

Original Article

Assessing Preparedness of Higher Education Institutions for Bomb Related-Emergencies

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Abstract. The study assesses how prepared higher education institutions are to respond to a bomb-related incident on the school campus. The total number of respondents is 585, consisting of faculty, security personnel, administrators, and staff. The study was conducted in Lucena City, Quezon, with four participating higher education institutions. The study aims to analyze respondents' awareness of safety measures for responding to bomb-related emergencies, determine whether higher education institutions provide adequate training for school personnel and have the necessary resources to respond to such incidents, and compare each institution's preparedness level. Structured survey questionnaires were used to collect data, and a weighted mean was used to interpret the results. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the preparedness levels of the higher education institutions. As a result, there was no significant difference in the preparedness of higher education institutions regarding equipment and resources. However, there are significant differences in training and programs, as well as in collaboration and coordination. This study reveals that the respondents are aware of the safety measures for responding to bomb-related emergencies. Also, higher education institutions are poorly prepared to provide adequate training for school personnel. However, they have the necessary equipment and collaborate with various agencies in response to bomb-related emergencies. This study emphasizes the importance of responding proactively to bomb emergencies in educational institutions.

Keywords: Bomb; Bomb threat; Emergency preparedness; Explosions; Higher Education Institution; Safety.

As a second home to a child, higher education institutions should be free from threats, danger, or fear. The parents entrusted these institutions with developing their children's skills, education, and, of course, their safety. Schools use various programs and strategies to prevent potential dangers that may affect the institution, since schools are prone to various risks. As Mubita (2021) notes, to ensure security, academic institutions should take all measures to protect learners, teachers, and other staff. In managing safety, educational institutions face many challenges, including preventing student violence, minimizing hazards, and preparing for emergencies such as fires and earthquakes. These challenges also include bomb-related emergencies. There are several recorded incidents of bomb threats sent to schools in the Philippines, like what has reported by Tupas and Villeza (2024), where a bomb threat was sent through email and text message, which disrupted the operation of two schools and seven offices of government in Bataan, Zambales, and Metro Manila. Such an incident may cause fear, panic, and danger, and can disrupt the quality of education. In the report of Agonoy, Rosauero, Alipala, Umel, Lacoste, Fernandez, and Bautista (2024), while Catholic Mass was being held and attended by the students inside

the Dipamoro gym of the Mindanao State University, a bomb exploded, resulting in the deaths of four people, and fifty others were injured.

Following the tragic event, the Commission on Higher Education asked higher education institutions to review their safety and security protocols (Chi, 2023). In the province of Quezon, educational institutions have also experienced the threat of such incidents. According to Estacio (2023), a bomb threat was posted on the Facebook page of the PUP Mulanay State University Student Government by “Ka Tonyo”. According to the post, multiple bombs were planted on the school campus. Also, in Tiaong, Quezon, one lecturer of a higher education institution reported that she received a message from her messenger app that a bomb was placed in her school (Zoleta, 2024). In Lucena City, although there have been no recorded bomb-related incidents at any higher education institution, the absence of such incidents does not guarantee safety from the threat. According to CHED (2024), the highly urbanized city of Lucena comprises 17 higher education institutions, including both public and private colleges and universities. As the number of higher education institutions in the city continues to grow, they become increasingly attractive targets for those seeking to cause disruption and harm.

There are few studies assessing the preparedness of higher education institutions in Lucena City. This study aims to examine the preparedness levels of the 4 participating private and public colleges and universities in response to bomb-related incidents. By doing so, the study may fill a knowledge gap and inform future research. This research aims to assess school personnel's knowledge and awareness of safety measures for responding to bomb-related incidents and to determine whether institutions have the necessary equipment and resources, as well as proper training, for their personnel. The gaps identified in the study lead to recommendations to improve security measures, especially by ensuring adequate training for school personnel. This study also provides data that may help the government to formulate new policies, and the research encourages inter-agency coordination between the government and educational institutions.

Methodology

Research Design

For the study, a quantitative research design with a descriptive method was used to determine respondents' preparedness levels and their implications for higher education institutions. Because the study uses numerical data to measure the preparedness of higher education institutions to handle bomb-related incidents, a quantitative research design is more appropriate. The research employed a descriptive method to assess the preparedness of higher educational institutions.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study's respondents included school personnel, administrators, faculty, and security personnel. Since the researcher involved respondents from 4 different higher education institutions, the researcher used stratified sampling. This method ensures proportional and adequate representation by selecting respondents from each higher education institution's sample size. The respondents were selected as participants because they are potential first responders in the event of a bomb-related incident on the school campus. In emergencies, the teacher's role has been defined as that of a first responder; a trained teacher can handle emergencies effectively. As first responders, the teacher and relevant stakeholders must access and notify the administrator to activate the emergency plan regardless of the severity and type of the emergency (Hyder, Manzoor, & Iqball, 2020). The respondent provides insight into their situational awareness, knowledge, and preparedness of higher educational institutions.

The total number of school personnel from the 4 higher education institutions who agreed to participate is 1,152, according to the collected data. A total of 585 will represent the total 1,152 population. This includes 235 respondents from HEI (A), 152 respondents from HEI (B), 152 from HEI (C), and 46 from HEI (D). The number of respondents is based on the recommended sample size of the Raofsoft calculator. Because higher educational institutions vary, the researcher used a stratified sampling procedure. As a criterion, school personnel should have worked for at least 1 year at a higher educational institution. Only those who are willing and available were selected. This includes administrative personnel, faculty, and personnel from higher educational institutions in Lucena City.

Research Instrument

The researcher used structured survey questionnaires that comprise three parts. The first part determined each

respondent's length of service. The second part assessed the respondent's situational awareness. The third part examined whether higher education institutions are prepared to manage bomb related incidents. The questionnaire was reviewed by the research adviser to ensure accuracy before distribution to the respondents. To ensure the adequacy of the questionnaires' content, they were submitted to PNP personnel assigned to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit. They reviewed the questionnaire statements to determine whether each is technically accurate and aligned with the protocols to be followed during a bomb-related incident. This validation determines whether it would provide sufficient information to address the specific objectives. Regarding the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of permission to conduct the research was sent to the school administration. Those who were available and willing to participate were selected. It includes administrative, faculty, and security personnel from higher educational institutions in Lucena City. Following that, the survey questionnaire was distributed physically to the selected respondents. Responses from each respondent were recorded using a structured survey questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale. Data collection lasted at least 2 months. Each piece of data gathered was kept confidential and stored in a safe, secure locker. The responses gathered were the basis for concluding the study.

Data Analysis Procedure

For accurate results, a weighted arithmetic mean was used because the responses were recorded on a Likert scale. The weighted arithmetic mean helps the researcher to interpret the data. A four-point Likert scale was used to assess personnel at higher education institutions' level of situational awareness regarding the safety measures necessary for responding to a bomb-related incident. Wherein the respondent's awareness level was measured using the following: Fully Aware, meaning the respondent fully understands and has a high level of knowledge in responding to a bomb-related incident. Moderately Aware means the respondents are aware but need additional guidance or information. Slightly Aware, which means that the respondents have limited knowledge, and Not Aware, which means that they do not know of bomb related incidents. In terms of preparedness, being Fully Prepared means that higher education institutions are completely prepared to respond to bomb-related incidents. Moderately Prepared means that the institutions are ready but have room for improvement. Poorly Prepared means the institution demonstrates limited readiness and that procedures are unclear. Not Prepared means the institution pays no attention to how to respond to a bomb-related incident. Because the research aimed to determine significant differences in preparedness levels across higher education institutions in Lucena city for handling bomb-related incidents, a One-Way ANOVA was used.

Ethical Considerations

The participating higher education institutions consist of private universities, state universities, and colleges. Because of privacy concerns, the researcher used pseudonyms for each educational institution involved. Each institution was designated as HEI (A), HEI (B), HEI (C), and HEI (D). This allowed the participating institutions to be compared without revealing their names. The respondents were asked about their willingness to participate. They were asked to respond freely and to sign informed consent. Before completing the research survey, the respondents were informed about the nature of the research and the confidentiality of their responses. The researcher ensures that the study adheres to the highest ethical standards and complies with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussion

Situational and Knowledge Retention

Table 1 presents the levels of situational awareness and knowledge retention among school personnel at higher education institutions regarding the safety measures needed to respond to bomb-related emergencies. With the highest average of 2.83 and a verbal description of being moderately aware, the respondents recognize the importance of remaining calm and not causing panic if there is a report of a bomb threat or an explosion on the school campus. This may indicate that respondents are aware that it is important to remain calm and not cause panic. Regarding the respondents' awareness of the specific zones and safe areas to direct students, and the area to which other personnel should go during a bombing incident, the weighted mean of 2.62 indicates moderate awareness. This may indicate that the respondents know where to direct the students and where to evacuate during the incident. However, it also indicates that there is still a need for clearer information about where the specific is.

Table 1. *Level of Situational Awareness and Knowledge Retention Among Higher Education Institutions' School Personnel Concerning Safety Measures Necessary for Responding to Bomb Threats and Explosions*

Indicators	Weighted Mean				Ave. Mean	Verbal Description
	Sch. A	Sch. B	Sch. C	Sch. D		
1. Importance of remaining calm and not causing panic if there is a report of a bomb threat or an explosion at the school campus.	2.75	2.76	2.70	3.13	2.83	Moderately Aware
2. Specific safety zone and safe areas where students can be directed and where other personnel should go in the event of a bomb threat or explosion.	2.56	2.49	2.65	2.79	2.62	Moderately Aware
3. Necessary measures to ensure the safety of students and other personnel during a bomb threat.	2.64	2.63	2.46	2.64	2.59	Moderately Aware
4. How to use the equipment provided by the institution (e.g., alarms, communication devices, emergency kits) during bomb threats or explosions.	2.59	2.56	2.59	2.55	2.57	Moderately Aware
5. Who to contact and where to report if a package or device on campus is discovered.	2.64	2.52	2.42	2.53	2.53	Moderately Aware
6. First aid procedures to assist those injured by a bomb explosion.	2.47	2.27	2.51	2.60	2.46	Slightly Aware
7. Communication channels and protocols for cooperating with local law enforcement and emergency personnel during a bomb threat or explosion.	2.38	2.42	2.42	2.49	2.43	Slightly Aware
8. Specific procedure to be followed in case there is an incident of a bomb threat or explosions on the school campus.	2.54	2.45	2.35	2.30	2.41	Slightly Aware
9. Role to play in responding to bomb threats or explosions when there is an emergency.	2.32	2.29	2.43	2.53	2.39	Slightly Aware
10. Proper procedure to follow in case a bomb threat is received via email, text, or chat.	2.30	2.34	2.24	2.40	2.32	Slightly Aware
Overall Mean	2.52	2.47	2.48	2.60	2.52	Moderately Aware

Legend: 1.00-1.75 - Not Aware; 1.76-2.50 - Slightly Aware; 2.51-3.25 - Moderately Aware; 3.26-4.00 - Fully Aware

However, with the lowest average of 2.32, the respondents are only slightly aware of the proper procedure to follow if they receive a bomb threat via email, text, or chat. This indicates that respondents are unfamiliar with the appropriate response to such an incident. Also, if they are familiar with their role in responding to a bomb-related incident, their responses indicate that respondents are only slightly aware of the weighted mean of 2.34. This means that the role of the respondent in such an emergency should be clearer to them. In the study by Ilori and Sawa (2020), which examined emergency preparedness plans in private schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, the researchers found that schools lacked emergency plans, leaving school personnel unaware of their responsibilities in emergencies. This aligns with the study's findings, which indicate that respondents are only slightly aware of their role in responding to bomb-related incidents, with a weighted average of 2.41. This may indicate that local findings reflect an international pattern, suggesting that school personnel should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in such an emergency.

Overall, the respondents were moderately aware of the safety measures required for responding to bomb-related incidents, with an overall mean of 2.52. Although this may indicate that school personnel were aware of safety measures, HEI still needs to enhance its awareness of them in response to bomb-related incidents. As Escoto and Hussein (2024) stated, the teacher's role is important in fostering readiness and awareness of potential disasters, thereby promoting effective safety measures.

Preparedness of Higher Education Institutions

In Terms of Training and Programs

Table 2 illustrates the preparedness of higher education institutions to handle bomb threats and explosions, specifically regarding training and programs. The mean of 2.34 indicates that HEIs are poorly prepared to provide regular training and workshops for personnel on responding to bomb-related incidents. These findings contrast with what Olorunfemi and Adesunlove (2024) emphasized: that to maintain preparedness and proficiency in handling various aspects of disaster response, training and drills, and education programs are essential. As a result of these findings, personnel may lack the knowledge to respond properly to a bomb-related incident. Also, with an average of 2.22, higher education institutions are poorly prepared to provide periodic refresher training sessions to keep personnel up to date on the response procedure.

Table 2. Preparedness of Higher Education Institutions in Handling Bomb Threats and Bomb Explosions in Terms of Training and Programs

Indicators	Weighted Mean				Ave. Mean	Verbal Description
	Sch. A	Sch. B	Sch. C	Sch. D		
1. The school regularly provides training and workshops for personnel on how to respond to bomb threats and explosions.	2.53	2.31	2.29	2.21	2.34	Poorly Prepared
2. There are refresher training sessions held periodically to keep personnel updated on response procedures.	2.37	2.21	2.20	2.09	2.22	Poorly Prepared
3. Personnel regularly engage in school drills that simulate bomb threats and bomb explosion scenarios.	2.43	2.26	2.30	2.26	2.31	Poorly Prepared
4. The school provides adequate information and resources to help staff respond to bomb threats or explosions.	2.46	2.28	2.34	2.28	2.34	Poorly Prepared
5. Because of the training provided, the personnel feel confident to act appropriately during a bomb threat or explosion based on the training I have received.	2.48	2.32	2.31	2.21	2.33	Poorly Prepared
Overall Mean	2.46	2.28	2.29	2.21	2.31	Poorly Prepared

Legend: 1.00-1.75 – Not Prepared; 1.76-2.50 – Poorly Prepared; 2.51-3.25 – Moderately Prepared; 3.26-4.00 – Fully Prepared

This is also inconsistent with what Ruttenberg, Tobey, and Rice (2021) stated, that refresher training ensures an effective and coordinated response during emergencies. A lack of refresher training sessions may affect school personnel's knowledge retention in emergencies that may occur on school premises. The overall mean of 2.31 indicates that higher institutions are poorly prepared to respond to a bomb-related incident in terms of training and programs. The findings are supported by a previous study by Kharat (2022), which concluded that schoolteachers have insufficient knowledge of emergency preparedness, suggesting a lack of necessary training and programs for school personnel to address such situations. In the study by Manuel, Arias, Orfrecio, Martinez, Java, Java, Janito, and Tagare (2025), personnel's awareness, training, and understanding of emergency response procedures are significant. Regular training and simulations can improve employees' responses in such emergencies. Contrary to the study's results, this may indicate that HEIs should improve their preparedness through training and programs.

In Terms of Equipment and Resources

Table 3 illustrates the level of preparedness of higher education institutions to handle bomb threats and explosions regarding equipment and resources. With the highest average of 2.92, all respondents believe that higher education institutions are moderately prepared, with adequate resources (e.g., first-aid kits, fire extinguishers) to manage the aftermath of bomb explosions. On the other hand, the respondent agreed least that the institution's emergency equipment for bomb-related incident response is regularly checked, with an average of 2.54. This means that HEIs need to regularly monitor their equipment and resources to ensure they are ready for emergencies.

Table 3. Preparedness of Higher Education Institutions in Handling Bomb Threats and Bomb Explosions in Terms of Equipment and Resources

Indicators	Weighted Mean				Ave. Mean	Verbal Description
	Sch. A	Sch. B	Sch. C	Sch. D		
1. The school has the necessary equipment (e.g., communication systems, alarm systems) to respond effectively to bomb threats.	2.82	2.72	2.58	2.85	2.74	Moderately Prepared
2. There are adequate resources available (e.g., first aid kits and fire extinguishers) to manage the aftermath of a bomb explosion.	3.02	2.76	2.86	3.04	2.92	Moderately Prepared
3. The emergency equipment of the institution that is required for bomb threat responses is regularly checked and maintained.	2.64	2.46	2.43	2.64	2.54	Moderately Prepared
4. Personnel are aware of the location and proper use of the emergency equipment needed for responding to bomb threats or explosions.	2.60	2.48	2.57	2.77	2.60	Moderately Prepared
5. In case of a bomb explosion, the school is well-equipped to manage the evacuation of students and personnel.	2.79	2.73	2.69	2.94	2.78	Moderately Prepared
Overall Mean	2.77	2.63	2.62	2.85	2.72	Moderately Prepared

Legend: 1.00-1.75 – Not Prepared; 1.76-2.50 – Poorly Prepared; 2.51-3.25 – Moderately Prepared; 3.26-4.00 – Fully Prepared

With an overall mean of 2.72, the result indicated that HEIs are well-equipped and well-resourced. In a study conducted by Fragata (2022) at the University of Baguio, he concluded that the school has sufficient equipment to respond effectively during disasters. This may indicate that national educational institutions have sufficient equipment to address not only bomb-related incidents but also other emergencies.

In Terms of Collaboration and Coordination

Table 4 presents the level of preparedness of higher education institutions to handle bomb threats and explosions, focusing on collaboration and coordination. Based on the results, with the highest average of 2.67, the respondent ranked the presence of established communication channels between the school and government agencies (e.g., police, bomb squads) for quick response to bomb threats or explosions as first. This coincides with the study of Nielo (2024), he suggested that the most frequent strategy to strengthen the communication strategy and foster disaster resiliency in the academic environment of the Province of Occidental Mindoro, signing of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the government agencies like local disaster departments, police and fire departments, and other agencies whose duty is to safeguard the public during emergencies. This may indicate that it is a practice for the national level to have established communications channels. Meanwhile, with an average of 2.52, they ranked the training program last in collaboration with external agencies such as police, bomb squads, and the fire department.

Table 4. *Preparedness of Higher Education Institutions in Handling Bomb Threats and Bomb Explosions in Terms of Collaboration and Coordination*

Indicators	Weighted Mean				Ave. Mean	Verbal Description
	Sch. A	Sch. B	Sch. C	Sch. D		
1. The school coordinates properly with the law enforcement agencies in handling bomb threats.	2.47	2.47	2.61	2.94	2.62	Moderately Prepared
2. The training program includes collaboration with external agencies such as police, bomb squads, or fire departments.	2.49	2.46	2.47	2.66	2.52	Moderately Prepared
3. There are established communication channels between the school and government departments (e.g., police, bomb squads) for quick response to bomb threats or explosions.	2.53	2.56	2.61	2.96	2.67	Moderately Prepared
4. The schools are inviting government agencies to conduct comprehensive training for the school personnel in response to a bombing incident.	2.49	2.51	2.44	2.70	2.54	Moderately Prepared
5. A school emergency response plan has been developed in consultation with experts from government departments.	2.44	2.42	2.49	2.77	2.53	Moderately Prepared
Overall Mean	2.48	2.48	2.53	2.80	2.57	Moderately Prepared

Legend: 1.00-1.75 - Not Prepared; 1.76-2.50 - Poorly Prepared; 2.51-3.25 - Moderately Prepared; 3.26-4.00 - Fully Prepared

This relates to the study of Delacruz and Ormilla (2022), as they suggested that to enhance the preparedness of the schools and activities being conducted in terms of disaster planning to respond during an emergency, there is a need for the schools to have a link with other government agencies for training and upgrading of the facilities. Furthermore, with an overall mean of 2.57, the respondents agreed that the HEIs are moderately prepared in terms of collaboration and coordination. This relates to the study by Kamaruddin (2025), who noted that coordination and collaboration between the school and concerned agencies are important. This is important because coordinating with government agencies will help HEIs to have support.

Significant Difference in Higher Education Institutions

Table 5 reveals a significant difference in respondents' preparedness levels for handling bomb threats and bomb explosions. With a P-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the preparedness of higher education institutions in terms of training and programs was rejected. It may indicate that each HEI's efforts differ in providing proper training and programs for responding to bomb-related incidents. Moreover, regarding the significant difference in preparedness among higher education institutions in terms of equipment and resources, the P-value of 0.102 is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is not rejected. This indicates that, in terms of equipment and resources, HEIs are the same; this may be due to standard regulations and requirements for all institutions. The findings also revealed that the preparedness level of HEIs in terms of training and programs is generally low, while that of equipment and resources is moderate. This may be attributed to the fact that, when it comes to equipment, institutions are driven by compliance. While the training and programs given to personnel may be limited, not all personnel are trained to respond to a bomb-related incident. Also, such training and programs require specialized training from the experts. In terms of collaboration and coordination, the P-value of 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 significance level, indicates that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This indicates that, in terms of coordination and collaboration with different government agencies, HEIs differ. This may indicate that the HEIs have different policies and approaches to establishing communication channels and formal partnerships with government agencies.

Table 5. Significant Difference in the Preparedness Levels of Higher Education Institutions in Handling Bomb Threats and Bomb Explosions

Dimension		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p-value	Interpretation
Training and Programs	Between Groups	0.16	0.05	15.72	<.001	Reject Ho There is a significant difference among respondents in their preparedness for training and programs.
	Within Groups	0.05	0.00			
	Total	0.22				
Equipment and Resources	Between Groups	0.18	0.06	2.43	.102	Fail to Reject Ho There is no significant difference among respondents in their level of preparedness regarding equipment and resources.
	Within Groups	0.39	0.02			
	Total	0.57				
Collaboration and Coordination	Between Groups	0.35	0.11	16.54	<.001	Reject Ho There is a significant difference among respondents in their level of preparedness for collaboration and coordination.
	Within Groups	0.11	0.00			
	Total	0.47				

Legend: If $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are derived: School personnel understood the importance of remaining calm and avoiding panic when bomb related incidents were reported on the school campus. However, school personnel show limited awareness of appropriate procedures for handling bomb threats. They also demonstrated unfamiliarity with their role in responding to such an incident. Higher education institutions should have a comprehensive emergency plan for bomb threats and explosions, with school personnel aware of its contents. HEIs have sufficient equipment and resources to handle a bomb-related incident. However, training and programs provided by HEIs for all personnel are limited. Mandated training for personnel and periodic drills may enhance not just the awareness of school personnel but also the preparedness of every institution. Having enough resources is essential for every institution, but it should be paired with the skills, which is why every personnel member needs hands-on training. HEIs have established coordination and collaboration with different concerned agencies. Regular communication planning should be established among government agencies such as BFP, PNP, DRRMO, and higher education institutions. Regular training, such as drills and simulations, should be conducted on the campus by the government agency concerned. This will establish the partnerships and collaboration needed by the higher education institution to ensure that its response to a bomb-related incident is sufficient.

Contributions of Authors

Ulyses D. Ranas is responsible for conceptualizing the study, gathering data, and analyzing the data. Henedina A. Lagumen ensured the study's content remained accurate and relevant throughout the process.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors ensure that there is no conflict of interest related to the study.

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