Students with criminal record vs. safety rights challenges for prospective students in the institutions of higher learning in South Africa

F.C. Sithubi, Tshidaho Manyage, P.N. Soundy

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F.C. Sithubi*

School of Education,
Faculty of Humanities,
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Email: fsithubi9@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Tshidaho Manyage

Academic Development Unit,
Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL),
University of Venda, South Africa
Email: tshidaho.manyage@univen.ac.za

P.N. Soundy

School of Education,
Faculty of Humanities,
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Email: SoundyPN@tut.ac.za

Abstract: Constitutionally, every individual citizen in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) has the right to education regardless of social and/or legal circumstances. The constitution also guarantees everyone the right to freedom and security of a person. This article aims to advocate the rights of students to pursue their studies safely that might be threatened by safety challenges in the institutions of higher learning (IHL) around the country. A phenomenological qualitative research design and chain referral sampling method was used for this study to determine the practical experience of safety challenges in IHL. The study revealed that it remains the responsibility of the IHL to always manage and operate campus patrols and determines that there are safety measures readily and at hand when the need arises and to ensure that conducive teaching and learning takes place without fear of victimisation amongst its component societies. It has been recommended in this study that the management of IHL should improve and strengthen their security systems with adequate human resources.

Biographical notes: F.C. Sithubi is a PhD student at the Tshwane University of Technology. He holds a Master's in Education from the Tshwane University of Technology. He is currently working at the Department of Correctional Services as an Educationist in Gauteng Province in South Africa. His primary duty is to teach and support incarcerated offenders who are pursuing education while being under correctional facilities. His area of research focus is prison education. He is registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

Tshidaho Manyage is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Venda. His work focuses on both academic development, curriculum and instructional studies. His other interest is on supporting students with criminal historic background and their safety rights in institutions of higher learning. His favourite place to do research is in his native country as he is well conversant with it.

P.N. Soundy is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundation. She holds a Doctor of Education from the Tshwane University of Technology. She is a Registered Psychometric with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The central focus of her research is on inclusive education and psycho-social challenges at different levels of the education system. She has presented papers, published, and contributed to a book chapter. Apart from teaching undergraduate students, she continues to supervise and co-supervise master's and doctoral students. She is a Project Coordinator for BEd (hons.) online programme. She is also a member of the Departmental Research Committee and Faculty Research Committee. She is registered with the South African Council for Educators. In addition, she is involved in an international project with the British Council.

1   Background of the study

Universities around the world are characterised by the undeniable and rife occurrence of criminal activities within their campuses (sometimes vehemently denied) which compromise the safety of its student societies. Criminal activities have increased in the institutions of higher learning (IHL) for the past two decades in Republic of South Africa (RSA) (Kandala, 2018). Universities as institutions of higher education are anticipated to have the best and safest security provision as compared to other areas of learning in the country, but ironically, they are also facing similar challenges of crime and gang activities like any high schools in townships. Inevitably, students are often victims of criminal acts inside the campus and their place of their residence. Campus safety should be the primary priority of the security component in the IHL (Mugume, 2017). Students are always victimised and sometimes brutally killed on university campuses by other students or members of the society who unlawfully gain access to these premises (Makhaye, 2017). Those who are victims of campus crime are subjected to a traumatising experience and sometimes exist in unremitting fear of being victimised again. It is therefore, the responsibility of the IHL that their staff and students should always be safe from any form of criminal attacks while on the campus. This could be achieved by conducting vetting of criminal history of the students seeking admission. Students with a criminal history background will have to face collateral consequences; barriers that are used at universities to prevent them from being admitted (Custer, 2018). Offenders who are convicted of having committed a serious crime should declare it to the university after

admission to bolster the mechanism of campus safety (Mugume, 2017). University societies and visitors should also be screened thoroughly to gain access in the campus. IHL access control should also be supported by digital safety equipment so that any criminal activities that can take place in the campus could be traceable.

It perhaps needs to be said that many learners at high schools were once incarcerated and placed under correctional facilities for behavioural change. It should also be frankly noted that criminal acts, anti-social delinquency and violent behaviour at schools is not a new phenomenon in the country (Makhaye, 2017). While being incarcerated in correctional facilities, of course, many offenders regretted their deviant behaviour displayed and criminal acts they have committed. As such, they probably resort to correct their unethical conduct by becoming model students while serving their sentences. In fact, there should be an access route to higher education for offenders who are done with serving their correctional sentences without considering their criminal history (Mugume, 2017). Of course, many scholars also agreed that acquiring education in correctional facilities positively contributes to behavioural transformation and reduce recidivism when they are reintegrated back to the society (Vandala, 2017). Undoubtedly, the lack of education and unemployment is said to be the primary determinants and source of crime in society, however, the cause of recidivism amongst youths is unclear (Kandala, 2018). However, educational achievement in a prison does not guarantee the removal or cessation of criminal behaviour by the student but helps to improve behavioural change (Thomas, 2012 as cited by Vandala, 2017). It should be known that incarceration has a societal stigma that may follow a student throughout his career path (Small, 2005).

Regardless of the crime committed, once charged and convicted, they are registered as offenders and also declared to have a criminal record. As such the element of choice lies with a person, either to continue with a criminal lifestyle or stop it. Therefore, it is uncertain if they may be likely to continue to engage in criminal acts or not at a later stage in their lives. Mugume (2017) observed and in his studies indicated that criminal history constituted a risk factor for committing another crime in the future. Of course, people are liable to change in life if offered the opportunity and necessary resources, nonetheless, IHL may list certain criminal activities that could be used to preclude admission of students with a relevant criminal record.

Students who are registered for having committed sexual offences should be refused admission (Custer, 2018). IHL should use their own discretion when admitting a student with a criminal history based on the nature thereof and the time when the crime was committed. The majority of the South African students do not reveal their criminal history status when they apply for admission at the IHL because institutions have a legal mandate to reject and/or disregard it for most courses. The importance of screening for criminal history should be primarily the safety of other students on the campus (Mugume, 2017). A criminal history check of prospective students should be the main driving force behind the safety of any campus community.

Criminal acts in the IHL environment affect the safety of both students and staff societies (Makhaye, 2017). By so doing, it becomes essential to require every student who seeks admission at any IHL to reveal their criminal history background when securing admission space. Of course, this must be conducted within a very confidential environment. Some IHL are also hesitant to admit students with criminal records whether they are still under parole supervision or they are unconditionally released because safety of other students and staff remain a primary priority of their institution. Nonetheless, little

is known whether students who applied for admission in South African IHL are screened or not. Certainly, South African IHL is also affected by high crime rates on campus (Makhaye, 2017). There is a saying that, "once a pirate is always a pirate" and "the leopard never changes its spots". Students with criminal records should be conditionally admitted to study at IHL based on the nature and time of crime committed. Since the central premise of this study is based on the rights to safety, challenges induced by students with bad historic criminal records, the nature of the criminal act should firstly be considered before admission.

2   Literature review

South African IHL has undergone massive reforms and safety challenges of its component societies since 1994 (Mugume, 2017). Studies conducted on criminal activities reveals that unlawful acts such rape, robbery, sexual assault, theft and/or antisocial behaviour are common in the IHL around the world. Students in the IHL are victimised and sometimes killed on the campuses. And some criminal acts that occur on the IHL campus are even not reported. Many township schools, where these students came from in huge numbers, are characterised by crime suffering societies. South African crime statistics revealed that offending behaviour seemed prevalent amongst the youth between ages of 18 to 25 years (Kandala, 2018). Young people are incarcerated in high numbers while they are still at secondary schools. Accessing education in the IHL is a vital effort for societal progress and is viewed in a serious light (Mugume, 2017). In fact, it may be suggested that IHL should have a reliable criterion of vetting students for admission and strengthen their security component to deal with criminal acts constructively.

Contradictory, criminal activities on various campuses undermine the quality of learning and affect IHL operations very negatively. Such acts are mostly conducted by students who might have been charged once and sometimes convicted for criminal acts while they were still at high school (Makhaye, 2017). It might be of some value to mention that it is not uncommon to find learners aged 21, and even older, still at secondary schools. Allowing over age learners in secondary schools overlay and widens criminal activities path in education sector. It remains the responsibilities of the IHL to protect its societies by screening students for criminal records during the admission period. Although it is not consistently the case, IHL require and expect the students to declare their criminal records to be checked when seeking academic admission (Custer, 2018). In the USA in particular, applicants in the IHL are required to submit two criminal history declarations: self-report for specific information about their criminal history or running criminal history background checks (Mugume, 2017). And as such, many students do not disclose their criminal status record for fear of not being considered for admission. In the USA, IHL has also added criminal history questions in the application for admission forms (Custer, 2018). Here, the implication is obvious; any false declaration will lead to immediate refusal and eviction.

However, many IHL in RSA do not regard screening of students for criminal history as a vital admission requirement because students are exclusively admitted based on points credentials instead. Many of South African IHL does not require criminal history disclosure from the applicants as precondition for admission (Mugume, 2017). It is therefore concluded by authors of this study that the current admission process

undermines and devalues the safety of the campus community. It is also viewed that any Institution policy that does not require access to the applicant's criminal history is eroding safety and widening the path of criminal acts on its campus. It also remains the sole responsibility of the university to insist that a crime prevention strategy should be well-oiled, constructive and that a safe learning environment should be created for its component societies. It should also perhaps, be noted that IHL play a significant role to empower and insist on behavioural development amongst its students. Certainly, higher education socialises students into conforming to an acceptable lifestyle, for example, being law abiding citizens. It is also highlighted that higher education achievement provides a way out from destructive activities to an effective productive role in the society (Mugume, 2017). Many students learn social interaction and tragically sometimes also adopt bad social habits from their mates. It then stands as a fundamental controversy, offenders are described as people who are unpredictable, excessively exposed and easily influenced by confrontational or circumstantial social conditions (Kandala, 2018). It should not be seen as a punishment but as an effort to protect campus community, making the students with criminal history to be aware that what he did was wrong and to the student society unacceptable.

Although not all IHL in RSA are equally experiencing criminal activities, but where it did happen, they have suffered a telling punch from criminals. Therefore, it is important to have measures on hand so that institution may know what to do when it does happen. It is also significant to keep the prerogative and always be prepared so that they may be able to respond when struck by criminal acts. University security structures should always advise the management about ways to prevent possible crime and ways of dealing with potential consequences if happens. The interaction between security structures and management must be kept at the highest possible level. Authors of this study are aware that denying access and/or admission of students at any IHL is constitutionally prohibited. But we are uncertain whether students with criminal history are likely to stop or continue with their criminal elements in the IHL after being admitted (Mugume, 2017). People who were once incarcerated are likely to re-offend (Johnson, 2019). However, we are aware that admission in the IHL might bring social and mental development on its own on the behaviour of the students.

Admission in higher education usually provides an opportunity to acquire necessary skills. As such, we are expecting caustic criticism from other scholars, however, we are certain that it is important for ill-disciplined students with bad criminal history background to be excluded from being admitted in the IHL for the safety of other students. We are also conscious that many scholars have indicated that education as one of social factors that do contribute positively to behavioural transformation and reduce chance of recidivism amongst most offenders (Mugume, 2017). Nevertheless, it should be noted that some scholars also agree that students who are pinned to criminal activities in the IHL have once incarcerated (Bruyns and Neiwenhuizen, 2003). We are aware that The White Paper of 2005 states that provision of continuing with educational activity should be made but no effort is made to remove criminal records attached to offenders.

Kandala (2018) appears to differ from the other scholars because he also raises the issue that the society is more concerned about the re-incarceration of young people after the first offence. It should be also noted that authors of this study are not postulating that students with criminal records should not be unconditionally admitted to the IHL. They should be compelled to declare their criminal history and IHL should also vet them

before conditionally admitting them for the safety of campus community. It should also be based on the nature of the crime and time when it was committed that should determine their admission. Above all, the scope of student's rights to safety challenges is far beyond this article and admission in the IHL are complex. Therefore, historic criminal check could be a time consuming to any IHL around the world, however, it is necessary to conduct it for the safety of its campus community.

3   Theoretical framework

Many students were involved in criminal activities while they were at high schools. Some students were even incarcerated and placed in a correctional facility, for a determined period of time. Some criminal activities that have been committed by some of these students such as petty theft, gang related violence and assault become habits and many students struggle to turn away from such habits. Several theories of public safety support various institutions' initiatives to impose methods of enforcing laws and correcting of deviant behaviour of offenders (Johnson, 2019). Rehabilitative theory suggests that deviant behaviour can be corrected by channelling an offender on certain training programmes to transform that person's behaviour away from committing new crimes. Whereas retributive theory suggests that an offender who purposefully violates the law should be punished for wrong doing as way to pay back the debt he owes to the society.

On the other hand, the denunciation theory states that punishing someone in public will prevent others to commit crime due to fear that if they commit crime similar consequences might be suffered. Punishment should serve as an example to other members of the societies that certain actions are morally unacceptable and they are punishable. Authors of this study are not specifically using the word punishment with reference to experience bodily pain (this is specifically prohibited by the constitution), but to any corrective measures designed to break the cycle of crime and that can also be used to improve deviant behaviour of the offending person. Of course, retributive methods should be appropriate, balanced and related to the crime (Johnson, 2019).

We are also attentive to the fact that incarceration is another form of retributive punishment on its own which is used to protect the victim from continuous harm. Apparently, incarcerated offenders are anticipated to be rehabilitated rather than to be punished while being held in correctional facilities. We are also aware that denying admission to a person who has served his/her sentence is unfair and unconstitutional. However, many scholars agree that person who was once incarcerated is likely to be re-incarcerated. This, however, is not an absolute rule because some scholars also agree that there is no consistent crime. South African correctional facilities are overcrowded by offenders who were incarcerated more than once (Bruyns and Neiwenhuizen, 2003).

Therefore, incarceration needs to serve as a retributive method to set an example so that society members become aware that certain attributes and actions are morally wrong and constitute unacceptable practices (Johnson, 2019). As such, it could be a high risk and gambling with the lives of other students and the staff community to admit students with criminal records. Many criminal acts were also not reported to the police and perpetrators remained uncorrected. However, whether the student is apprehended or not; and/or convicted of a criminal charge, they are both burdened with a criminal record. Of course, there is no evidence which show that a person who was once incarcerated will continue to live the same criminal life at the later stage. In absolute terms, offenders with

high criminal tendencies are likely to spend most of their time preparing to conduct the next crime regardless of their educational achievement (Kandala, 2018). People who are properly mentored and guided may change, of course. Consequently in life, people should reap what they sow, they have to be corrected in one way or the other. The purpose of divulging a criminal record is not to punish the offender but to correct the social ills of the offender to refrain from continuing with the criminal lifestyle. However, students with criminal records should be made to acknowledge that what they did was wrong and also make them to understand why the society perceive what they did as unacceptable behaviour as indicated in The White Paper on correction of 2005. This could be done through using criminal record as a tool to restrict them from achieving something in life, for example, securing sustained employment. If students with criminal records are given a chance for admission, the criminal record will not be serving its deterrent purpose. This is commonly known as 'collateral consequences' because it entails legal sanctions that limit an offender to access sustainable employment, housing, education and other important opportunities (Astrada, 2018). Collateral consequences make life very difficult for an ex-offender to be industriously moves on after post incarceration.

Therefore, authors of this study employed 'deterrence theory' as its framework. Deterrence theory suggests that penalties should not be imposed only to punish law violators but also to discourage other people from committing the same crime. It is in this theory wherein offenders are placed in correctional facilities to protect them and other members of the society (Johnson, 2019). The concept of deterrence can be divided into general and individual deterrence. General deterrence aims to apply to a larger group as it deters members of a society from doing something by means of setting an example that will make them know the consequences of certain behaviour.

On the other hand, individual deterrence aims to deter a certain individual from doing something and this can be done by means of incarceration. Containment theory will be preferred to address the mistakes of the past. It is in this framework wherein a person has to analyse the relationship between personal decision and social controls. It induces the rational cost-benefit analysis. According to Kandala (2018), every person has two structures, that is: ability to contain external structure and how to protect internal structure. External structure could be defined as extrinsic pressure (social forces) whereas internal structure as a pressure from within (psychological forces). Both structures are based on defensive and protective mechanism.

Students with criminal records are precluded from admission by using external structures to reduce the possibility of further harm that might be extended to other students on the campus. IHL have all the weapons to protect the campus community. Firstly, IHL should consider the consequences and security management risk that could be caused by admitting students with criminal records. Secondly, the impact of transforming the lives of offenders through educational development as a form of rehabilitating of student behaviour. People with criminal records are legally deprived from social opportunities to attain some human rights for certain period of time, for example, not to receive tenders or job opportunity from the government due to their criminal history. It is assumed that if they are given chance, they may continue to conduct criminal acts within public services departments.

Constructively, the deterrence theory promotes rational decision making and aspects to be considered during the admission processes. IHL should have to compare the cost

over the benefit, what are they going to benefit by admitting students with criminal records and what will be the cost of rejecting them. Of course, admitting students with criminal history places the lives and health of the campus community at risk. By still refusing admittance to offenders at academic institution with criminal record will also have an acute impact of not being considered for sustainable employment opportunities after graduation (Kandala, 2018). Education is one of social factors that reduce the chance of recidivism amongst the youth in general. However, Johnson (2019) states that if you increase the cost of committing crime adequately, you decrease benefit chance of crime in the society. Therefore, authors of this article are vocally suggesting that students with criminal history should conditionally be admitted in IHL or else be channelled on acquiring vocational skills and employment-based prerequisite opportunities. This will assist them not to depend on someone for survival or employment placement but to create job opportunities for themselves and other members of the community.

4   Methodology

Authors of this article used the phonological qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was deemed to be pertinent because evidence used in this study is evocative. In simple words, authors have explored ideas and experiences of multiple scholars to raise an awareness and also appeal to the IHL management so that they may consider the importance of vetting of students during admission. Social, psychological and legal perspectives documents were consulted to build up a strong argument and critical debate in this study. Research methodology is the tool and/or relevant instrument to collect and analyse the data [Scott and Morrison, (2007), p.153].

The population from which the study sample was selected considered two groups of participants. The first primary group comprised university societies: that is, three university students, three students from Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College at Gauteng Province, two university lectures. Students from IHL were regarded as the key participants of this study as they are the ones who suffer the consequences of criminal acts through emotional breakdown as a result of having to witness campus criminal acts. The second and last group was made up of two ex-offenders who have been just released from correctional facilities. They were both registered with the University of South Africa (UNISA). They registered for different courses and they are at different levels of studies. One was incarcerated after passing Grade 12 and the other one achieved his matric whilst held in correctional facilities. They were also incarcerated in different correctional centres in Gauteng region. They were incarcerated for committing different crimes. As ex-offenders, they both have existing criminal records.

The total number of the participants was 10. Semi-structured interview questions were also used to substantiate the academic content in this article. Due to COVID-19 and relevant health safety protocols, interviews were carried out telephonically.

4.1   Sampling technique

Chain referral sampling under non-probability sampling technique was employed. Non-probability is used when needing to get an access to the entire population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This sampling method was preferred because authors of

this study realised that it involves a primary data source, which also refer them to other prospective data sources who will participate in the data collection. Chain referral sampling is also used for sensitive topics and procedures are not self-evident or obvious. It is used to minimise biasness but maintains confidentiality and personal privacy of the participants. Key participants of this study were six students from IHL, two university lecturers and two ex-offenders who are also currently registered at UNISA. For the credibility findings of this study, probing and member checks were conducted to ensure the establishment of common understanding from the participants.

4.2   Data collection instrument

Data was collected using semi-structured questions and was carried out telephonically. All the participants were allowed to schedule their own time which was suitable for them to be interviewed. In some other instances, several telephone calls were attempted because participants were not available for prior interview arrangements. Data collecting was sometime exhausting and strenuous because authors had to always introduce themselves more than once to all individual participants. Some participants wanted to know how authors got their contact details and who made such referrals. One ex-offender also wanted an assurance of anonymity and also a guarantee that information is really needed for studies only. One TVET student demanded to be compensated for information provided.

4.3   Procedures

Interviews for this process were made telephonically. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their contributions and their contact details. It was a hard task to execute to completion especially interviewing people over the phone, people you could never know especially in sensitive topic like this one. University lectures were also hesitant to be interviewed although they knew the importance of the study. TVET students wanted to know their benefits for participating in the interview. Authors of this study explained to them about rational cost-benefit that although there will be no direct personal benefit, this study might contribute positively when developing safety policy at IHL. Ultimately, all participants ended up agreeing to form part of the study. They were thoroughly informed on the purpose for the study. They were also informed about their rights to participate and study ethics were considered.

5   Findings and discussion

Authors interviewed ten participants. Three were TVET students, three from the university, two university lectures and two ex-offenders who are currently registered at UNISA. Participants agreed that education play a significant role in rehabilitating and changing lives of individuals and to restore stability in the society. It was also indicated that some people with low level of education are always angry, and they mostly opt to vent their anger through criminal activities. They all agreed that education is a right, therefore everyone should be given chance to do so. As such, it was also discussed that community members, including ex-offenders, should be allowed to register at the IHL to

reduce the high number of illiterate people in the society. However, one university student suggested that ex-offender should only be allowed to do their studies through distance learning or online system (Mkosi and Mahlangu, 2015).

> "I know it is the right of every South African to be educated but there are number of female-students who were raped and killed at the university campus. When you inquire about the perpetrator, you find that he is a jailbird. It could be good if they do their studies through correspondence or online. They must not mix with innocent students. We are told that there are no teachers in prison, they teach themselves. Let them do so even when they are outside. We do not want them near us. We won't be safe any longer."

From the above discussion, students revealed that indeed they feel unsafe at IHL campus. Although they are not directly denying their admission at IHL, they are suggesting an alternative route to secure their right to learn. Besides, it was also mentioned that ex-offenders appear to be untrustworthy people because they were perceived as always coming in and out (jailbird) of prisons for committing same or new crimes. Students do not want anything that makes them to be with offenders. They feel unsafe with even people who are now incarcerated under correctional centres, what more with the one they see and/or are with every day in the campus. Another student also complained about her friend who was also a student in the same TVET College, who was rearrested because he raped one of her friends.

> "When I heard that Thabo (not real name) had raped Mapula (not her real name too), I was so shocked. He looked so innocent. He was also our best friend. I trusted him even though some students warned me about his previous alleged case of rape. I thought they were jealousy because he looked so handsome. That day he could have raped me instead because he invited me to his room, fortunate enough I went to town with my mother. Jooo!! Don't trust anyone in this life. People will surprise you."

The above statement revealed that criminals are facially unidentifiable. In simple parlance, you cannot indicate whether a person is a criminal or not by just looking at him. They stated that criminals are people they relate to, they live with and sometimes their best friends. However, it was also revealed during interviews by ex-offender that, as indicated below, people should be given second chance in life to mend their wrongdoing so that they also come and pay back through social services to members of community they wronged. The discussion below indicates that, people are prepared and willing to change if they are socially supported or given chance through education. It was also clearly indicated in the succeeding paragraph that, sometimes incarceration was not be perceived as a mistake to some offenders, but it should be seen as a fulfilment for something good to happen. It was only unfortunate that he has to become pastor by firstly going to prison.

> "Members of the society should understand that some of us wronged them because we were young and innocent but now we are men and wise, we have changed. Some of us are now Christians. As I am saying now, this is my final year of studying 'Bachelor of Theology'. When I'm done with my studies, the church that I am attending is going to ordain me as full time pastor. I am currently assisting in praying for the sick but as an ordinary church member. Many members of our church who knew me before I was arrested, they thank God because they knew that I was a deeply troubled person in the society."

One of TVET student raised the issue of allowing everyone who want to be student to be allowed to do so. He argued that a criminal record is an unworthy punishment especially to younger people who still have wider opportunities to change in life. It was also mentioned that sometimes criminal records are issued unnecessary. He argued that everyone deserve a second chance in life. He pointed out that if he was also not given chance he could be a criminal too.

> "I remember when I was doing my matric. Another guy from the neighbouring school came to our school. He found me walking with my girlfriend. He touched her at the back. I did not notice that. But my girlfriend start to swear at him. He came back and slapped her at the face. I defended my girlfriend by fighting back. I knocked him down with one punch, I mean one punch and he fainted. The next morning I was called by my principal. …. I paid R200 for admission of guilty at the local magistrate court. The presiding magistrate told me that as from that day I had a criminal record. I did not go to jail but still I have criminal record. …. What will have happened if Tshwane South College did not admit me because of this criminal record? Today I am completing my learner-ship with a big company. After this learner-ship I am going to be awarded the diploma. I will be an engineer…"

It is clear that allowing or admitting him changed his life. One of the lecturers was also worried about students with criminal record in the campus. It was indicated that lives of members of the campus community are at risk. He complained about one student who failed the test and threatened to kill him if he could not change the marks. However, he believes that not all students who have criminal records should not be considered for admission.

> "… I think university should request the proof of criminal clearance certificate from every student. They have to consider the nature of criminality before they admit them. … If it was not a colleague who entered in my office, he could have stabbed me. When we check his criminal history later, we found that he was once arrested for grievous body harm (GBH) after beating his girlfriend for not honouring an appointment. He was expelled from the college. … Who does not know about the case of the serial killer at Capricorn College? …"

When responding to the time and place where criminal acts happened, the participants have indicated that criminals do their criminal activities any time of the day but mostly they prefer, during the night time. The perpetrators only consider what would be a convenient time to them and then conduct their criminality undisturbed. However, it was indicated that they make sure that they should be unnoticed or not seen when conducting their criminal acts. Participants displayed mixed emotions on whether to admit students with criminal records or not. But it should be considered that criminal records are also used for criminal history vetting in other different Institutions except for admission in IHL.

6 Conclusions and recommendation

Authors of this study are more concerned about the rife prevalence of criminal acts in the IHL. Findings revealed that the safety of the campus community should be the primary priority for every educational institution. Education as one of the constructive social factors contributes significantly on crime reduction in the society. People with low levels of education are mostly implicated with criminal acts and they are observed being part of

the over-population of our correctional facilities worldwide. Above all, studies have also shown that education reduces chance of recidivism, however, causes of recidivism amongst the youth was mentioned to be unclear. Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that many criminal acts in the IHL are mostly conducted by students who have criminal records that they got while they were still in high schools.

It is, therefore, recommended that IHL should require potential students to provide them with information concerning their criminal records, and as such, institutions should conduct a vetting process during admission period of new students. This could be a proactive step towards ensuring maximum safety of campus community. When admitting new students, the selection panel should have to consider the nature of the crime and time it was committed. As all people suspected of having committed a crime, appear before a judiciary system and admits by pleading guilty, pay admission of guilt fine, or when prosecuted after a plea of not guilty and convicted are ended up are burdened with a criminal record (Mugume, 2017). Students who are conditionally admitted with criminal records should be always monitored and given support by psycho-social structures within the campus so that they may not continue with their criminal lifestyle.

IHL should furnish the whole campus with digital devices equipment as way of preventing criminal acts within the campus. Security personnel should also be adequately trained on how to detect suspicious behaviour and how they should deal with it in order to reduce criminal acts. This could also be done by searching everybody who enters and leaves the campus all the time. There should also be a regular campus patrol by security personnel especially during the night.

Students who become victims of campus crime should receive professional counselling. Campus community should always be made aware of possible criminal acts within the campus and being told to report any suspicious behaviour to security personnel. The security component should also take student reports very seriously, those who reported any act of crime regardless of its nature. Safety awareness programmes and presentation sessions should be conducted to campus community especially during orientation of new students.

It is also recommended that students with criminal records should consider vocational training as optional alternatives so that even if they do not qualify for admission in IHL they still have something that they can depend on for survival. They must be made aware that criminal record could deprive them from securing sustainable employment opportunities.

7   Contribution to the body knowledge

South African IHL are facing a common phenomenon concerning safety rights as challenges for students on campus. Universities and colleges in RSA are no longer safe areas of teaching and learning as they used to be. Most of the scholars are university students and lecturers, they are less-willing and hesitant to research about criminal acts and violence that are happening in their institutions maybe because they do not want to place their institution in disrepute, they fear to be questioned by institutional management, they fear to reduce the number of new applicants, to maintain a good name of the institution, to be labelled as best institution, sensitivity of topic, to challenge the admission policy, they want appear not to be against the constitution and some other reasons that might not be mentioned in this study. As such, the authors of this study hold

the strong conviction that the IHL could be a better place to learn if more studies of this nature are conducted by the primary source, especially where incidents of criminal acts have taken place. We also concur that such an IHL may very well get external research support and other assistance to improve security challenges on their campus.

We strongly approve that this study will encourage other scholars to challenge every IHL to have a selection panel that will solely deal with and consider the criminal record background of students before confirming their admission. It will ensure that the current registered students who are also potential criminals will start to distance themselves from criminal activities as it is against social dictates and constitutional laws. IHL that were ignorant and dismissed it at first glance, could now consider the safety of students in their campus as the primary priority by introducing the disclosure of criminal history on the application forms. Policy makers may also design a monitoring strategy to establish the number of applicants with criminal records and the nature of crime in all IHL.

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