which creates the basis for further analysis and comparison of their approaches with the findings of the current study. It is important to investigate their positions and conclusions in detail in order to gain a better understanding of this issue. Such an analysis will allow the identification of common trends and differences between different studies, as well as of possible areas for further research.

According to R.E. Morgan and B.A. Oudekerk (2019), rape is one of the most underreported violent crimes. They indicate that the “factual” recidivism rate of sexual offences is likely to be much higher, as about two-thirds of all rapes are not reported to law enforcement. In criminal statistics, rape is one of the least reported criminal events. The researchers show that this may be due to the considerable number of cases that go undetected and unreported by law enforcement agencies. Given the findings of this study, this has serious implications for assessing the risk of repeated offences and developing effective prevention strategies. As noted in the previous section, the lack of research on rape can lead to an underestimation of the scale of the problem and insufficient measures to combat it. In the light of the study’s findings, it is important to emphasise the need to increase attention to the problem of underreported and unrecorded rape, which may include improving statistical data collection procedures, raising public awareness of the importance of reporting crimes, and improving access to psychological and legal support for victims.

M. Farmer and colleagues (2015, 326–328) have found out that as the perpetrators of sexual offences are ageing, the level of the evasion of responsibility increases. According to the researchers, as sex offenders grow older, there is a tendency to avoid or evade punishment, which may be due to a range of factors, including reduced physical activity, changes in social relationships, and the development of strategies to avoid detection of their criminal activity. The researchers also note that ageing can lead to a change in priorities in the lives of criminals, including a decrease in interest in committing crimes and a desire to lead a quiet and stable life. This can affect their ability to evade responsibility as well as the effectiveness of preventive measures and rehabilitation programmes. However, in comparison with the findings of the present study, it should be noted that not all sex offenders show a tendency to evade responsibility with ageing. The results described above have shown that some criminals may, on the contrary, become more confident and even try to implement their criminal intentions, using their experience and skills in a more balanced strategy. Thus, although ageing may influence the level of evasion in sex offenders, this process is ambiguous and may vary depending on the individual characteristics and circumstances of each case.

According to B. Fox and M. DeLisi (2019, 74), there is a variety of subtypes of homicide, including sexual, serial, and sadistic murder, which makes it difficult to identify the perpetrators and their motives. According to the researchers, sadistic murder is characterised by a desire to control, dominate, oppress, and inflict pain for the sadist's mental satisfaction and sexual arousal. Sexual homicide is defined as an act of murder during which the victim's body or genitals are exposed, touched, or put in a sexual position, as well as when foreign objects are inserted into the victim's body and/or any form of sexual activity or sexual intercourse with the victim takes place. Serial murder, according to their study, is a case where two or more murders are committed by one perpetrator, and there is a certain cooling-off period between these events. The latter type of murder causes fear and panic in society due to the nature and considerable risk of the recurrence of such crimes. Notably, according to the results above, different types of sexual offences are unique in nature and characterised by different aspects that reflect a variety of motivations, methods, and dynamics; they are extremely complex and may require appropriate investigation strategies and preventive measures.

According to K. Reale and colleagues (2020, 1770–1773), sadistic sexual offenders strategically choose places away from the flow of people to meet potential victims and abduct their bodies. This allows them to avoid visibility and overt interference during the execution of the crime. Research shows that these criminals use sophisticated methods to manipulate and control their victims as well as minimise the risk of detection. They show knowledge of forensic science, including strategies for hiding evidence and disguising their actions. Furthermore, the researchers point out that sadistic criminals actively use specific strategies

to avoid detection and apprehension. This may involve staging a crime scene or destroying any traces that may indicate their involvement. Their actions are carefully planned so that they can stay anonymous and avoid legal liability. The researchers note that this can include eliminating any evidence that could be used against them in court, as well as other security measures to avoid any possible investigations. The researchers point out that sadistic criminals often demonstrate a high level of erudition in planning and committing crimes. They may use a variety of methods and techniques to fulfil their criminal intentions, including those that are illegal or violent. This may include the skilful use of staging techniques, the manipulation of the psychological state of victims, and the destruction of traces that may help identify the perpetrator. As mentioned in the previous section, sadistic criminals demonstrate a prominent level of professionalism and efficiency in committing crimes, which makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to detect and apprehend them.

According to D.K. Rossmo (2021, 257), the essence of criminal investigation of sexual violence can be questioned, since most of these crimes are not even recorded by the police, and only a third of cases are solved, and only a few of them lead to criminal liability. In the author's opinion, these systemic limitations raise the problem of investigating sexual crimes. The researcher argues that detectives could ensure greater public safety if their goal was not limited to solving crimes. In its concept, the researcher offers a comprehensive approach aimed at improving the quality of criminal investigations of sexual offences. One of the main components of this approach is to improve the research mindset of law enforcement agencies, which involves not only raising detectives' awareness of approaches to investigating sexual offences, but also developing their analytical and critical skills to effectively handle such cases. Furthermore, the researcher emphasises the importance of detecting serial crimes, which requires careful analysis of evidence, the use of modern methods of criminal analytics, and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and specialised research groups. In addition, the researcher recommends developing and implementing strategies to prevent such situations. The findings described above suggest that the prevention of sexual crimes, including serial crimes, may include public education campaigns to raise the awareness of the risks of sexual violence, as well as psychological support programmes for potential victims. Another crucial element is cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective preventive measures.

Based on the analysis of researchers' studies and comparison with the findings of the present study, emphasis is placed on the importance of considering various aspects of serial sexual crimes that contribute to strategic planning and the evasion of responsibility. A low level of the registration of sexual offences is noted along with the need to improve statistical data collection and raise public awareness of the need to report crimes. The identified problems in the investigation of sexual

offences, including the lack of the registration and disclosure of such events, highlight the need to improve investigation methods and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and specialised research groups.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that serial sexual crimes can be classified by time and method of commission. The classification by method of commission divides perpetrators into “stranglers” and “butchers”, who have different methods and motivations. It is also important to distinguish between four main types of sexual offenders, which reflect their motivations and psychological characteristics: “Power–Calming”, “Power–Affirmation”, “Anger–Vengeance”, and “Anger–Arousal”. The type of offender and their psychological characteristics determine the way they commit a crime and the choice of potential victims. Sadistic acts pose a serious threat, as this type of offender derives pleasure from the suffering and punishment of others. Understanding the strategies of criminals when searching for potential victims helps to effectively investigate and combat sexual crimes.

The *modus operandi* concept and the ritualistic aspects of sexual offences are important for understanding the motives and characteristics of perpetrators, as well as for identifying and prosecuting them. In some countries, such as the United States, Canada, Germany, and England, sexual homicide is considered an aggravating circumstance in a murder case rather than having a separate status. Serial sexual offenders are distinguished by the fact that they commit three or more murders with a certain time interval between them, often thinking about their crimes in advance and creating fantasies. For effective investigations of serial sexual offences, it is important to develop search portraits, considering various aspects such as the time and place of the crime, weather conditions, and the routes of victims and offenders. Studies show that some serial criminals eventually stop their criminal activity, which may be the result of cognitive transformations or changes in the way they think. Ukraine, like many other countries, has a problem with sexual crimes, including serial crimes. Currently, the Ukrainian legislation does not have a concrete definition for serial sexual offences, but there are laws regulating sexual offences in general. It is important to consider the need to introduce special legislation to combat this phenomenon and raise public awareness of the risks of sexual violence.

While the study sheds light on key patterns in serial sexual crimes, it is important to note that the results pertain only to those perpetrators who have been successfully identified and convicted, limiting the scope to a specific subset of offenders. This limitation calls for further research into undetected cases and the broader social, cultural, and economic factors contributing to serial sexual

offences. The study also highlights the need for more precise legal definitions in Ukrainian law to address serial sexual crimes effectively, and calls for a multifaceted approach to prevention, involving legal reform, psychological support, and public awareness.

Serial sexual offences have grave consequences for both victims and society as a whole. For victims, these crimes can lead to profound psychological and emotional trauma, physical and medical problems, and a disruption in relationships. For society, they can lead to a general increase in fear and mistrust, and a decrease in trust in security and justice. Understanding these consequences helps to develop effective strategies to prevent such crimes and provide adequate support for victims. Preventing sexual crimes, including serial attacks, requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, psychological support, and cooperation between different institutions and segments of society. Only such an approach can help build a safe and harmonious environment for all its members. Future researchers should pay attention to investigating the impact of the social, cultural, and economic environment on the development of serial sexual offences.

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