

UDC 343.4

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32849/2663-5313/2022.9.10>**Andrii Dobroskok,***PhD in Law, Director, Yaroslav Kondratiev Law Lyceum of the National Academy of Internal Affairs, 1, Solomianska square, Kyiv, Ukraine, postal code 03035, dobroskokandrii@ukr.net***ORCID:** orcid.org/0000-0002-7047-8566Dobroskok, Andrii (2022). On the issue of motives for modern vandalism. *Entrepreneurship, Economy and Law*, 9, 59–64, doi: <https://doi.org/10.32849/2663-5313/2022.9.10>

ON THE ISSUE OF MOTIVES FOR MODERN VANDALISM

Abstract. Purpose. The purpose of the article is to identify and study the motives as they give a deeper understanding of the causes of vandalism and make it possible to identify specific personal qualities and characteristics of a vandal. **Results.** Vandalism is an extremely complex form of deviant destructive behaviour that has existed at all stages of society's development and has been inherent in all types of social cultures. In the modern world, the problem of vandalism has not lost its relevance, on the contrary, it has acquired new forms of expression. Expanding its legal nature and going beyond the traditional legal interpretation, vandalism has penetrated almost all spheres of public relations and has affected all strata of society. It is emphasised that in recent years, scholars and practitioners have been focusing on the motives for vandalism, which are the basis and the initial element for developing and implementing an effective system of preventive and corrective measures. It is highlighted that from the perspective of criminology, the study of subjective characteristics of vandalism and its psychological basis is not so much theoretical as practical. After all, traditional methods of countering vandalism, such as punishment of offenders and repair of the damage caused, do not yield the expected results today, as evidenced by the intensification of vandal behaviour, increased aggressiveness and cruelty of its manifestation.

Conclusions. It is established that all motives for vandalism can be classified into 12 main groups: 1) lucre; 2) hooliganism; 3) ideological motives, such as nationalistic, religious, racial, political, anarcho-nihilistic motives; 4) revenge; 5) anger; 6) boredom; 7) curiosity; 8) self-affirmation; 9) selfish reasons; 10) protest; 11) manipulation; 12) sexual motives. In addition, the motives for vandalism may include envy, anger, irritation, frustration, despair, attention-seeking, self-defence, etc. It is proven that when considering a specific act of vandalism, it is usually extremely difficult to clearly identify the immediate motive for its commission. This is due to the fact that a characteristic feature of vandalism is multi-motivation, i.e., the simultaneous existence of two or more dominant motives.

Key words: vandal behaviour, act of vandalism, motive, dominant motive, ideological motives.

1. Introduction

In the public consciousness, vandalism is perceived mainly as a manifestation of senseless (unmotivated) behaviour and is identified with irrational, aimless, unjustified damage, destruction, and defamation of other people's property. In fact, absurdity, senselessness, and recklessness of vandalism are features that explain only its external, objective aspect, i.e., characterise its perception by other people or entire society. In a subjective context, vandalism cannot be considered a meaningless act, as it is always motivated and has a personal meaning.

It should be noted that from the perspective of criminology, the study of subjective characteristics of vandalism and its psychological basis is not so much theoretical as practical. After all, traditional methods of countering vandalism, such as punishment of offenders and repair

of the damage caused, do not yield the expected results today, as evidenced by the intensification of vandal behaviour, increased aggressiveness and cruelty of its manifestation.

Therefore, in recent years, scientists and practitioners have been focusing on motives for vandalism, which are a basis and the initial element of the development and implementation of an effective system of preventive and corrective measures. For example, the issue of vandalism has been to some extent addressed in the works by O. Bandurka, V. Vasylevych, O. Dzhuzha, V. Dziuba, O. Kolb, A. Niebytov, M. Khavroniuk, V. Shakun, and others.

The purpose of the article is to identify and study motives as they give a deeper understanding of the causes of vandalism and enable to identify specific personal qualities and characteristics of a vandal.

2. General principles of basic motives for vandalism

Relying on the analysis of scientific approaches to classifying vandalism, as well as on the results of our research, including the study of criminal proceedings and a sociological survey, we can offer our own perspective on the classification of motives for vandalism (Dobroskok, 2016, p. 88).

The vast majority of respondents (89% of police officers and 86% of citizens) consider *lucre* to be the main motive for vandalism. Indeed, lucrative vandalism is the oldest and, at the same time, the most widespread type of vandalism. The main purpose of vandals' actions in this case is to enrich themselves, to gain profit, material goods or any other benefit.

However, it should be noted that some scholars deny the expediency of identifying lucrative vandalism and refer to it as a crime against property (Pashutina, 2009). We believe that this approach is unjustified, as there are several significant differences between theft and lucrative vandalism, such as:

- in case of theft, the main object of the offense is property, while in the case of vandalism, morality as well;
- in case of theft, the intent of the perpetrator is aimed solely at stealing property, while in case of vandalism, also at destroying, demolishing or damaging a certain object;
- in case of vandalism, unlike theft, the perpetrator knows and is aware of the special historical, cultural, religious or other value of the object, but deliberately disregards it;
- theft usually involves causing only material damage to the victim, while vandalism can cause both tangible and intangible damage.

Moreover, it is proposed that lucrative vandalism should include cases of intentional destruction of or damage to property that occurs in order to conceal another crime or the true intentions of the offender. In the scientific literature, such actions are traditionally referred to as tactical vandalism. However, in our opinion, this approach is questionable, because when assigning an act of vandalism to a particular group, the original motives should be considered. In this case, such motives are primarily *lucre*, profit, financial or other enrichment.

A significant number of respondents (82% of police officers and 77% of citizens) identify *hooliganism* as a motive for vandalism. In the science of criminal law, *hooliganism* is traditionally considered to be "a person's desire to demonstrate his or her contempt for others and society; to openly oppose his or her behaviour to public order; to show contempt for human dignity and the rules of human coexistence" (Danshyn, 2003, p. 55). Therefore, the reasons for commit-

ting *hooliganism* acts are characterised by triviality, insignificance, they are clearly inadequate, i.e. they do not correspond to the unlawful acts committed and the consequences caused, they have no logical explanation, are not caused by circumstances, and do not follow from them (Korzhanskyi, 1998, p. 4).

For example, the most typical feature of the so-called *hooligan vandalism* is that the offender acts irrationally, impulsively, under the influence of unconscious anger, cruelty and cynicism. Frequently, the object of destruction or desecration is chosen at random. However, frequently the characteristic features of the object are outlined in advance (for example, these may be objects indicating affiliation with a particular religion, nationality, etc.) In these circumstances, the *hooligan nature* of vandalism is evidenced by the intent that arises and develops suddenly. The most illustrative example of *hooligan vandalism* is the activity of radical and extreme football fans who are prone to fighting, rioting, and breaking both inside and outside stadiums. Frequently, it does not matter whether the team they support wins or loses, which indicates the lack of a clearly understood motivation in their actions.

The majority of respondents (83% of police officers and 80% of citizens) emphasise that vandalism is often motivated by ideological motives. It should be noted that ideological motives characterise vandalism in its classical sense, as traditionally vandals were considered to be people who destroyed or damaged objects of historical, cultural, religious or other value.

Ideological vandalism is a rather capacious concept that encompasses numerous different motives. The review of the materials of the studied criminal proceedings, as well as media publications, enables to group them into several relatively independent subgroups (Dobroskok, 2019, p. 33).

First, these are *nationalist motives*. Such motives are the basis for attacks on state symbols, acts of destruction of historical monuments to famous statesmen, damage and destruction of burial sites of famous cultural figures, soldiers and liberators, etc.

Secondly, these are *religious motives*. Today, several types of religious vandalism can be distinguished depending on those who commit it. For example, it can be initiated directly by the state. In this case, vandalism becomes massive and organised and is usually aimed at the complete destruction of objects of a certain religious value.

Thirdly, these are *racial motives*. The peak of vandalism motivated by racial animosity is traditionally considered to be the Second World War, when all objects related to people

of the Jewish race, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, or social status, were completely destroyed. However, even today this type of ideological vandalism is widespread throughout the world, including in Ukraine. Jews, as well as Roma and Crimean Tatars, continue to face the greatest oppression. The objects of destruction or desecration in this case are most often burial sites, monuments to prominent statesmen, religious buildings, private property, etc. Acts of racial vandalism mostly deal a significant blow to the reputation of our country and undermine its authority in the international arena.

Fourth, there are *political motives*. Scholars rightly argue that vandalism can not only be a manifestation of interethnic and religious conflicts, but also reflect "the state's internal policy toward various entities" (Pashutina, 2008, p. 145). For example, most of the large-scale rallies, demonstrations and other mass events held in recent years have been accompanied by the destruction or damage not only to monuments and objects of cultural, historical, artistic or other value, but also by the banal destruction of infrastructure: fences, public transport stops and even sidewalks.

Fifth, there are *anarcho-nihilistic motives*. They reflect a conscious rejection of, and opposition to, generally accepted rules, norms, and standards in society. For example, some scholars use these motives to explain the cases of unauthorised felling of centuries-old trees in protected areas and the construction of private houses in their place; deliberate discharge of wastewater and hazardous waste into rivers; persistent (despite fines) air pollution (Liubchenko, Savelieva, 2018, p. 24). In this case, vandalism is a form of resistance, opposition to changes in economic, political and social life. Such changes, affecting value orientations and attitudes of a person, are subjectively perceived by him or her as a violation of his or her subjective rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, as well as generally accepted moral norms and centuries-old traditions.

The majority of respondents (62% of police officers and 59% of citizens) believe that *revenge* is one of the main motives for vandalism. The results of the criminal proceedings we have studied show that this type of vandalism is based on aggression, which usually arises and develops through interpersonal hostility. Destruction and damage of certain objects in these circumstances appears as a delayed, mostly anonymous, response to the offender's actions: to the insult, humiliation, harassment, injustice, etc.

It should be noted that vengeful vandalism usually involves an indirect form of revenge. For

example, the vandal usually chooses an object that is only indirectly, symbolically connected to the primary source of aggression and hostility. In other words, the aggression is shifted from the victim's person to the property that belongs to him or her or to which he or she is related.

Today, the most common and typical examples of vindictive vandalism are damage to the property of an enterprise or organisation by an employee who is dissatisfied with the level of financial security, or a former employee who was dismissed at the initiative of the employer, or an employee who has a conflict with management or other team members. The same motives are used to destroy or damage the property of one of the spouses or their close relatives after a divorce; destroy or damage the property of an educational institution by a student who received a reprimand or unsatisfactory grade; desecration of religious monuments or buildings by a person who has an interpersonal conflict with a member of the relevant religion, etc. By the way, these acts of vandalism are usually committed under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

3. Basic motives for vandal behaviour

Almost half of the respondents (48% of police officers and 37% of citizens) consider *anger* to be the main motives for vandal behaviour. The basis of this type of vandalism can be considered several relatively independent levels of personal and emotional needs that activate the aggravation of vandal motivation, namely:

- Hostility, envy, jealousy, cynicism, nihilism, dislike of other people, disgust. Under their influence, a person has a desire to harm those who are more successful; to disfigure or deface things that someone else has but a person does not have; to destroy items or objects that make someone admire or be proud of, etc;

- Anxiety, sociopathy, irritability, impulsivity, psychological imbalance, and other disorders associated with mental instability or a person's being in various frustrating states. In these conditions, a person usually acts unconsciously, satisfying their own needs under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs, as well as being in a state of extreme emotional distress. These conditions are accompanied by the inhibition of mental reactions, providing an outlet for anger and discharge in the form of destructive actions;

- Pronounced sensitivity and vulnerability, inability to self-realisation. These and other qualities are a clear indication of a person's emotional instability, i.e., the inability to control the emotions that control them. In addition, they lead to the emergence and deepening of stress. In this case, destructive actions

become the most acceptable form of coping with stress.

More than two-thirds of respondents (74% of police officers and 81% of citizens) recognise *boredom* as the main motivation for vandalism. As some scholars have rightly noted, "boredom is not a motive; it is a psychological background that causes many youth offenses, including vandalism" (Antonjan, 1992). The motivating factor here is the search for new experiences, thrills, which are caused by all kinds of prohibitions and danger. Vandalism allows a person to distract themselves, have fun, feel adrenaline and strong emotions, ignore the rules, act quickly and ignore the consequences.

A typical form of this type of vandalism is a game that serves as a tool for self-assertion within a narrow social group, allowing it to express courage or earn the respect of peers. Moreover, two subtypes of game vandalism can be distinguished. The first is unintentional vandalism, which is the result of careless games ("unintentional" is a rather conditional title, since the nature and rules of the game imply a rather high probability of socially dangerous consequences, which the offender is clearly aware of). The second is intentional vandalism, which occurs when the destruction or damage of certain objects is an immediate condition, the basic rule of the game.

Every second respondent (49% of police officers and 56% of citizens) believes that vandals may be motivated by *curiosity*. Curiosity vandalism is a fairly common, but not sufficiently studied, type of destructive behaviour. It often does not pose an increased public danger and is committed mainly by children and teenagers. After all, they are always interested in what a particular mechanism, device, item, or object consists of and how it works.

This type of vandalism is based on knowledge and interest, which are manifested in excessive curiosity and "destructive experimentation." Much less frequently, destructive actions are caused by the lack of competence and carelessness of employees when working with new equipment or at a new workplace.

The majority of respondents (55% of police officers and 63% of citizens) recognise *self-assertion* as one of the main motives for vandalism. This type of vandalism is defined in the scientific literature in different ways: it is called "self-personal", "intrapersonal", "existential", etc. However, whatever the name, the characteristic feature here is the need for self-affirmation and self-realisation, which is satisfied by humiliating in various forms what is of special cultural, artistic or religious value to others. It is in this way that a person tries to attract attention and stand out from the grey masses; to

gain prestige, dominance, raise his or her social status or become a group leader; to explore the possibilities of his or her influence on society; to express a cynical protest against the rules of social coexistence, etc.

A significant number of respondents (60 percent of police officers and 52 percent of citizens) identified *selfish* motives as the main motivation for vandalism. This type of vandalism is based on a person's desire to satisfy their aesthetic needs, which arise due to the inconsistency of a certain object, its individual elements or characteristics with the existing perceptions of it. By committing destructive actions, he or she seeks to change such an object, to improve the environment in accordance with own needs and interests, to make it more convenient and comfortable.

Selfish vandalism is most common among adolescents and young people. Frequently, the person is not even aware of the illegal nature of their actions. After all, the actions that society and criminal law classify as destruction or damage to someone else's property he or she see as improvement of a certain object (subjective ergonomics). This is how graffiti appears, as well as various inscriptions and drawings on fences, building walls, and other architectural structures that a person considers an artistic achievement, a decoration of the city. That is, in this case, vandalism serves as one of the ways to demonstrate one's own position and attitude to the aesthetics of the surrounding space, to eliminate the inconvenience and discomfort that exists in it. These seemingly positive impulses can explain the fact that acts of vandalism are mostly committed in places that have already been deformed.

The majority of respondents (52% of police officers and 57% of citizens) believe that many acts of vandalism are a form of *protest*. In this case, acts of vandalism are directed not against a specific person, organisation, national community or religious movement, but against the entire society, generally accepted norms and rules of social coexistence. Protest can take many forms: from a deliberate refusal to comply with mandatory requirements, to follow established canons or standards, to acts of destructive behaviour, one of which is vandalism.

Today, there are many reasons for this type of vandalism. For example, it can be a manifestation of a person's rejection of established centuries-old traditions, norms and rules that limit his or her "freedom," a response to the authorities' abolition of any rights and legitimate interests. By engaging in acts of vandalism, adolescents and young people speak out against the social and cultural norms of the "adult world." For workers and employees, it is a desire to show

their disagreement with existing or new working conditions; for politically active citizens, it is a desire to reveal their opposition views. The mechanism of formation of criminal intent may also vary: it may arise as a result of a long, gradual accumulation of negative emotions; or it may be the result of a sudden, one-time experience of a stressful situation.

One in three respondents (33% of police officers and 39% of citizens) is convinced that acts of vandalism are often the result of *manipulation*. The materials of the criminal proceedings we studied show that manipulative vandalism can have various forms of manifestation, which depend, first, on the individual characteristics of the offender; second, on the nature of the needs that he or she seeks to satisfy in this way. For example, children and adolescents may commit vandalism to divert attention from other activities (e.g., setting fire to a building that was used as a drug or alcohol den). In organisations and workplaces, an informal leader may commit vandalism to manipulate the public consciousness and behaviour of colleagues in order to achieve personal goals (e.g., increased salary, career advancement). Criminal groups, by organizing large-scale exterminations, seek to intimidate certain groups of citizens, thus keeping them in constant tension. By committing vandalism, some informal groups can sabotage an important event or divert attention from the true nature of their activities, etc.

Every fourth respondent (26% of police officers and 22% of citizens) does not rule out the possibility of *sexual motives* when committing vandalism.

Above, we have analysed only the main motives underlying most acts of vandalism recorded by law enforcement agencies in recent years. Of course, within and beyond these, scholars identify a number of other motives that detail the type of destructive behaviour under consideration: abusive vandalism; conformist vandalism; instrumental vandalism; aesthetic vandalism.

In addition, the *reasons of vandal behaviour can be the motives* such as envy, anger, irritation, frustration, despair, attention-seeking, self-defence, etc.

4. Conclusions

To sum up the analysis of the motives for vandalism, it should be noted that when considering a specific act of vandalism, it is usually extremely difficult to clearly identify the immediate motive for its commission. This is due to the fact that a characteristic feature of vandalism is multi-motivation, i.e., the simultaneous existence of two or more dominant motives. Moreover, there is a fairly close integrative relationship and interdependence between all the motives of vandalism. For example, vandalism motivated by hooliganism is facilitated by anger, rage and irritation accumulated by a person at that moment, as well as a desire to attract attention; ideological motives are often combined with protest, revenge and despair; the desire to assert oneself is often based on selfish motives, self-interest, envy, group dependence, irritation, etc. Taken together, all of these motives arouse a sense of hostility in a person, increase the level of aggression, and encourage them to commit destructive violent acts.

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ДО ПИТАННЯ МОТИВІВ СУЧАСНОГО ВАНДАЛІЗМУ

Анотація. Мета. Метою статті є визначення й дослідження мотивів, оскільки саме вони дозволяють більш глибоко зрозуміти причини вандалісної поведінки, а також визначити специфічні особистісні якості та характеристики вандала. **Результати.** Вандалізм є надзвичайно складною формою девіантної деструктивної поведінки, яка існувала на всіх етапах розвитку суспільства та була притаманна всім типам соціальних культур. У сучасному світі проблема вандалізму не втратила своєї актуальності, навпаки, набула нових форм вираження. Вандалізм проник практично в усі сфери суспільних відносин, торкнувся всіх прошарків суспільства, розширивши таким чином свою правову природу та вийшовши за межі традиційного юридичного тлумачення. Наголошено, що останніми роками науковці та практичні працівники зосереджують увагу на мотивах вандалізму, які є основою, вихідним елементом розроблення та впровадження ефективної системи профілактичних і корекційних заходів. Наголошено, що з позиції кримінології дослідження суб'єктивних характеристик вандалізму та його психологічного підґрунтя має не стільки теоретичне, скільки практичне значення. Адже такі традиційні методи протидії вандалізму, як покарання правопорушників та усунення завданої шкоди, на сьогодні не дають очікуваних результатів, свідченням чого є активізація вандалісної поведінки, посилення агресивності й жорстокості фактів її вияву. **Висновки.** Встановлено, що всі мотиви вандалісної поведінки можуть бути об'єднані у 12 основних груп: 1) користь; 2) хуліганські спонукання; 3) ідеологічні мотиви, у межах яких слід виокремити націоналістичні, релігійні, расові, політичні, анархо-нігілістичні мотиви; 4) помста; 5) злість; 6) нудьга; 7) цікавість; 8) самоствердження; 9) егоїстичні спонукання; 10) протест; 11) маніпуляція; 12) сексуальні мотиви. Окрім зазначених, мотивами вандалісної поведінки можуть бути заздрість, гнів, роздратованість, розчарування, зневіра, бажання привернути увагу, самозахист тощо. Доведено, що під час дослідження конкретного акту вандалізму зазвичай буває вкрай складно чітко визначити безпосередній мотив його вчинення. Це зумовлено тим, що характерною рисою вандалізму є полімотивованість, тобто одночасне існування двох і більше домінуючих мотивів.

Ключові слова: вандалісна поведінка, акт вандалізму, мотив, домінуючий мотив, ідеологічні мотиви.

The article was submitted 19.07.2022

The article was revised 09.08.2022

The article was accepted 30.08.2022