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The Relevance of Problem Benchmarks in Police Activity

Abstract: The article is devoted to analysing the problem-oriented approach in the activities of the National Police of Ukraine. The study is relevant in the context of legal reform and armed aggression, which affect the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies. The study's object is to the forms and methods of police management, while the purpose is to formulate an optimal strategy for assessing law enforcement effectiveness. The research methodology includes system analysis, content analysis, and methods of induction and abstraction. The research is based on the works of Gusarev, Dotsenko, Kubayenko, Hinkle, Weisburd, Itskovich, and other scholars. The results indicate that the SMART model is adequate for assessing police performance, as it identifies key indicators of law enforcement effectiveness and their adaptation to modern conditions. This article is recommended for academics, law enforcement officers, postgraduate students, and anyone interested in the reform of law enforcement as a sector of Ukraine's security and defence.

Keywords: police reform, public monitoring, hot spots, effective strategies, effect size analysis, problem-solving, reducing crime.

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Релевантність проблемних орієнтирів в діяльності поліції

Анотація: Стаття присвячена аналізу проблемно-орієнтованого підходу в діяльності Національної поліції України. Дослідження актуальне в умовах правової реформи та збройної агресії, що впливають на ефективність органів правопорядку. Об'єктом дослідження обрано форми та методи управлінської діяльності поліції. Метою є формування оптимальної стратегії оцінювання ефективності правоохоронної діяльності. Методологія дослідження представлена системним аналізом, контент-аналізом, методами індукції та абстрагування. У роботі використані праці Гусарева, Доценка, Кубасенка, Hinkle, Weisburd, Itskovich та інших науковців. Результати дослідження вказують на продуктивність застосування SMART-моделі для оцінювання ефективності поліції, тому що дозволяє визначити ключові показники результативності правоохоронної діяльності та адаптувати їх до сучасних умов. Стаття рекомендована науковцям, працівникам правоохоронних органів, аспірантам та всім, хто цікавиться реформою органів правопорядку як сектору безпеки та оборони України.

Ключові слова: поліцейська реформа, громадський нагляд, гарячі точки, ефективні стратегії, оцінка продуктивності впливу, розв'язання проблеми, зниження рівня злочинності.

Introduction

Problem statement. The wide range of tasks that law enforcement officers have been involved in since the beginning of the 20th century and evaluating the effectiveness of their implementation has become a topic for long discussion. Scientific schools, which emerged as a result of diverse studies of the dichotomy “police” and “coercion” in their collections, looked for alternatives to the criteria for evaluating the activities of police bodies (divisions) that stereotypically functioned in Ukrainian society. The number of registered offences, their disclosure, and demonstration of episodes of investigation of the most high-profile crimes in the media, despite their simplicity, created an image of “crime fighters” for law enforcement officers (*Introduction..., 2009*), which was discordant in the perception of the National Police of Ukraine as a central executive authority with service functions (*On the National Police, 2015*).

Although European countries introduced a problem-oriented approach to policing by the end of the 1990s of the last century, Ukrainian law enforcement officers continued to function as an overly conservative, closed system of the “police state.” (*Introduction..., 2009*) The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has become an unprecedented challenge for the activities of law enforcement agencies and the beginning of the transition to a new reform doctrine (*Comprehensive..., 2023*). Replacing traditional guidelines in assessing the effectiveness of law enforcement functions with vectors related to promoting the creation of a safe environment and prompt response determines the need to rethink problematic guidelines in the activities of National Police bodies (divisions) and the relevance of scientific developments in this direction.

The study object is the forms and methods of managerial activity in law enforcement agencies, in particular the bodies (divisions) of the National Police.

The study aims to form a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the National Police as a subject of Ukraine’s security and defence sector.

The research tasks were defined as follows: to identify determinant vectors in implementing the problem-oriented approach in police activities and to propose an optimal model for assessing the effectiveness and quality of work of National Police bodies and divisions for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and time-limited (SMART) goals.

The study used methods of system analysis to identify factors that affect the specifics of Police Activities, content analysis to take into account the priority areas of its implementation when forming a list of performance criteria, and methods of abstraction and induction to build an optimal assessment model.

There are the works of S.D. Husariev, O.S. Dotsenko, A.V. Kubaienko, Kh.V. Solntseva, V.A. Ahmadov, B. Ariel, O.B. Bodnar-Petrovska, E. Buchnik, N.O. Chudyk, O.M. Dubenko, J.C. Hinkle, E. Itskovich, V.V. Lytvyn, A.V. Novichenko, M.M. Rudenko, A.O. Saporova, V.I. Teremetskyi, A.V. Trembetsky, I.M. Vyhivskyi, N. Wain, C. Weinborn, D. Weisburd used in the study.

The article is intended for scientists, practitioners, applicants for higher education and other specialists whose interests are related to reform and management in law enforcement agencies.

Results

Problem-Oriented Police Activities

The introduction of a problem-based approach to policing in the scientific literature is well considered in the context of the professional and personal development of a police officer (*Dotsenko, 2021*) or the promotion of criminological theories of the search for managerial solutions for the provision of Police Services (*Solntseva, 2021*). Priority in choosing the direction of research a posteriori is determined through determinant vectors, differentiation of the categories “police activity” and “activity of the police,” and the choice of a methodological basis for identifying problems, their causes and risk assessment. To develop a model for evaluating the effectiveness of bodies (divisions) of the National Police of Ukraine to ensure the security of the environment at the state, regional and local levels, it is appropriate to apply a systematic approach that takes into account the determinant vectors of problem benchmarks, as well as quantitative and qualitative performance indicators. In this context, it is important to form a system of essential evaluation criteria based on Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and time-limited goals that would allow an objective assessment of the work of these bodies (divisions) and their application of a problem-oriented approach.

A.V. Kubayenko connects the implementation of a problem-based approach in the activities of the police with the introduction of foreign concepts, strategies and methods of innovative management. Determinant vectors in the choice of role models in this aspect are the current regulatory framework that regulates public relations in law enforcement, foreign policy and internal management factors, which together determine the transformation processes for the structure, strategy and tactics of functioning of police bodies (divisions). Constant changes in the political course of the state under martial law and those that will arise during a unique period require conscious management, intra-departmental interaction, preventive thinking in the direction of work and the priority area of application, careful strategic analysis, planning and implementation of initiatives in the activities of the subordinate unit (*Kubaienko, 2020, pp. 385-386*).

S.D. Gusarev believes that national and national interests should determine the implementation of a problem-oriented approach. In the context of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and overcoming its consequences, issues of protection, protection and ensuring a balance between the system of international relations in which Ukraine is involved, the system of values and priorities of legal reality that reigns in Ukrainian society, and the system of familiar, widely used categories of legal realities, which are rethought under the influence of integration, globalisation movements and form a new content of such categories as “police activity” and “activity of police.” Due to the constancy of threats to the protection of national sovereignty, functional transformations activate the differentiation of powers in the activities of the police by scope of implementation and subject composition (*Gusariev, 2023, pp. 432, 439*).

V.I. Teremetskyi et al. noted that the problem-oriented approach to police activities is practical in the system of preventive measures, which involves a significant part of civil society.

In the formation of ways and mechanisms for organising the security space, providing police services in ensuring public safety and order, and countering offences, the priority is considering the experience of foreign countries, harmonising the selection of candidates for police service and their professional training, strengthening the work of police officers at the local level. Indicators of high efficiency from the use of a problem-oriented approach in the activities of the police are the ability of law enforcement agencies to quickly protect the rights of citizens and take into account the needs of the state and society (*Teremetskyi et al., 2024, pp. 19-20*).

J.C. Hinkle and D. Weisburd point out that the etymological nature of problem-oriented policing is quite variable. Its effectiveness depends on the number and quality of subjects involved and the objects for which it has a target direction. A general relative decrease in the level of committed/committed public order offences is possible due to the use of moderator analysis, the expansion of response measures, the involvement of a significant number of partner departments/groups or more police officers in the programme, as well as the focus on specific types of criminal offences (e.g., criminal offences against property, criminal offences against public safety). Received by J.C. Hinkle and D. Weisburd empirical results allow us to speak of a problem-oriented approach as an effective means of managing the activities of police bodies (divisions) even at the initial stages when the law enforcement agency cannot implement a profound solution to the problem (*Hinkle & Weisburd, 2024*).

According to E. Itskovich et al., the isolation of the problem-based approach and the constant presence of police officers in controlled hot spots does not significantly reduce crime. The results of an empirical study conducted by the authors in south Birmingham (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) indicate that the concentration of police forces collectively contributes to a decrease in the level of committing offences. However, the indicators obtained are unsustainable and require constant adjustment to consider police reports. This means that the main determinants in the implementation of a problem-oriented approach in police activities are the level of criminogenic situation in a particular territory, the ability of law enforcement agencies to ensure a reasonable concentrated presence of their personnel in hot spots, the presence of a relevant model of rapid response to an event or offence (“treatment-as-assigned” or “treatment-as-delivered”) and the smooth reporting between the service links of police units (*Itskovich et al., 2025*).

Thus, implementing a problem-oriented approach in policing is traditionally associated with the imitation of European systems that began in the early 1980s under the influence of hedonistic values of consumer morality of postmodernism to replace the “Puritan asceticism” of industrial, public administration. As a result of the reorganisation processes that took place before the end of the 1990s of the last century, the police department was determined by at least one of the two models produced by “social engineering” or decentralised provision of services.

Identifying Problems

Launched in 2014 in the activities of bodies (divisions), the problem-oriented approach provides for close interaction between authorised subjects of law enforcement agencies and the population. This means that the identification of problems, search for the causes of their occurrence, and risk assessment should consider citizens’ opinions, their expectations related to creating a safe environment, and the prompt response of law enforcement officers to incidents.

Police powers focus on analysing data and information received to understand patterns and trends and identify potential threats and vulnerabilities at the state, regional, and local levels.

I. Vyhivskiy and A. Trembetsky note that the political situation in Ukraine has functionally changed the powers of the National Police bodies (divisions). In the context of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the list of official tasks of police officers includes countering military threats, maintaining law and order in the de-occupied territories, countering crimes against national security and preventing offences related to the introduction of a legal regime of martial law. Changes made to the national legislation regarding the management of bodies (divisions) of the National Police take into account the peculiarities of the period of martial law, restrictions on the rights and freedoms of citizens defined by the Constitution of Ukraine, the law of Ukraine “on the legal regime of martial law”, allow ensuring the effectiveness of police tasks to promote the creation of a safe environment and rapid response to threats and incidents (*Vyhivskiy & Trembetsky, 2024, p. 155*).

New problems in the current conditions are the issues of excessive length of pre-trial investigation due to the overload and inefficiency of individual bodies (divisions) of the National Police, the lack of well-established interaction of police officers with other subjects of the security and defence sector of Ukraine (*Lytyyn & Ahmadov, 2024, p. 58*). The latter is the result of a blurred differentiation of the competence and powers of law enforcement agencies that carry out police activities, duplication of their functions, the presence of corruption risks in making managerial decisions by these subjects of the security and defence sector, imperfect mechanisms for appointment to positions and promotion (*Comprehensive..., 2023*).

Thus, rapid response in the context of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a priority way to adapt law enforcement agencies to new challenges and minimise risks. The lack of well-established interaction between the subjects of the security and defence sector of Ukraine, whose competence includes ensuring law enforcement functions, leads to an overload of the work of government personnel, their general inefficiency and slows down the course of the implemented reforms, reducing the level of public confidence.

Causes and Risk Assessment

V.A. Nekrasov and G.S. Katamadze note that the application of risk assessment measures should be comprehensive and meet the requirements of current legislation. Risk analysis is a tool for studying complex socio-economic systems in conditions of uncertainty, such as potential threats, possible dangers, and harm caused. The subject of such a procedure is the “National Coordinator,” fixed in the current regulatory framework (*Nekrasov & Katamadze, 2024, pp. 311, 315*). Establishing the cause of occurrence and assessing risks determines the choice of methods according to the authority of the National Coordinator and provides long-term prospects in the security management system at the state, regional and local levels.

The main criteria for the effectiveness and quality of work of bodies (divisions) of the National Police of Ukraine to ensure environmental security may include the following components:

1. *Quantitative Parameters and Performance of Work.* This indicator determines the number of completed tasks provided for in regulatory legal acts. For example, this may include the number of criminal proceedings investigated and submitted to the court, the number of offences that

were prevented (including repeated ones), and the number of preventive measures taken. To this should be added indicators of early detection and neutralisation of threats, which are important factors for the success of law enforcement agencies.

2. *Economic Efficiency*. This criterion concerns the rational use of the body's (Division) resources to perform the tasks assigned to it. It is important to analyse the extent to which the costs of maintaining the national police body (Division) correspond to the results achieved. In particular, the ratio between costs and results of work performed and the economic efficiency of the distribution of human and material resources is evaluated.

3. *Employee Performance*. Assessing the individual performance of employees of the national police body (subdivision) is important in evaluating the body's overall performance. This indicator includes productivity, discipline, compliance with professional ethics standards, and a willingness to improve.

4. *Staff Satisfaction*. Work efficiency largely depends on employee satisfaction with working conditions, organizational culture, and career opportunities. Regular staff surveys can identify problematic aspects of internal communication, excessive workload, or dissatisfaction with service conditions, which can negatively affect the effectiveness of the body's work.

5. *Integrating the Gender Approach and Countering Discrimination*. One of the key criteria of the modern assessment system is compliance with gender equality and effective counteraction to discrimination. This includes indicators relating to women's involvement in all areas of the national police and the availability and effectiveness of mechanisms to prevent discrimination on any grounds.

These key performance indicators are based on the principles of the SMART methodology (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) and function as a separate element of an integrated system (*Giulmagomedov et al., 2023, p. 560*), according to the requirements of the current legislation, which contains recommendations for implementing an assessment of the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies (*Action Plan..., 2023*).

To specify performance indicators for each of the proposed parameters for evaluating the work of National Police bodies and divisions, the following key indicators can be defined:

1. Quantitative parameters and performance:
 - The number of proceedings investigated for a certain period (for example, monthly or quarterly).
 - The number of criminal proceedings submitted to the court.
 - Percentage of completed criminal proceedings (with notification of a court decision).
 - The number of violations in law and order that were prevented.
 - Number of preventive measures (lectures, campaigns, public awareness).
 - Time spent investigating cases (from receiving the case to submitting it to the court).
2. Economic efficiency:
 - Costs per completed production (total costs of the authority divided by the number of completed production).
 - The ratio of expenses to income (in the case of organisations that can generate income through fines or other sanctions).
 - Percentage of completed tasks with minimal resource consumption.
 - The number of productions completed is more than the budget.

- Reduce the cost of auxiliary processes (logistics, technical support, etc.).
- 3. Employee performance:
 - Average number of completed proceedings per employee for a certain period.
 - Percentage of over-fulfilment of planned indicators by each employee.
 - Assessment of the quality of employees' work (based on internal audits or colleague feedback).
 - The number of disciplinary violations or complaints against employees.
 - Time spent investigating one case by a particular employee.
- 4. Staff satisfaction:
 - The level of satisfaction of employees with working conditions (based on the survey or questionnaire results).
 - Percentage of employees who positively assess working conditions, career opportunities, and the internal climate.
 - Staff turnover (the number of layoffs over a certain period).
 - The number of vacation days taken due to stress or work overload.
 - The level of employee participation in professional development programmes and training.
- 5. Gender mainstreaming and countering discrimination:
 - Percentage of women in senior positions of the body (Division).
 - Percentage of women and men in different departments (no gender imbalance).
 - Number of programmes or activities aimed at promoting gender equality.
 - The number of complaints of gender discrimination and cases resolved.
 - Measures to prevent discrimination (training programs, mechanisms for protecting rights) have been implemented.

Each of these indicators should comply with the SMART methodology (concreteness, measurability, reach, relevance, time constraints), which allows them to be evaluated regularly and used to improve the work of law enforcement agencies.

Thus, political instability in Ukraine and legal conflicts in national legislation negatively affect the effectiveness of police activities. The SMART methodology allows you to conduct a systematic risk assessment, reduce threats by integrating modern technologies, improve personnel policy, and expand interdepartmental interaction. An adequate set of preventive measures and public supervision will also contribute to improving the effectiveness of police activities in this sense.

Optimal Evaluation Model

The SMART methodology emphasises that goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. The following qualitative assessment scale adapts these principles to assess the effectiveness of the national police body (Division) based on quantitative parameters and performance, economic efficiency, employee performance, staff satisfaction, gender integration, and countering discrimination.

1. Specific

Definition: clarity of goals and operations.

- (1) Bad: Goals are vague and vaguely defined; roles are ambiguous.
- (2) Satisfactory: Some goals are clear, but others lack specificity; roles are partially defined.

- (3) Good: Most goals are specific and clearly stated; the roles are mostly clear.
- (4) Very good: All goals are clearly defined with specific results, and the roles are well understood.
- (5) Excellent: The goals are concrete and consistent with the community's needs, and the roles are conveyed and understood by all participants.

2. Measurable

Definition: the ability to qualitatively assess progress and results.

- (1) Bad: There are no qualitative indicators for evaluating performance or feedback mechanisms.
- (2) Satisfactory: Some quality indicators exist but are not used constantly; reviews are sporadic.
- (3) Good: Quality indicators are available and used regularly; reviews are collected but not analysed systematically.
- (4) Very good: strong quality indicators guide ratings; regular feedback is collected and analysed for improvement.
- (5) Excellent: Comprehensive quality indicators encourage current assessments, and feedback is actively used to inform strategies and operations.

3. Achievable

Definition: realistic goals that can be achieved with available resources.

- (1) Bad: The goals set are unrealistic given the available resources, and there has been frequent failure to achieve them.
- (2) Satisfactory: Some goals are achievable, but many remain unattainable due to resource constraints.
- (3) Good: Most goals are realistic and achievable with available resources; achieving goals can be problematic.
- (4) Very good: the goals set are consistently achievable within resources; proactive measures taken to solve problems.
- (5) Excellent: All goals are realistic and constantly achieved; strategic resource allocation ensures success.

4. Relevant

Definition: aligning goals with the community's needs and the organisation's mission.

- (1) Bad: The goals do not meet the community's needs or the organisation's mission; there is a significant gap.
- (2) Satisfactory: Some goals meet the community's needs, but many do not effectively reflect the organisation's mission.
- (3) Good: Most goals meet the needs of the community and meet the mission, although there are some gaps.
- (4) Very good: The goals are very relevant to the community's needs and are closely related to the organisation's Mission; community contributions are taken into account.
- (5) Excellent: All goals are directly related to the community's needs and fully consistent with the organisation's mission; constant interaction with the community informs goal setting.

5. Time-Bound

Definition: a clear time frame for achieving your goals.

- (1) Bad: There is no set time frame for achieving goals; uncertain completion dates lead to delays.
- (2) Satisfactory: Some goals have a time frame but are not consistently followed or unrealistic.
- (3) Good: Most goals have a clear time frame that is usually followed; sometimes, there are delays.
- (4) Very good: Deadlines for all purposes are clearly defined and mostly followed; proactive time management is evident.
- (5) Excellent: All goals have a well-defined time frame that is strictly followed, and continuous monitoring ensures timely completion.

The form for evaluating the effectiveness of the national police body (Division) is presented in the Appendix (*Table 1*).

Thus, the proposed assessment scale provides a structured approach to evaluating the effectiveness of bodies and divisions of the National Police of Ukraine to promote creating a safe environment and rapid response based on the SMART methodology. By focusing on quality parameters, structural divisions can gain valuable information about their performance and identify areas for improvement. Regular assessment on this scale can help increase public accountability, transparency, and trust in law enforcement agencies.

Discussion

The scientific discussion on problematic guidelines in police activities covers a wide range of issues, particularly the effectiveness of prevention methods in countering crime, the role of high technologies in law enforcement, and optimal models for evaluating effectiveness. The research of Ukrainian and foreign authors reflects various aspects of this problem, namely, from the importance of legislative integration of international norms into national legislation to establishing interaction between the police and society as a key factor in reducing the crime rate.

Integrating a problem-based approach helps reduce crime rates, but it requires significant resources and systematic risk analysis. The smart methodology in modern assessment of the work of law enforcement agencies is quite effective. It allows you to create a transparent system of performance indicators and contributes to improving the accountability of national police bodies (divisions) and public confidence in them.

Existing scientific discussions indicate the need for a comprehensive approach to assessing the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies, combining legal, organisational, technological, and social factors. The study prospects in this area determine the favourable formation of an optimal model of police activity focused on citizens' needs.

Conclusion

Determinant vectors in the implementation of a problem-oriented approach in the activities of the police, which determine the specifics of the implementation of the concept for imitation, are the target orientation of the political course of the state, the balance of national legislation with international norms, the number, professional motivation and professionalism of authorised subjects of law enforcement agencies, their ability to perform official tasks to ensure respect for human rights, identify problems that require rapid response and the use of preventive measures. Indicators of well-established management processes are highly effective police

activity, which is achieved by specifying the causes of problems in the law enforcement sphere, assessing risks to create or promote a safe environment, and quickly responding to the elimination of problems by law enforcement agencies.

The analysis of the problem-oriented approach in police activities indicates the need to improve the management mechanisms of the National Police bodies (divisions). Identification of problems indicates legal and organisational barriers that hinder the effective functioning of law enforcement agencies as subjects of the security and defence sector of Ukraine. The causes of problems and risk assessment prove that the stability of law enforcement depends on resource support, regulatory framework and interdepartmental coordination. The proposed SMART assessment model makes it possible to systematise the activities of the police at the state, regional and local levels and increase the efficiency of decision-making to promote the creation of a safe environment and rapid response.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Table 1. Form for evaluating the effectiveness of the national police body (Division)

Criteria / Evaluation	1 (Bad)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)	4 (Very good)	5 (Excellent)
Specific					
Measurable					
Achievable					
Relevant					
Time-Bound					

Note. Marks in columns are made using “+”/ “-” signs in black or blue ink (paste). One rating must correspond to one criterion on the scale. Strikethrough or correction is not allowed in the form.