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RESEARCH PAPER

Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support and Psychological wellbeing amongst the Students of Balochistan, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to address the profound gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between terrorism catastrophizing, social support, and psychological well-being among college students in Hub, Balochistan. Terrorism continues to exert intense effects on the social and psychological wellbeing of individuals, particularly students who represent a valuable and vulnerable segment of society. Earlier researches have examined the consequences of terrorism, but little attention has been paid to its connection with social support and psychological well-being. A total of 203 students (103 males, 100 females) from Government Degree College Hub participated in the study. To collect the data, standardized measures, including the Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale (TERCS), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS), were employed. Results show that terrorism catastrophizing was negatively associated with social support and its domains, but showing a positive relationship with psychological well-being. Social support, in turn, was found to be negatively associated with psychological well-being, indicating a complex interplay between these constructs in terrorism-affected settings. Demographic analyses further showed significant variations across age and educational levels, offering deeper insight into students' coping responses. These findings highlight how prolonged exposure to terrorism reshapes students' perceptions of social life and personal growth. The study findings highlight the importance of context-specific interventions within educational institutions that not only address the psychological consequences of terrorism but also strengthen adaptive coping strategies to enable students to pursue academic goals while maintaining psychological health.

| **KEYWORDS** | Terrorism, Balochistan, catastrophizing, wellbeing, social support, Students |

Introduction

Pakistan has faced both inter-state and intra-state conflicts since its independence in 1947. Much of the country's political instability stems from the competing interests of key actors, the civilian government, the military, Islamist groups, and the pressures of relations with neighboring and international powers. The challenges began with partition from British India in 1947, followed by subsequent wars with India. Regional disputes, such as the Kashmir issue, the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the Soviet-Afghan war, and the U.S.-led "War on Terror," have deeply shaped Pakistan's internal and external dynamics.

Internally, Pakistan has struggled with sectarian violence, ethnic tensions, and movements for autonomy, particularly in Balochistan. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan during the 1990s and the escalation of terrorism after 2001 further destabilized Pakistan's tribal regions (formerly FATA), especially in the wake of drone strikes and military operations. Terrorism and militancy have taken a severe toll and since 2002, more than 50,000 people have lost their lives, while the economic cost has exceeded US $120 billion (NUST International Model United Nations, 2019). These persistent conflicts have profoundly influenced social cohesion, psychological well-being, and the everyday lives of the Pakistani people.

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century, reshaping global security discourses and influencing the social, political, and economic structures of many nations. The attacks of September 11, 2001, marked a turning point in international relations, leading to profound transformations in global governance, legal frameworks, and security mechanisms (Ali, 2008). Beyond its geopolitical implications, terrorism instills fear and uncertainty within societies, affecting not only those who directly experience its violence but also those indirectly exposed through media coverage and communal narratives (Hashmi, 2016).

In the province of Balochistan political instability (Khan et al., 2025), and terrorism has left deep and enduring marks on communities. Hub, a border city between Sindh and Balochistan and a significant trade hub for both provinces, has long been subjected to acts of violence such as target killings, bombings, and mob unrest. For decades, families in this region have lived under the shadow of insecurity, with many experiencing loss and trauma directly or indirectly. Educational institutions have also been recurrent targets of terrorist activities, which has generated widespread fear among teachers, students, and parents. Several striking incidents, such as the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, the assault on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, and the tragedy at Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University in Balochistan ,show the deliberate targeting of students and academics by extremist groups (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Khalily, 2012; Yaseen, et. al., 2018).

The psychological consequences of such violence are intense. Exposure to terrorism, whether direct or indirect has been shown to heighten fear, disrupt social cohesion, and create long-term insecurities that erode community resilience (Mansdorf, 2008). Students, in particular, represent a vulnerable group, and their academic journeys, personal development, and career trajectories are shaped not only by educational opportunities but also by the psychological environment in which they live. When fear of terrorism becomes embedded in their daily lives, it can negatively influence their mental health, learning outcomes, and future aspirations (Nayab & Kamal, 2010; Nizami et al., 2018). As students are often regarded as the backbone of national progress. In this situation, it is imperarive to understand how terrorism-related fears affect their psychological well-being. Besides this, exploring the role of social support as a potential coping mechanism is critical, as it may buffer the adverse effects of fear and insecurity. Therefore, present study seeks to examine the relationship between terrorism-related future fear, social support, and the psychological well-being of students in Balochistan. By addressing this intersection, the research aims to contribute to academic and policy-level understanding of how young populations cope with life challenges under the persistent threat of terrorism, and how support systems can be strengthened to promote resilience, well-being, and educational continuity.

Literature Review

Terrorism

Terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that employs violence or threats to instill fear and achieve political objectives. It is defined as the deliberate use of violence against civilians to create widespread fear (Juwana, 2014). Unlike conventional warfare, terrorism is distinguished by its symbolic acts of violence intended to disrupt civilian life and spread panic (Sambanis, 2008). Historically, terrorism was considered primarily state-driven, motivated by politics, but over time non-state actors became the focus, particularly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, which transformed global counterterrorism discourse (Moghadam, 2006).

Beyond political implications, terrorism profoundly influences individual psychology and social functioning. The public, as the ultimate target, experiences lasting disruptions in daily life and community resilience. While its economic consequences are severe, scholars emphasize that the psychological impact such as fear, insecurity, and

mistrust can be even more enduring (Felsher & Millstein, 2002). Social scientists have linked terrorism to theories of aggression and learning. Freud's instinct theory (Rubin et al., 2007) suggests an innate human drive toward violence, while social learning perspectives argue that oppressive environments normalize aggression, fostering susceptibility to extremist ideologies (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017; Nayab & Kamal, 2010).

Terrorism Catastrophizing

Terrorism catastrophizing refers to heightened apprehension about the likelihood of future terrorist events. It involves maladaptive cognitive patterns such as rumination, magnification, and helplessness (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007). Rumination leads individuals to dwell on negative outcomes, magnification involves exaggerating worst-case scenarios, and helplessness reflects a perceived inability to prevent or cope with terrorism-related threats. Such responses create persistent psychological distress even when actual risk remains low (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007). Prior studies highlight that individuals with pre-existing vulnerabilities are more prone to catastrophizing, which exacerbates anxiety, helplessness, and impaired coping (Meara, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2009).

Social Support

Social support is conceptualized as the exchange of resources that enhance recipients' well-being (Zimet et al., 1988). It encompasses support from family, friends, and significant others, each contributing uniquely to emotional and practical assistance. Research shows that social support can serve as a protective buffer against stress, reducing psychological distress such as depression and anxiety (Taylor, 2007). For students, peer support may provide resilience in terrorism-affected environments, although in certain contexts it may also intensify fear if peers themselves are distressed (Sahar, 2009).

Social support is consistently associated with better psychological adjustment. Supportive networks foster a sense of belonging, self-worth, and security (Taylor et al., 2010). Family and friends play a particularly critical role in mitigating academic and emotional stressors, thereby strengthening students' coping capacity (Calvete & Smith, 2006). Based on prior findings, it is hypothesized that terrorism catastrophizing will be negatively related to social support, while social support will positively predict psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is defined as optimal functioning and fulfillment across emotional, social, and personal domains. It combines hedonic elements (pleasure, happiness) with eudaimonic dimensions (purpose, growth, and self-realization) (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Huppert, 2009). Ryff's multidimensional model outlines six components: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Individuals high in well-being report greater resilience, life satisfaction, and healthier relationships, while deficits are linked to anxiety, depression, and impaired functioning (Xu & Roberts, 2010). Terrorism disrupts the psychological environment by fostering fear, insecurity, and chronic stress. Students in conflict-affected regions often experience reduced concentration, motivation, and cognitive performance due to persistent fear (Yablon, 2019). Research in Pakistan shows that fear of being a potential target diminishes students' life satisfaction and psychological health (Malik et al., 2018). Thus, terrorism catastrophizing is expected to negatively predict psychological well-being.

Terrorism and Demographic Variables

Demographic factors also shape responses to terrorism. Literature suggest that due to heightened emotional processing women often report higher levels of fear and anxiety.

Socioeconomic status also influences coping: and students from higher-income families may access broader support networks, while those from marginalized groups face greater vulnerability. Further, educational attainment plays a dual role, as awareness of terrorism may raise critical understanding but can also amplify perceived fear and stress (Cicirelli, 2002).

Material and Methods

Research Design

The study employed a correlational, cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of 203 students (103 males, 100 females) from Government Degree College Hub, Balochistan, selected through convenience sampling. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 25 years.

Instruments

A demographic sheet was constructed to gather information on participants' age, gender, birth order, educational level, and prior exposure to terrorism-related incidents. Further, following three scales were used to collet the data. (i) The Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale (TCS) developed by Sinclair and LoCicero (2007) consists of 13 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). It includes three subscales: rumination (items 1, 3, 5, 9, 12), magnification (items 6, 8, 10), and helplessness (items 2, 4, 7, 11, 13). Several items (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13) require reverse scoring. Scores range from 13 to 65, with higher scores indicating greater catastrophizing. The reported internal consistency is α = .89 (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007). (ii) Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), developed by Zimet et al. (1988), comprises 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree). It assesses perceived support from significant others (items 1, 2, 5, 10), family (items 3, 4, 8, 11), and friends (items 6, 7, 9, 12). Subscale and overall scores are calculated by summing item ratings, with higher scores reflecting stronger perceived support. The scale demonstrates strong internal reliability (α = .88). (iii) Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) (Ryff et al., 2010), contains 18 items scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). It measures six dimensions: self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relations, personal growth, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Items 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, and 18 are reverse scored. Total and subscale scores are computed by summing item ratings, with higher scores reflecting greater psychological well-being. Reported reliability for the scale is α = .89.

Geographical Context

Hub is a developing city in Balochistan, located on the border with Sindh. It serves as a trade hub for both provinces but has been heavily affected by terrorism-related incidents, including targeted killings, bomb blasts, and mob violence. The selection of this locale was based on the prevalence of terrorism-related threats and their impact on students.

Procedure

Students were approached in classrooms and individually, with departmental approval. and participants were informed that the survey would take approximately 15–30 minutes to complete. Questionnaires were distributed and completed in the presence of the researcher, who provided clarifications when needed. Upon completion, responses were collected, and gratitude was extended to participants and faculty for their cooperation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 21). Reliability of the instruments was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha, all exceeding .70. Pearson product–moment correlations were computed to assess relationships among terrorism catastrophizing, social support, and psychological well-being. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine differences across demographic variables.

Ethical Considerations

Permission for data collection was obtained from institutional authorities and informed consent was also taken from the participants. Further, participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage of the study and confidentiality of the data was also assured.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Correlation between Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203)

	Measures	1	2	3
1.	TERCS	1	-.03	.21**
2.	MSPSS	-.03	1	-.29**
3.	PWBS	.21**	-.29**	1

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance. **p < .01

The correlation results in table 1 indicate that terrorism catastrophizing showed a positive association with psychological well-being (r = .21, p < .01), while no significant relationship was found with social support (r = −.03, ns). In contrast, social support demonstrated a significant negative correlation with psychological well-being (r = −.29, p < .01). These findings suggest distinct coping dynamics among students in HUB, Balochistan.

Table 2
Correlation between Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203) subscales

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	RUMN	1	.14*	.34**	-.13	-.08	-.07	.21**	.20**	.12	.08	.04	.13
2	MAGN	.14*	1	.23**	-.04	-.06	-.06	-.02	.01	-.05	.07	-.07	-.06
3	HELP	.34**	.23**	1	.01	.02	.05	.21**	.26**	.20**	.17*	.05	.20**
4	OTHR	-.13	-.04	.01	1	.73**	.76**	-.16*	-.08	-.14*	-.25**	-.28**	-.08
5	FMLI	-.08	-.06	.02	.73**	1	.76**	-.09	-.15*	-.05	-.24**	-.26**	-.08
6	FRND	-.07	-.00	.05	.76**	.76**	1	-.18**	-.15*	-.13	-.24**	-.35**	-.18*
7	AUTO	.21**	-.02	.21**	-.16*	-.09	-.18**	1	.35**	.36**	.41**	.32**	.37**
8	ENVMA	.20**	.01	.26**	-.08	-.15*	-.15*	.35**	1	.31**	.36**	.30**	.46**
9	PRGRO	.12	-.05	.20**	-.14*	-.05	-.13	.36**	.31**	1	.39**	.44**	.28**
10	PRELA	.08	.07	.17*	-.25**	-.24**	-.24**	.41**	.36**	.39**	1	.57**	.38**
11	PLIF	.04	-.07	.05	-.28**	-.26**	-.35**	.32**	.30**	.44**	.57**	1	.40**
12	SELAC	.13	-.06	.20**	-.08	-.08	-.18*	.37**	.46**	.28**	.38**	.40**	1

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF = Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance. **p < .01, *p < 0.05

The results in table 2 indicate that rumination and helplessness were positively correlated with autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance (r = .20–.26, p < .01). Magnification showed no meaningful associations. In contrast, all dimensions of social support (significant others, family, friends) were strongly interrelated (r = .73–.76, p < .01) but negatively related to well-being factors such as autonomy, purpose in life, and positive relations (r = −.16 to −.35, p < .05). This suggests that HUB students tend to rely more on internal coping than external support networks.

Table 3

Gender Differences in Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203).

	Male		Female					
	(n = 103)		(n = 100)				95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P	LL	UL
TERCS	48.41	3.64	48.69	3.41	-.54	.58	-1.25	.70
RUMN	18.78	1.80	18.81	1.81	-.09	.92	-.52	.47
MAGN	10.83	1.29	10.74	1.21	.53	.59	-.25	.44
HELP	18.89	1.79	18.95	1.81	-.22	.82	-.55	.44
MSPSS	55.94	15.79	58.28	15.83	-1.05	.29	-6.71	2.04
OTHR	18.48	5.95	19.28	6.38	-.91	.36	-2.50	.91
FMLI	19.10	5.58	19.42	5.80	-.39	.69	-1.88	1.26
FRND	18.34	5.27	19.58	5.55	-1.61	.10	-2.72	.26
PWBS	85.14	5.27	85.70	11.43	-.35	.72	-3.59	2.49
AUTO	15.04	2.11	14.77	2.36	.88	.37	-.34	.89
ENVMA	14.68	2.05	14.60	2.09	.30	.75	-.48	.66
PRGRO	15.21	2.39	15.19	2.24	.07	.94	-.62	.66
PRELA	12.19	2.99	12.69	3.51	-1.08	.28	-1.39	.40
PLIF	12.75	3.25	12.66	3.36	.20	.83	-.81	1.01
SELAC	15.24	2.39	15.79	2.26	-1.67	.96	-1.19	.09

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance.

Table 3 shows no significant gender differences were found across terrorism catastrophizing, social support, or psychological well-being. Male and female students reported comparable levels on all subscales, indicating similar experiences of terrorism-related fear, perceived support, and overall well-being.

Table 4
Educational level differences in Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203)

	Inter		BS					
	(*n* = 100)		(*n* = 103)				95% CI	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*	*LL*	*UL*
TERCS	48.69	3.28	48.41	3.76	.59	.08	-.70	1.25
RUMN	18.90	1.76	18.61	1.83	1.49	.96	-.12	.87
MAGN	10.82	1.16	10.75	1.34	.35	.45	-.28	.41
HELP	18.91	1.60	18.93	1.98	-.08	.03	-.52	.47
MSPSS	55.75	16.79	58.39	14.77	-1.19	.02	-7.02	1.72

OTHR	18.49	6.32	19.25	6.02	-.88	.25	-2.47	.94
FMLI	18.67	5.61	19.83	5.71	-1.46	.63	-2.73	.40
FRND	18.59	5.69	19.31	5.17	-.94	.15	-2.22	.78
PWBS	86.18	11.00	84.67	10.95	.97	.40	-1.53	4.53
AUTO	14.85	2.26	14.97	2.22	-.38	.45	-.74	.50
ENVMA	14.84	2.03	14.45	2.09	1.32	.63	-.18	.95
PRGRO	14.99	2.03	15.40	2.56	-1.28	.00	-1.05	.22
PRELA	12.60	3.32	12.28	3.21	.69	.26	-.58	1.22
PLIF	13.00	3.34	12.42	3.25	1.23	.68	-.34	1.48
SELAC	15.90	2.28	15.13	2.34	2.34	.63	.12	1.40

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance.

The results in table 4 demostrate that BS students reported slightly higher scores on overall social support (M = 58.39) compared to intermediate students (M = 55.75), and also showed higher psychological well-being (M = 84.67) though the difference was not significant. However, on the personal growth subscale, BS students scored significantly higher than intermediate students, suggesting that advanced educational exposure may contribute positively to students' sense of growth and development.

Table 5
Age level differences in Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203) need analysis

| | 16-20 | | 21-25 | | | | 95% CI | |
| | (n =129) | | (n =74) | | | | | |
	M	SD	M	SD	t	P	LL	UL
TERCS	48.34	3.25	48.91	3.96	-1.12	.26	-1..59	.43
RUMN	18.75	1.70	18.86	1.98	-.39	.69	-.62	.41
MAGN	10.73	1.21	10.87	1.33	-.77	.44	-.50	.22
HELP	18.81	1.63	19.10	2.05	-1.12	.26	-.81	.22
MSPSS	56.99	15.33	57.27	16.73	-.12	.90	-4.83	4.28
OTHR	19.03	5.91	18.59	6.61	.49	.62	-1.33	2.22
FMLI	19.09	5.41	19.55	6.14	-.55	.57	-2.09	1.17
FRND	18.86	5.22	19.12	5.82	-.32	.74	-1.82	1.30
PWBS	84.64	10.69	86.77	11.39	-1.33	.18	-5.27	1.02
AUTO	14.90	2.08	14.91	2.25	-.36	.97	-.65	.63
ENVMA	14.57	1.95	14.77	2.25	-.65	.51	-.79	.39
PRGRO	14.96	2.20	15.62	2.45	-1.96	.05	-1.32	.00
PRELA	12.24	3.29	12.77	3.21	-1.09	.27	-1.46	.41
PLIF	12.50	3.06	13.06	3.67	-1.17	.24	-1.51	.38
SELAC	15.44	2.23	15.62	2.53	-.50	.61	-.84	.50

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance.

In table 5 the comparison between students aged 16–20 years (n = 129) and 21–25 years (n = 74) revealed no significant differences in terrorism catastrophizing, its subscales, or perceived social support (all p > .05). Psychological well-being scores were also statistically similar across both groups (M = 84.64, SD = 10.69 vs. M = 86.77, SD = 11.39, t = -1.33, p = .18). However, a marginally significant difference was observed in personal

growth, with older students (21–25) scoring higher (M = 15.62, SD = 2.45) compared to younger students (M = 14.96, SD = 2.20, t = -1.96, p = .05). This suggests that age may contribute to enhanced maturity and growth-related aspects of well-being, while exposure to terrorism appears to affect both groups similarly.

Table 6
Birth order-level differences in Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203) need analysis

	1-5 birth order		6-11 birth order					
	(n = 120)		(n =83)				95% CI	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*	*LL*	*UL*
TERCS	48.38	3.46	48.79	3.62	-.81	.41	-1.40	.58
RUMN	18.65	1.75	19.00	1.86	-1.32	.18	-.84	.16
MAGN	10.84	1.30	10.71	1.19	.72	.46	-.22	.48
HELP	18.84	1.76	19.03	1.85	-.75	.45	-.70	.31
MSPSS	57.45	15.03	56.57	16.97	.38	.70	-3.59	5.33
OTHR	18.82	5.98	18.95	6.46	-.14	.88	-1.86	1.61
FMLI	19.60	5.63	18.77	5.74	1.02	.30	-.77	2.42
FRND	19.02	5.30	18.85	5.64	.21	.82	-1.36	1.70
PWBS	84.70	10.67	86.45	11.38	-1.12	.26	-4.84	1.33
AUTO	14.80	2.16	15.07	2.34	-.85	.39	-.90	.35
ENVMA	14.52	2.09	14.81	2.02	-.96	.32	-.87	.28
PRGRO	15.09	2.38	15.36	3.22	-.81	.41	-.92	.38
PRELA	12.34	3.21	12.57	3.34	-.50	.61	-1.15	.68
PLIF	12.50	3.27	13.01	3.34	-1.08	.27	-1.44	.41
SELAC	15.44	2.52	15.61	2.06	-.51	.60	-.83	.48

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance.

Table 6 shows no significant differences were found between 1–5 and 6–11 birth orders categories in terrorism catastrophizing (M = 48.38 vs. 48.79, p = .41), social support (M = 57.45 vs. 56.57, p = .70), or psychological well-being (M = 84.70 vs. 86.45, p = .26). Subscales across all three measures also exhibited non-significant results, demonstrating that birth order did not meaningfully influence these constructs.

Table 7
Previous indecent level differences in Terrorism Catastrophizing, Social Support, and Psychological Well-being (N = 203) need analysis

	yes		no					
	(n =100)		(n =103)				95% CI	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	*LL*	*UL*
TERCS	48.76	3.51	48.34	3.54	.82	.40	-.56	1.38
RUMN	19.01	1.72	18.59	1.87	1.65	.09	-.07	.91
MAGN	10.79	1.23	10.78	1.28	.02	.98	-.34	.35
HELP	19.10	1.69	18.74	1.88	1.39	.16	-.14	.84
MSPSS	55.37	16.81	58.76	14.68	-1.53	.12	-7.76	.96
OTHR	18.16	6.50	19.57	5.77	-1.63	.10	-3.11	.28
FMLI	18.87	6.02	19.64	5.33	-.96	.33	-2.34	.80
FRND	18.34	5.72	19.55	5.09	-1.59	.11	-2.71	.28
PWBS	86.36	12.46	84.50	9.27	1.20	.23	-1.18	4.89

AUTO	15.23	2.26	14.60	2.17	2.01	.04	.01	1.24
ENVMA	14.91	1.98	14.38	2.12	1.80	.07	-.04	1.09
PRGRO	15.42	2.53	14.99	2.08	1.32	.18	-.21	1.07
PRELA	12.11	3.48	12.75	3.01	-1.41	.15	-1.54	.25
PLIF	13.08	3.66	12.34	2.87	1.58	.11	-.18	1.64
SELAC	15.61	2.39	15.41	2.29	.58	.56	-.45	.84

Note. TERCS = Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale, RUMN = Rumination subscale, MAGN = Magnification subscale, HELP = Helplessness subscale, MSPSS = Social Support Scale, OTHR = Significant subscale, FMLI = Family subscale, FRND = Friends subscale, PWBS = Psychological Well-beingscale, AUTO= Autonomy, ENVMA= Enviornmental Mastery, PRGRO= Personal Growth scale PRELA = Positive relations,. PLIF= Pirpose in Life and SELAC= Self Acceptance.

In table 7, the comparison between participants with and without previous incident exposure shows no significant differences on terrorism catastrophizing (M = 48.76 vs. 48.34, p = .40), social support (M = 55.37 vs. 58.76, p = .12), or overall psychological well-being (M = 86.36 vs. 84.50, p = .23). However, a significant difference emerged on the autonomy subscale of well-being, with previously exposed participants reporting higher scores (M = 15.23 vs. 14.60, p = .04, 95% CI [.01, 1.24]). This suggests that experiencing a prior incident may enhance a sense of independence, while other domains remained unaffected.

Discussion

Terrorism has profoundly disrupted social life across cultures, from Europe to Balochistan, leaving unerasable physical and psychological scars on individuals and communities. Despite these challenges, people continue to live in such environments, striving for survival and pursuing their personal and social goals (Razik et al., 2013). The present study provides valuable insights into the relationship between terrorism, social support, and psychological well-being among students in Hub, Balochistan, a city heavily affected by terrorism (Muzaffar, et. al., 2021; Karamat, et. al., 2019).

The first hypothesis of the study that terrorism is negatively associated with social support was confirmed. Findings revealed that terrorism catastrophizing significantly reduced students' reliance on social support systems, and this outcome is consistent with earlier research, which indicates that persistent fear of terrorism limits people's capacity to engage in social life (Nizami et al., 2014). Social gatherings, which are a fundamental human need, become potential sites of danger in terrorism-prone areas, and consequently, young individuals who have grown up witnessing terrorist attacks often perceive social support not as a source of comfort but as a risk-laden activity.The fear of being targeted in public spaces discourages participation in community events, thereby weakening the availability and utility of social support networks (Thoresen et al., 2014). Moreover, state-imposed restrictions on gatherings, often enacted as preventive measures, further erode opportunities for social interaction. Hence, the evidence clearly validates that in terrorism-affected contexts, social support is diminished due to heightened fear and restrictions.

Surprisingly, the second hypothesis that terrorism would be negatively related to psychological well-being was not supported. Contrary to expectations, the findings indicated a positive association between terrorism and certain dimensions of psychological well-being, particularly autonomy and environmental mastery. Autonomy enables individuals to make independent decisions and maintain a sense of identity despite external adversities (Sinclair, 2014), and environmental mastery reflects the ability to adapt, utilize resources, and function effectively even in hostile surroundings. Students in Hub demonstrated higher levels of independence and adaptability, showing that prolonged exposure to terrorism had, paradoxically, strengthened these coping abilities. These results align with the idea that in contexts where abnormal conditions become normalized,

individuals recalibrate their understanding of "normal life" (Stankov, 2018), and can develop resilience and competence by adjusting to environments where threats are persistent (Erol, 2022).

The third hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between social support and psychological well-being. However, the results revealed a negative association. This surprising finding can be understood in the broader context of terrorism-affected societies. Although social support is generally considered essential for psychological health (Weinberg, 2017) but during conditions of chronic insecurity, individuals prioritize safety needs over social ones. In Hub, where social gatherings are viewed as unsafe and often restricted, the protective role of social support is overshadowed by the primary need for security. Consequently, the anticipated positive link between social support and well-being was not observed. This highlights the unique social geography of Balochistan, where weakened social life reflects both community-level fear and administrative constraints.

Analysis of demographic variables further enriched the study's findings. Gender differences, although often evident in psychological responses due to biological and neurological distinctions (Hanamsagar & Bilbo, 2016), were not significant among Hub students. This suggests that prolonged exposure to terrorism has created a shared environment of fear and resilience, minimizing gender-based differences. Educational level, however, showed significant variations. Intermediate-level students reported higher levels of helplessness compared to BS-level students, who demonstrated relatively greater reliance on social support. This distinction reflects developmental differences, as younger students are more dependent and vulnerable, whereas older students are better equipped to deal with adversity.

Age-related differences were also significant on the personal growth subscale of psychological well-being. Students aged 21–25 reported higher levels of personal growth compared to those aged 16–20, suggesting that maturity and cognitive development foster more adaptive coping strategies. Birth-order differences did not appear significant in this study, possibly due to the overwhelming influence of terrorism as a shared contextual factor. Finally, students with previous exposure to terrorism reported significantly higher autonomy scores, indicating that direct experiences of violence may accelerate the development of independent coping mechanisms (Erol, 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that terrorism has redefined the normality of life in Balochistan. Communities adapt to persistent insecurity by restructuring priorities, where survival and autonomy become central. Students, despite being directly targeted by terrorism in several high-profile incidents, continue to pursue education and personal development. The paradoxical outcome, where terrorism restricts social life yet enhances autonomy and environmental mastery shows the complexity of human resilience in the face of chronic adversity. Thus, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on terrorism and mental health by demonstrating how prolonged exposure to violence reshapes social dynamics and psychological adaptation. The insights highlight the urgent need for context-specific interventions that prioritize safety while simultaneously fostering positive psychological growth among students.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between terrorism catastrophizing, social support, and psychological well-being among students in Hub, Balochistan. Findings revealed that terrorism weakens social support networks but unexpectedly enhances certain dimensions of psychological well-being, particularly autonomy and environmental mastery. These outcomes suggest that students adapt to persistent insecurity by developing resilience and self-reliance, though at the cost of diminished social interaction.

The negative association between social support and well-being demonstrates the unique context of terrorism-affected regions, where gatherings are perceived as unsafe. For policymakers and educators, this highlights the need to create alternative, safe models of social support and to integrate psychological resilience-building into education and community programs.

Future research should explore similar dynamics in other conflict-prone areas and adopt longitudinal and qualitative approaches to better capture students' lived experiences. Overall, the study emphasizes that while terrorism disrupts social life, it can also foster adaptive strengths that require recognition and support in policy and practice.

Implications

This study provides future researchers with insights into how fear of terrorism influences both the erosion of social support and the development of psychological well-being. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized adverse outcomes, this research also highlights the adaptive strategies students employ to cope with trauma and sustain their mental health.

1. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the risk factors that decreases well-being and the protective factors that enhance resilience among college students living in terrorism-affected regions. This knowledge can guide future studies to explore psychological adjustment in conflict zones.

2. Psychologists, counselors, and social workers can utilize these results to design context-specific interventions. Mental health programs should not only address the distress associated with terrorism but also build on students' resilience, and such interventions must align with Pakistan's cultural and social values as well as the academic demands of students.

3. For the provincial administration of Balochistan, the study provides critical information about the challenges faced by students. These insights can inform policies and strategic initiatives aimed at safeguarding youth, ensuring educational continuity, and promoting psychological well-being in conflict-affected areas.

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