

## PEACE AND RECOVERY PROGRAM

Pilot, Full Study, and “Infrastructure and Public Goods” Creation  
Proposal Cover Sheet and Narrative, Round VI (Winter 2020)



Principal investigator name	Institutional affiliation
Sultan Mehmood	New Economic School Moscow
Co-PI(s) and institutional affiliation(s)	
Saher Asad, Lahore University of Management Sciences	
Title of proposal	
The Strike of the Righteous: The Impact of Hate Literature on Radicalization in Pakistan	
Type of proposal (pilot study, full study, or “infrastructure and public goods” creation)	Country
Pilot	Pakistan
Partner(s)	Partner contact (name, email, phone)
Co-funder(s) (if applicable)	Funded award (PI, project title, amount)
Have you previously submitted this proposal, or a related proposal, to any IPA or J-PAL program or initiative, including the Peace & Recovery Program?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>  No X	If yes, which program or initiative, and when?

<b>P&amp;R funding requested</b>		<b>Total co-funded<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Grant start date:</b> (yyyy-mm-dd)		<b>Grant end date:</b> (yyyy-mm-dd)	
<b>Institution to receive grant funds</b>		<b>Contact for contracting</b>	

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<sup>1</sup> Please indicate the total amount of additional grants for this research, if any.

## **I. Peace & Recovery (P&R) Narrative**

*Note: The narrative should not exceed five pages, including the abstract and appendices. Please use 12-point Calibri font.*

### **Abstract:**

*[150 words max, to be added to the P&R webpage if proposal is awarded funding.]*

In many vulnerable democracies, radicalization poses a significant challenge. Radicalization as a precursor to political violence may be a threat to both democracy and development. Policymakers must decide from many policy options based on little to no evidence. Does limiting access to hate literature work best or is it the case that counter-narrative messaging and subsidizing competitors' content more effective? We hope to inform this debate and contribute to the literature on determinants of political violence by conducting a pilot study where we explore the feasibility of several interventions that may reduce support for extremist ideologies. Our focus groups with vulnerable populations guide us to pilot 6 interventions. The randomized evaluation stemming from this pilot may provide new causal evidence on: i. how hate literature impacts support for extremist ideologies? ii. Does subsidizing counter-narrative messaging work, if so, what kind of counter-messaging is most likely to reduce support for extremist violence? iii. Does reducing access to hate literature and counter-narratives work as complements or substitutes?

### **Policy problem, academic contribution, and generalizability:**

*[A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research, how the research fits with the list of research priorities laid out in the P&R Guiding Principles and Funding Priorities, and the academic contribution you expect the project to make. Please also describe how this research will lead to generalizable insights, and why this project goes beyond a specific place-based policy or program evaluation.]*

The project fits well with the IPA Peace and Recovery theme of reducing violence and promoting peace. Hate speech and extremist thought is known to be a source of inciting violence. The use of Facebook for spreading hate speech in Myanmar, use of social media platforms for spreading anti-muslim sentiments in India as well as the anti-Ahmadiya sentiments being spread through news media in Pakistan, all provide examples of how hate speech may increase political violence. This pilot will be able to contribute to these themes by providing a better understanding on

- 1) How a reduction in access to hate speech publications impacts support for extremist ideologies?
- 2) What are the potential ways in which these ideologies can be challenged through encouraging alternate publications?

This is an important question for context of Pakistan as well as for other countries where radical ideologies are prevalent and evolving. Recent qualitative scholarship point that the key Islamic State's publication *Dabiq magazine* has been a critical recruitment tool for the organization (see for instance, Gambhir, 2014; Ingram, 2016; Jacoby, 2019).

Most radical organizations target the youth with the use of such radical publications (magazines in particular). The use of magazines is especially prevalent in areas where internet penetration is low such as large parts of rural Pakistan. Therefore, understanding ways to effectively counter this information is extremely important for building peace and reduce religiously inspired violence in the long-term. It is also important in contexts where governments are making efforts to eliminate the organizations physically, yet their ideology seems to persist. Moreover, simply limiting hate speech might not be cost-effective in countries where religious identity is considered substantially more important than national identity where

policy makers fear backlash. Moreover, some literature has suggested bans are not always effective and create backlash effects (Roese and Sande, 1993; Robinson, 2019). In the absence of an effective counter-narrative, bans can be perceived by public as curbing the freedom of expression and create resentment towards the state and deteriorate trust in state institutions. This may explain why several governments, including Pakistan our focus of study, have gone back on forth on banning hate literature. This may further strengthen support for such organizations and increase their penetration. One of the questions answered through research conducted in this project is to identify what type (secular or religious) counter-narratives print literature can be most effective in reducing support for such extremist organizations.

The project results may also be generalized to other Muslim majority countries, which also have widespread radicalization. Brief look at historical data reveals that over the last two decades, 95% of all terrorist events occurred in Muslim majority countries (GTD, 2018). Moreover, a large fraction of population in these countries espouse violent political views. For instance, 84% of Pakistanis and 99% of Afghanis favor Sharia to be made official law of their country. Similarly, large proportions of population support death penalty for blasphemy and apostasy (Pew Survey, 2017). In terms of the academic relevance, the project is connected to several strands of literature. With many European countries facing radicalized youth and consequent terrorism at home and abroad, the lessons for this project may also allow us to better understand the radicalization process itself in a context which high degree of radicalization. The project, therefore, first speaks to the large body of literature which shows that early childhood environment is crucial in determining later life outcomes (Knudsen et al., 2006; Almond and Currie, 2011; Heckman et al, 2013). We want to examine this question in the context of development of radical political views surrounding violence and religion. Violent political views are thought to be a key ingredient or “pathway” for actual perpetration of terrorism (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). We hope to contribute to this literature by providing experimental evidence from the field on the actual formation of these beliefs.

Second, the project also relates to the literature showing the impact of political bias in media. For instance, a strand of literature shows that media bias can help promote negative social norms and political outcomes as result of propaganda (see for instance, Adena et al., 2015; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). Our project will contribute to this literature by studying the spread of religious extremist propaganda through hate speech publications. Third, this study will also contribute towards the literature on how fact-checking or providing the truth or an alternative narrative can impact radical views. This strand of literature shows that in political context fact-checking on political facts is not able to undo the effects in terms of changing voting patterns (Barrera et al., 2018; Nyhan et al., 2017; Swire et al., 2017). A body of scholarship documents that depending on the context political beliefs are amenable to change (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya, 2011). Likewise, evidence also shows that many key non-cognitive skills are malleable and there is a large scope for interventions in post-conflict societies (Blattman, Jamison and Sheridan, 2017). Our project will contribute to this literature by examining whether limiting certain form of media at key junctures of people’s lives impact on their belief formation and radicalization.

### **Policy Relevance**

The proposal may have relevant to policy making for Pakistan as well as many Muslim majority countries where religion-inspired radicalization has taken root. First, through this research will collect survey evidence on the extent of prevalence of extremist hate literature in rural Pakistan. No such data exists to our best of knowledge in any Muslim majority country, let alone Pakistan. This can allow policy makers and international donors to approximate the extent of prevalence of these ideologies in the society and if some policies need to be designed to combat it. Second, our baseline survey will collect the characteristics of

people, including those who buy hate publications. This may help government design better targeted programs for vulnerable groups who might have these characteristics.

Third, this proposal may also give lessons on the potential ways of combatting hate extremist literature. For instance, if we find that increasing the implicit cost of hate literature through making it less visible would have a much larger effect on consumption of this content than say subsidizing competitors, the policy-makers and donor funded programs can help in scaling this subsidization by subsidizing certain magazines that out-compete the hate literature. This may be particularly helpful where hate literature has continued to circulate despite several attempted bans on part of government.

Fourth, moving away from extremist hate speech literature and moving towards more scientific publications may also help build trust in science. This is particularly important as countries like Pakistan are struggling to convince people into signing up for vaccination and observe social distancing rules. Data collected by Co-PI Asad shows that the proportion of individuals in Punjab not willing to take COVID-19 vaccine is 30% (gone up from being at about 12% two months back). In rural areas particularly, the top concern is around safety issues associate with vaccine, which may have to do with not having enough understanding and trust in science.

Finally, hate speech publications can also hurt gender norms. Recently, women's March to celebrate woman's day (Aurat March) have been under attack from these publications as well. For instance, a headline ran that women who attend these marches are "Disrespecting the Prophet". Another one ran as calling such activism "is worse than terrorism" (see headline in Figure 1 of appendix). Dissemination of this type of literature is likely to exacerbate resistance towards women activism. We hope that our interventions on limiting access to such hate speech literature may also impact gender norms.

### **Context of Low Internet penetration and the most Popular Magazines: *Zarb-e-Momin* and *Ummat* -**

Internet penetration is limited in Pakistan with about 15% of the population having access to the internet. The figure is even lower in rural Pakistan. Our focus groups and discussions with vulnerable population reveal that extremist organizations' major recruiting tools are monthly magazines in print. According to a survey conducted by the Institute of Peace Studies in Pakistan *Zarb-e-Momin* (The Strike of the Righteous) and *Ummat* (The Muslim Fraternity) are the most popular Islamist magazines in Pakistan with circulation estimated to be about 70, 000 each. These magazines are special in their use of "colors and multimedia techniques" and target adolescents and teenagers in rural Punjab. As the prominent Afghan journalist, Sami Yousafzai notes: "After the Taliban took control of Kabul, the *Zarb-e-Momin* magazine became a mouthpiece of the Taliban regime. It started publishing pieces that glorified violence and the call for global Jihad. It demonized the Shias and Ahmadiyya community and attracted a considerable following among the youth" (The News, 2018). Likewise, another report, *Jihadi Print Media in pakistan: An Overview*, notes that *Zarb-e-Momin* and *Ummat* began as a subsidized venture but it has now become a "lucrative business". It further observes that "innovations" in design and targeting the youth that has allowed "the jihad media to emerge as an alternate print media" (PIPS Report, 2018).

The government has pondered banning both these magazines but lacked political will as well as consensus on it. For instance, the Sindh State government banned *Zarb-e-Momin* and *Ummat* in November 2008 citing these two magazines "contain material that is source of inspiration for Jihadi outfits, is prejudicial to national integration and intended to promote anti-state fillings". Lack of consensus, both from the left and right, on the optimal policy mix to fight extremist ideologies implied that the ban was lifted after a few months (The News, 2018).

Likewise, two focus groups with 10 avid readers of these magazines suggest that they are key in militant recruitment in Pakistan and that equips you with the “ideological foundations” to “argue our case”. It was also learned from about focus group that Zarb-e-Momin, although no longer subsidized is still cheaper than other magazines in demand. About 70% of the teenagers we surveyed were willing to exchange their Zarb-e-Momin with a “Science key Dunya” (World of Science) magazine when both were offered for the same price (World of Science is 30% more expensive than the extremist Zarb-e-Momin). As part of the project, we will pilot 3 separate treatments (along with their interactions making total number of treatments to be 6). Therefore, based on these qualitative accounts and our focus group with avid readers of these magazines we think targeting these two magazines may have substantial potential to limit extremist ideology and support for extremist violence.

### **Research design:**

#### *Question:*

In this project we hope to understand some key pathways through which societies get radicalized and to examine some policy tools that can be utilized to deradicalize youth. We plan to first conduct a pilot where we will explore the feasibility of operationalizing 6 interventions (to tested in a future full scale RCT) in Pakistan. These interventions are informed by conducting focus groups with radicalized youth and taking to stakeholders and implementation partners on the ground. The eventual RCT will help us to provide causal evidence for the following questions:

- a. How does limiting access to hate publications (through making hate literature less accessible) impact support for extremist ideology, political violence and gender norms?
- b. How does augmenting hate literature with ‘counter-narrative’ literature impact support for extremist ideology and political violence?
- c. How does educating people (though information interventions) on role of media (and hate speech) in inciting violence impact support for extremist ideology and political violence?
- d. How do the interactions of these interventions work in impacting support for extremist ideology?

#### *Treatment and Evaluation Design:*

We hope to examine the impact of hate speech literature on formation of radical political beliefs and extremist ideology for adolescents in Pakistan. To do this, we vary the supply of three key publications (magazines) aimed at teenagers in Pakistan: the “Zarb-e-Momin” (literally, The Strike of the Righteous), “Iman ka Nizab-e-Taleem” (literary, Islamic Curriculum on Peace) and “Science key Dunya” (The World of Science). The first publication, Strike of the Righteous, glorifies political violence and terrorism, whereas the second focuses on moral teachings in the society and a more peaceful interpretation of the Islamic faith. The third publication is a domestic science publication that is also gaining traction among the youth. We decided to include this publication because we learned from our focus group that 7/10 teenagers we surveyed were willing to exchange their Zarb-e-Momin with a “Science key Dunya” (World of Science) magazine when both were offered for the same price (World of Science is 30% more expensive than the Zarb-e-Momin). Moreover, interviews with “book stall” owners revealed “Science key Dunya” was the only remaining direct competitor of Zarb-e-Momin as opposed to any religious publication. As part of the project, we will pilot 3 separate treatments (along with their interactions making total number of treatments add up to six).

### Negative Access Shock – Supply Treatment:

One cannot randomly allocate these magazines, especially Zarb-e-Momin, due to ethical reasons where allocation of magazines might convince additional recruits for terrorist organizations. Therefore, we propose to simulate a supply shock by collaborating with the village distributors where we will incentivize them into not displaying these magazines on their main visible shelves.

This is feasible since given the context, especially following discussion with many bookshop owners who are extremely profit sensitive (given their low profit margins are extremely low). Preliminary groundwork shows that since there are at most 2 vendors per village that making hate content less visible. Moreover, we have support of a key stakeholders that will further facilitate our intervention: a key publishing house that fiercely competes with Zarb-e-Momin (and provides alternative religious publication) is Minhaj-ul-Quran Publication which will also be one of our implementation partners and will help during the experiment. We hope to create a random supply shock across clusters on these two publications and observe outcomes for control and treated groups through periodic surveys as well as match it with other data sources such as number of alleged terrorists in the district according to new case filings in the district high courts. This is a monthly publication so we can create several months (and even a year) of exposure shocks given the low price of the magazine.

### Potential Retaliation

Although, it is impossible to plan completely for every contingency, we think the safest way is to engage local competitors who are already in fierce competition with the hate magazines. Our work with our partner organization, Minhaj ul Quran Publications, which has significant field presence as well as publishes key counter-narrative publications (e.g. the Iman ka Nizab-e-Taleem) is particularly helpful. An understanding has been established with Minhaj ul Quran Publications for closely collaborating with us to conduct this project and our field assistant will be accompanied by a regional official from this well-known organization. This will provide both legitimacy and security to prevent any strong action on part of the hate literature publishers. The risk of retaliation is likely to be much lower in the current scenario as we are only removing these publications from display and not removing them from the bookshop completely.

### Counter-narrative Treatment:

The second major component of the project is to test the effectiveness of counter-narrative strategies. These include counter-narrative using existing publications. For counter-narrative our focus groups reveal two different current counter-narrative publications are in highest demand. The first magazine has messaging empathizing science and rationality. In this regard, we hope to supply a popular magazine, “Science key Dunya” (The World of Science). The second will use an alternative more peaceful religious narrative, namely “Iman ka Nizab-e-Taleem” (literary, Islamic Curriculum on Peace).

### Education Treatment:

In addition to the counter narrative, we will have another arm where we will inform people on responsible media use as well as how hate speech through media may impact violence. This can be implemented through sending text messages or even through potential pamphlets talking about the role of hate speech publications in instigating violence and hurting the social fabric.

### **Experimental (Pilot) Design Details:**

In this pilot, we roll out treatment across 35 villages with 5 villages per treatment (with 18 individuals per village). Our individual level sample for 35 villages will collect baseline and end line information for a total of 630 individuals in the 35 villages. The data from pilot will then also be used for conduct power calculations for the full experiment and assess feasibility of some of the interventions. For instance, the pilot will allow us to assess the response of readers of hate literature to our supply shock of removing these magazines from main display shelves or relegating them to “middle invisible shelf” (according to a bookshop owner’s suggestion). The pilot will also help us further in understanding which interventions are feasible as well as most interesting and have potential. The assignment to treatment will be done at the village level but the outcomes will be measured at the individual level. To summarize, we hope to the following pilot 6 treatments and 1 control across the 35 villages and implement the following interventions:

**T1:** Invisible Hate Treatment – Paying bookshop owners not to display extremist publication.

**T2:** Counter-Narrative Treatment – Introducing popular counter-narrative literature without changing supply:

**T2a:** Secularization Counter Messaging – we subsidize secular positive science publication while keeping the supply of Zarb e Momin (hate literature) unchanged.

**T2b:** Religious Counter Messaging - a religious non extremist treatment while keeping the supply of Zarb e Momin unchanged.

**T3:** Education Treatment - Educating people on responsible media use and impacts of hate speech.

**T4:** Negative Access to Hate Shock X Counter-Narrative– T1 and introducing counter-narrative

**T5:** Negative Access to Hate Shock X Education – T1 and educating people on responsible use of media and impacts of hate speech

**C:** Control Group – No intervention

By subsidizing mean we will cover some cost of the positive science publication. Our focus groups with bookshop owners revealed a subsidy equivalent to reducing cost of competitor by 25% is likely to provide enough incentive to switch for many buyers (although the elasticity of demand of these buyers are yet to be ever computed).

Nevertheless, the change in treatments give rise to new technical issue. In particular, whether shopkeepers will not renege on their commitment to not display the hate speech books. We hope to closely monitor compliance and conduct random inspection or “audits” to ascertain whether the bookshop owners are actually observing the invisible hate literature treatment. For this we will be sending mystery shoppers randomly to try and purchase each of the publications to check if the relevant protocols are being followed. The mystery shoppers will not purchase any of the publications and instead will purchase a neutral item such as a pen or a pencil. We will also pay the bookshop owners in instalments to incentivize the bookshop owners keeping the magazines out of clear sight according to our trail needs. The payments to the bookshop owners will be linked to the extent to which they follow our experimental protocols.

### **Hate speech Ban Treatment Feasibility Assessment and Focus Groups:**

For our hate speech supply shock pilot treatment (T1) we have done some ground work in 5 villages around Lahore (namely, Barki, Kalyan, Ladheke, Saroi, Kot Chandi). In these villages we have reached agreement with the major book shop(s) to remove the hate speech literature from their display. On average there is one book shop per village. We have used their price quotes to calculate the cost of buying major hate speech literature for buying monthly hate speech magazines for 3 months. Focus group discussion in two villages (Kalyan and Kot Chandi) on 10 people who read hate literature suggest that although there is

demand for hate literature, they are substitutable with counternarrative, secular and non-violent religious content. Interestingly, 7/10 subjects were most interested in substituting to a science magazine “Science key Dunya” (the world of science magazine), therefore, we have added it as additional Secularization Counter Messaging (T2).

**Outcome variables:**

The key list of outcomes we plan to study include conducting surveys in the pilot: support for extremist ideologies; support for terrorist organizations; willingness to pay for accessing radical literature; number of terrorist cases registered in the area, perspectives on other social issues such as women’s empowerment (domestic violence, women activism for their rights such as right to an inheritance), support for political violence, financial support for terrorist organizations, willingness to pay for accessing radical literature perspectives on women’s empowerment, degree of slant in gender norms and other development outcomes such as self-reported income and asset ownership. We will conduct baseline and endline surveys by phone whenever possible. The baseline survey we will be conducted before starting the interventions and endline survey will be conducted 6 months after launch of interventions.

*Target population:*

We will design and pilot baseline and endline (phone & in-person, depending on the COVID-19 situation) surveys with people in sample villages. Our primary population of interest will be a random sample of individuals in age range 18-35 years old in treatment and control villages. We also plan to stratify on gender as men and women have different channels of information so a comparison of men and women will provide useful insights.

*Consent Process:*

In this project we will be following protocols to get consent at two levels in the experiment. First, for the subjects or the customers buying these magazines, their consent will be sought during the baseline survey. Subjects will be told that they are being invited to participate in a research study on how print media can view norms and attitudes. They will be informed that as part of the research their village may randomly get picked for research study. Subjects will also be informed that they will be interviewed again in a few months. Should they refuse to any of these, they can stop the interview at any time and they will not be included in the study. Second, we will also be getting consent from bookshop owners as well. Bookshop owners will be asked for their consent to be part of the intervention in which they will be asked to follow the relevant intervention protocol. Should the bookshop owners refuse participation, we will move to the nearest bookshop/village. Finally, with the change in supply side intervention, the threat to freedom of expression will also be reduced. That is, if a person did want to access the extremist publication, all they have to do is ask the bookshop owner who will then provide them with a copy. This is also not an unusual practice in Pakistan where the bookshop owners have full control over how they choose to curate the publications on the various display shelves according to demand and publishers typically do not request a specific spot at the bookshelf.

### *Implementing partner(s):*

We will work with a local network of distributors of publications in the relevant clusters to implement the experiment (we are already in contact with some). In addition to that we also plan to work with another partner organization, Minhaj ul Quran Publications, which has significant field presence as well as publishes key counter-narrative publications (e.g. the Iman ka Nizab-e-Taleem) which we plan to use for providing the counter-narrative in some of the treatment arms. An understanding has been established with Minhaj ul Quran Publications for conducting this project (partnership letter attached). In addition to that we will also work with other potential local NGO partners with enough rural coverage, who can also help us in implementing the experiment in a successful way. In addition to that we will also work with CRED for the implementation of the experiment as they have extensive experience in managing and conducting large scale randomized experiments in Pakistan.

The data collection for baseline, follow-up and endline surveys will be conducted by the survey firms (which could be either of CRED or IDEAs which one of the PI has worked in the past). The survey firm will also help conduct random checks to make sure that the project is being implemented as planned in terms of the correct interventions. These random checks will include visits to the distributor outlets to make sure that they have cut back the supply or have not brought in newer supply after the initial lot was purchased by the research team (particularly for the intervention causing supply shocks). These checks will also include visiting some households to make sure that they are perhaps not accessing the materials from the neighboring villages or from other potential outlets.

### **Gender:**

*[Does this proposal address gender in any way, and do you plan to disaggregate the analysis by gender?]*

The project plans to look at the impact of different interventions on ideologies of men and women through heterogeneous effects. Although the experiment is not explicitly blocking on gender as a variable, we still intend to look at the differential impacts of the interventions on women. This is important for this project for several reasons. First, women have different information networks so it will be interesting to see if the hate speech publications reach them and impact them in similar ways. Second, women have different labor market opportunities and are also much more home bound. Therefore, it will be interesting to check if these publications impact them in a differential way through some of these channels. Nevertheless, we also hope to assess the impact of limiting access to hate literature and other interventions on how it may impact gender norms. Indeed, hate speech publications can also hurt gender norms. Recently, women's march to celebrate international woman's day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (Aurat March 2021) have been under attack from these publications as well. For instance, a headline ran that women who attend these marches are "Disrespecting the Prophet" and committing "blasphemy" (an implication being that they deserve the death penalty). Another one ran as calling such activism "*A bigger crime than terrorism*". Dissemination of this type of literature is likely to exacerbate resistance towards women activism. We hope that our interventions on limiting access to such hate speech literature may also impact gender norms.

## **COVID-19:**

### *Risks and contingency planning:*

*[Please describe any COVID-related risks to the feasibility of the project, and detail your relevant design adaptations, risk mitigation measures, contingency plans, etc.]*

Pakistan has done well in keeping the COVID-19 cases under control when compared to various developing countries in the region as well as developed countries. Our project will facilitate social distancing and carefully follow the directives of Government as major public health organizations. In case the number of COVID-19 cases increase, there is some risk of fieldwork being delayed in case there is a lockdown. The government is committed to not enforcing a nationwide lockdown (as also said by the prime minister on various occasions) but rather is using the strategy of enforcing localized or “smart lockdowns”. These localized lockdowns tend to focus on larger urban areas, while our project will be focused on rural areas. That being said, we are also cognizant of COVID-related risks and our implementation partner, Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP), has already demonstrated great care and flexibility in transforming in-person interviews to phone interviews and moving the research assistants to work remotely. Therefore, by using their on-ground expertise, we will leverage their experience in navigating COVID-related risks in Pakistan. We plan to employ all sanitary measures in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. We will also aim to shift to phone surveys whenever possible and encourage field assistant and research assistant to work remotely. Some parts of our intervention can be shifted online e.g. providing counter-narrative publications or education intervention may also be considered using online avenues in case the sudden unexpected spike occurs. The negative access (invisible hate speech intervention) only requires the fieldworker to visit the shop to collect magazines, which will be done only a it 5 times during the 5 months of intervention. For this, we will make sure that our fieldworker takes all precautions and uses necessary PPEs, as well as our mystery shoppers for random audits observe all precautionary protocols.

### *Relevance to COVID-19 and generalizability:*

*[Does this project seek to answer any COVID-related research questions? If so, please detail how these findings will inform policy and practice during the current pandemic, and whether they will be generalizable beyond the COVID-19 context.]*

Our project looks at the relative efficacy of various tools in countering extremism in Pakistan. To do this we are experimenting with 3 treatments including removing supply of extremist publications, introducing counter-narrative, educating audience on hate speech and interaction of removing supply with counter-narrative and education. While our project is not explicitly targeting COVID-19 related research questions, we will be able to learn about the extent of radicalization as well as its dynamics in COVID-19. If we see that there are changes in COVID-19 cases during our intervention period, we can try to look at trends in radicalization during the COVID-19 circumstances.

We hope that a potential reduction in radical beliefs (due to our interventions) may also help people take COVID-19 precautions more seriously. Survey conducted by Co-PI (Saher Asad) has shown that 53.8% of people (sampled from rural Punjab) agree with the statement that “Religion says do not take any precautions since everything is predestined”. We plan to include some questions on COVID-19 related beliefs in our baseline and endline survey.

The findings from our pilot project may also be generalizable beyond the pandemic. We don’t intend to include any COVID-19 related changes to our interventions other than the necessary precautions needed

to keep all study subjects and staff safe. Moreover, since both COVID-19 information and compliance is particularly low in villages, we also hope think our interventions focused on villages where COVID is much lower than cities (given limited travel and transport network between cities and villages) may imply that our study may have external validity beyond the pandemic years. Our sampling strategy will also not be changed due to COVID-19 as we plan to sample our subjects randomly from the village population (in age range 18 to 35 years). Therefore, our results can be generalized beyond the COVID-19 times.

## II. Project Milestones

Please list each key milestone for the project (e.g. baseline survey design, baseline survey implementation, baseline data analysis, etc.) We generally expect projects to list 8-15 milestones. Add lines as needed.

#	Milestone Description	Target Dates	
		Start (YYYY-MM-DD)	End (YYYY-MM-DD)
1	Working on project design – finalizing intervention design	2021-09-1	2021-11-01
2	Working on baseline survey design	2021-11-1	2021-12-30
3	Apply for and getting relevant administrative permissions	2021-12-1	2021-1-31
4	Finalizing baseline survey	2022-2-1	2022-3-30
5	Conducting Baseline Survey (including pre-piloting and training)	2022-3-1	2022-5-30
6	Randomization – assigning villages to various treatments	2022-6-15	2022-6-30
7	Planning intervention logistics	2022-7-15	2022-9-01
8	Launching interventions and running for 4 months	2022-10-1	2023-3-30
9	Designing endline survey	2023-4-15	2023-4-30
10	Conducting endline survey (including pre-pilot and training)	2023-5-1	2023-5-30
11	Data cleaning and analysis	2023-6-1	2023-8-30

## Appendix A: Headlines from 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Backlash on “Aurat March” a protest organized to commemorate international women’s day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021



Note: Headlines on Zarb-e-Momin (right) and Ummat (left).

Headlines: “Women participating in Women Rights commit blasphemy” (right), “Marching for women rights is worse than terrorism” (left).