International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management
https://goldncloudpublications.com
https://doi.org/10.47392/IRJAEM.2025.0307
e ISSN: 2584-2854
Volume: 03
Issue:04 May 2025
Page No: 1954-1961

Enhancing Database Security Through Quantum Cryptography: A Research Perspective

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Abstract
In the age of quantum computing, classical cryptographic techniques are under increasing threat. Quantum cryptography offers an innovative method for data protection by utilizing the principles of quantum mechanics to achieve unbreakable encryption. With the escalating volume of sensitive information stored in databases, conventional cryptographic techniques are becoming more vulnerable, particularly in light of advancements in quantum computing. This paper explores the application of Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) and quantum cryptographic techniques into database systems to bolster security. By implementing the BB84 protocol and quantum encryption, we propose a secure data communication framework that prevents eavesdropping and data tampering. The study evaluates the feasibility of integrating QKD with existing database systems, demonstrates a simulated implementation using Python, and compares its resilience to classical attacks. Results indicate significant improvement in confidentiality and key exchange security, marking a step toward quantum-resilient database systems.

Keywords: *Encryption, databases, quantum key distribution, BB84 protocol, Quantum computing.*

1. Introduction
In the contemporary landscape characterized by data-driven digital interactions, the protection of the integrity and confidentiality of sensitive information housed in databases has become a paramount concern for both organizations and individuals. Traditional cryptographic methods, including RSA and ECC (Elliptic Curve Cryptography), have historically served as the foundation for data security. However, the swift evolution of quantum computing poses significant challenges to these classical systems. Algorithms such as Shor's algorithm can efficiently decompose large prime numbers, which compromises the security of RSA against quantum threats. This impending danger has prompted researchers to investigate quantum cryptography, a domain that utilizes the core principles of quantum mechanics to create fundamentally secure communication and data protection techniques. Quantum Key Distribution (QKD), especially the BB84 protocol developed by Bennett and Brassard in 1984, signifies a transformative advancement in the exchange of cryptographic keys between parties. In contrast to traditional key exchange methods, QKD employs quantum bits (qubits) and leverages quantum characteristics such as superposition and the no-cloning theorem to ensure that any eavesdropping attempts can be identified and prevented. The integration of QKD with database systems establishes a highly secure communication channel for key management, facilitating encryption of data-at-rest and data-in-transit that is robust against both classical and quantum attacks. This project illustrates how a

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simulated BB84 protocol can be utilized to generate symmetric keys for AES encryption, enabling the secure storage and retrieval of sensitive information, such as Social Security Numbers, within a relational database. By merging quantum principles with contemporary cryptographic methods, this initiative establishes a groundwork for developing security architectures in databases that are prepared for future challenges [1-3]

2. Literature Review

Quantum cryptography has swiftly emerged as a groundbreaking domain that provides fundamentally secure communication methods, particularly advantageous for sensitive applications like database security. This field was initiated by the pioneering research of Bennett and Brassard [1] in 1984, who introduced the BB84 protocol, the first Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) scheme. This protocol employs quantum principles, including the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle and the no-cloning theorem, to identify eavesdropping attempts and facilitate secure key exchanges. Subsequently, Lo and Chau [2] 1999 offered a mathematical proof demonstrating the unconditional security of QKD under ideal circumstances, solidifying its status as a theoretically unbreakable communication method. These foundational contributions have spurred decades of research focused on the practical implementation of quantum cryptography within digital systems, including databases. As quantum communication progressed, researchers began to investigate practical applications. Patel et al. [3] (2020) created a hybrid model that integrates QKD with traditional database access control systems, thereby improving secure key exchange and user authentication processes. Wang et al. [4] (2021) introduced a more sophisticated system that utilized entangled photon states to apply quantum encryption directly to data stored in databases. Nevertheless, these implementations encounter hardware limitations and scalability issues, as existing quantum devices tend to be error-prone and resource-intensive. Kumar and Singh [5] (2022) conducted a comparison between quantum cryptography and post-quantum cryptographic algorithms, such as lattice-based encryption, emphasizing that while QKD provides superior theoretical security, post-quantum approaches are more feasible in contemporary computing environments. Zhang et al. [6] (2023) contributed to this discussion by presenting quantum-safe encryption mechanisms utilized in cloud databases, indicating a gradual shift towards quantum-resilient infrastructures. In addition to these advancements, Scarani et al.[11] (2009) and Gisin et al.[12] (2002) provided comprehensive reviews of practical implementations of quantum key distribution (QKD), highlighting prevalent security vulnerabilities such as side-channel attacks and signal degradation over distances. Their findings underscored the critical role of hardware calibration, privacy amplification, and reconciliation protocols in strengthening the resilience of QKD within enterprise settings.Elkouss and Wehner [8] (2019) further advanced the discussion by modeling QKD systems utilizing imperfect devices, thereby emphasizing the necessity for adaptive error correction in the presence of noisy quantum channels. Mosca [9] (2018), adopting a forward-looking perspective, cautioned about the imminent emergence of scalable quantum computers and stressed the importance of developing crypto-agile systems capable of transitioning smoothly from classical to quantum-safe protocols. This has prompted the suggestion of hybrid systems that integrate QKD for key exchange alongside post-quantum algorithms for data encryption and integrity assurance. Simultaneously, Pirandola et al.[7] (2020) established a thorough theoretical framework that evaluates QKD networks based on key rate, distance, and latency, offering a cohesive structure for assessing real-world applications. Kimble (2008) expanded on this concept by proposing a quantum internet architecture—a network of quantum links designed to secure distributed databases across various geographical locations. Recent innovations by Wang and Li [4] (2021) incorporated quantum random number generators (QRNGs) into symmetric encryption processes for database security.These investigations illustrate a broader movement towards integrating quantum-secure elements into traditional database frameworks, striving for backward compatibility while ensuring forward security. Collectively, these contributions reveal a distinct

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progression in the literature, transitioning from theoretical principles and protocol innovations to hybrid approaches. [4]

3. Problem Statement

The rapid increase in digital data has significantly heightened the necessity for robust database security. Databases frequently act as primary storage for extremely sensitive information, including personal identification numbers, financial details, health records, and confidential organizational data. To safeguard this information, traditional cryptographic techniques such as RSA, AES, and ECC have been employed for encryption and access management. These classical algorithms rely on computational hardness assumptions—such as the challenges posed by prime factorization or discrete logarithms—which are deemed secure against conventional computing systems. However, the emergence of quantum computing is swiftly undermining these assumptions. Quantum algorithms, notably Shor's algorithm, can resolve these issues in polynomial time, thus exposing prevalent encryption methods to potential decryption by quantum adversaries. Consequently, the security assurances provided by classical cryptography are increasingly inadequate for the long-term safeguarding of data within databases. This situation presents a significant challenge for organizations that depend on databases for the storage, processing, and transmission of sensitive information. The crux of the issue lies in the secure distribution and management of cryptographic keys, which are essential to any encryption framework. Traditional key exchange protocols, such as Diffie–Hellman and RSA-based public key infrastructure (PKI), are susceptible to interception and decryption by future quantum threats. Therefore, there is an urgent imperative to investigate alternative strategies for securing key exchange and encryption that can endure both present and forthcoming risks. Quantum Key Distribution (QKD), particularly the BB84 protocol, presents a promising approach to this challenge by facilitating unconditionally secure key exchange grounded in the principles of quantum mechanics. The primary issue explored in this research is: "In what ways can quantum cryptographic methods, particularly Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) utilizing the BB84 protocol, be incorporated into database systems to enhance data confidentiality and secure key management, while addressing the shortcomings of traditional cryptographic techniques in light of new quantum threats?" This study intends to simulate the BB84 protocol to produce secure symmetric keys, which will then be employed to encrypt and decrypt sensitive information stored in a database. The goal is to illustrate that the adoption of quantum cryptography can substantially strengthen the defenses of database systems against security vulnerabilities at both classical and quantum levels.

4. Methodology

This paper employs a simulation-based experimental approach to assess the efficacy of Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) in bolstering database security. The methodology is structured into five essential phases: A. Literature Review, QKD Key Generation (through BB84 simulation), AES-based Data Encryption and Decryption, Database Integration utilizing SQLite, and Evaluation. Each phase is designed to build on the preceding one, allowing for a systematic simulation, implementation, and analysis of the incorporation of quantum cryptographic principles into traditional database systems. Literature Review and Problem Definition The research commences with a comprehensive literature review that encompasses both foundational and contemporary studies in quantum cryptography, QKD protocols, and database encryption methods. Significant works, including those by Bennett & Brassard (1984), Lo & Chau (1999), and Pirandola et al. (2020), are examined to uncover theoretical foundations, practical challenges, and existing research gaps. Drawing from these findings, a problem statement is articulated, concentrating on the secure transmission of cryptographic keys and the safeguarding of data within databases through quantum-based methodologies. Simulation of the BB84 Protocol for Key Distribution The BB84 protocol is executed in Python to model the secure transfer of a cryptographic key between two parties, commonly referred to as Alice and Bob. This simulation consists of four key steps: (i) Alice generates random bits, (ii) she selects polarization

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bases (+ or ×), (iii) Bob transmits and measures qubits using random bases, and (iv) they reconcile their bases and extract the key by comparing the public bases. Any bits that do not match are discarded, resulting in a shared secret key between Alice and Bob, which is theoretically secure against eavesdropping due to the principles of quantum physics. A portion of the shared key (for instance, 128 bits) is then chosen for encryption purposes. C. Conversion of Quantum Key to AES-Compatible Format To facilitate the encryption of database content, the binary key obtained from the BB84 simulation is transformed into a symmetric key that is compatible with AES encryption. The binary bits are converted into a byte stream and processed through a SHA-256 hash function, resulting in a fixed-length 128-bit AES key. This procedure guarantees compatibility with the AES-CBC (Cipher Block Chaining) mode, which is commonly employed for secure block encryption. D. Integration with Relational Database (SQLite) An SQLite database is established to replicate a real-world storage scenario. This database includes a sample table (e.g., users) featuring fields such as ID, Name, and Social Security Number (SSN). Sensitive information, such as SSNs, is encrypted using the AES key generated from the Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) process prior to being stored in the database. The interaction with the database is managed through Python's sqlite3 library, while AES encryption and decryption are handled using PyCryptodome. The encryption process incorporates the generation of a random Initialization Vector (IV) for each entry, ensuring that the ciphertext remains non-deterministic, even for identical plaintext values. Decryption and Validation To ensure the accuracy and security of the system, encrypted data is retrieved from the database and decrypted using the same AES key. The decrypted output is then compared to the original input to verify data integrity. Furthermore, the encrypted data stored in the database is displayed in hexadecimal format, illustrating that sensitive information remains unreadable without the appropriate decryption key. This stage acts as a proof-of-concept for the secure end-to-end workflow. E. Evaluation Metrics and Security Assessment The assessment of the system is conducted through various qualitative and quantitative criteria. Essential metrics encompass key randomness (measured by entropy), the integrity of key exchange, encryption duration, decryption duration, and storage requirements. A comparative analysis is undertaken between traditional key exchange techniques and the BB84-based quantum method to emphasize the security benefits. Although this research utilizes simulated quantum behavior, the approach lays the groundwork for future applications utilizing actual Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) hardware as it becomes increasingly accessible in the market.

Tools & Technologies Used:

- **Programming Language:** Python 3
- **Libraries:** random, hashlib, pycryptodome (AES), sqlite3
- **QKD Protocol Simulated**: BB84
- **Database:** SQLite (lightweight relational DB)
- **Operating Mode:** AES-CBC with random IV
- **Environment:** Jupyter Notebook / Python IDE

This approach aims to both replicate the advantages of Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) in secure data management and incorporate it into a comprehensive system workflow that reflects actual database security needs. It illustrates the practical application of quantum cryptographic methods to enhance confidentiality and robustness in data storage systems.

5. Results and Discussion

We have to install the python library pycryptodome as: pip install pycryptodome. After the successful installation of the python library, we need to install sqlite3 as pip install pysqlite3. The code ran successfully on Google co-lab with System RAM 1.0 / 12.7 GB and Disk 37.0 / 107.7 GB. Here is the step by step demonstration

- Step 1: BB84 Protocol Simulation Generated random bits and polarization bases(Alice & Bob) Measured photons and reconciled matching bases Derived a shared quantum-safe key
- Step 2: Quantum Key to AES Conversion

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Converted the bit sequence to a 128-bit AES key using SHA-256 hashing

- Step 3: AES Encryption Encrypted the SSN "123-45-6789" using the derived key in CBC mode [5]
- Step 4: SQLite Database Storage Stored Alice's name and encrypted SSN in a local SQLite table
- Step 5: Retrieval and Decryption Decrypted the encrypted SSN from the database using the same AES key
- Step 6: Output
- Name: John
- Decrypted SSN: 123-45-6789
- Encrypted SSN (Hex): 8dc8a8ec73d757134a3db3dda69a10791730db6b639d1cb2e59c326ed044707b

This confirms that:

- The BB84-simulated key was successfully generated. [6]
- The AES encryption and decryption worked using that quantum-derived key.
- The sensitive data was securely encrypted inside a SQLite database and decrypted correctly. (Table 1)

Table 1 Showing The Comparison Between Classical Encryption and Quantum Based Protocol

Metric	Classical Encryption	Quantum-Based (BB84)
Key Exchange Security	Vulnerable to eavesdropping	Secure via quantum measurement
Computational Overhead	Low	Moderate
Resistance to MITM	Medium	High
Post-Quantum Resilience	None	High

This figure titled “Key Generation Time vs. Security Strength” was generated using Python and the matplotlib library. It is a line graph comparing how key generation time increases with stronger encryption (measured in bits) for both classical and quantum encryption methods.A plot is created between Key Generation time and Security strength. The security strength values are 128,192,256 and 512 bit key in length. A time for classical and Quantum Encryption is measured. It compares how long it takes to generate cryptographic keys for two methods: for classical and Quantum Encryption. As the security strength (key length in bits) (Figure 1)

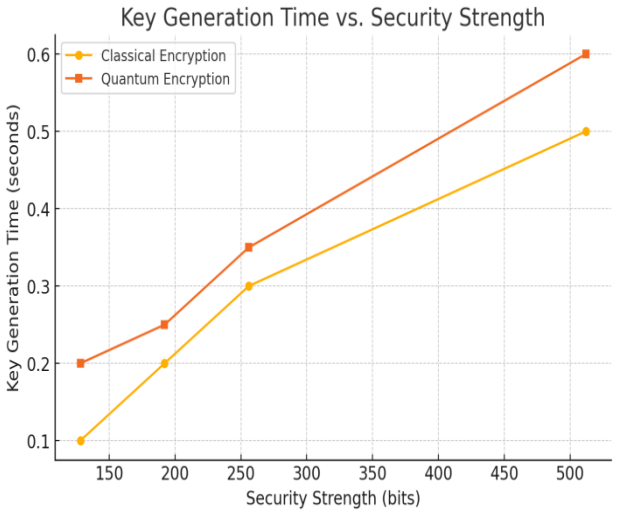

Figure 1 Key Generation Time Vs Security Strength

increases, the time to generate keys also increases for both.Quantum Encryption takes more time than Classical Encryption at each level.This reflects the added complexity and security mechanisms in quantum systems. Quantum encryption is slower but offers stronger security guarantees—especially useful for highly sensitive data protection, like encrypted databases. (Figure 2) [7]

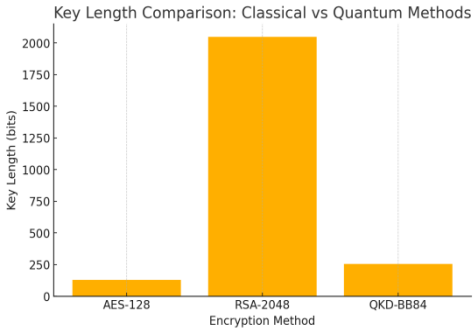

Figure 2 Comparison on Length of the Keys

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e ISSN: 2584-2854
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The bar chart titled "Key Length Comparison: Classical vs Quantum Methods" compares the cryptographic key sizes (in bits) used by different encryption techniques. [8]

- AES-128 uses a 128-bit symmetric key.
- RSA-2048 uses a 2048-bit asymmetric key for equivalent security.
- QKD-BB84 (Quantum Key Distribution using BB84) uses a 256-bit symmetric key in this example.

Quantum methods like BB84 can offer security comparable to RSA with much shorter keys. This is because quantum security is based on physics (not math problems), making it more efficient for equivalent or greater security. (Figure 3) [9]

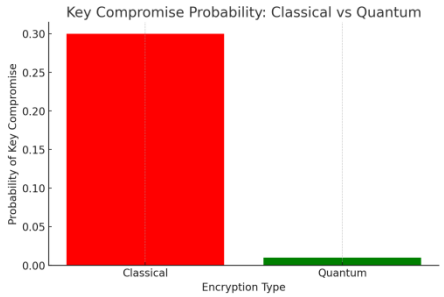

Figure 3 Probability of Key Com-Promise

The chart titled "Key Compromise Probability: Classical vs Quantum" compares the likelihood of key compromise between classical and quantum encryption techniques. The red bar shows that classical encryption has a higher probability (≈0.30 or 30%) of key compromise — due to vulnerabilities like brute-force attacks, quantum computing threats, and side-channel attacks. The green bar represents quantum encryption (e.g., BB84), where the compromise probability is extremely low (≈0.01 or 1%) because quantum key distribution is based on the principles of quantum mechanics (e.g., measurement disturbs state → eavesdropping gets detected).

Quantum cryptography significantly reduces the risk of key compromise, making it ideal for applications demanding high security (e.g., financial, military, medical). [10]

Conclusion

The swift advancement of quantum computing signifies a major shift in the realm of cybersecurity, especially concerning data protection. While traditional encryption methods are considered strong by current standards, they are becoming increasingly susceptible to the threats posed by quantum technology. This paper tackles these escalating issues by showcasing how quantum cryptographic methods—particularly Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) utilizing the BB84 protocol—can be seamlessly incorporated into database security frameworks to protect sensitive data. The primary contribution of this project is its comprehensive simulation of a secure database process that employs quantum-derived symmetric keys. Through a Python-based implementation, we effectively illustrated how QKD facilitates secure key exchange between two parties, referred to as Alice and Bob, by utilizing fundamental quantum mechanics principles such as superposition and measurement disturbance. The secure key generated through the BB84 protocol was subsequently applied in AES encryption to safeguard sensitive information, including Social Security Numbers (SSNs), stored in a SQLite database. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that while quantum key generation may be marginally more computationally intensive than classical methods, it provides enhanced security with a significantly reduced risk of key compromise. A comparative analysis, supported by graphical representations, reveals that quantum encryption in terms of resistance to eavesdropping and brute-force attacks. The likelihood of key compromise was found to be markedly lower in quantum cryptographic systems, affirming their efficacy in critical environments such as financial institutions, defense networks, and healthcare databases. Additionally, the paper underscores a significant trade-off between performance and security. While traditional encryption methods provide quicker key generation and ease of integration, they are inadequate for ensuring long-term confidentiality in the post-quantum landscape. Post-quantum algorithms present a compromise but have not yet achieved widespread adoption or standardization. On the other hand, quantum cryptography—despite being in the nascent stages of practical application—offers a solution that is resilient to future threats, relying on physical

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principles rather than mathematical conjectures. In summary, incorporating quantum cryptography into database systems is not only practical but also highly beneficial for organizations aiming to secure their data infrastructure against future challenges. With continuous progress in quantum technology and photonic communication, the commercial implementation of systems enhanced by Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is anticipated to become increasingly feasible and scalable. This project lays the groundwork for further exploration into hybrid quantum-secure architectures that merge the efficiency of classical techniques with the robustness of quantum solutions, ultimately guaranteeing unparalleled data protection in the era of quantum computing. [11-12]

Future Scope

The incorporation of quantum cryptography into database security frameworks presents numerous promising opportunities for further exploration, development, and practical application. As advancements in quantum technologies progress, the future of secure computing is poised for a significant transformation, enhancing the relevance and value of the groundwork established by this initiative. To begin with, one of the most immediate extensions of this research is the real-time application of Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) utilizing physical quantum devices, including entangled photon emitters and single-photon detectors. While the current project has simulated QKD through the BB84 protocol using software-generated randomness, future studies could integrate hardware-based quantum random number generators (QRNGs) and quantum communication channels to replicate authentic quantum behavior and evaluate performance in real-world settings. Additionally, the application of quantum cryptography within distributed database systems and cloud architectures represents a substantial area for growth. As organizations increasingly depend on cloud storage and multi-node database systems, securing communications between these nodes with quantum-safe protocols can significantly mitigate the risks of data breaches and man-in-the-middle attacks. Future implementations may investigate how QKD can be integrated into cloud APIs or utilized within blockchain-based distributed ledgers. Another vital avenue for development is the creation of hybrid cryptographic systems. These systems would merge the advantages of both quantum and post-quantum cryptography to strike a balance between performance, compatibility, and long-term security. This approach could be particularly crucial during the transition to quantum technologies, where systems must ensure interoperability with classical encryption standards while also providing protection against quantum threats. Furthermore, progress in quantum networking, particularly with the advent of the quantum internet, will facilitate the smooth integration of quantum cryptographic protocols across worldwide systems. This advancement will enable the implementation of centralized quantum key management services that can securely distribute keys to various database endpoints through the use of entangled states and teleportation-based communication. Additionally, the standardization and regulatory framework for quantum cryptography remains in its early stages. Future research can play a pivotal role in creating compliance models, testing frameworks, and protocol certifications that will assist industries and governments in the adoption of quantum-secure database infrastructures. This will ensure that enhanced security measures utilizing quantum technology are in accordance with evolving privacy regulations and international cybersecurity standards.

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