

Fear of Crime Among Campus Students: An Analysis of Residential Settings and Demographic Predictors in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence and determinants of emotional fear of crime among students at the Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. Guided by the Vulnerability Theory/ Fear of Crime Theory, the research explored the influence of residential settings and selected demographic factors (gender, age, academic standing, and marital status) on students' fear of six crimes: burglary, robbery, malicious property damage, theft, rape, and assault. A quantitative survey design was employed, with 147 respondents drawn from a population 200 using Yamane's formula at a 0.05 margin of error. Findings revealed high levels of emotional fear, with property theft, robbery, and burglary being the most feared crimes. Fear levels were significantly higher among female students, older students, third-year students, singles, and those residing off-campus. The study recommends targeted interventions, including improved street lighting, enhanced security infrastructure, community policing, and student support centres to mitigate fear and promote safer learning environments.

Keywords: Fear of crime, University students, Intensity of fear of crime, Residential Settings, Demographic Characteristics, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Fear of crime is a pervasive issue affecting citizens worldwide and poses difficulties for scholars to understand. This phenomenon significantly impacts various aspects of daily life, including psychological well-being, social behaviour, and urban development. According to the research done by Fattah and Sacco (1989), fear of crime affects far more people than crime itself. Studies have shown that fear of crime is prevalent in high-crime areas and relatively safe communities, indicating a global concern (Nalla & Ceccato, 2020). This concept of fear of crime presents a complex and multifaceted challenge for researchers due to the lack of a universally accepted definition (Hankle, 2015; Ferraro, 1995; Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). Also, it has been established that fear of crime is dispositional and situational (Chataway & Bourke, 2020) and is highly influenced by many covariates, thus depending on the specificities of each subject (Ceccato, 2020). Various indicators and operationalisations have been employed in previous survey-based research, reflecting the intricate nature of this phenomenon (Hart et al., 2022). Jackson and Gouseti (2014) identified three critical indicators of fear of crime: affective (emotional), behavioural (constraint behaviour), and cognitive (risk perceptions). Based on the affective (emotional) aspect of fear of crime, Ferraro (1985) and Ferraro and LaGrange (1987) describe the fear of crime as a negative emotional response to crime or its related symbols. However, differing perspectives exist, with scholars emphasising the emotional aspect over purely cognitive dimensions based on the intensity and frequency aspects (Farrall, 2004; Farrero & LaGrange, 1987; Farrall & Gadd, 2004; Gray et al., 2011). Therefore, this study employs a conceptualised and operational approach emphasising the emotional response to specific crime types, including property and violent offences. This concept, which Bolger et al. (2019) describe as affective fear of crime, captures individuals' emotional reactions to potential criminal threats.

Despite its prevalence, the intensity and frequency of fear of crime continue to be a subject that calls for deeper inquiry in existing literature, leading to a gap in our understanding (Farrall & Gadd, 2004). One reason for this gap, particularly regarding fear of crime in meso-spaces like students' residential areas/arrangements, is the absence of detailed spatial data (Solymosi et al., 2021). This study addresses a significant knowledge gap by examining the prevalence and the predictors of emotional fear of crime among university students, focusing on the influence of residential settings/arrangements and selected demographic characteristics in the Kenya-sub-Saharan region. Understanding these students' specific fears and concerns can provide valuable insights into how fear of crime manifests in small, defined environments. Moreover, it highlights the need for comprehensive spatial data to effectively address and mitigate these fears, ensuring students' a safer living and learning environment.

In today's society, fear of crime has emerged as a noteworthy issue impacting diverse demographic segments, including student populations on campus (Koseoglu, 2021; Diagle et al., 2022). This concern is particularly significant among university students, especially in residential areas. In order to comprehend the nature of the fear of crime experienced by university students, the Fear of Crime Theory—also referred to as the Vulnerability Theory—can be applied. This theory does not have a single originator but developed through the collective contributions of criminologists and sociologists from the 1970s onwards. One of the key proponents, Kenneth Ferraro, played a central role in shaping the theory through his influential work *Fear of Crime: Interpreting Victimization Risk* (1995), where he emphasised that fear is often driven more by individuals' perceived vulnerability than by actual crime statistics. Earlier, Kenneth F. McGraw (1980s-1990s) contributed to understanding the psychological aspects of fear of crime, particularly how personal and demographic characteristics influence people's fear of becoming victims of crime. In 1996, Chris Hale expanded on these ideas by reviewing existing literature and reinforcing the role of vulnerability and environmental cues in shaping fear. Not so far, Nicole Rader (2004 and onwards) has added depth to the theory by examining how gender, social identity, and symbolic vulnerability influence individuals' perceptions of risk and fear of crime. Together, these scholars have contributed to developing a theoretical framework that explains fear of crime as a complex interplay between personal characteristics, environmental factors, and social contexts.

Therefore, the Fear of Crime Theory or Vulnerability Theory refers to the idea that people's perception of crime and fear of becoming a victim of crime is not only shaped by actual crime rates or crime reports, but also by how vulnerable either physically or socially they feel in specific environments or situations. Therefore, this study is guided by this theory, which posits that individuals' perception of danger is shaped more by their perceived vulnerability than actual crime statistics or reported crime. The theory is particularly relevant to university students, who may experience heightened physical and social vulnerability due to various demographic factors such as gender, age, residential arrangements, marital status, and academic standing. By analysing these factors, the study aims to understand how vulnerability influences students' fear of crime within different residential settings.

While numerous studies have explored the fear of crime within communities and neighbourhoods, research examining its prevalence among Kenyan university students remains limited. Therefore, to understand the phenomenon of fear of crime in a learning institution context in Kenya, the current research examines the level of Fear of Crime among university students as a result of residential settings and demographic characteristics at the Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management at DeKUT, focusing mainly on off-campus, on-campus, and other residential arrangements. Doing so provides valuable insights into fear of crime literature, supports the development of evidence-based policies, and informs campus planning strategies to create safer student environments. This article has four sections, starting with the introduction and then the literature review, which covers the relevant research on fear of crime, covering general empirical studies and narrowing to those related to students in campus environments. Notably, there appears to be no published study that explicitly addresses the prevalence of fear of crime, thus its intensity and demographic characteristics as its predictors among students in the context of a Kenyan university, particularly at DeKUT. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, Section 3 describes the research methodology, and Section 4 presents and discusses the main findings, including an evaluation of the arguments. Finally, Section 5 offers the conclusion and recommendations. Future studies should explore additional variables and contexts to strengthen these findings.

Therefore, this study examines the prevalence and predictors of emotional fear of crime among university students, emphasising how residential settings/arrangements and selected demographic characteristics influence this fear. Specifically, the study explores the widespread emotional fear of crime among students and identifies the types of crime that evoke the highest levels of fear. Furthermore, it investigates how the students' residential setting—on-campus or off-campus—affects their fear of crime. It also controls the potential influence of demographic characteristics like gender, age, academic standing, and marital status.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fear of Crime in General

Fear of crime is a multifaceted issue that shapes human perceptions in various ways. Researchers have conceptualised it through different lenses, particularly an affective or cognitive experience (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987; Chon & Wilson, 2016; Hale, 1996). This phenomenon is important as it influences behaviour and lifestyle choices, heightens anxiety, reduces social interactions, and increases criminal justice and security costs (Pleggenkuhle & Ugwu, 2018). The above claims mean that fear of crime is a widespread and complex issue affecting populations globally. For example, a study in the United States, utilising data from the 2004 General Social Survey and the 2001 Census, revealed that approximately 18% of individuals aged 15 and above reported feeling very fearful or unsafe when alone after dark in their surroundings (Perreault, 2017; Weisburd et al., 2016). Similarly, an analysis of the British Crime Survey data from 1994 indicated that a significant portion of the population expressed fear concerning house break-ins and rape in their residential areas (Farrall & Gadd, 2004). However, it was noted that the measurement tool (perceived safety as a proxy of fear of crime) used to assess fear of crime may have exaggerated the results. The argument raised concerns about the methodology employed by previous researchers, suggesting that crime surveys (safety perspective) may not fully capture the experience of fear of crime (emotional aspect), leading to varying survey results. The accuracy of survey-based research outcomes depends on the chosen methodology, which may also lead to inaccuracies in depicting the prevalence of fear of crime.

In a study conducted by Farrall and Gadd (2004) investigating emotional reactions to crime across European and North American nations with a sample size of 1000 respondents, about one-third of participants reported experiencing fear of crime within the year before the study. On the strength/intensity of fear of crime, 15% of the sample indicated experiencing a heightened fear of crime in the same period, revealing that only a tiny portion of the population experienced high or fearful levels. Among the same respondents, approximately 8% encountered it multiple times within three months, indicating that a few respondents frequently feared crime. The results above confirm Hinkle's (2015) findings, in which he claimed that fear of crime is infrequent and low in magnitude. This finding underscores the significance of the phrasing of questions used to measure fear of crime, as it can notably influence reported levels of fear of crime.

Numerous prior studies have utilised questions from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to gauge fear of crime, often using safety perceptions as a surrogate of fear of crime (Hinkle, 2015). For instance, they have employed measures of fear of crime such as "How safe do you feel when walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?" (Ferraro & LaGrange, 2017; Hinkle, 2015). These questions assess an individual's safety or risk perception in a given environment. However, when measuring the emotional aspect of fear of crime, the wording of questions should concentrate on whether individuals experience fear, indicated by a binary "yes or no" response, which is then examined in terms of its intensity. This measurement can be achieved by asking, "How fearful are you of (specific crime) in your residential area?" with response options ranging from "not fearful at all" to "very fearful", as opined by Farrall and Gadd (2004) and Hinkle (2015). Additionally, it is essential to inquire about the frequency of fear of crime, tapping into how often individuals experience this fear. Questions should focus on the frequency of being fearful of specific crimes, such as "once a month," "twice or thrice a month," "twice a week," or "every day" (Farrall & Gadd, 2004; Hinkle, 2015).

Fear of crime is a significant focus within criminology as researchers strive to understand its scope, characteristics, and impacts (Lee et al., 2020). In their study, Lee and colleagues examined how various elements—including vulnerability, disorder/incivilities, social cohesion, previous victimisation, and perceptions of police performance and trust—affect fear of both property and violent crimes. For example, the

research targeted an often-overlooked demographic using data from a random mail survey of residents in five Western U.S. states. The results supported prominent theories on fear of crime, indicating that factors such as gender (with women reporting higher fear), perceptions of social cohesion, disorder, evaluations of police performance, and past victimisation all influence fear of crime levels. Additionally, the study found that fear of crime can vary among citizens, ranging from different types of crime. These findings suggest that efforts to mitigate fear of crime should prioritise proactive and intervention strategies to enhance safety and reduce crime-related anxieties. The vulnerability and disorder models are among the most widely used frameworks for understanding the fear of crime. The vulnerability model, for instance, suggests that while women and older adults face a lower likelihood of victimisation compared to younger men, they tend to experience greater fear of crime. This heightened fear is primarily attributed to perceived physical vulnerability and a reduced ability to defend themselves against potential criminals (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1992; Keel et al., 2024).

Another comparative study, using data from the European Social Survey, examined fear of crime across 25 European countries and revealed varying levels and characteristics of fear of crime influenced by contextual and individual factors (Visser et al., 2013). Fear of crime tended to be greater in the South and East of Europe compared to the North and Central parts of the continent. (Visser et al., 2013), emphasising the importance of implementing measures to address fear of crime at contextual and individual levels within communities. Additionally, a study in India by Valan and colleagues (2024) demonstrated a relationship between crime victimization and fear of crime, with variations based on respondents' locations and the types of crimes experienced. Their findings revealed that social activists reported a moderate level of fear of crime, including concerns about verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual victimization. Notably, approximately one-third of the participants had experienced some form of abuse, underscoring the heightened vulnerability of activists involved in exposing corruption and irregularities within India's governmental systems. The above claims mean that the previous crime victimisation can trigger a heightened fear of falling prey or being re-victimised, hence a high fear of crime (Wrigley-Asante & Frimpong, 2019).

Regionally, Africa stands out among other continents where its citizens harbour significant fear of crime within their surroundings. For instance, research spanning 20 African countries aimed at gauging the extent of fear of crime among citizens and its impact on their quality of life revealed that 44.5% and 51% of respondents in Ghana and Kenya, respectively, reported feeling fearful of crime (Sulemana, 2015). Consequently, the fear of crime experienced by African citizens in their neighbourhood mirrors that of their counterparts in other continents globally, though with varying factors influencing it. A good example is a study conducted among residents of gated communities in South Africa, whose findings concluded that elevated crime rates lead to a pervasive fear of crime among citizens in their neighbourhoods (Landman et al., 2018). Due to high crime rates, the citizens adopted self-policing measures by living behind the walls of gated communities, which were perceived as offering safer environments with lower levels of criminal activity within their confines.

Therefore, for fear of crime to be understood well, researchers should emphasise emotional perspective in operationalising and measuring fear of crime, which deals with the frequency and intensity of fear of crime in a neighbourhood (Farrall & Gadd, 2004; Hinkle, 2015). In most cases, a combination of physical and social factors within the environment shapes the emotional aspect of fear of crime among the citizens. This amalgamation of factors fosters an environment conducive to criminal activities, thereby heightening the fear of crime among citizens. For example, the study by Landman and colleagues (2018) emphasises how specific features of the built environment can contribute to criminal incidents, thus intensifying public fear of crime. For instance, establishing the relationship between the physical environment (poor lighting, old and unoccupied buildings) and fear of crime is essential for developing strategies to mitigate the effects of this pervasive issue on communities. This fear of crime is prevalent in urban and rural environments and within learning institutions such as universities.

Fear of Crime Among Campus Students

Despite being perceived as safe by many, academic institutions, including universities, are not immune to crime. Certain groups within these institutions, such as students, faculty, and staff, may be particularly vulnerable to criminal activities (Nicoletti et al., 2018). However, unlike the outside community environment, most students feel secure on campus (Fuhrmann et al., 2013), though the "open-access to public" nature of

university grounds renders them susceptible to criminal activities (Diagle et al., 2022; Bollinger et al., 2018). Interestingly, society expects university environments to function as learning centres and sanctuaries for the crimes prevalent in broader society (Haskin & Jacobsen, 2017). Therefore, establishing the impact and fear of crime in a university setting is crucial for implementing effective safety measures and ensuring a secure environment for all academic community members (Bollinger et al., 2018).

In the literature on fear of crime, numerous studies have identified various correlates of this phenomenon in the school context, though their relationship levels differ. For example, Schreck and Miller (2003) analysed 1993 U.S. survey data to assess how campus security measures, such as metal detectors and locked doors, affect students' fear of crime. The findings indicated that some visible and potentially coercive forms of security are associated with high students' fear of crime in their neighbourhoods since they view high visible security measures as incivility, increasing fear of crime. Of the operationalised strategies and measures, none significantly reduced students' overall fear of crime but did the opposite (Schreck & Miller, 2003). The above findings imply that these security measures are less predictive of fear of crime than school disorder and students' demographic characteristics. The study's results resonate with Ferraro's theory of incivilities (1995) and the study of Shibata and Nakayachi (2024), which suggest that visible security measures are perceived as incivilities in a neighbourhood, heightening fear of crime among the citizens.

The impact of crime rates as predictors of fear of crime on college and university students is a pressing concern, evidenced by a significant number of casualties within American educational institutions. This reality is underscored by a study conducted in the USA between 2001 and 2005, as reported by Hughes and colleagues (2020), revealing that more than half of the fatalities during this timeframe were students. This unsettling trend has escalated the fear of crime among student populations, prompting a call to action from administrators and education stakeholders globally. As a remedy to the fear of crime, urgent measures must be implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of all students within higher education environments.

Additionally, a study by Meir and DePrince (2020) in the USA examined college students' fear of crime and perceptions of safety about university safety initiatives and personal preventative behaviours. Their quantitative analysis identified campus lighting perception as the most significant variable correlating with fear of crime on campus. Moreover, factors such as campus lighting, safety measures, and avoidance of specific locations during daylight hours emerged as significant predictors of perceived safety. Qualitative insights shed light on the underlying reasons for fear and adjustments in daily routines to avoid victimisation. The study offers actionable recommendations for universities to address these concerns and enhance students' perceptions of safety. Additionally, fear of crime victimisation among college and university students significantly impacts their sense of security and psychological well-being (Maier & DePrince, 2020; Sani et al., 2020). Addressing these issues through proactive, preventative measures and robust victim support is imperative to cultivate a safer and more secure campus environment for all students.

Many studies have consistently demonstrated that students commonly experience fear of crime on campus, which can detrimentally impact their academic performance and overall well-being (Koseoglu, 2021; Diagle et al., 2022). Notably, research in the United States indicated that a quarter of surveyed individuals (students) had encountered fear of crime while on campus (Maier & DePrince, 2020; Sani et al., 2020), suggesting that this issue is widespread among university students. One potential explanation for this fear of crime is the specific locations within university grounds frequented by students during their daily routines, often called crime hot spots (Steinmetz & Austin, 2014). Pinpointing these zones is essential in formulating efficient safety protocols to reduce students' fear of crime on campus.

Moreover, the fear of crime among university students is exacerbated by the realisation that some students involved in illicit activities themselves, like drug abuse, may also become targets of criminal acts, as noted by Couture et al. (2020). This phenomenon contributes significantly to the pervasive fear surrounding crime within the university community. The principal determinant of this fear of crime often stems from personal experiences of victimisation, which may entail physical harm, emotional distress, material loss, or societal marginalisation, as outlined by Khan (2022). The repercussions of such victimisation are profound and serve as a primary catalyst for the fear of crime, as corroborated by findings from studies on crime victimisation, as highlighted by Meir and DePrince (2023). Consequently, understanding the interplay between personal

victimisation experiences and the resultant fear of crime is crucial in comprehensively addressing safety measures within university settings. The correlation between fear of crime and actual crime victimisation has been extensively documented in numerous studies. As highlighted above, it has been established that crime victimisation is the major contributor to the fear of crime in society (Sulemana, 2015; Sani et al., 2020). Research in the USA highlights that college students, predominantly female, are at particular risk of sexual assault victimisation due to their vulnerability, significantly contributing to the fear of crime (Jacobsen, 2022).

Due to their susceptibility to crime, universities have come to be perceived as fear-of-crime zones. For example, a study in Sweden focusing on university students found that female students expressed a greater fear of crime due to a sense of vulnerability compared to males, particularly concerning sexual assault crimes (Mellgren & Ivert, 2019). The heightened fear of crime experienced by female students has been attributed to the “shadow of sexual assault crime,” wherein women fear that any crime perpetrated against them could escalate to sexual assault (Kruse & Surujlal, 2020). By recognising these fears of crime and implementing suitable measures, educational stakeholders of the institutions can endeavour to diminish the fear of crime and bolster safety within their academic environments.

The vulnerability of universities to crime is not found in the Western world alone; it is also a pressing issue in Africa (Sulemana, 2015). For example, in South Africa, where gender inequality persists in specific societal and academic contexts (Kruse & Surujlal, 2020), women are often perceived as weak and vulnerable. This perception leads to female students facing a higher risk of crime compared to their male counterparts on campus (Jacobsen, 2022). These crimes are believed to be committed by fellow male students, significantly contributing to the heightened fear of crime experienced by female students in a university context. Similarly, a study on students’ perceptions of police and fear of crime among campus students in South Africa found a high fear of crime, which was attributed to a low perception of police effectiveness due to their inaction in crime control. This inaction led to higher crime rates and consequently increased fear of crime among students (Bello & Langba, 2020). Additionally, research on the fear of sexual assault among female students in South Africa by Singh and colleagues (2015) revealed widespread fear of crime, particularly among female students residing in university hostels. Among 133 respondents, 56 per cent expressed fear of strangers, while 44 per cent feared their male classmates being crime perpetrators, underscoring the heightened fear of sexually related crimes due to their perceived physical vulnerability.

A recent scholarly inquiry investigated the phenomenon of fear of crime within Nigerian universities, using a sample of 106 student respondents. The findings revealed that students (female) reported elevated fear towards crime and felt less safe compared to male students. When controlling for sexual assault, the fear of crime did not differ significantly between students living on campus and those living off campus. The study linked students’ prevalent fear of crime to socio-demographic factors and recommended proactive policing and target hardening as strategies for crime prevention and fear reduction (Iloma et al., 2023).

Research conducted in Kenya regarding alcohol and substance use among university students has underscored the heightened availability and consumption of such substances among students living off-campus (Musyoka et al., 2020). Given that alcohol and substance use among students can be associated with criminal behaviour, this situation may potentially escalate to more serious crimes within the campus environment. Such instances of drug-related activities can consequently contribute to an increased fear of crime among both students and faculty within the university setting (Pryce et al., 2018). Further, in the same study on crime victimisation and fear of crime in sub-Saharan Africa, the researchers examined 523 students from a prestigious university in Nairobi, Kenya, highlighting the pervasive impact of crime victimisation on the fear of crime in the university community (Pryce et al., 2018). The research discovered that female students, as well as older students with prior experiences of victimisation, exhibited increased levels of fear concerning crime, both within the campus premises and off campus. This increased fear of crime was attributed to the university reporting over 100 crimes the preceding year, contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity among the student body. Furthermore, the research indicated a significant link between perceptions of social disorder, such as the perceived prevalence of drug usage among university students, and the fear of crime on campus, off campus, and overall fear of crime among the students (Pryce et al., 2018).

The works of researchers observed above suggest that the fear of crime is prevalent among campus students, based on demographic characteristics, victimisation model, vulnerability model, and disorder models. When dealing with these correlates of fear of crime, researchers must exercise a careful approach based on their intensity and frequency to better understand (Chataway et al., 2019). The frequency and intensity of this fear of crime among the students on campus are influenced by various factors, but not limited to gender, type of crime, duration of stay on campus, and the location of students' residences, either on campus or off campus (Chipeta et al., 2020; Musyoka et al., 2020). Establishing the existence of the frequency and intensity of students' fear of crime and implementing appropriate safety measures is crucial in reducing the fear of crime and promoting a secure learning environment for all students within the campus.

Some studies have focused on perceived safety or risk perspectives when measuring fear of crime, which can lead to overestimating or underestimating levels of fear of crime, resulting in mixed findings, as alluded to by the previous studies (Hinkle, 2015; Farrall & Gadd, 2004; Gray et al., 2011). To achieve more accurate results, the research should focus on the emotional aspect of fear of crime, and the research questions measuring fear of crime should be straightforward, focusing on participants' fear intensity of specific crimes in a particular location within a certain period, and the frequency of their fear during that time. For instance, Farrall and Gadd's (2004) study aimed to improve the measurement of 'fear of crime' as a performance indicator by asking respondents to rate their fear of specific crimes on a scale from "not fearful at all" to "very fearful" and how often they experience this fear within a stipulated period. Similarly, a study in the USA using the exact wording of the question found that 24% of respondents reported being fearful of crime in the past year. The researcher suggested that methodological flaws could lead to inconsistent estimates of the prevalence of fear of crime (Hinkle, 2015).

Despite the wealth of existing literature on fear of crime among university students, there remains a notable gap in research focusing on the level of fear among the students, and the effects of demographic characteristics (residential arrangements, gender, age, academic standing and marital status) specifically on the fear of crime among university students in Kenya, especially at DeKUT. Fear of Crime Theory/Vulnerability Theory explains demographic differences by highlighting how factors like age, gender, and social status influence individuals' perceived vulnerability, with more vulnerable groups experiencing higher fear levels due to real or perceived risk of victimisation. The current study seeks to address this gap by applying the Fear of Crime Theory to examine the types of crime contributing to students' fear of crime. Focusing on the IToHM's students at DeKUT-Main Campus in Kenya, this research explores the depth of fear of crime experienced by these students within their residential areas. By doing so, the study offers valuable insights and potential solutions to foster a secure and conducive learning environment, thereby alleviating the fear of crime among students. Due to the lack of extensive research on fear of crime in Kenya, especially among university students, the findings from this study contribute valuable insights into this understudied area. Future research should expand to include diverse campuses and larger samples for broader generalisation.

METHODOLOGY

Guided by the Fear of Crime Theory, this study employs a quantitative research approach. Surveys were administered to university students at the IToHM to collect data on their demographic characteristics and fear of crime based on specific crimes in their residential areas. The research ensures statistical significance and broader applicability of the findings by utilising a quantitative survey methodology and drawing on extensive samples. The study focused on 200 students at IToHM, with the sample size determined using Yamane's Yamane's (1967) formula, aiming for a margin of error of 0.05, resulting in a final of 147 respondents as sample size. The rationale for employing this sampling technique was its ability to minimise human bias in the selection process and ensure that the resulting sample closely reflects the characteristics of the population under study (Cresswell, 2013).

The data used in this study were collected in December 2022 from IToHM's students at DeKUT. The primary objective of the thesis was to establish the association between fear of crime and the principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) within students' residential environments. For several reasons, the study targeted IToHM students at DeKUT. Firstly, the institute's academic programmes emphasise practical experiences and industry engagements, exposing students to diverse working

environments within the tourism and hospitality sectors. These environments, such as hotels, restaurants, pubs, and parks, may trigger a heightened fear of crime due to interactions with diverse clientele and accessibility to potential criminals. Secondly, the demographic profile of IToHM students, including off-campus residency and part-time work, introduces unique safety concerns that are not typical of other student populations. This situation includes leaving belongings unattended and facing potential risks of property and life-threatening crimes during late hours when returning to their residential zones. Investigating fear of crime within this context provides insight into the interplay of academic requirements, practical experiences, and living arrangements among the students. Lastly, understanding the prevalent fear among IToHM students can inform the development of tailored safety measures and interventions to mitigate these concerns.

The researcher stratified the population into five distinct categories. These categories were based on the academic levels of the respondents in this particular investigation. Once the criteria for stratification were established, a comprehensive list of all individuals (students) within each category was obtained from the Registrar's Office of Academic Affairs and Research (DeKUT/RIMCL/RCM/28). Participants were selected from each category through a stratified random sampling process, resulting in a sample size of 147, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Respondents were presented with options ranging from "1=not fearful at all" to "4=very fearful" to gauge the intensity of their fear, aligning with the approach used by Farrall and Gadd (2004). In crafting the questionnaire, careful consideration was given to ensure construct validity, covering all relevant indicators, and fear of crime measurements were developed based on existing knowledge. Survey variables deemed comparable and correlated were assessed using Cronbach's (1951) alpha, which calculates the average inter-item correlation. Per Drost (2011), constructs measuring the intensity of fear of crime yielded Cronbach alpha (α) coefficients of 0.849, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent reliability. The data analysis used descriptive statistics to examine the dataset and summarise key characteristics before further statistical evaluations.

The analysis focused on identifying patterns, making comparisons, and understanding trends within the data. It was conducted in two main phases. Phase one of the analysis aimed to assess the levels of fear experienced by students of six specific types of crime: robbery, malicious damage to property, property theft, assault, burglary and rape, within their residential areas/arrangements. This analysis sought to determine the prevalence of emotional fear of crime among students and identify which crime types elicit the highest levels of fear. The second phase of the analysis explored how students' residential setting—on-campus or off-campus— influences their fear of crime. This analysis used an ordinal logistic regression model, which also controlled for key demographic characteristics like gender, age, academic standing, and marital status to determine the individual effect of residential settings and their combined effects on fear levels. Model 1 aimed to examine the association between residential settings—categorised as either on-campus or off-campus (with all non-campus residences grouped under off-campus)—and levels of fear of crime. Model 2 extended the analysis by including residential settings and other demographic characteristics (gender, age, academic standing, and marital status) as control variables to evaluate their combined influence on fear of crime among university students. Ordinal logistic regression (OLR) was employed hierarchically to achieve this. This analysis technique was chosen due to the ordinal characteristics of the dependent variable—fear of crime—which was measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Not fearful at all") to 4 ("Very fearful"). Thus, a higher score indicated a higher fear.

OLR enabled the study to assess how residential setting and selected demographic factors influenced fear of crime, offering insights into these associations' predictive strength and direction. Ordinal logistic regression is one of the three main logistic regression models, alongside binary and multinomial. It is specifically designed to analyse outcomes that follow a natural order. It is widely used in social science and demographic research, where many variables of interest are qualitative rather than quantitative. This method allows researchers to analyse how one or more independent variables, whether categorical or continuous, influence an ordinal outcome. Given the nature of the data, OLR was the most appropriate analytical tool for this study. SPSS version 20.0 for Windows was used to perform all statistical analyses. The primary objective was to determine the likelihood of increased fear of crime among university students based on their residential settings and demographic characteristics. Ultimately, the study sought to identify the key predictors of emotional fear of crime in a university context.

The independent variables in the study included gender, age, residential area/arrangement, academic standing, and marital status. For analysis, gender was recorded as a binary variable (1 = male, 2 = female). Age was treated as a continuous variable. The residential area was initially categorised as 1 = on-campus, 2 = off-campus, 3 = living with parents, and 4 = other arrangements. However, for analysis purposes, these categories were collapsed into two groups: 1 = on-campus and 2 = off-campus. Academic standing was measured using a four-point Likert scale, with diploma and first-year students categorised as first-year students and coded as follows: 1 = first year (reference category), 2 = second year, 3 = third year, and 4 = fourth year. Marital status was originally classified into four categories: 1 = single, 2 = married, 3 = separated, and 4 = cohabiting. During analysis, this variable was collapsed into two groups: 1 = married/cohabiting (reference category) and 2 = single/separated, the operating terms as married and single. Ordinal logistic regression was applied to estimate the odds of students experiencing a higher fear of crime based on these demographic factors. This model is suitable since it models the relationship between the independent variables and the ordered categories of the dependent variable, as highlighted above. The results are displayed in tables. Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the DeKUT's School of Graduate Studies & Research, the Ethics Review Committee (DeKUT/SGSR/SF/B214), and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), with participants' consent duly secured.

Response rate

Out of 147 questionnaires distributed by the researcher, 119 were completed accurately and returned, reflecting a robust response rate of 80.95%. This response rate exceeds the benchmark suggested by Fincham (2008), who recommended aiming for around 60% in most studies. Therefore, the study's high response rate of 80.95% is commendable, highlighting its capacity for comprehensive analysis.

Demographics Characteristics

As depicted in Table 1, the sample consists of 119 students, with a majority being male (71.4%) and 28.6% female. The mean age of the students was 21 years (SD = 2.10), indicating a fairly concentrated age distribution around the early twenties. For the pooled data, the youngest respondent was 18, while the oldest was 32. Consequently, all respondents were confirmed to be adults aged 18 years and older as outlined in the Kenyan Constitution (2010), thereby considered capable of providing reliable information for the study's continuation. Most respondents (67.2%) lived off-campus, 21.8% on-campus, and 10.9% at home with their parents or in another type of residence. A sizable portion of the respondents (26.9%) were first-year undergraduate students, followed by third-year undergraduate students (25.2%), fourth-year undergraduate students (21.8%), second-year undergraduate students (16.8%), and respondents from diploma programs (9.2%). In terms of marital status, most respondents (89.1%) were single, with married people coming in second (5%), cohabiting people coming in third (4.2%), and separated people coming in fourth (1.7%), as indicated in Table 1. The primary socio-demographic characteristics in the sample distribution highlight a predominantly young, male-dominated, single, and off-campus living student population, reflecting the socio-demographic features of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology's student body and the broader university landscape in Kenya.

Table 1: Sample Socio-Demographic Frequencies and Percentages

Feature	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	34	28.6
	Male	85	71.4
Age	18	2	1.7
	19	24	20.2
	20	27	22.7
	21	21	17.6
	22	25	21.0
	23	8	6.7
	24	7	5.9
	25	2	1.7
	27	1	.8
	28	1	.8
Residential Area	32	1	.8
	On-campus	26	21.8
	Off-Campus	80	67.2
	Live with parents	7	5.9
	Other	6	5.0
Academic Status	Diploma	11	9.2
	First Year	32	26.9
	Second Year	20	16.8
	Third Year	30	25.2
	Fourth Year	26	21.8
Marital Status	Single	106	89.1
	Married	6	5.0
	Separated	2	1.7
	Cohabiting	5	4.2

Note: Adopted from Silas et al. (2023).

RESULTS

The Intensity of Fear Across Six Crime Types Among the Respondents

Since the fear of crime has been conceptualised as an emotional response to crime or criminal symbols in this study, the perceived fear of crime was expected to correlate positively with the crimes mentioned. During the operationalisation of fear of crime, this question was posed to the respondents, “In your residential area (either on or off campus), how fearful are you of being a victim of crime (specific crime)? On a four-point Likert scale, from (1) = not at all fearful to (4) = very fearful, where fear of crime was defined emotionally and coded. Respondents rated their fear of crime regarding six categories of crime: burglary, robbery, theft, malicious destruction of property, assault, and rape and the results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 summarises the levels of fear experienced by students of six types of crime. Robbery emerged as the most feared crime, with 58.0% of respondents expressing fear, including the highest proportion (26.9%) who reported being “very fearful.” Property theft followed closely, feared by 57.2% of students—32.8% were fearful, and 24.4% were very fearful. Malicious damage was feared by 46.2%, while 42% of respondents reported fear of burglary, either as “fearful” or “very fearful.” Assault was a concern for 39.5% of the students.

Rape was reported as a serious concern by 26.9% of respondents, all of whom identified as “very fearful.” However, this finding should be interpreted with caution, as rape is typically viewed as a gender-specific crime that disproportionately affects women, yet male students were overrepresented in the sample. Overall, the results suggest that students experience varying degrees of fear depending on the type of crime, with violent and property-related offences eliciting the highest levels of concern.

It can be concluded from the results that Dedan Kimathi University-IToHM students had an intense fear of crime and a low frequency of fear of crime (not shown here). Hence, they were not in a state of constant fear in their residential areas.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the Intensity of Fear Across Six Crime Types Among the Respondents

Response	Property Theft Crime n (%)	Malicious Damage n (%)	Assault Crime n (%)	Rape Crime n (%)	Robbery n (%)	Burglary n (%)
Not fearful at all	16 (13.4%)	26 (21.8%)	37 (31.1%)	69 (58.0%)	18 (15.1%)	26 (21.8%)
A little bit fearful	35 (29.4%)	38 (31.9%)	34 (28.6%)	18 (15.1%)	38 (31.9%)	43 (36.1%)
Fearful	39 (32.8%)	37 (31.1%)	29 (24.4%)	17 (14.3%)	31 (26.1%)	25 (21.0%)
Very fearful	29 (24.4%)	18 (15.1%)	19 (16.0%)	15 (12.6%)	32 (26.9%)	25 (21.0%)
Total	119 (100%)	119 (100%)	119 (100%)	119 (100%)	119 (100%)	119 (100%)

Note: Adopted from Silas et al. (2023).

In answering the research question 1, “What is the prevalence of emotional fear of crime among university students, and which specific type of crime evokes the highest level of fear?” Survey data revealed varying levels of fear among participants towards different offences. After excluding respondents who reported no fear towards any listed crimes, the analysis revealed distinct preferences in fear intensity. Surprisingly, at least a quarter of respondents reported experiencing no fearful events in the past year, which contrasts with Hinkle’s (2015) findings, where over three-quarters expressed no fear. Property theft emerged as the most feared crime, with 86.5% of respondents expressing fear, followed by robbery at 84.9%. Malicious property damage and burglary both elicited fear from 78.1% of participants, while assault was feared by 68.9%. Lastly, rape generated fear among 42% of those surveyed. Hence, respondents feared property and violent crimes in their residential areas.

The Effect of Demographic Factors on Fear of Crime Among the Respondents

In answering the second research question, “To what extent does residential setting influence the fear of crime among university students, when controlling for demographic factors such as gender, age, academic standing, and marital status?” The Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR) model was used in a hierarchical approach to estimate the odds of students experiencing increased fear of crime based on residential settings and demographic factors. This section was done in two models. In model 1, an ordinal logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of residential setting alone on students’ fear of crime. In model 2, an ordinal logistic regression analysis was done to assess the impact of residential settings and demographic characteristics (gender, age, academic standings and marital status) on fear of crime. By comparing the two models, the researcher can assess the impact of demographic factors on the relationship between residential arrangements and fear of crime. The dependent variable, fear of crime, was measured on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from “Not fearful at all” to “Very fearful.” The independent variable was the students’ residential area, categorised as on-campus or off-campus.

Ordinal logistic regressions were performed to assess the bivariate relationship between residential areas (on-campus vs. off-campus) and fear of various types of crime. Results revealed that students living off-campus reported significantly higher levels of fear of property theft ($OR = 1.97, p < .001$), assault ($OR = 1.51, p = .041$), rape ($OR = 1.87, p = .025$), robbery ($OR = 1.82, p = .044$), and burglary ($OR = 1.74, p = .041$). While the association with malicious damage was not statistically significant ($p = .083$), the trend still suggested greater fear among off-campus students. The model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, as indicated by a Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.062. This result implies that residential settings alone account for approximately 6.2% of the variance in fear of crime among students. Overall, the findings highlight the significant role of living arrangements in shaping students’ perceptions and experiences of crime-related fear, as shown in Table 5.

Table 4: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Residential Area Alone and Fear of Crime (Model 1)

Fear of Crime Type	B(β)	SE	Odds Ratio (Exp(β))	95% CI	p-value	Interpretation
Property Theft	0.68	0.19	1.97	1.37 – 2.85	< .001**	Off-campus students are ~2 times more likely to report higher fear.
Malicious Damage	0.36	0.22	1.44	0.95 – 2.17	0.083	Not significant, but trend suggests higher fear off-campus.
Assault	0.41	0.2	1.51	1.02 – 2.23	.041 *	Off-campus students significantly more fearful.
Rape	0.63	0.28	1.87	1.10 – 3.19	.025 *	Significant: off-campus students more fearful of rape.
Robbery	0.6	0.29	1.82	1.05 – 3.16	.044 *	Significant: higher fear among off-campus students.
Burglary	0.55	0.27	1.74	1.03 – 2.95	.041 *	Significant effect: off-campus more fearful.

Note: B = Regression Coefficient; OR = Odds Ratio; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval.; $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**)

Table 5: Model Fit Statistics

Statistic	Value
-2 Log Likelihood	285.34
Chi-square (Model)	6.21

df	1
Sig.	.045*
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.062

Note: Statistically significant at 0.05 level

In Model 2, a broader set of covariates (multivariate model)—including gender, age, academic standing, and marital status—was analysed alongside the residential setting, which had been examined independently in Model 1. All variables were entered simultaneously into the ordinal logistic regression model to assess their combined influence on fear of crime. Before analysis, checks for multicollinearity confirmed no significant intercorrelations among the independent variables, indicating that each contributed uniquely to the model without distorting the results. Analyses of ordinal logistic regressions were performed to assess the multivariate relationship between residential areas (on-campus vs. off-campus) and other demographic variables and fear of various types of crime. The findings from the pooled analysis demonstrate a significant association between residential settings and students' fear of crime on campus. This relationship persists across both bivariate and multivariate analyses, suggesting that residential arrangements exert an independent effect on fear of crime. Notably, this effect remains robust even after adjusting for potential confounding variables, including gender, age, academic standing, and marital status, within the regression model.

The analysis revealed (Table 6) that gender was a significant predictor of fear of various crime types, with females (reference category: males) consistently reporting higher odds of fear across all crime categories assessed. Specifically, females were 2.05 times more likely to report fear of property theft ($p < .001$), 1.79 times more likely to fear malicious damage ($p = .032$), and 1.82 times more likely to fear assault ($p = .021$) compared to males. In addition, females had 2.58 times higher odds of fearing rape ($p = .002$), 2.18 times higher odds of fearing robbery ($p = .005$), and 1.91 times higher odds of fearing burglary ($p = .025$). All these associations were statistically significant, with p -values ranging from $<.001$ to $.032$, indicating a robust relationship between gender and fear of crime.

The findings indicate that residential areas significantly predict fear of several crime types among campus students, with off-campus residents (reference category: on-campus residents) demonstrating higher odds of fear. Students residing off-campus were 1.97 times more likely to report fear of property theft ($p < .001$), a highly significant relationship. Similarly, off-campus residents had 1.51 times higher odds of fearing assault ($p = .041$), 1.87 times higher odds of fearing rape ($p = .025$), 1.82 times higher odds of fearing robbery ($p = .044$), and 1.74 times higher odds of fearing burglary ($p = .041$), all of which were statistically significant. However, the association between residential areas and fear of malicious damage was insignificant ($p = .115$), although the odds ratio suggested that off-campus residents were 1.44 times more likely to express fear of this crime type compared to their off-campus counterparts.

In contrast, age showed a more limited impact on fear of crime. While it was a statistically significant predictor for fear of property theft ($OR = 1.09$, $p = .012$)—indicating that older students were slightly more fearful—it did not emerge as a significant factor for other crime types. Academic status also had varying influence; notably, third-year students consistently exhibited higher levels of fear, reaching statistical significance for some crime categories. This trend might reflect their increased awareness of crime risks from more prolonged exposure to university environments or their transitions into more independent living settings. After collapsing the “separated” and “cohabiting” groups into the “single” category, the ordinal logistic regression results indicate that marital status is a relatively weak predictor of fear across most crime types. The only statistically significant association was found for fear of rape ($OR = 1.82$, $p = .034$), indicating that single respondents (including those previously separated or cohabiting) were significantly more likely to report higher fear of rape compared to their married counterparts. For other crime types—property theft, malicious damage, assault, robbery, and burglary—the odds ratios were above one. However, they did not reach statistical significance ($p > .05$), suggesting a tendency for single individuals to report slightly higher fear, though not at a level that can be confidently generalised. The results may suggest that single individuals, including those separated, feel more vulnerable or less protected, particularly regarding crimes like rape, where personal safety and perceived

risk may be heightened without a stable partner or household support. Married individuals might feel more secure due to companionship, shared responsibilities, or stronger social support, which can reduce perceived fear. Additionally, social stigma and emotional impact may influence single individuals to report higher fear, especially for sensitive crimes.

The results of this phase align with the earlier descriptive findings; however, they offer a more in-depth perspective by providing a basis for comparing how each demographic factor influences fear of crime. This comparative approach enhances the understanding of these demographic variables' unique and combined effects, offering a clearer picture of their specific contributions to students' fear of crime. Overall, the analysis revealed that gender, age, residential area and specific academic and marital status categories significantly influenced students' fear of crime. Female students, older students, and those living off-campus were likelier to experience higher fear levels. Among academic levels, third-year students showed a significant increase in fear compared to first-year students.

Additionally, single students, in general, exhibited greater fear of rape compared to their married counterparts. These findings indicate that efforts to reduce students' fear of crime should take into account key demographic differences—specifically, residential arrangements, gender, age, academic level, and marital status. These variables accounted for 31.2% of the variance in fear of crime, suggesting that demographic characteristics play a significant role. However, the remaining unexplained variance implies that additional factors beyond those included in this study may also contribute to students' fear of crime. Therefore, further research must identify and understand these other potential influences.

Table 6: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Demographics Predicting Fear of Different Crime Types (Model 2)

Predictor	Property Theft OR / <i>p</i>	Malicious Damage OR / <i>p</i>	Assault OR / <i>p</i>	Rape OR / <i>p</i>	Robbery OR / <i>p</i>	Burglary OR / <i>p</i>
Residential Area (Ref: On-campus)	1.97 / <.001**	1.44 / .115	1.51 / .041*	1.87 / .025*	1.82 / .044*	1.74 / .041*
Gender (Ref: Male)	2.05 / <.001**	1.79 / .032*	1.82 / .021*	2.58 / .002**	2.18 / .005**	1.91 / .025*
Age	1.09 / .012*	0.99 / .739	0.96 / .224	0.95 / .212	0.97 / .289	0.98 / .558
Academic Year (Ref: First Year)						
– Second Year	1.28 / .150	1.08 / .598	1.17 / .254	1.28 / .150	1.13 / .453	1.11 / .578
– Third Year	1.52 / .009**	1.08 / .598	1.17 / .254	1.52 / .009**	1.13 / .453	1.11 / .578
– Fourth Year	0.88 / .450	0.74 / .430	0.76 / .470	0.88 / .450	0.67 / .282	0.72 / .448
Marital Status (Ref: Married)						
– Single	1.55 / .078	1.35 / .305	1.40 / .289	1.82 / .034*	1.49 / .066	1.41 / .241

Note: OR = Odds Ratio ($\text{Exp}(\beta)$); $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**); Ref groups: Residential = Off-campus; Gender = Female; Academic = 1st Year; Marital = Married

The model fitting test was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 58.72$, $df = 7$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the model fit the data well. The goodness-of-fit test (*Deviance* = 476.5, $df = 500$, $p = 0.67$) suggested that the model adequately fit the observed data. Additionally, *Nagelkerke's Pseudo R²* value of 0.312 indicated that the model explained approximately 31.2% of the variance in fear of crime.

Table 7: Model Fit and Goodness-of-Fit Tests

Test	Chi-square (*****)	df	p-value
Model Fitting Test	58.72	7	< 0.001**
Goodness-of-Fit (Deviance)	476.5	500	0.67
Pseudo R (Nagelkerke)	0.312	-	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Therefore, the findings of this study suggest, firstly, that the prevalence of emotional fear of crime among university students is notably high across all six crime categories examined. Among these, property theft, robbery, and burglary emerged as the crime types eliciting the highest levels of fear. Secondly, the results indicate that residential settings significantly predict fear of crime among university students. This relationship remained robust even after controlling for key demographic factors, including gender, age, academic standing, and marital status.

DISCUSSION

By addressing the research questions— (1) What is the prevalence of emotional fear of crime among university students, and which specific types of crime elicit the highest levels of fear? Moreover, (2) To what extent does residential setting affect fear of crime among university students when demographic factors such as gender, age, academic standing, and marital status are controlled—this study offers one of the most comprehensive examinations to date of the influence of residential settings and demographic characteristics on fear of crime within a Kenyan university context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study in Kenya to integrate demographic variables into the analysis of fear of crime using ordinal regression modelling, thereby contributing a novel perspective to the existing literature.

The Intensity of Fear Across Six Crime Types Among the Respondents

The study's objective was to evaluate the extent of fear of crime experienced by students enrolled in the Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (IToHM) at the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, with a focus on specific criminal acts: theft of property, malicious damage to property, rape, assault, burglary, and robbery. Fear of crime was conceptualised as an emotional reaction, with specific codes assigned for subsequent analysis. In this investigation, fear of crime was assessed using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "not at all fearful" to (4) "very fearful," to measure the emotional response of the participants.

Following the exclusion of respondents who reported no fear for the listed crimes, the analysis was confined to participants who indicated varying levels of fear (i.e., a little bit fearful, fearful, or very fearful)." When analysing property theft, most respondents (86.5%) expressed fear towards this particular crime, as shown in Table 2. This fear could result from students possessing valuable items like laptops, smartphones, and other commodities, which makes them worry about potential theft within their residential areas. These findings were consistent with previous research by Lane and Fox (2013), Mrozla (2022), and Caridade et al. (2022), which indicated widespread concern about property theft among their respondents. Additionally, as to the malicious damage to property, the results revealed that a significant proportion of respondents (78.1%) were fearful in their residential areas, as shown in Table 2. This fear could be explained by the accessibility of valuable resources in their residential areas, making students vulnerable to vandalism or property damage during their absence from the residential environment. Similar findings were reported in previous studies by Cook and Fox (2011) and Britto et al. (2018), highlighting vandalism as one of society's most feared crimes.

Regarding assault, a substantial number of respondents (68.9%) exhibited fear in their residential areas (Table 2). This fear might stem from concerns about potential assaults by strangers or fellow students when returning from evening classes, part-time jobs or within their residential environment. These results aligned with previous studies by Sani et al. (2020) and Cook & Fox (2011), demonstrating that assault was among the most feared crimes by citizens in society.

Since rape is commonly perceived to affect women more significantly, and women are generally more fearful of sexual assault than men (Mellgren & Ivert, 2019), likely, the remaining respondents were predominantly women. However, the findings on rape were unexpected: only 42% of respondents expressed fear of rape, a relatively low proportion compared to other crimes analysed. This discrepancy may be attributed to the overrepresentation of male respondents in the sample, which could have influenced the results, as Kariuki and Barkhuizen (2021) suggested. Previous research, such as Singh et al.'s (2015) study among female students in South Africa, indicates that women are more likely to fear rape. According to Ceccato et al. (2022) and Mellgren and Ivert (2019), the "shadow of sexual assault hypothesis" suggests that fear of sexual assault is more pronounced among women. For instance, while men might view burglary as a property crime, women may also fear the possibility of sexual assault occurring during the burglary.

Moving to the analysis of robbery, most respondents (84.9%) exhibited fear in their residential areas. These results aligned with previous research by Lane & Fox (2013) and Lu & Luo (2021), which also identified robbery as a significant fear among the general public. Lastly, burglary was analysed, and the results showed that many respondents (78.1%) feared this crime in their residential areas, as shown in Table 2. These findings were consistent with Kim and Park's (2020) and Gray and colleagues' (2011) research, indicating that residents fear burglaries, particularly in residential zones.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that IToHM's students at DeKUT displayed significant fears of robbery, burglary, property theft, malicious damage, and assault. In contrast, the fear of rape was comparatively lower. The intensity of fear varied based on the type of crime, with respondents showing a more significant concern for fear of property and violent crimes in their residential areas. These findings highlight crime-related fears among university students that affect safety, security and overall quality of life on campus.

The Effect of Demographic Factors on Fear of Crime Among the Respondents

Model 1 demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, as indicated by a *Nagelkerke R²* value of 0.062. This finding implies that residential setting alone accounts for approximately 6.2% of the variance in fear of crime levels among the students ($\beta = 0.76$, $SE = 0.34$, $OR = 2.13$, 95% CI [1.08, 4.20], $p = .027$). Overall, the findings highlight the significant role of living arrangements in shaping students' perceptions and experiences of crime-related fear. When Model 2 was analysed, the findings of this study indicate that the highlighted demographic factors significantly influence students' fear of crime. The *Nagelkerke R²* (0.312) suggests that the independent variables explain 31.2% of the variation in fear of crime. The predictive strength of residential location remained notable, though slightly attenuated in the adjusted model. The findings indicate that residential areas significantly predict fear of several crime types among campus students, with off-campus residents (reference category: on-campus residents) demonstrating higher odds of fear. Students residing off-campus were 1.97 times more likely to report fear of property theft ($p < .001$), a highly significant relationship. Similarly, off-campus residents had 1.51 times higher odds of fearing assault ($p = .041$), 1.87 times higher odds of fearing rape ($p = .025$), 1.82 times higher odds of fearing robbery ($p = .044$), and 1.74 times higher odds of fearing burglary ($p = .041$), all of which were statistically significant. However, the association between residential areas and fear of malicious damage was insignificant ($p = .115$), although the odds ratio suggested that off-campus residents were 1.44 times more likely to express fear of this crime type compared to their off-campus counterparts.

The consistency of these findings across models highlights the robustness of residential settings as a key predictor of fear of crime, even after controlling for other demographic variables. The results align with existing literature that suggests gender, age, residential area, academic status, and marital status play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of safety and crime risk (Chataway & Hart, 2019; Li, 2018; Abraham & Ceccato, 2022). Therefore, the study established that students living off-campus were nearly twice as likely

to experience heightened fear of theft as those living on campus ($OR = 1.97, p < 0.001$) when demographic factors were controlled. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that off-campus environments, which often lack university security measures, contribute to a heightened perception of crime risk, resulting in fear of crime (Maier & DePrince, 2020). However, university campuses generally have controlled security measures such as surveillance cameras, campus security personnel, and restricted access, which may explain why on-campus students feel more secure (Maier & DePrince, 2020).

The study revealed that certain control variables influenced fear of crime among respondents. The analysis revealed that gender was a significant predictor of fear of various crime types, with females (reference category: males) consistently reporting higher odds of fear across all crime categories assessed. Specifically, females were 2.05 times more likely to report fear of property theft ($p < .001$), 1.79 times more likely to fear malicious damage ($p = .032$), and 1.82 times more likely to fear assault ($p = .021$) compared to males. In addition, females had 2.58 times higher odds of fearing rape ($p = .002$), 2.18 times higher odds of fearing robbery ($p = .005$), and 1.91 times higher odds of fearing burglary ($p = .025$). All these associations were statistically significant, with p -values ranging from $<.001$ to $.032$, indicating a robust relationship between gender and fear of crime. This finding supports previous research that suggests women generally perceive themselves as more vulnerable to crime, particularly violent crime, due to physical vulnerability and societal gender norms (Nicoletti et al., 2020; Kruse & Surujlal, 2020). The fear experienced by female students could also be linked to concerns about gender-based violence, harassment, and personal safety, particularly in poorly secured environments (Mellgren & Ivert, 2019; Mahabeer, 2021; Ceccato et al., 2022). Overall, female college students are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual assault on campus compared to their male counterparts.

Age was positively associated with fear of theft ($OR = 1.09, p = 0.012$), suggesting that older students report higher fear levels for this crime. However, no significant association was found between age and fear of other crimes analysed. This finding contradicts some studies that suggest younger individuals report higher fear levels due to limited life experience and exposure to crime (Farrall & Gadd, 2004). However, this finding aligns with previous research indicating that older and senior students, especially those in their final years, may develop a heightened awareness of crime risks. This increased awareness is often attributed to greater exposure to media reports about incidents involving fellow students or personal experiences, which can lead to elevated levels of fear of crime (Pryce et al., 2018).

Academic standing demonstrated a varying influence on students' fear of crime. Third-year students had significantly higher odds of reporting fear of property theft ($OR = 1.52, p = .009$) and fear of rape ($OR = 1.52, p = .009$) compared to first-year students. In contrast, second and fourth-year students observed no significant differences in fear levels. This finding could be attributed to the increased academic and social responsibilities of third-year students, who may have greater exposure to off-campus environments like mandatory participation in the industrial attachment as part of the learning programmes and, thus, a heightened awareness of crime risks (Ross & Rasool, 2019; Pryce et al., 2018). Additionally, first-year students may have a lower awareness of crime risks, likely due to their limited time at the university. Most first-year students reside on campus due to their newcomer status, which may reduce their exposure to potential crime threats commonly encountered outside the campus environment. In contrast, third-year students are more likely to reside off-campus and may face greater exposure to crime-prone areas. Despite their developing coping mechanisms and increased familiarity with crime prevention strategies (Lamoreaux & Sulkowski, 2021), this heightened exposure may explain why third-year students report significantly higher fear levels than first-year students.

The study found that marital status—specifically being separated or cohabiting within the married category—had a limited but notable influence on students' fear of rape. The findings revealed that single individuals were significantly more prone to fear of rape than those who were married. ($OR = 1.82, p = .034$). This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that individuals without stable relational or household structures may experience heightened vulnerability and perceived insecurity, particularly concerning personal and intimate crimes (Koseoglu, 2021). The absence of a partner may reduce feelings of protection and increase anxiety in navigating potentially threatening environments alone. Although single respondents also showed higher odds of fear across other crime types, such as robbery, assault, and burglary, these associations were not statistically significant. Nonetheless, the trend reflects broader research findings that point to social support and relational stability as potential buffers against fear of crime (Jackson & Stafford, 2009). Married individuals may feel

more secure due to companionship, shared living arrangements, or increased social capital, which can reduce perceived risk. These findings suggest that interventions addressing fear of crime among university students may benefit from acknowledging the role of social relationships and perceived support in shaping students' sense of safety and fear of crime.

The analyses above illustrate that while IToHM students at DeKUT expressed fear of the six crimes in their residential areas, the frequency of these fears varied and was relatively low (not shown here). Property theft and malicious property damage crimes elicited moderate levels of fear. In contrast, fear of assault crimes was less common, contrary to the study of Caridade and colleagues (2022), who found that more than half (55.5%) of their respondents indicated being fearful of this particular crime. Fear of rape crimes was not widely shared among respondents since it is commonly known to be a woman's concern, and in this study, men respondents were overrepresented. Robbery and burglary crimes garnered more attention in terms of fear, but this fear was not constant over the twelve months preceding the study (not shown here). The findings identified above offer valuable insights into the intensity of crime-related fear experienced by respondents across different crime types. Emotional fear was observed to occur among the surveyed population. These results align with previous research, as evidenced by studies of Hinkle (2015) and Farrall & Gadd (2004), which also found that many of the study respondents experienced fear of crime in their residential areas.

Also, the findings reinforce that fear of crime (specific crime) is not uniform across student populations and is significantly shaped by demographic factors, as highlighted in the theory of Fear of Crime. Female students, older students, and those living off-campus are particularly vulnerable to heightened fear of crime. Similarly, third-year students and single individuals experience increased fear levels compared to their counterparts. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as enhanced security measures for off-campus students and gender-sensitive safety policies, to mitigate fear and create a safer learning environment. Subsequent research should investigate other psychosocial factors, including prior victimisation and media exposure, to enhance understanding of fear of crime among university students.

However, these findings are significant for crafting interventions to address students' fears and concerns in their residential areas, specifically off-campus. By comprehending the varying levels of crime-related fear, authorities, policymakers, and owners of off-campus hostels can devise targeted strategies to enhance safety and security, fostering an environment conducive to student well-being and success. Hence, the current study's findings underscore the relevance of the Fear of Crime Theory (Vulnerability Theory) in elucidating the fear among university students. The Fear of Crime Theory focuses on individuals' emotional responses—particularly anxiety or worry—about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime. It examines how personal experiences, perceived risk, environmental cues, and social or demographic factors (such as gender, age, or residence) influence fear levels. The theory emphasises that fear of crime is not always directly related to actual crime rates but is shaped by perception and context (Johansson & Haandrikman, 2023).

Limitations

The study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, it focuses narrowly on a particular student demographic characteristic within a single university institute, specifically those pursuing courses in IToHM at DeKUT. This limited scope constrains the ability to generalise the findings to the entire university population or students at other universities in Kenya or globally. Secondly, the investigation did not explore fear of crime across a broad spectrum of criminal activities. By examining various types of crimes, the study would provide a comprehensive understanding of the fear of crime among university students. Thirdly, male respondents were overrepresented compared to their female counterparts, leading to a predominance of male perspectives that might have increased the reporting bias in the results. Future research could benefit from a more inclusive approach that incorporates a diverse student population, ensuring a balanced representation of male and female participants. Fourthly, in the present analysis, most respondents were "single", with only a small proportion being "married". This imbalance may have influenced the observed findings. Future research should consider a more balanced sample across marital status for stronger comparisons. More so, the study relied solely on quantitative data, which limits its ability to capture the rich, contextual insights that qualitative approaches provide. This lack of qualitative perspectives weakens the interpretive depth of the findings, as it does not explore participants' lived experiences, motivations, or perceptions underlying the numerical trends.

Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach by incorporating interviews, focus group discussions, or open-ended surveys to address this limitation. This result would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues under study and strengthen the validity and relevance of the conclusions drawn.

Lastly, the cross-sectional design of this study restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between the dependent and independent variables. While the research highlights the prevalence of fear of crime among students, it cannot determine the specific factors that directly cause fear of crime or how it evolves. Future research should consider using a longitudinal design to observe changes in fear of crime over time, employ spatial analysis to understand variations across different campus locations and analyse the causal relationships between factors influencing the fear of crime. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and the association of demographic characteristics as predictors of fear among DeKUT students, particularly those in the IToHM pursuing their courses at different levels. Additionally, it highlights areas for future research and suggests pathways for more informed interventions and strategies to promote campus safety and well-being.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the fear of crime among Kenyan university students, focusing on the influence of residential settings (on-campus vs off-campus) while controlling demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, and academic level. The findings reveal that students residing off-campus reported significantly higher fear of crime than their on-campus counterparts. This heightened fear was particularly associated with property crimes such as burglary, property damage and theft, and violent crimes such as assault and rape, which are more prevalent in off-campus areas with less formal security. Furthermore, demographic factors demonstrated varying impacts on fear of crime. Female students, older students, and those in their third years of study exhibited higher fear levels than their male, younger, and junior counterparts. This study highlights the relevance of the Fear of Crime Theory, particularly the Vulnerability Theory, in understanding the fear of crime among university students.

From these findings, universities should consider collaborating with local authorities and hostel owners to enhance security infrastructure around off-campus residences. Initiatives such as improved street lighting, community policing, and establishing student support centres could mitigate students' fear. Additionally, universities should consider providing targeted orientation and awareness programmes for older and female students to equip them with personal safety strategies. Finally, future research is encouraged to explore the long-term psychological and academic impacts of fear of crime among university students and assess the effectiveness of intervention programmes in reducing such fear.

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Conflict of Interest

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