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ASSESSING SCHOOL SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR TERRORIST THREATS IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Habib Alam[*1], Kamal Uddin[2], Navid Hussain[3]

[*1]*Incharge, IT Section, Security Department, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan*
[2]*Assistant Professor, Karakoram International University, Gilgit*
[3]*Sr. Educator, Department of Education, Gov. of Gilgit-Baltistan*

[*1]habibrajpoot007@gmail.com, [2]kamal@kiu.edu.pk, [3]virgorian1986@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: *
Habib Alam

Abstract
Security in educational institutions is a global concern. There is no doubt a secure institutional environment positively influences the attitudes of students, teachers, parents and supporting staff. This study aimed to assess the background of the terrorist incidents targeting schools and to evaluate the current level of security preparedness level to deal with any possible terrorist attack, in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted in the District Gilgit. Schools were randomly selected from the population of primary to secondary level institutions in the year 2022. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to head teachers. Security preparedness was assessed across four key areas: (1) Building and Infrastructure (2) Technology Deployments (3) Human Resource Training, and (4) Security Policy Guidelines. Descriptive analysis showed that the majority of the schools (76%) lacked essential security measures across all four domains. Only a small proportion of (4%) had security levels considered sufficient to counter potential terrorist attacks. No significant differences were found between public and private schools. However, primary schools were identified as more vulnerable compared to middle and secondary schools. It is recommended that school security policymakers establish a clear mechanism for implementing security guidelines to ensure safer educational safer environment.

INTRODUCTION

Around the globe, the importance of security, and a safe environment in educational institution is well recognized. However, over the past few decades' global terrorism has escalated leading to an increasing number of attacks on schools (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2016). Although it's a worldwide phenomenon, certain regions—such as Pakistan— are more severely affected due to heightened vulnerabilities (Government of Pakistan, 2014; IEP, 2016). Until the attack on the Army Public School in December 2014, the Government of Pakistan had paid limited attention to the safety of schools, students, and instructors. This deadly assault on the Army Public School in Peshawar, which left 147 people dead (Shah, 2024), triggered a wave of terror and was followed by a series of attacks on educational institutions (Shah, 2014).

The Supreme court of Pakistan, in its verdict on September, 25, 2020, regarding the judicial commission's inquiry into the APS Peshawar attack, declared the accident a security failure (Bhatti, 2020). A report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) gained

internationally attention and urged the Government of Pakistan to take stronger action against terrorist attacks on schools, particularly after when 12 schools were burned down in the Diamer District of Gilgit Baltistan (HRW, 2018). While the government efforts to mitigate the risks of attacks on educational institutions and enhance school security are commendable (Weibel, 2018), vulnerabilities persist and yet to be fully addressed.

In the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, the risk of a terrorist attack is heightened due its sparse population limited infrastructure, which hinder rapid emergency response. Such incidents can spread among the population, especially given the region's history of conflict and recurring sectarian tensions, which have fueled instability over time. Gilgit city, as the administrative and economic center of the region, is particularly vulnerable to security threats. In the context, schools may become soft targets for terrorist activities, whether in large-scale attacks or isolated acts of violence by extremist groups.

In addition, Gilgit Baltistan—recognized as a gateway to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—has gained significant strategic importance in recent years due to multi-billion-dollar investments in infrastructure, energy, and other economic sectors. Such large-scale investment may attach terrorist organizations seeking to sabotage economic development, ongoing projects, and public institutions, including schools. Educational institutions are particularly vulnerable, as security gaps make them soft targets for terrorist activity. Terrorists often employ violence to advance their objectives by instilling fear. The reason behind attacking educational institutions serves two purposes for terrorists. Attacks on schools serve two key purposes for such groups: first, they generate widespread terror due to the targeting of children, and second, they affect nearly every segment of society, thereby creating national uncertainty and jeopardizing economic stability (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020). In this context, the present study aims to assess the existing security measures and the level of preparedness in schools to respond to potential future incidents.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing terrorism. We begin with Dela Roche's (2004) views, who attempted to develop a 'scientific' definition of terrorism in his article Toward a Scientific Theory of Terrorism published in the journal of Sociological Theory. The article was written in the wake of the September 11 attacks on World Trade Centre. Admitting acknowledging the the failure of specialists from in international studies and political science to define terrorism adequately, the author proposes a socioecological perspective—one that focuses on the causes of terrorism and the group behavior behind organized attacks. As he defines, "Terrorism is a form of collective violence, a broader subject whose students have long displayed a hunger for scientific explanation" (p. 1). In his attempt to define terrorism, the author cites Charles Tilly's statement "the term [terrorism] sprawls across a wide range of human cruelties." (p. 1). Terms such as 'Cruelty', 'Violence' [whether individual or by groups], 'attack', 'extortion' are often used in relation to terrorism, thus rendering it an unmanageably broad concept. The author concludes his discussion by proposing five criteria for a scientific theory of terrorism—without offering a definitive definition of terrorism itself. Nevertheless, the criteria he outlines are: (1) simplicity (2) generality (3) testability (4) validity, and (5) originality. He suggests these criteria as potential framework for evaluating scientific bases of any definition of terrorism. Similarly, much of the literature, that discusses, or reports on related policies, frameworks, and actions also suggests that terrorism remains a phenomenon that has yet to be defined in a consistent and universally accepted manner.

The lack of clarity and objectivity in defining terrorism renders any theory of terrorism unscientific, objectivity is fundamental criterion of science. Consequently, the existing definitions appear to be based on superficial understanding of terrorism (Lia, 2000). A review of literature on theories of terrorism (for instance, Coccia, 2018; Hošková-Mayerová et al., 2020; De La Roche, 2004; Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2016), suggests that terrorism often originates from acts of violence. The definition becomes particularly ambiguous a group uses violence as a tactic in their struggle for freedom and resistance against oppression. This indicates that rationality plays a crucial role in arriving at a scientific definition.

Even terrorist often rationalize of their violent tactics to support their narratives. However, the nature of rationality in socio-religious context differs from the general concept of rationality, as violence in the context of resistance against oppression and foreign occupation may appear justified. In any case, the element of 'rationality' in the definition of 'terrorism' is essential for understanding perspectives of both 'terrorists' and others— especially the victims, who are often innocent.

Khan, and Azam, (2008) who described individuals involved in terror acts:

…. all believed that if they sacrificed themselves for the sake of their religion, they would be blessed with paradise in life after death… The resulting evidence on the individual level suggests that both higher standards of living and education are negatively associated with participation in terrorist activities (p. 65),

Religious extremists build their arguments on interpretations rooted in religious teachings. As such, recognizing this form of rationality—motivated by religious beliefs—is nearly impossible to address through conventional logical or rational discourse, as it deviated from the standard of definitions of rationality. This becomes more evident in the latter part of Khan and Azam's (2008) description. The first part reflects the perspective of the terrorist, yet it does not explain why they choose terrorism as a means to attain paradise—especially when other, non-violent paths are available. Rationality, being a dynamic concept, can be applied even to religious motivations behind terrorist and violence. Furthermore, as Roche (2004) pointed out, a sociological perspective should also be included in the theoretical framework of terrorism, as its root causes may extend beyond purely religious factors. Nevertheless, if the motivation is religious, it's important to recognize that religion is subject multiple interpretations. This raises two key questions (1) why do terrorist adopt one specific interpretation of their religious teachings over others, and (b) what drives their self-proclaimed sense of 'righteousness'? These questions have practical significance for policymakers, who need to understand both the conception and misconception of religious teachings and the concept of righteousness in order to effectively address the issue. This discussion—regarding how an act of righteous, as perceived by one party, may be viewed as an act of terrorism by the aggrieved party—could, we believe, be more effectively addressed if other social and political factors were carefully excluded from the analysis of terrorism's root causes.

Thus a 'scientific' explanation of religious interpretations, and the notion of righteousness may include the ideological dimension—alongside other aspects such economic, social, psychological factors. The challenge lies in the fact that each of these dimensions, in one way or another relates to the conception of terrorism appears to be 'scientific' within its own disciplinary framework. This is one of main reasons many theorists struggle to comprehend the phenomenon in a holistic manner. For instance, experts such as Coccia, (2018), Hošková-Mayerová et al., (2020), De La Roche (2004), the Institute of Economics and Peace
(2016), and Khan, & Azam (2008) as well as Lia (2018),) tend to highlight specific dimensions of terrorism—often focusing on its association with overpopulation and the resulting economic deprivation of the masses, which falls under the economic aspect of terrorism. While no denies that terrorism has roots in multiple scientific fields—including social psychology, political science, and economics—there remains a need for an integrative theoretical framework than can account for this complexity (Lia & Skjølberg, 2005)

Terror attacks on schools: A global phenomenon

Many believe that the motivation for terrorism, at a deeper level, is multifaceted— extending beyond religious or economic roots. The phenomenon of Globalization appears to have exacerbated terrorism and made it even more complex. Lia's (2007) brief booklet on Globalization and the Future of Terrorism pointed out:

"While globalization had long been counted as mostly a force for good, at least for the Western world, the horrifying onslaught of death and destruction in the world's greatest metropolis of power and capital highlighted the 'dark side of globalization" (p. 1).

In any case, accepting that terrorism is an act of violence in the general sense, it tends to flourishes based on its perceived success. The question of how terrorist succeed in carrying out acts of terror often

reflects the weaknesses or vulnerabilities of the affected parties (Hošková-Mayerová et al., 2021; IEP, 2016). Schools are among the most vulnerable civilian institutions, facing significant risks of terrorist attacks. According to Forester (2019), in the context of Jordon, women are particularly vulnerable to terrorism. The Global Terrorism Index-2016 (IEP, 2016) reported that, of all terror attacks on educational institution globally, Pakistan accounted for the highest percentage at 23.15%, followed by Afghanistan, Iran, India, Thailand, United States, Peru, Turkey and Philippines.

Although school security has improved, school premises, lives of students, and school infrastructure remain prime targets of terrorism (Hošková-Mayerová et al., 2021). According to a report by the Educator's School Safety Network (Klinger & Klinger, 2019), during the 2018-19 school year, in the U.S., 6% of all reported terror incidents were school shootings. Other incidents include false reporting/mock attacks (34%), the discovery of firearms on school grounds (24%), suspicious devise (9%), and other violent incidents (such as fights) accounting for 18%. Additionally, incidents such as bomb threats reportedly increased by 34%.

According to Michael (2018):

"In reality, school safety and security issues are a pervasive global issue. School officials in Canada, Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Argentina, Israel, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, South Africa, Kenya, and Trinidad – Tobago all have safety concerns ranging from poisonous snakes, spiders and centipedes to gang violence, terrorism and devastating natural disasters" (Para-2).

A study in the Japanese context by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004) revealed that Japanese society was awakened to the need to ensure school safety following a 2002 terror attack at an elementary school, which left eight children dead. Incidents like these in developed countries prompt one to begin thinking how serious the situation can be in developing countries. For example, Pakistan has experienced particularly troubling levels of school-related terrorism. The 2014 Army Public School massacre (Government of Pakistan, 2014) which killed more than 150 students and injured many others, sent a shockwave through society and instilled fear among students and parents alike. Similarly, a school bus attack in Swat Valley killed school girls again striking fear among students and parents.

The aim here is not to recount every past terror incident, as much has already been reported and documented. Rather, two core concerns are raised:

1. Why does terrorism occur?
2. If it occurs, how can its impacts be minimized?

The first question involves identifying the conditions and motivations that enable terrorist acts, both globally and locally. Understanding the causes of terrorism provides critical insight for addressing the second concern—mitigating its effect. The aftermath of terrorism can have a long-lasting and devastating consequences. Therefore, those involve in disaster management and emery response—particular in terrorism related cases—must possess knowledge of terrorist-related factors as well as strategies, tools, and techniques to manage the aftermath.

Lia (2018), in discussing general causes of terrorism, found a correlation between terrorism and overpopulation (r = .30). Furthermore, a stronger negative correlation between terrorism and a country's per capita income (r = -.45). only two relationships then moved to second question how? Review, although gpt improved its write up. As for preparedness, many institutions have developed safety guidelines, manuals, and technological tools aimed at preventing such incidents or reducing their impact (Lomte & Almaqashi, 2019). These plans and action protocols need to be updated from time to time in order to adapt to changing circumstances. are to be revised from time to time in order to modify as per demands of the circumstances.

School security in Pakistan: Background, policies, plans and actions

A study conducted by Mirza & Paracha (2016) revealed how militant violence has harmed the education of hundreds of thousands of children due to fragile law and order situation and weak security measures across school premises. Following the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, there was a nationwide pledge to take strong action against the terrorists (Government of Pakistan, 2014). The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) of 2014, introduced by the Government of Pakistan, outlined broad policy principles along with long-

awaited reforms across various state institutions. It was recognized that an action plan with precise, primarily quantitative, and time-bound objectives was required to effectively combat terrorism. Towards this end, the government took further steps by establishing the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). This organization developed the National Action Plan (NAP) to combat terrorism, under the direction of the Ministry of Interior and in collaboration with key stakeholders. The plan was adopted by parliament on December 24, 2014. Operation Zarb-e-Azab along with operation Radu-Ul-Fasad, was carried out as a part of NAP to combat terrorism and restore law and order in the country (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020). However, school-safety requires broad-based efforts by the entire community, including educators, students, parents, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations (Monsees, 2019). By adopting a comprehensive approach to school safety—focusing on prevention, intervention, and response—schools can increase the safety and security of students (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020; Khan & Azam, 2008). Parents should be engaged in the decision-making process for various reasons, primarily to ensure the safety of their children's (UNISDR, 2014). It is essential to implement strict and extensive security measures on premises to protect both human lives and physical Infrastructure. The Government of Pakistan (2014) outlines four major safety frameworks that are critical in determining the effectiveness of preparedness: school building & infrastructure, technological deployment, human resource skill management & training, and policies and framework for maintaining school security. These aspect of security are highlighted in the Government of Pakistan's technical documentation on educational security (Government of Pakistan, 2014), and are further elaborated as a theoretical framework for the present survey study.

Dimensions of School Security Framework

School building and infrastructure.

According to UNISDR (2014), a comprehensive school safety framework consists of three key components: (1) Safe learning facilities, (2) School disaster management, and (3) Risk Reduction and Resilience Education. In recent years, increased attacks on educational institutions involving weapons and explosives have prompted many school districts to enhance their traditional security systems with high-tech equipment and trained personnel (Lomte & Almaqashi, 2019).

Global security measures reveal various strategies, for example, following a 2001 attack on a Japanese elementary school, administrators revised their security protocols and level of preparedness. These revised strategies wee categorized into 'soft' and 'hard 'approaches to school safety. According to OECD (2004), soft approaches included the development of crisis management manuals for school (e.g. guides outlining response patterns for critical situations), and collection of school security models (e.g. methods of restricting access), which could be adapted according to each school's specific context and needs. Another soft approach involved community-based projects such as preparing pamphlets on how to support victims. Hard approaches, as identified through expert consultations, focused on planning and design of school facilities to meet security needs. These included ensuring visibility to deter criminal acts, and the installation of emergency notification systems in classrooms (OECD, 2004, p, 50).

Technological Deployment.

The rapid development of technology has increased both the potential for and sophistication of security threats. Safety cameras now allow for the monitoring and control of individuals' possession and surroundings. Most organizations and management bodies use these cameras with a strong sense of responsibility to protect their assets and premises from unauthorized access (Gillani, 2019; Lomte & Almaqashi, 2019). Modern surveillance cameras are more advanced, compact and capable of uninterrupted operations. Video surveillance is considered a key component in countering threats, as closed-circuit televisions (CCTV) systems are now widely deployed in schools, commercial establishment, hospitals, traffic intersections, and various other public and private spaces (Lomte & Almaqashi, 2019). Surveillance cameras can help detect criminals and terrorists before they gain access to facility. Additionally, they serve as powerful tools for gathering evidence. If the perpetrators are not apprehended at the scene, the recorded footage can later serve as crucial evidence in court. This was

exemplified in the case of presented before the Supreme Court of Pakistan following the Army Public School APS) attack (Bhatti, 2020). The technological deployment is not easy to manage and maintain, as it requires highly trained skillful personnel. In addition, such technological resources are too expensive to provide with each and every school in Pakistan, especially in far-flung rural areas of the country (Gillani, 2019; Mir, 2015).

Human resource management.

It entails professional security guards, well-equipped personnel, CCTV operators, and the head of school with necessary knowledge of security protocols. As according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (2004), the soft approaches are more concerned with people in charge of school security. Any school safety plan would be incomplete without involving the skills and necessary training of the individuals responsible for school safety. In order to ensure the safety of all students and employees, a thorough and successful security strategy must include establishing clear duties and responsibilities for each member of the school community (Monsees, 2019; Protection, 2014). Having a team in place to deal with possible threats must have the confidence to report any suspicions, security breaches, or concerns to the proper authorities and implement a security strategy. Employees must be taught about the need to look out for ammunition and licensed weapons, oddly-placed luggage or other goods, and unusual curiosity from strangers in more difficult-to-access areas (Schneider, 2002). Induction training for new employees should give specific training on how to respond in an emergency (as also indicated in OECD, 2004). Gillani (2019) revealed that academics manage security in schools with meagre knowledge about security protocols, current security systems, and all connecting nodes of security.

Policy and framework.

The policy framework entails monitoring and action plans to implement security protocols effectively. The Pakistan School's Safety Framework (PSSF, 2017) provides comprehensive guidelines for effective security in educational premises (Government of Pakistan, 2014). With this policy framework, the Government hopes to create a set of standards for executing comprehensive school safety at the national, provincial, and local levels. The framer includes almost all stakeholders' support in school safety. It emphasis on at the participation of faculty, security staff, and children in enhancing school security. It provides guidelines for adopting risk reduction measures to avert any potential threat as documented. The framework acknowledges the importance of working with other similar organizations, already operational in the country such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is also advised to work (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Since the Government of Pakistan (2014, 2017) recognizes that safety needs in schools, and thus has chalked out the policy frameworks, however, there are challenges which deter its full implementation. There are reports that suggest schools' lacking of necessary technological and human resources, break down in communicating the policies (Gillani, 2019), therefore, the present study has attempted to assess security preparedness in Pakistani schools within the boundary of these four dimensions of school safety.

Methods

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used to study all schools up to K-10 (Secondary) level, in District Gilgit, the capital city of the administrative province of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Using stratified random sampling, 106 head teachers were selected from the target population of 385, which included both public and private schools in District Gilgit. The stratified sampling technique ensured proportional representation from primary, middle, and secondary schools across each stratum.

A questionnaire containing a mix of nominal and categorical scales was developed to measure preparedness within the framework of four dimensions of security. The instrument was validated through taking feedback from security experts and filed researchers. Prior to data collection, consent was obtained from school administrator and the headteachers.

The survey included statements to assess four key areas: Building and infrastructure (10 items), Technological deployment (8 items), Human resource deployment and training related statements (13 items), and policy framework and guidelines (08

items). The respondents were to indicate whether the security facility mentioned in the statement "does not exit", "partly exist", or "fully exist".

The questionnaire comprised three parts. Part one sought the participants' consent and provided information about the purpose of the study along with ethical assurances. Part two collected demographic information such as school level (primary, elementary or secondary), and school system (public or private). Since private schools outnumber public schools in the district, their proportion was considered in the sample design.

Results and Findings

Descriptive statistical analytical tools, such as frequencies, percentages o were used. For comparisons between school systems, Test of Median, Chi-square analysis was conducted. It helped in examining the association of demographic variables with the security preparedness. Frequency of responses against each statement are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Frequencies (Dimension-1) Safety of School Building and Infrastructure

#	Statements	Does not exist	Partially exists	Fully exists
1	The school has boundary wall.	18 (17%)	5 (4.7%)	83 (78.3%)
2	The school boundary wall is as per standard.	27 (25.5%)	60 (56%)	19 (17.9%)
3	The boundary wall is fenced with razor wire	88 (83%)	9 (8.5%)	9 (8.5%)
4	The school has emergency exit gates.	96 (90.6%)	3 (2.8%)	7 (6.6%)
5	There are concrete barriers at the in and out	101 (95.3%)	1 (9%)	4 (3.8%)
6	The zigzag mechanism has been constructed at the entrance	101 (95.3%)	4 (3.8%)	1 (0.9%)
7	The school has separate car parking system	101 (95.3%)	2 (1.9%)	3 (2.8%)
8	The school is lying at a minimum distance of 100 meters from connecting road	39 (36.8%)	27 (25.5%)	40 (37.7%)
9	The school has security check posts at walls and main gates	99 (93.2%)	2 (1.9%)	5 (4.7%)
10	The main building is located at minimum distance of 50 meters from main boundary wall	36 (34%)	53 (50%)	17 (16%)

From an overview of Table 1, it becomes evident that school boundary—which is the primary requirement for any schools' safety—is reported by as many as 18 school principals that the boundary wall is non-existent. The response pattern shows that most of the facilities indicated in the security framework either do not exit or only partially exist.

Table 2: Response Frequencies (Dimension-2): Technology Deployment

S #	Statements	No	Yes
1	The school has security cameras installed.	93 (87.7%)	13 (12.3%)
2	The security cameras are functional.	92 (86.8%)	14 (13.2%)
3	Number of s functional surveillance cameras is enough.	95 (89.6%)	11 (10.4%)
4	The Monitoring and surveillance system is installed.	95 (89.6%)	11 (10.4%)
5	The school has advanced metal detectors.	101 (95.3%)	4 (3.8%)
6	The school has security alarm.	100 (94.3%)	06 (5.7%)
7	The school has walk through gates fully functional.	104 (98.1%)	2 (36.8%)
8	The school has uninterrupted power supply and generator. back up to alive the surveillance coverage.	96 (90.6%)	10 (9.4%)

The first item in Table 2 was about security cameras. As much as 93 % did not have cameras installed in their schools. Only 13 % reported to have security cameras. Most of the schools lacked in skills of monitoring and surveillance. They seemed to have lacked competence in maintaining proper functioning of the security equipment. Other indicators of the security preparedness under the second dimension of the security framework can be seen in Table 2.

Table 3: Response Frequencies (Dimension-3): Human resources deployment

S #	Statements	No	Yes
1	The school has security personnel deployed at various positions	101 (95.3%	5 (4.7%)
2	The security personnel are well equipped	98 (8.5%)	8 (7.5%)
3	The security personnel are licensed.	95 (89.6%)	11 (10.4%)
4	The school head has trainings in security domain.	101 (95.3%)	5 (4.7%)
5	The school has CCTV operator.	102 (95.3%)	04 (3.8%)
6	The security personal maintains security weapons & metal detectors	96 (90.6%)	10 (9.4%)
7	The security personnel scans and clears all visitors and students	98 (92.5%))	06 (5.7%)
8	The security personnel ensure that the parking area is clear using metal detectors	101 (95.3%)	05 (4.7%)
9	The security personnel follows the security protocols in case of any emergency	96 (90.6%)	10 (9.4%)
10	The head of school often visits around schools for security.	91 (85.8%)	15 (14.2%)
11	The head of school engages the security personnel in mock exercise.	106 (100%)	0
12	The head of school follows the security plan provided by provincial government	95 (89.6%)	11 (10.4%)
13	The head of school ensures the entire search of school along security staff before start of school timing to confirm no miscreant is hiding for potential threat and terrorist activity.	95 (89.6%)	11 (10.4%)

From the Human resource perspective, the statements and the responses in Table 3 show that only 5 schools had school security personal deployed various positions. Majority were not equipped, not licensed, and with no training for using CCTV cameras, and their maintenance. The few schools pointed out they had these were the Army controlled institutions, while institutions in normal civilian regions were prone to security issues and hence were at risk. Findings regarding the last dimension is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Response Frequencies (Dimension-4): Policy guidelines

	Statements	N0	Partially	Yes
1	The school has security plans received from higher authorities	106 (100%)	0	0
2	The school receives technical assistance from law enforcement agencies.	106 (100%)	0	0
3	The head of school ensures the premises cleared before and after the school timing	0	1 (0.9%	105 (99.1%
4	The security guards and weapons are licensed and verified	97 (91.5%)	00	9 (8.5%)
5	The respective police station officials often visit the school premises to verify the security measures are implemented	102 (96.2%)	00	04 (3.8%)
6	The school has complete action plan in case of any emergency	98 (92.5%)	00	08 (7.5%)
7	The school has all emergency numbers displayed	45 (42.5%)	00	61 (57.5%)
8	The administration and security personnel of the school participate in mock exercises	106 (100%)	00	00

In Table 4, we can see that none of the school principals reported that they receive any guidelines or plans from their seniors. No technical assistance seeking culture was reported as was obvious from the second statement in the table.

Demographic effects:

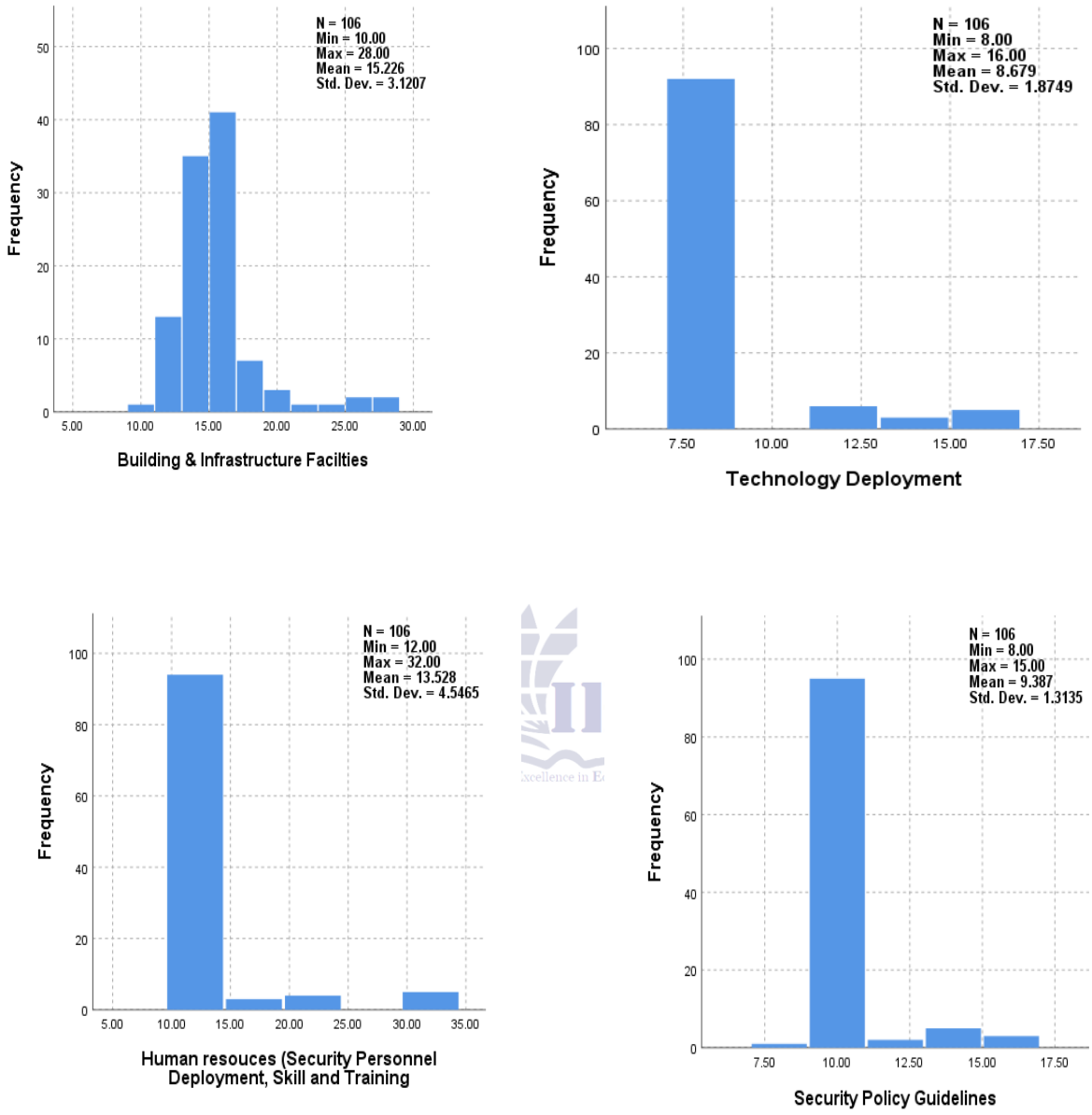
It seemed appropriate to test for difference across demographics. The Independent-Samples Median Test was run on SPSS V.23.,which facilitated in drawing comparison between school system. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Comparison of Median Between (School System) Public and Private schools.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The medians of "Building & Infrastructure" are the same across categories of School System.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.145[a]	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The medians of "Technology Deployment" are the same across categories of S. System.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.447[a]	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The medians of "Human Resource" are the same across categories of S. System.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.477[a]	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The medians of "Security Policy & Plan" are the same across categories of School System.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.183[a]	Retain the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .050.				
a. Yates's Continuity Corrected Asymptotic Sig.				

From the results given in Table 5, no significant difference between private schools and public schools were indicated, suggesting that both schools, on average, have similar conditions of security preparedness. The histograms can be seen in Figure. 1 for visual differences. Having found no significant difference between school system, all the responses were also calculated into a composite score to get an overall view of the security preparedness against each of the four dimensions of the security framework. This allowed a quicker and overall look at the data, as presented in Figure. 1

Figure 1. Visual display of frequency responses in each dimension



Comparison across School Levels

The researchers hypothesized if there was any significant difference between levels of schools, that is, whether there was any significant difference between the Primary, Middle and Secondary schools. To test the hypotheses, the Kruskal-Wallis test was run on SPSS. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison between school levels

	Building & Infrastructure (1)	Technology Deployment (2)	Human Resource (3)	Policy Guidelines (4)
Kruskal-Wallis H	9.609	30.808	18.146	21.653

Df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.008	.000	.000	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test				
b. Grouping Variable: School Level (Primary, Middle, Secondary)				

As it can be seen in the four columns of Table 6, which show Kruskal-Wallis H for the difference in the levels for all the four dimensions. Significant difference of security level was found in all of the four dimensions. The mean rank of Dimension-1 for the primary, middle and secondary schools were 46.05, 55.65, and 69.09 respectively. The mean rank for Dimension-2 for the primary, middle and secondary schools were 48. 40, 48.30, 72. 02 respectively showing the secondary level school had much better security condition relatively. With regard to the Dimension 3, the mean rank for the primary, middle and secondary were 48.66, 50.44, and 67.46 respectively. Similarly, for the Dimension 4, the mean ranks for the primary, middle and secondary level schools were 49.87, 49.15, 67. 46 respectively. For the significant of difference of each level, two of the level were picked for analysis using Mann-Whitney U, which yielded that the secondary level school security had significant difference from the rest of the two levels (Primary, Middle). However, for Dimension 1 all the levels were showing significantly different results from each other, pointing to the fact that the primary level schools had lowest level of security.

Discussion

The first key finding of the present study highlights a high level of unpreparedness among schools with regard to security standards. The survey was conducted in June, 2022. There are very few research studies or surveys that examine how schools in Pakistan are implementing maintaining security measures. However, the limited studies that do exit to significant shortcoming. Such studies only point out a general idea, mostly based on newspapers and reported incidents of terrorism. The current study findings reveal low security preparedness. In line with this findings, Khan and Lohana (2022) state: "The Pakistani government has not always been effective in prosecuting the offenders, despite the fact that there have been hundreds of attacks against educators, students, and educational institutions." (p. 3). Khan and Lohan (2022) have also emphasize the importance of security in educational institution and propose a security framework that identifies five key components: (1) building and infrastructure, (2) emergency protocols, (3) professionals, (4) risk assessment and (5) use of IT in security. These factors closely align with the general framework used in the present study to assess school security preparedness.

Bhati (2020) reported the incident of the 2014, Army Public School incident was a security failure, although the Army schools are relatively better equipped. The situation of security in other than Army backed-schools, is even worse. Lack of follow ups on the implementation of the security framework and the national action plan (NAP) has raised more concerns on school security. The problem of security has become even more complex in today's scenario in which there is a rapid increase of private schools, which makes it challenging to facilitate all of them with security equipment (Akhter, 2017). As far level of school-wise security is concerned, the primary level is the most vulnerable as the present study's finding revealed. The primary causes of which is again more private schools operate at this level and hence lack facilities. Previous studies on security dimensions point out that the international donors and agencies concerned with peace, education and health all have been showing concerns in this regard (Khan et al., 2020; Shahryar & Malik, 2018; UNESCO, 2017). According to Tanner-Smith (2015), schools are highly unprepared regarding security is connected to several factors, including a lack of policies, resources, training, and so forth. In case of the present study, most schools (over 90 %) do not have proper technological deployment, like security cameras, walk-through gates, metal detectors, uninterrupted power supply for continuous monitoring, and so forth; therefore, these schools become highly unprepared and vulnerable to technological aspects of security. The analysis of the study revealed a lack of technical expertise in headteachers and teachers pertinent to security. It is also endorsed by one of the studies conducted by other studies (Fatima & Ali, 2017; Gillani (2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to explore the preparedness of schools in terms of security measurements in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. It was found that schools are not in a position to counter any security breach and thus are highly vulnerable. However, the security level is better in high schools than in primary and elementary schools. Within different security dimensions, HRM is seriously lacking an attitude to use security resources to face any challenge if it occurs. Similarly, infrastructure and technological deployment currently lack installation and site selection security considerations. Policy framework, security plan, and execution expertise currently lack direction to revert any potential threat. The lack of different security measurements in schools makes them vulnerable. Schools with standardized boundary walls may lack razor wire around the wall. Similarly, some schools have check-in gates, but they lack trained human resource for using these gates to monitor the visitors and other people. They do not have check-in and out registers for maintaining a record of visitors. It is recommended that policy makers and school administrations take interest in the school security matters on the three key areas of security, that is school infrastructure, technology deployment, training and maintenance of security system in order for physically and psychological safer environment—these are the key aspects of an effective and conducive-to-learning environment. The security framework has been well developed and suggested by many national plans but these plans are not fully implemented. Also the responsible authorities seem to fail to realize the role of local administrations. It's the local administration which can better understand how use both the soft approaches as well as the 'hard' approaches. In addition, risk assessment should be continuously reviewed in collaboration with school community.

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