

Impact of Perceived Terrorism Threat On Student Engagement: An Empirical Study Of Pakistan

Murtaza Arif, Muhammad Waqas and Syed Ali Haider

Institute of Banking and Finance

Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

Corresponding Author Email Address: Murtazaarif31@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose – This paper attempts to examine the impact of perceived terrorism threat on student engagement. It aims to seek how the student learning environment is effected by terrorist attacks in educational institution.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The data were collected from students enrolled in various discipline studying in Pakistan. It carried out through convenience sampling method.

Finding – The continuous threat of terrorism has nominal impact on student engagement. It implies that students are more committed and dedicated to their institution.

Practical Implication – The result of this research has implication for policy makers of the Government and educational institutions. It provides a better understanding to academicians and researchers on student reaction to violence.

Originality/Value – The present literature does not show the influence of terrorist attacks on educational institutions. The current study aims to fills this gap by creating a new knowledge in this regards.

Keywords Terrorism, Student Engagement, Educational Institution, Government Policies.

Research Type Research Paper

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sixteen years have been passed since 9/11, terrorism threat has adversely affect nations and citizens around the globe (silver, 2011). The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, London bombing in 2005, and the recent attacks in Paris had drastically changed the life of people. The recent row of terrorism had escalated the chances of a person to be a victim of terrorist attack in the world (Doosje, Zimmerman, Kupper, Zick & Meertens, 2009). By keeping in mind a future terrorist attacks many precautionary steps including military actions surveillance and anti-terrorist force are taken by government and law enforcement agencies throughout the world and had been encouraged by the majority public groups after the destruction of 9/11 (Huddy & Fieldmen, 2011). There is a dramatic increase biasness and perception against Muslims in the West after the tragic incident of 9/11. (Doosje et.al. 2009). Terrorist threat setup a complicated social threat that generally comprised two mutual elements i.e personal and collective. (Fritshe and Fischer, 2009; Fritshe et.al, 2011). Terrorist attacks do not only influence people personally but as well as collectively, when their country, is a possible target of terrorist attack (Asbrock & Fritsche, 2013).

According to Fritshe and Kessler, (2010) "threat is a person's perception of feeling and imagination that something wrong is going to be happen to him". Pakistan is among those countries where there is a continuous increase of terrorist threat day-by-day. The attacks on educational institution are becoming a common practice of terrorists nowadays. Then the Pakistani Government had been supported the allied forces/NATO in war against terrorism after 9/11. Initially, the decision was against public support, but is the public supporting Pakistan's war against terror. Statistics shows that since 2003 there are 6611 terrorist attacks in the Pakistan nearly killed 80000 Pakistani citizens. According to the research 850 terrorist attacks have been made on Pakistani educational institutions which killed 461 people with large number of injured ones. The recent attack on Army Public School (Peshawar 2014) and Bachakhan University Charsadah in 2015 has shattered the soul of every Pakistani. As Pakistan is in state of war against terrorism its institutions are continuously being threatened.

In this paper we investigated the impact of continuous terrorism threat on the student engagement. How students perceive terrorism threat toward their engagement? Is there any relationship exists between perceived terrorism threat and students engagement? The main purpose of this research is to enable observer to understand the effect of perceived terrorism threat on student engagement in Pakistan.

People have been thinking that perceived terrorism threat affect student engagement. And have been thinking that due to terrorism threat student are quitting their education. Social identity threat is the factor that is strengthening the relationship between the perceived terrorism threat and student engagement. The significance of this paper describes the attitudes of student toward the terrorism threat. The current study aims to fill this gap by drawing the theory of social identity threat theory. The added benefit of this research is equipped by studying a country which is well reputed In the context of perceived terrorism threat. Pakistan with its distinctive role in the global war against terrorism present, itself an interesting addition to the existing knowledge (Y.Salman & Li.H, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perceived Terrorism Threat

Threat is the sensitivity or sentiment that something adverse is happening in the future. Feritsche & Kesselor in 2011 describe the global world a country with more terrorism threat is perceived as a danger country to endow in it. Terrorism can be defined as the violence, extremism, bombing, assassination, kidnapping and sabotage predominance in a country. Insecurity, instability, and political violence have been the obvious landscape of Pakistan since 1980s. As Pakistan plays a front line role against the war on terrorism, this phenomenon has been increased since the last two decades this war does not seem to be ending even after 15 years of vigorously participating in this war. In fact, the threat of terrorism has escalated and is a result there has been serious effects to this country. The current threatening situation affecting the law and order situation in Pakistan, heretical human rights of the citizen harm the basis infrastructure and anticipating opportunities. Terrorism tarnished the repute of the country. The areas which are gravely affected in Pakistan are its educational institutions.

2.2 Student Engagement

Engagement refers to a person's involvement in a task, project, goal, study or activity (Reeve, Jang, Carrels and Barch, 2004). Engagement is also described as "energy in action" the relation between person and activity (Russell, Ainley & Frydenberg, 2005). The aspect of engagement includes the amounts of words or piles of text which was understandable with deeper handling of the content. (Klem and Connell, 2004) contended that it is a strong evident of connection among, engagement, achievement and studying behavior across the level of social and economic gain and losses. (Furrer, Skinner, Marchand and Kindermann, 2006) also pointed out that engagement may be essential because it interacts intermittently relative

variables like academic results, social and behavioral outcomes. In addition; the concept of engagement internments steady process by which student cut off from their institution.(Finn, 1989). The measurement of student engagement is particularly important for improving the learning outcomes of student, especially those who have at a high risk.

2.3 Intra Religiosity

According to the consensus document from the national institute for health care research defined religion as “the feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred” (Tek & Ulug, 2001). It is evident from most of the research that religion has positive, yet sometimes negative impact on the views of the people (Koenig et.al., 2001). Moreover, it has been proving that religion contemplation are significant in mental intrusion (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). A number of religious scholars are making consensus on that religion effect positively at people thinking. Worthington in 1998 explained that people with high religiosity are more committed and evaluate the world on their religious perception based on values about their religion. The assumption is that a highly religion conscious person will assess the whole world by religious order and therefore will assimilate his or her religion into his or her life. One view concludes that a worst impact of war against terrorism in Pakistani community has been the religious fanaticism becomes lush.

2.4 Micro Government Policies

Government policies refer to the precautionary steps taken by government or institution to avoid or prevent from any uncertain attack. Micro level measures have proven to be fruitful for the handling of uncertain event. These measures include surveillance, fence walls, check posts, security guards, biometric and token system are effective ways in this regards. These are found to be more effective steps in the prevention of destruction.

It is significant from past studies that social identity salience decides perception of the people and reaction to environmental threats (Haslam et.al 2004 and Levine, 1999). Haslam & Reicher in 2006 concluded that social identity be a foundation for people not only to deal with a given circumstances but also need collective effort to rebel that circumstances. This means that self-defense in respect to social identity remain a base for people to “fight back” whenever terrorism threatens the social identity. It was expected that increased level of perceived terrorism threat, violence and backing for military grounded reprisal will see when the degree of appropriateness between contestants and social identity and the form of collective threat to which they are export (Fischer, 2010).

It is indicated in research that people express strong ingroup identification and more positive attitudes toward the ingroup (Sean Kelly, 2009). The responses after these attacks suggesting that these responses become more likely when people feel personally or collectively (Hogg, 2007). As students feel personally threatened by terrorism, but also collectively when they perceive their country (Not necessarily themselves) as a potential target for terrorist acts. La Trabe University in 2009 suggested that active involvement, Academic enjoyment, social integration and personal reflection contribute to high quality learning outcomes.

H1: There is a significant relationship between Perceived Terrorism Threat and Student Engagement.

A substantial amount of literature describes a strong connection between religion and mental health (Miller 1999, Richard & Bergin 1997, 2000 and Shafranske, 1996) and between religion and physical health (George, Larson, Koenig & McCullough, 2000, Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001 & Plante & Sherman 2001). Numerous researches have shown that the positive yet, sometimes negative relationship between religion and views of masses (Koenig et.al 2001, McCullough, Larson & Worthington, 1998). Highly religious people generally discover religious issues more salient than do other people of lower religious belief (Worthington et.al 1996). Furthermore, persons with high religious obligations tend to secularize most secular topics (Pargament, 1997). Past studies examined the importance of spirituality and religion in education. The inclusion of religious values into social work (Lun, 2015). Student responses themselves state the importance of religious values in their daily life and need greater understanding of religious diversity from educational programs (Lun, 2015). Students who have had religious diversity as part of their curriculum and higher satisfaction with their overall learning experience (Ali, et.al, 2004). There is an intrinsic relationship between religion and student engagement (Brinkerhoff & MacKie, 1985).

H2: There is a moderating relationship between Intra Religiosity and Student Engagement.

An increase in the number of terrorist attacks based upon such cues may appear to a personal threat leads to general and indirect responses of social defence. (Fritzsche et.al., 2011). (Fisher, Greitemeyer, Kasten, Müller-Frey and Obwald, 2007) are argued that remainders of terrorist attacks are more committed and show the great support, e.g. strict criminal laws, punishment to the violator. Landau et.al (2004) indicates that after 9/11 remainders, increased support for their country policies against war on terror. Similar effects were found death of their

own students/people. A positive student experience towards authoritarian policy, increase students satisfaction also student resilience and mental well being and more active alumni and life long learners (Marks, 2000). Engagement has been positively co related with micro level government policy. Australian higher education research has focused on student engagement, including The Government and university policies are formed might foster such engagement (Devlin, Brockett & Nichols, 2009). Research has linked positive academic engagement with social engagement and note that students do best where they have a sense of security in their university (Bok, 2006).

H3: There is a moderating relationship between Micro Level Government Policies and Student Engagement.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

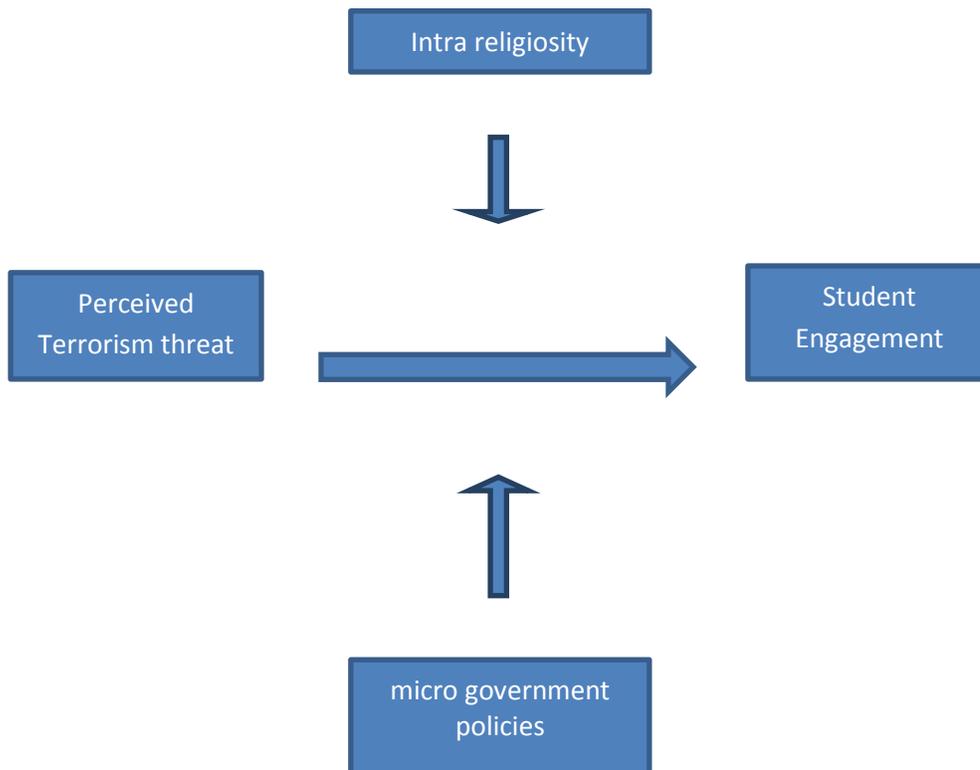


Fig 1: Research Framework for Study

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data collection

To collect the data regarding the research a survey questionnaire was adopted. The data from these questionnaires was collected through convenience sampling method, from respondents enrolled in different degree programs in different universities across six big cities of Pakistan namely; Multan, Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore and Bahawalpur because it was easy to gather data from these cities physically. Our respondents were belonging to different age group and were studying in different disciplines of education in different institutions in these cities.

4.2 Research Type

By approach it is a basic research with the help of this research a new knowledge is created. By purpose it is an exploratory research a very limited information is available on this topic it was very difficult to get information about the topic. And this topic has not been studied in past on Pakistan perspective. This research by time horizon is a cross sectional research because we collected data at one point of time i.e in two month period from March 2016 to May 2016. By method it is a quantitative research because the research instrument “questionnaire” was closed ended and structured.

4.3 Measurement

4.3.1 Perceived Terrorism Threat Scale

After 9/11 terrorism is a prevalent social phenomenon (Silver, 2011). After 9/11 the terrorism in the world was increased and it is now in the recent past impacting the educational sector of Pakistan i.e Peshawar Army Public School Attack and BachaKhan University Charsadda. To be able to see the perception of people about terrorism threat, a scale of perceived terrorism threat taken (Fisher, Halsam and Smith, 2010). Perceived terrorism threat was measured by following questions

To what extent you fear a terrorist attack in United Kingdom? To what extent do you fear becoming a victim of terrorist attack in your country? To what extent do you fear a member of your family become a victim of terrorism?

These questions were rephrased in wording according to situation; here the word “educational institution” was used instead of United Kingdom and Country.

Questions are given in the table 1.

Table 1 Perceived Terrorism Threat

I feel safe at my school, college, university.
I think there will be a future terrorist attack in my institution.
It is highly possible that my colleagues become the victim of terrorist attack.
Considering the security situation I may become a victim of terrorist attack in my institution.

4.3.2 Student Engagement Scale

To take the response of students on the student engagement the scale was adopted from James J. Appleton et.al in 2006. In this scale there were 35 questions measuring the student engagement with their institution, which were reduced and rephrased to 11 questions after a pre-test according to situation. These questions are given in table 2.

Table 2 Student Engagement

The problem I am facing today in my institution will affect my future.
In these circumstances learning remains no more fun.
I am hope full about my future.
My family/guardian wants me to keep trying when things are tough at my institution.
I will remain a part of my institution after unfavorable circumstances.
There is no significance difference in attendance before and after these kind of attacks.
I would like to be a part of anti-terrorist activity.
My parents force me to quit study after these attacks.
Better learning environment will create many future opportunities for me.
On the happening of uncertain event I will quit my institution.

I believe learning environment in my institute is very good.

4.3.3 Intra Religiosity Scale

Intra Religiosity scale was derived from Worthington et.al 2003. No changes were done in the scale and the questions are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Intra Religiosity

My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.
I often spend time trying to increase understanding of my faith.
It is very important for me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.
My religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.
My religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.
All the religious sects are agreed to nip the terrorism from the bud.

4.3.4 Micro Level Government Policies Scale

In this research we did not find any appropriate scale for measuring micro level government policies so to generate. To generate this scale we take the help of a “Focused Group”. This group consists of people from various disciplines of education and also from different age group. After a long discussion this scale was created by this focused group. These questions are given in the table 4.

Table 4 Micro level Government Policies

Biometric system in educational institution is useful for diminishing the activities of susceptible person.
Fence walls are justified measure to halt the terrorist attack.
Surveillance is one of the efficient mean to prevent terrorist attack.
Check post is one of the efficient mean to prevent terrorist attack.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Responses were taken from 176 respondents. There were 89 male (50.5%) and 87 female (49.5%) respondents. The majority of respondents in total 157 (89.2%) were belonging to age group of 18 to 23, 17 (9.6%) were from age group of 24 to 29 and 2 (1.13%) were from the age group of 30 to 35 years. 40 (22.7%) students were in intermediate, 89 (50.5%) in bachelor, 37 (21%) in master degree and 10 (5.6%) were in higher education.

Demographically 79 (44.4%) students were from Multan, 5 (2.8%) from Peshawar, 7 (2.84%) from Islamabad, 55 (31.25%) from Lahore, 9 (5.11%) from Bahawalpur and 21 (11.9%) from other cities of Pakistan.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE
GENDER	MALE	89	50.6	50.6
	FEMALE	87	49.4	100
AGE	18-23 YEARS	157	89.2	89.2
	24-29 YEARS	17	9.7	98.9
	30-35 YEARS	2	1.1	100
QUALIFICATION	INTER	90	22.7	22.7
	BACHELOR	89	50.6	73.3
	MASTER	37	21.0	94.3
	HIGHER DEGREE	10	5.7	100
CITY	MULTAN	79	44.9	44.9
	PESHAWAR	5	2.8	47.7

	ISLAMABAD	7	4.0	51.7
	LAHORE	55	31.3	83.0
	BAHAWALPUR	9	5.1	86.1
	OTHERS	21	4.9	100

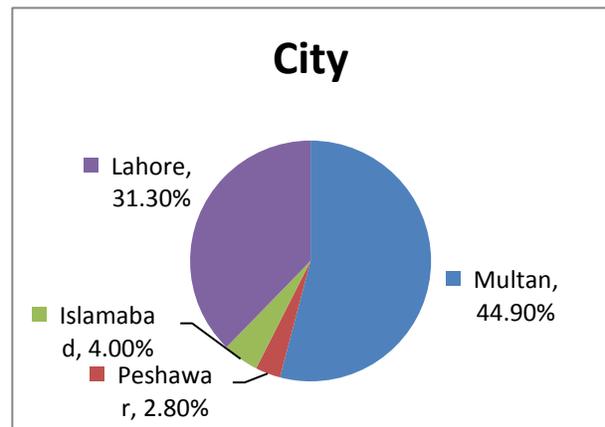
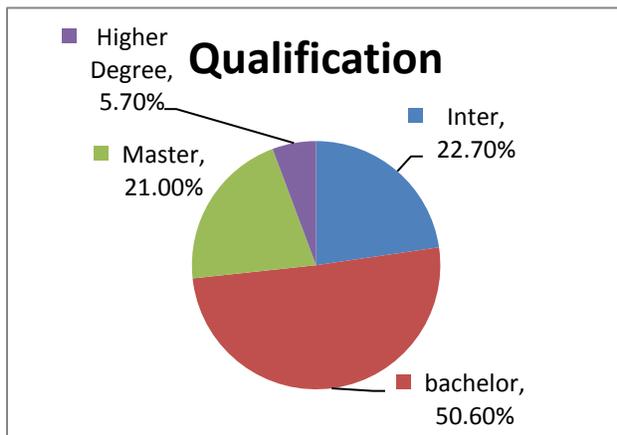
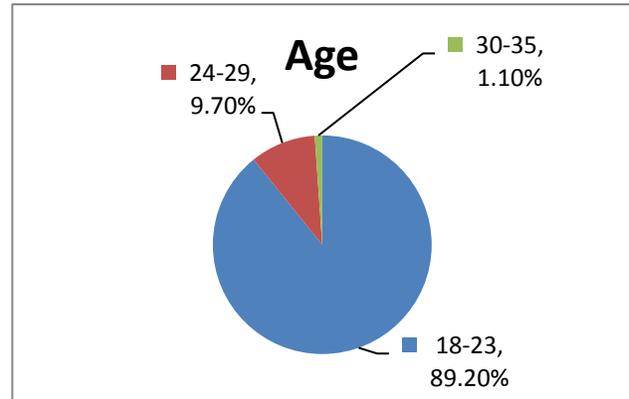
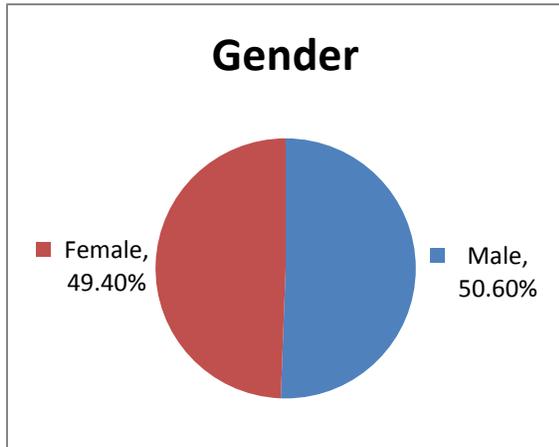


Fig 2. Graphical Representation of Descriptive Statistics

5.2 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Moss et.al (1998) recommended that the Alpha value should be greater than 0.6. So the values we derived of alpha are as follow.

Table 6 Reliability Analysis

FACTOR	LOADING	ALPHA	VARIANCE
Inter religiosity		.689	10.808
Inter religiosity 1	.657		
Inter religiosity 2	.702		
Inter religiosity 3	.807		
Inter religiosity 4	.571		
Intra religiosity		.651	9.839
Intra religiosity 2	.759		
Intra religiosity 4	.702		
Intra religiosity 5	.758		
Government policies (Micro)		.605	10.729
Micro 1	.615		
Micro 2	.693		
Micro 3	.752		
Micro 4	.754		
Government policies (Macro)		.673	9.031
Macro 1	.743		
Macro 2	.818		
Macro 3	.651		

Student engagement		.701	10.792
S. Engagement 1	.916		
S. Engagement 2	.466		
S. Engagement 3	.923		
Perceived terrorism threat		.727	10.318
Perceived terrorism threat	.712		
Perceived terrorism threat	.850		
Perceived terrorism threat	.838		

5.3 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

5.3.1 Perceived Terrorism Threat And Student Engagement

There is a significant relationship between our independent variable Perceived terrorism threat and dependent variable Student engagement as P-value is 0.01 which implies that there is less than 1% chance of our calculated data being wrong. The Beta Coefficient value is .192 which means increase in one unit of Perceived Terrorism Threat will increase Student Engagement by 192 units.

Table 7 Perceived Terrorism Threat and Student Satisfaction

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.094	.097		11.281	.000
Perceivedterrorismthreat	.111	.040	.192	2.730	.007

H1: There is a significant relationship between Perceived Terrorism Threat and Student Engagement.

5.3.2 Student Engagement And Religiosity

There is a significant relationship between our moderating variable Intra religiosity and dependent variable Student engagement as P-value is 0.01 which implies that there is less than 1% chance of our calculated data being wrong. The Beta Coefficient value is .261 which means increase in one unit of Intra religiosity increase Student Engagement by 261 units.

Table 8 Student Engagement and Religiosity

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.980	.101		9.662	.000
	religiosity2	.287	.076	.261	3.772	.000

H2: There is a significant relationship between Intra Religiosity and Student Engagement.

5.3.3 Student Engagement And Government Policies

There is a significant relationship between our moderating variable Government Policies (Macro) and dependent variable Student engagement as P-value is 0.01 which implies that there is less than 1% chance of our calculated data being wrong. The Beta Coefficient value is .307 which means increase in one unit of Government Policies (Macro) will increase Student Engagement by 307 units.

Table 9 Student Engagement and Government Policies

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.894	.104		8.561	.000
	govtpolicy2	.295	.066	.307	4.499	.000

H3: There is a significant relationship between Micro Level Government Policies and Student Engagement.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Student engagement is basic scale to monitor the performance of the students who are facing this continuously mounting threat. A precise measurement of student engagement in the adverse environment can provide a sound knowledge of apprentice commitment to education, determination in challenging faces and fulfill the basic needs of sovereignty belongingness and competence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This study analyzed the dimensions of variables such as student engagement, moderating Government policies, religiosity and perceived terrorism threat. The finding of this study suggests that students are not severely affected by the hinds of these threats. It is quite interesting to know that students got more engaged towards their educational institutions and student educational activities are not adversely affected. . Perception of people about perceived terrorism threat observed to increase not only their engagement but also strong commitment as a nation to curbing the evils. Findings suggest that people perception to threat and joint efforts to responding to it based on social identity. (Haslam, 2010) suggested that under each threat people appear to be cohesive. Violence increase student identification towards their institutions (Dechene, Janssen & Van Knippenber, 2000). Moving towards the end of the discussion, this study identifies that student engagement towards their institutions is not much distorted by perceived threat of terrorism. Summing up, research

identifies that threat which can be controlled by human efforts increase in-group support and resistance.

This research is genuine and is fulfilling all the parameters and requirements which are necessary for a research paper. The purpose behind choosing this field of research is that no previous researches are made on this topic in the past. We have chosen perceived terrorism threat as independent variable, student engagement as dependent variable and our moderating variables are religiosity and Government policies. The data for this research is collected from the university students of different cities of Pakistan. This research indicates that a directly proportional relationship exists between perceived terrorism threat and student engagement when religiosity and Government Policies acting as moderating variables.

Academic implication of this research is that perceived terrorism threat and student engagement are moving along the same way. In the other words greater the perceived terrorism threat greater will be student engagement. Practical implication of this research is that it will enable the readers for a comprehensive overview of student engagement because of prevailing threat of terrorism. The Government and educational institutions should take this research into consideration and take further initiatives for the betterment of the situation.

The main limitation of this research is that the researchers did not have access to the affected cities which includes Peshawar, Charsadda, Islamabad, FATA and tribal areas of Pakistan. The other limitation was that this research is only limited to few cities. This research is conducted in a very limited time span. Sample size was also very limited. There were only 176 respondents in this research.

Research should be made all the cities of Pakistan especially the cities where these incidents takes place. Sample size should be increased and there should be more time and resources spent on this research.

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