

Pandemic, Religiosity and Sectarian Conflict
Analyzing the Nexus in Pakistan



By

Aisha Ali

Registration No: 00000318959

Supervised By

Dr. Imdad Ullah

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies
Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS)
National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)
Islamabad
(2021)

Pandemic, Religiosity and Sectarian Conflict

Analyzing the Nexus in Pakistan



By

Aisha Ali

Registration No: 00000318959

Supervised By

Dr. Imdad Ullah

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS)

National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Islamabad

(2021)

Pandemic, Religiosity and Sectarian Conflict

Analyzing the Nexus in Pakistan's Context

By

Aisha Ali

Registration Number: 000318959

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of MS Peace and Conflict Studies

Supervisor

Dr. Imdad Ullah

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS)

National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Islamabad

(2021)

Thesis Acceptance Certificate

It is certified that the contents and form of the MS thesis titled “Pandemic, Religiosity and Sectarian Conflict: Analyzing the Nexus in Pakistan’s Context” written by Ms. Aisha Ali (Registration No. 00000318959) of Centre for International Peace and Stability has been vetted by the undersigned, found complete in all respects as per NUST status/regulations, is free of plagiarism, errors and mistakes and is accepted as partial fulfillment for the award of MS/MPhil Degree. It is further certified that the necessary amendments as pointed out by the GEC members of the scholars have also been incorporated in the said thesis and have been found satisfactory for the requirement of the degree.

Supervisor: _____

Dr. Imdad Ullah

CIPS, NUST

Head of Department: _____

Dr. Muhammad Makki

CIPS, NUST

Associate Dean: _____

Dr. Tughral Yamin

CIPS, NUST

Dated: _____

CERTIFICATE FOR PLAGIARISM

It is certified that this MS thesis titled “Pandemic, Religiosity and Sectarian Conflict: Analyzing the Nexus in Pakistan” by Ms. Aisha Ali (Registration No. 00000318959) has been examined by me. I undertake that:

- a. The thesis has significant new work/knowledge as compared to the works already published. No sentence, equation, diagram, table, paragraph, or section has been copied verbatim from previous works. All material used has been directly referenced.
- b. The work presented is the original work of the author (i.e., there is no plagiarism). No ideas, processes, results, or words of others have been presented as the author’s own work.
- c. There is no fabrication of data or results. The thesis has been checked using TURNITIN (a copy of the originality attached) and found within limits as per HEC plagiarism policy and instructions issued from time to time.

Signature of Supervisor

Dr. Imdad Ullah

Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS)

National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Islamabad, Pakistan

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Dr. Ali & Dr. Mehr – for all their love, support and prayers.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support, understanding, and guidance of the many wonderful people I'm fortunate enough to have in my life. My dear sisters – Rabeeah, Tooba & Ammarah who have offered help and support at every step of the way, regardless of what corner of the world they are in. My dearest nephews, Yahya, Zakariya & Hashir who continue to brighten my days.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my parents, who have seen me through the highs and the lows of this process, and supported and encouraged me at every step of the way.

Most of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Imdad Ullah, whose patience and calm has guided me through the rough patches. I would like to thank my teacher Dr. Bakare who has always been patient with me. Lastly I would like to thank my class, the wonderful people that I have met during this journey whose generosity and kindness have seen me through at every step of the way.

Most of all, I'd like to thank my parents for their unwavering support and undying faith in my abilities.

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the link between threats like COVID-19 pandemic and the rising manifestations of xenophobia in collectivist & individualist societies. It explicates this relationship by conceptualizing the factors that can manifest intergroup conflict within a country. As disease exposes the fault lines within a society, this study uses the cases of India, Sri Lanka and USA to see how different societies have resulted in different levels of harassment and violence against a marginalized group. India has displayed a great increase in instances of violence & mob violence, whereas in the US there have been more cases of harassment and hate crimes reported by individuals. On the other hand, Sri Lanka's example showed that limited role of social media has curbed the impacts of violence to a great extent in the country. The thesis then turns to the subject in Pakistan's context, as it explores the sectarian dimension and the rise in Shia-Sunni conflict within the country, a fault line that has impacted the peace and stability of the country. Findings have shown that increased polarization has resulted as lack of movement and increased use of social media have resulted in a limited exposure to the outgroup. However, due to a well-controlled COVID-19 response although sectarian tensions have festered, aside from a few incidences of mob violence, no major upticks in violence were observed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1 Literature Review.....	12
1.2 Research Significance.....	15
1.3 Research Question	17
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework	19
2.2 Parasite Stress Theory.....	21
2.3 Characteristics of a Collectivist Society	22
2.3.1 Strong Family Ties.....	22
2.3.2 Outgroup Xenophobia.....	23
2.3.3 Role of social media.....	24
2.3.4 Religiosity	25
2.4 Radicalization	26
Chapter 3: Background	28
3.1 Cases from across the globe:.....	28
3.1.1 USA.....	30
3.1.2 India	30
3.1.4 Sri Lanka.....	33
3.2 The Case of Pakistan.....	35
3.2.1 Historical Overview	35
3.2.2 The Present Situation	37
3.3 Research Limitations	39
Chapter 4: Results	42
4.1 Sample Characteristics.....	42
4.2 Social Media Exposure & Use.....	42
4.3 Religiosity	43
4.8 Findings & Discussion.....	45

Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	48
5.1 Recommendations.....	49
Appendix.....	53

Table of Figures

Figure 1 The graph shows increasing number of internet & Social media users	22
Figure 2 the two images show samples of content that were circulating in India	32
Figure 3 Tweets that were going viral in Pakistan, during the first wave of COVID-19 , referring to the issues of Shia Pilgrims	37
Figure 4 Frequency of searches of keywords used for this study . (Data:google Trends)	38
Figure 5 total number of cases reported all over Pakistan	40

Chapter 1: Introduction

Differences exist in all forms in nearly all societies across the globe. These differences may affect how individuals interact with each other, how successful an individual is going to be and how they relate to the rest of the global population. However, as the understanding of differences and formation of groups deepened, certain discriminatory practices have become recognized. These discriminatory practices, often become so ingrained in a society that it requires a lot of attention, or perhaps the onset of an external threat to recognize them.

The economic decline and the social changes that have occurred throughout the globe have increased pressure on states, and in many cases given rise to conflicts. These conflicts can be viewed as a result of the inequalities that have become ever more pronounced, particularly when it comes to access to basic necessities such as health and education. In areas where conflict already persisted, such as Syria and Yemen, and countries that had poor health infrastructures the COVID-19 crisis has decimated already depleted systems, and while the impact has been studied in detail in areas where armed conflict is already occurring (Mehri & Thurner, 2020). However, it can be argued that in several spaces the pandemic did curb violence and war. At this juncture, it would be important to mention, that historically, during pandemics human security faces greater risk as opposed to traditional security (Zhaou, 2015).

However, there have been increased instances of discrimination and hate crimes, within the United States. Asians, particularly Chinese people have been targeted by xenophobes and online trolls (Gover et al, 2020). A similar occurrence has been observed in India, where the Muslims were targeted because they were perceived as those responsible for the spread of the Corona Virus in the country (Al Jazeera, 2020).

A vast majority of the literature produced in the past year has attempted to capture how a Pandemic-level virus, has made the link between disease and prejudice ever more relevant in the world today. This thesis will attempt to contextualize how infectious diseases (viruses), can affect the sources of conflict. In order to attempt such a feat, it will first try to conceptualize the role that disease plays in creating differences between groups in a society, and as a result increases polarization. Typically measures implemented to control the spread

of the pandemic level disease, such as closing of borders & quarantining facilities can have diverse psychological effects on people (Serafini et al.,2020). Furthermore, it can also give rise to feelings of alienation & isolation within individuals or groups. These feelings can leave a people vulnerable to violent radicalization (Bizina and Gray, 2013).

Increased religiosity has in the past been linked to violent radicalization as well (Rousseau et al.,2019); similarly ethnic inequalities can give rise to nationalist/separatist sentiments (Shiller,2016). Therefore, Religion and ethnicities are quite common grounds for conflict, and this thesis will aim to understand how the presence of an infectious disease can impact these grounds for conflict and what other factors can come into play when such conflicts play out. For instance, in spite of the rising waves of Islamophobia in South Asia (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2020), not all countries have experienced rises in violence or extremism; Moreover, different fault lines have played out differently in different cases. One of the major impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak has been the increased time that youth are spending online – on different websites and social media platforms. Increased use of social media platforms has been linked to increasing polarization among young people (Holmes and McNeal, 2016) and can further result in making a group vulnerable to violent radicalization (Piazza,2021). Given the current state of affairs in the region, with increased interferences from terrorist groups, such vulnerabilities can put Pakistan’s security interests at risk.

1.1 Literature Review

The literature review will focus on the research that has been conducted so far with regards to COVID-19 and the impacts it has had on the psychological and social well-being of the global population. It will aim to establish some arguments that have rendered a study of this nature necessary.

The coronavirus outbreak has resulted in heightened tensions across the globe and has provided a unique opportunity to study the impacts of disease on conflict. Mehri and Thurner’s (2020) report suggests that the outbreak of the virus has on the whole, resulted in an increase in armed conflict across the globe. These findings are also supported by Letendre et al, (2010) who managed to establish a causal link between pathogen prevalence and intrastate armed conflict. There are various understandings of how the emergence of an infectious disease can cause conflict. One understanding, is based on how inequalities have

been exacerbated or become increasingly more pronounced in societies (Jacobson,2020). The global lockdown that lasted for nearly 6 months, resulted in a rise in inflation and unemployment which will be contributing increasingly to rising crime and violence (Rosenfeld & Messner, 2013)

Much of the discourse on disease and the rise in hate crimes, addresses the various type of crimes that have arisen – for instance many scholars have talked about the systemic injustices that have been “revealed” due to COVID-19. For instance, Wade (2020), addresses how outbreaks of various diseases have always been harder on marginalized groups, by providing historical context. According to the author marginalized and poverty-stricken groups are always more likely to suffer more due to their access to health care. Albaum (2020) discusses the impacts of unequal access to healthcare on the lives of many African Americans. Similarly, Gravlee (2020) builds on these arguments as he propounds that Emerging Infectious Diseases, will always affect those groups that are already systemically discriminated against.

However, uncovering injustices and shedding light on racism might not be a function of the inequalities in our society, rather many scholars argue that it is a function of how we have evolved. Sabatello et al. (2020) has focused on how the impacts of a pandemic level outbreak highlights the biological differences that certain groups have. They further argue that these differences are genetic in nature, leaving certain groups more “vulnerable” to pandemics. This work is a recent extension of bio-sociology and can be linked to the works of Diamond (1997), who argues that different groups have different genetic makeups, and that it is in fact our “biology” that shapes our social and political structures. Fincher & Thornhill (2008) have used these bases to further theorize the impacts of biology on political structures and even intrastate conflict.

One of the reasons why in cases of an outbreak, an increase in marginalization occurs is because certain prejudices become even more defined, as a result of economic inequality & social disparity. Keil and Ali studied the relation between infectious diseases and their association with certain identities that can lead to discriminatory behavior amongst different groups in societies (Keil and Ali,2006). Association of varying groups with certain diseases has been studied in the context of African Americans, Afro-Brazilians & Asians across the globe. Clissold et al (2020) and Roberto (2020) both recognize a rise in xenophobic sentiment, and reports of hate crimes by Amnesty international to build their case. The SARS

outbreak of 2003 and the Ebola outbreak in 2014, have also been suggested to have given rise to racist and xenophobic rhetoric against African-Americans (O'Shea et al.,2019; Monson,2017) and Chinese peoples (Keil & Ali,2006).A recent study on xenophobic attitudes on the Even in South Asia, with communities with higher levels of Pathogen Prevalence, there have been noted levels of tensions amongst various groups, particularly in countries like India & Pakistan (Bano et al, 2020)

Furthermore, Ingroup strengthening have also been studied by many scholars – who have argued that in a bid for survival, biology & instincts have strengthened in-group sociality and increased prejudices & stereotypes. Drury et al. (2021) have studied how groups collectively process situations of outbreak to improve their chances of survival; this in effect strengthens group identity and can result in hostile attitudes towards others. Moreover, they argue that such behaviors are what led to people following & abiding by the rules which included quarantine measures & restrictions on movement. Cruwys et al (2020) supports this argument by claiming that group identity defines our emotions (particularly trust & disgust) which then impact safety & trust assessments.

Another contributory factor towards consolidating group identity has been religiosity – as defined by Franz & Makula (2021) who studied all major religions and religiosity trends throughout them. Their findings indicated that public religious practices are more common in South Asia and contribute greatly to group identity. Moreover, in the context of the pandemic, religiosity has seen an upsurge as indicated by the study conducted by Bentzen (2020), who has assessed it on the basis of rise in religion related web searches. Religiosity has also been linked to pathogen prevalence, where Fincher & Thornhill (2012) found that there is a direct link between religiosity and pathogen prevalence in difference countries. Additionally, Tybur et al (2016) have studied how Parasite stress and avoidance have been observed in various ideological settings. However, even though they studied 30 countries, Pakistan was not one of them.

While the role of religiosity in violent radicalization has been discussed at great lengths, the link between pathogen prevalence & violent radicalization is not apparent enough. To establish this link, one must note the role that media & information dissemination has played in it. The past year has seen several awareness campaigns and movements to curb misinformation. Social Media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook have started implementing strict “fact-checking” policies to curb the spread of misinformation. A number

of studies have linked increasing political & social polarization to the spread of fake news – Piazza (2021) for instance claimed that social media disinformation has a positive relation with domestic terrorism. Within Pakistan’s context misinformation exists in various forms serving various purposes – the main result has been ethnic & religious polarization amongst the youth.¹

Haroon et al (2021) has observed that polarization within Pakistan, is a result of misinformation that appeals to emotions, conspiracy theories & fake news and the impact they have had on political mobilization. Moreover Tahir (2019), explores the role that religious exclusivism plays in making Pakistan a country with a long history of terrorism. As this thesis progresses the theoretical framework will further explore the reasons for such attitudes, as we classify Pakistan as a collectivistic society. Violence linked to religious differences has been quite common due to Pakistan’s blasphemy law, which has been a source of grievance for many minorities across Pakistan.

The themes that have been highlighted through this literature review have included the impact of Infectious Disease on violent conflict and the subsequent rise in hate crimes & xenophobia. While socio-economic inequality has been one of the major contributory factors behind them, this literature review has also addressed factors that include biosociology (i.e. how our biology defines our society). Furthermore, building on the basis of biology, the literature review also explored the strengthening of group identity which has resulted in the rise of acts of xenophobia. The strengthening of group identities has then also been supported by behavioral studies. Religiosity has also played a major role in setting group identities; meanwhile misinformation has contributed to polarization. In Pakistan’s history religious polarization has resulted in a rise in extremism & sectarian violence. This thesis will aim to address the gap that has been left with reference to conflict and the role that disease plays as a contributory factor towards it.

1.2 Research Significance

As a nation whose policy is widely guided by its geo-economic & strategic interests, Pakistan has paid very little attention towards its health security paradigm. One of the reasons for such omission is that the discourse is heavily focused on traditional security and military

¹ the EU Disinfo Lab Report is one instance where the threat posed by misinformation has manifested in the way that Pakistan’s security interests have been hurt.

capabilities. However, the nature of Peace & Conflict Studies is not limited to the warzone, and hence matters like health security also deserve addressal as the study underscores.

The growing population of Pakistan and the state of its current health infrastructure leaves Pakistan vulnerable to Emerging Infectious Diseases in the future. The study of Parasite Stress in Pakistan's context can help understand how health security may affect Pakistan's social cohesion & raise threats to national interest posed by ethnic/religious clashes. It will also present an understanding of public health, that may seem more relevant to scholars of defense & strategic studies, defense analysts and policymakers.

An observation made, shows Indian News Outlets were keener on reporting the strife of the Shia Muslims, so much so that when checking for frequency of tweets coming in from across the world on the keyword "Kafir", India's participation was notably more than that of Pakistan. Similar results were seen in the "Shia Kafir" tag. This gimmick underscores the relevance of studying sectarian violence with regards to a time when Pathogen Prevalence was high (i.e., when COVID-19 Cases were surging). Further, it highlights the reason why the point of disease or infectious outbreaks should be viewed from a security standpoint. As rifts occur, parties may want to exploit the rifts & use them to cater to their own interests.



Shia Kafir



Kafir

Moreover, the role of media in threat construction and perception has been explored through this thesis. Social media is being increasingly used as a medium of polarization through the use of misinformation and disinformation campaigns. At such a time, it is

necessary to ensure the need to mitigate these threats by using techniques that can improve the overall resilience of a country to the ‘infodemic’ as well as any future pandemics.

1.3 Research Question

Furthermore, this research aims to explore and establish evidence for the causal relationship between, health security risks, increased nationalism or religiosity and the probability of violent conflict or clashes between these groups. It will aim to answer the questions –

What effect do health security risks such as outbreaks & emerging Infectious Diseases have on societies like Pakistan?

How do health security risks impact group identities & how do they impact risks of radicalization amongst individuals?

The answer to these questions can help identify the level of threat that infectious diseases pose in a country like Pakistan. The conceptual framework will try to conceptualize the grounds for & key assumptions that need to be made for this research.

This thesis will test the assumption that rising threats of infectious diseases may result in increased risks of radicalization and polarization resulting in higher chances of intergroup conflict.

1.4 Research Methodology

In order to provide a holistic view of the current situation of Sectarian violence in Pakistan, this study collected data through a survey questionnaire. The survey was based on the design by Tsai et al. (2021) however that survey could not be entirely replicated as that survey was designed to assess the American population and the level of racist sentiments. However, the survey designed here for this study, catered to a different population & assessed different metrics. The study is a qualitative study that is aimed at measuring the propensity of violent radicalization & outgroup hate while holding conditions of high pathogen prevalence constant. The variables identified for this study measure how religiosity & exposure to polarized content can result in sectarian violence. The survey measures ingroup strengthening, polarization & exposure to outgroup activities.

This questionnaire was designed to assess polarization tendencies based on exposure to social media & scenario-based questions pertaining to relevant political & social issues. Group identity strength was identified by how they responded to a question of identity, that showed a list of ethnic & religious options. The next set of questions aimed to assess ingroup socialization & outgroup interactions to see if there had been any record of negative sentiments. Religiosity & political activism were also measure by the survey, as it questioned how often respondents engaged in such activities.

The study used a survey to assess responses of young people across Pakistan- as they are the largest group to have access to the social media & internet searches. The survey was designed to test the above-mentioned variables. A sample of nearly 150 people was taken at random to help ensure equal chances of participation to all groups.

Moreover, in order to look for empirical evidence for the claims made in this study – the researcher used Google Trends & DataReportal – two online platforms that can provide statistics on the usage of internet, social media platforms & search engines. While gathering data from these resources, the time period covered in the study starts from 1st May 2020 to 1st May 2021.

The rationale behind choosing this time period is because it covers the peaks of the first & second waves of the COVID-19 infection. Moreover, this period also covers the time of certain key events that took place – including reports of the highest ever Shias being booked under the blasphemy law & the largest anti-Shia rally, which was held in Karachi, Sindh.

Hence the independent variables for this study included religiosity & time spent online, with dependent variables of polarization & grievances. Furthermore, keywords used to highlight trends included: Shia, Shia Kafir, Blasphemy, Ahmadi & Kafir. These keywords were identified based on information covered in various news outlets regarding the blasphemy law & anti-Shia sentiments.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this thesis includes varying concepts which inevitably tie into the Parasite Stress Theory of Sociality. The link between the hypothesized rise in sectarian violence will be observed as a result of the rise in religiosity during the pandemic. Moreover, while the parasite stress theory, in its depth has already been explored to a great extent, this thesis will also attempt to draw a conclusion on the impact that pathogen prevalence can have on polarization & possible violent radicalization. It will do this by first establishing disease as a threat, through the Human Security lens.

As a threat, the presence of disease will likely impact the way threats are perceived and the reaction that they will garner. These reactions have great impact on the socio-political landscape of a country; hence we will further conceptualize how the threat manifests into the possibilities for violent radicalization and the processes that disease triggers within a society that will result in greater risk of intergroup conflicts.

2.1 Human Security

The terms “Human Security” are most often associated with the 1994 United Nations Human Development Report on Human Security – authored by Mahbub Ul Haq, probing more deeply, why societal insecurity exists and how to provide security for the people of the state, human security proponents stress the need to focus on the people rather than the state of as referent of security studies. The report broadening the security debate observed:

“The concept of security has far too long interpreted narrowly... related more to the nation-states...Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.”

When viewed as a source for conflict the human security aspect provides grounds for creating conflict in case of any above-mentioned threats becoming imminent. Human Security has been seen as a key element in radicalization of groups or building extremist tendencies in individuals. Any threat to human security can impact the level of vulnerability to threats of disease or environmental hazards. Many of these threats begin to manifest within

our society, first in the media & then in the physical world resulting in rising social polarization.

Social Polarization is a phenomenon that occurs when intergroup gaps increase, making social divisions & group starker against the background. There is plenty of research on how polarization can result in the violent radicalization – which is a process that can push any simmering conflict into its violent phase. The process of violent radicalization is hence defined as when “diverging interests are abandoned and one or more groups/individuals engage in violent actions to reach a specific goal.”

In response to threats to human security, there have been several cases across the globe of rise in hate speech & hate crimes against ethnic or religious minorities. While there are several factors that can be linked to the causation of this increase, it is necessary to understand that within Pakistan’s context certain threats to human security have always been imminent. For instance, due to poor hygiene, sanitation, and lack of access to health services, freedom from disease has never been an option. Similarly, socio-economic stress has been constant for Pakistan for a very long time due to increasing debt burden on the economy.

Aside from the economic burden that it poses, Albert et al, (2020) argues that the need to counter threats such as disease is necessary because there is “no natural enemy” to it. It further adds that disease is not perceived as a threat in the sense that it doesn’t pose an existential threat – a theory that has been negated by the impacts of COVID-19 (Albert et al, 2020).

It can be argued that this gap in recognizing disease as an existential threat, exists because of a lack of understanding of how the presence of disease can impact the behaviors & group dynamics of any society. Peterson (2002), Iqbal (2006) and McDonald (2002) argue that health security or protection from disease plays a crucial role in helping maintain territorial sovereignty, which is a key element of National Security. Moreover, studies have shown that threats to human security play a greater role in increasing risks of radicalization amongst the youth (Nyadera, 2015).

The parasite stress theory of sociality by Fincher & Thornhill can further aid in explaining how radicalization can be linked with disease and can play a great role in radicalization or rising violence in a society.

2.2 Parasite Stress Theory

The Covid- 19 Pandemic has hence proven as a final push towards social polarization in an already polarized society. The polarization that has occurred due to the Pandemic can be theorized using Fincher & Thornhill's Parasite Stress Theory of Sociality that propounds that during times of disease outbreaks in-group & out-group differences become starker. As a result, disease prevalence in any society can relate to how the social structure of a society is built – classifying societies as either “individualistic” or “collectivistic”. Higher disease prevalence results in collectivistic societies – moreover, the pathogen prevalence hypothesis contends that with every subsequent outbreak, a society will grow more collectivistic.

Furthermore, even the responses to outbreaks are decided by the level of disease that prevails in a society. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the chances of survival depended on the adherence to the safety protocols, but individualist societies have found individuals struggling to adhere to the safety procedures (Webster et al, 2020). On the other hand, collectivist societies showed greater adherence to the safety protocols and hence managed to navigate the pandemic with relatively fewer losses. The following chapter will explore these differences in much more detail with the help of examples.

Furthermore, the pathogen prevalence hypothesis also estimates an increase in rising violence within states. The dataset by ‘COVID-19 Disorder Tracker’ has highlighted the rising instability and instances of violence and discrimination. The lockdown measures, were used by many states as opportunity to suppress or target a marginalized group such as in the case of India & Sri Lanka.

The changing conflict landscape has allowed some Non-State Actors to benefit from

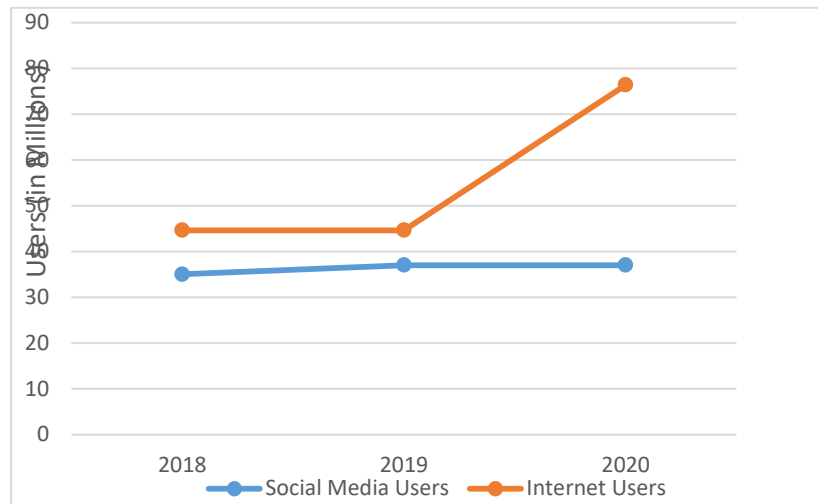


Figure 1 The graph shows increasing number of internet & Social media users

the situation by building better response mechanisms, as opposed to countries where the entire state failed to look after its people. Differences also manifested as increased competition between various warring groups within a state, or allowed certain groups to take the opportunity to join forces to fight the state. In yet other instances, the coronavirus has altered the political landscape and exacerbated protracted tensions (Kishi,2021).

Hence, group dynamics have altered significantly as a result of the pandemic, and in collectivist societies, where group identities are the main source of identity, politics and social cohesion can be greatly impacted by the prevalence of disease.

2.3 Characteristics of a Collectivist Society

Collectivistic societies are characterized by, their family ties, philopatry, outgroup xenophobia & ingroup trust. According to Hofstede's model of national cultures, Pakistani society can be assumed to be a collectivistic one. The Pathogen Prevalence Hypothesis focuses on a collectivist society (in a situation of high pathogen prevalence) to understand how conflict within groups may arise. Hence, it is necessary to understand how Pakistan can be considered a collectivist society.

2.3.1 Strong Family Ties

Strong family ties are a core value in Pakistani society, a recent study conducted, found that nearly 51% of households are joint households, meaning that extended families live together (Lodhi et al. 2021) Stronger family ties in this context means, stronger group

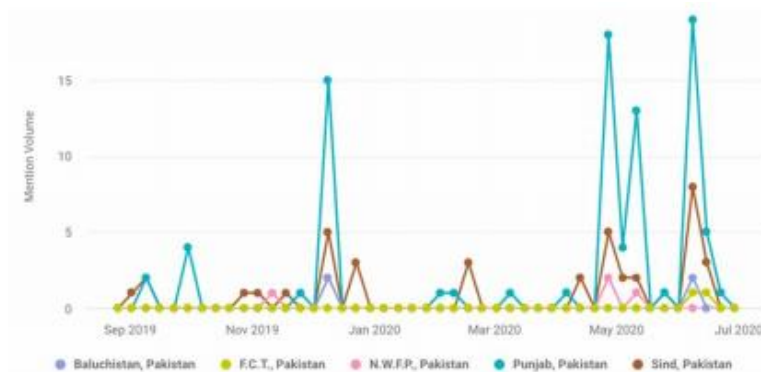
identity. On the contrary, stronger family ties have played a key role in the deradicalization of the youth, and studies conducted on Countering Violence Extremism, note the key role stronger family ties play in this regard. One explanation offered by Hafez (2016), is the changing trends in recruitment by extremist groups, that now use their own families to accomplish their means. What he refers to as “Home-grown” radicalization is made possible using grievances, ideological socialization & social networking². Therefore, as pathogen prevalence results in a stronger group identity, given the right mix of grievances, polarization through social media and ideological socialization, strong family ties can prove to be fertile grounds for violent radicalization.

Furthermore, as was observed in the case of the recent pandemic, lockdown measures & quarantining facilities resulted in individuals being cut off from the rest of the world – a trait that is often encouraged in radicalization processes (Porta,1995). Being cut off from the rest of the world results in stronger association & dependence on the group that one lives with. Hence, as a collectivist society, with strong family ties, chances of pathogen prevalence resulting in strong group identity, which may be vulnerable to radicalization due to grievances & polarizing social networks, the chances of intergroup conflict within Pakistan do exist. Moreover, another effect of strengthening group identity is the enduring ethnic & sectarian identities that have arisen amongst groups.

2.3.2 Outgroup Xenophobia

The next defining feature of a collectivist society are the outgroup xenophobia &

Figure 1 Shows the level of hate speech and the rise from 2019 -2020 (Source:Bytes For All)



² This refers to bloc recruitment, where one person is radicalized and their influence within their families or circles is used to bring in larger number of recruits. Violent radicalization requires a high level of trust & camaraderie, which when targeting families, is already a given and can then be used to build stronger groups.

ingroup trust. Ingroup Trust results in stronger group identity and gives rise to chances of intergroup conflict. Moreover, studies on Intergroup contact in cases of pathogen prevalence, have exhibited that outgroup xenophobia has been linked to consumption of information & news from polarized information outlets (Tsai et al.,2020) While there has been little evidence for an increase in ingroup trust, the rise in outgroup xenophobia has been recorded by many organizations. One such organization is “Bytes For All” that released The Online Hate Speech Report 2020, which found an increase in not only the overall activity originated from Pakistan during the year – but also an increase in hate speech targeted at minority groups. The report identified minorities to be religious minorities. Moreover, its focus was on the Ahmadi group in Pakistan, that identify themselves as an Islamic sect but are shunned by all other sects. The graph shows how during the pandemic, there was a significant increase in hate speech targeted at a religious sect (Bytes For All,2021)

Another evidence supporting outgroup xenophobia along these lines, is that a record number of 200 blasphemy cases were filed in the year 2020 (Dawn,2021). The article suggested an exponential increase in the use of Pakistan’s blasphemy law to attack religious minorities. It further noted that while most of these cases included Ahmedis, Hindus & Christians, nearly 40 Shiites were also accused of blasphemy during the year (Noorzai & Momand,2020)

2.3.3 Role of social media

As outgroup xenophobia becomes evident, it is important to note the role that social media has played in the process. Rampant Misinformation & Disinformation has been a consequence of the increasing users on social media, with a growing dearth of digital literacy.

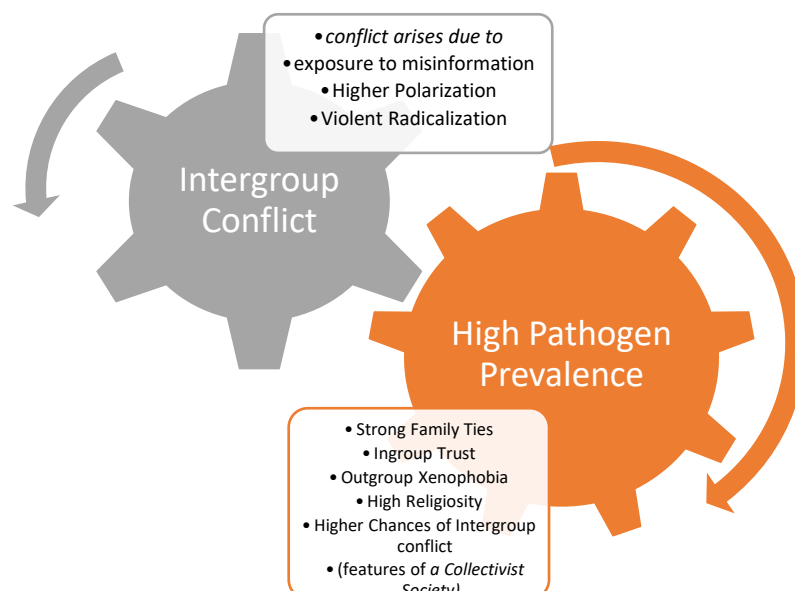


Figure 2 Illustrating how high pathogen prevalence can result in Intergroup conflict

Social Media algorithms are designed to promote. Some of the fake news might seem trivial and may be forwarded in the guise of jokes but there have been drastic consequences of such fake news as well. It has resulted in vicious rumors, mass hysteria and even mob lynching, resulting in the death of innocent people (Bali & Desai, 2019). A study on the impacts of misinformation on the rise of Islamophobia in India, established how religious ingroups in times of an outbreak can result in violent radicalization leading to violence against certain groups (Nagar & Gill, 2021) Furthermore, Mukhtar's (2020) study also explores the political impacts of such an epidemic – her findings suggest that certain societies are more at risk of being affected by a “misinfodemic” when there is greater socioeconomic inequality, low or inadequate health literacy and minority groups (Mukhtar, 2020). McCarthy argues that COVID-19 offered governments a tool to promote pathological nationalism – however she used the example of US & Italy, two countries that under normal circumstances are considered to be individualist societies, where intergroups conflict are typically fewer. However, during the pandemic & the subsequent misinfodemic, instances of outgroup xenophobia increased.

2.3.4 Religiosity

Not unlike India, Pakistan too is a nation that is tied together by its ideology, both societies are considered collectivist and even the state of healthcare is poor in both countries. As India's economy develops, there has been rising levels of socio-economic inequality, but religious differences have always been prevalent in the society. However, during the pandemic, India faced a much more virulent strand of the virus and increased polarization can be a result of the high levels of pathogen prevalence in its society. The role that religion plays in both societies is also of great significance, and hence warrants a deeper look in Pakistan's context.

Religiosity & Pathogen Prevalence share a positive relation, where societies that are traditionally more exposed to disease are more likely to be engage in religious practices (Fincher & Thornhill, 2014). These religious practices are further classified into public religious practices – which included participating in congregation & other religious group activities; on the other hand we have private religious practices which include private prayer & reading scriptures. Religiosity has been linked to stronger group identity and is a major contributor to ingroup trust. Moreover, a study conducted by Jackson & Hunsberger (1999) found that religiosity comes with its own set of prejudicial attitudes. Its findings highlight the

significant role that religiosity plays in the mix & showed that in-group religious others were shown more positive attitude as opposed to non-religious others. Their study also highlights how religion & religiosity are common basis for group identity and can bridge the gap between different ethnic groups if need be. Moreover, another study conducted by Bentzen (2020), highlighted the rise in religiosity as evidenced by the google search trends across the globe. This study focused on major religions and showed an absolute increase in the levels of google searches which it considered a rise in religiosity – Pakistan was one of the countries where religion related keyword searches increased.

2.4 Radicalization

While religiosity in itself is not a contributor to violent radicalisation, it is being increasingly argued that access to the internet has granted many people access to unlimited information, which in some cases might become harmful. Hence, in radicalization processes there are certain groups that remain vulnerable to radicalization, and as Pakistan's access to the internet increases (see figure 1) a greater number of the population is at risk of being radicalized. Silke focuses on 3 processes that play a role in the violent radicalization of people – these included Deindividuation which is a process that results in as McKenna & Bargh put it:

“...a weakened ability for an individual to regulate his or her own behavior, reduced ability to engage in rational, long-term planning, and a tendency to react to immediate cues or based largely on his or her current emotional state. Furthermore, an individual will be less likely to care what others think of his or her behavior and may even have a reduced awareness of what others have said or done. These effects can culminate in impulsive and disinhibited behavior...” (McKenna & Bargh,2000)

Deindividuation has also been linked to mob violence, a manifestation of the religious divides in Pakistan. There have been several instances where the blasphemy law that has been often used against religious minorities. Moreover, through deindividuation mob violence in the form of political violence or lynching, becomes a frequent occurrence.

2.5 Mob Violence

Mob violence makes up a large chunk of violence in Pakistan, a study conducted by Singay (2020), recorded nearly 22 incidences of mob violence, which he further categorized

by the motivation behind them. It was found that nearly 05 incidences that occurred between 2014-2017 & resulted in the deaths of at least one person had been recorded. The largest number of mob violence incidences Singay found, was motivated by theft or robbery. However, Gupta's understanding of mob violence, as relevant to terrorism – is that terrorism is motivated by a greater ideology – hence, mob violence that were motivated by religious differences are the only ones that are relevant to this case.

Beyond deindividuation, they also become part of an imagined community (which further supports the strengthening of group identity) & mortality salience. Studies have also explored traits that make individuals from groups more vulnerable to radicalization – these traits include perceived grievances & the feeling of belonging. This is another aspect that explains mob violence, and further explains radicalization from this perspective.

Moreover, it should be noted that while Internet penetration in Pakistan has risen, the unequal access to the internet has left many ethnic groups aggrieved. The past year has seen several student organizations demand better internet services, in areas considered to be far-flung. Moreover, there is also great disparity in digital literacy amongst the population, which has rendered some groups more vulnerable than others. Hence, unequal internet access might also add to intergroup conflicts within Pakistan.

So far, the theoretical framework has attempted to explain the applicability of the Parasite-Stress Model, and how disease and the recent pandemic can impact society. We have established that Pakistan is a collectivist society & although pathogen prevalence has always been high, the recent pandemic has offered a unique opportunity to study the impacts of disease as it induced enough economic, social and political pressure to allow for this theorization. In light of the Pathogen Prevalence, this theoretical framework has argued that the threats of violence and intergroup conflict rise as a result of disease. As an external threat, disease results in the strengthening of ingroups, and hence greater tension with outgroups. Religious & sectarian fault lines within Pakistan have erupted over the course of the pandemic, hence the next section will explore the outgroup xenophobia in the context of sectarianism in Pakistan and the rise of sectarian violence.

Chapter 3: Background

3.1 Cases from across the globe:

The COVID-19 outbreak is not the only instance where increased disease has been linked to increase in xenophobia – there have been several instances in the past that have allowed the relation of disease outbreak with an increase in xenophobia to be studied. Moreover, in several of these cases there has also been a detailed study of the role that the media has played.

The link between outgroup Xenophobia & disease can be taken as far back as the Plague Outbreak in the 14th Century in a Christian Majority Europe. The Jews were then blamed for spreading the Black Death, as they were a community least affected by it. Most historians claims that it was because of heightened fear with the initial onset of the Black Plague (Werleman,2020).

Similarly, during outbreaks of Smallpox, Cholera, Polio, Ebola and other infectious diseases, have coincided with a rise in othering attitudes, for instance the Typhus epidemic offers yet another example of exacerbation of attitudes towards a marginalized group, namely the Jews. During the 1892 Typhus outbreak, Germany & the US both showed increased xenophobia towards the Jews. In the US some 1200 Jews had recently immigrated from Russia, and as they settled, Typhus spread across New York, resulting in strict quarantine & isolation of the Jews (Werleman,2020). Similarly in Germany, the Jews were specifically restricted from going to public pools. Hence, Nazi Germany presents an example of how disease can be used as a means to leverage greater otherizing.

More evidence can be found in the Polio Outbreak in New York in 1916. Moreover this outbreak further highlighted how xenophobic attitudes can translate into practices of systemic discrimination. The initial hotspot for the outbreak, was an Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn, with poor waste management & garbage disposal systems. This resulted in Polio outbreak being associated with the Italians, and as the number of Polio cases increase, the prejudice against Italians rose. The resultant measures included complete quarantining & heavy fines in the city where a majority Italians resided.

The Smallpox outbreak in the 1840s also presented a similar opportunity as the outbreak occurred at a time when a group of Chinese immigrants had entered Canada, as a result of recruitment for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Although the disease had existed since the European settlers arrived in North America, Smallpox became more popular as a Chinese Disease. This resulted in the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, where immigrants from China were taxed and were subject to strict checks & inspections by Quarantine Officers. The Act was also responsible for limiting the number of Chinese Passengers allowed to travel on any vessel. The media played a significant role in the branding of the Chinese, as the source of the disease, although there was a clear lack of evidence to substantiate this claim.

So far, we have referred to instances of history where the presence of various infectious diseases resulted in heightened prejudice or xenophobia against an ethnic or religious minority. We have also established how disease can influence the system & give rise to discriminatory practices and the role that the media has played in it.

More recent examples of disease & xenophobia can be found with the Ebola outbreak that gave rise to anti African sentiment, and the SARS outbreak of 2003 which gave rise to prejudice & hate towards Asians. The SARS outbreak of 2003, was considered the first pandemic of the 21st century. As a result of the outbreak, an uptick in anti-Asian sentiment, targeted particularly at the Chinese people – several Asian-owned businesses suffered huge losses during the outbreak according to reports.

Similarly, during the Ebola outbreak Africans in Europe & the Americas suffered greatly because of the outbreak. Several incidents including sending back people from workplaces or schools without proof of exposure to the disease, also allowed social scientists to study how this systemic racism became ever more pronounced with the presence of a disease.

In our conceptual framework we argue that the increased prevalence in the case of COVID-19 has given rise greater collectivist tendencies even in societies typically considered individualist. This has resulted in greater tendencies of mob violence as a result of radicalization & polarization. With reference to the case of COVID-19, we will now see how it impacted prejudice & xenophobia in different parts of the world in different societies. This will further explicate how pathogen prevalence has brought about collectivist tendencies in even some of the most individualistic societies. We will also further explore the limits to

which polarization & risks of radicalization have improved Hence, we will now look at the cases of USA, India & Sri Lanka.

3.1.1 USA

The United States of America (USA) is considered a highly “individualist” society, with lesser outgroup xenophobia & lesser ingroup trust. However, in spite of this the pandemic resulted in Anti-Asian incidents across the country. One report suggested that while Asian and Pacific Islanders had been subject to racist rhetoric for several years, since the pandemic began there has been a noted increase in cases of harassment & hate crimes (Jeung et al, 2021) Anecdotal evidence (Human Rights Watch,2021), as well as data from monitors & reports (Jeung et al., 2021) have supported an increase in hate crimes across the US. Moreover, they have claimed that 10.6% of harassment occurred through online platforms.

Part of the reason why Asians faced a lot of racism is because the Donald Trump, the president at the time referred to COVID-19 as the “Chinese” Virus. As a result, people of Asian descent, or those that shared Chinese features were held responsible for the spread of the virus. In the case of the US the communalization resulted in the Virus gaining a “Chinese” identity. As a result there was an increase in instances of crimes committed by individuals, against individuals.

3.1.2 India

Anti- Muslim rhetoric has been on the rise in India, as the current ruling party, the BJP has been focusing on erasing Muslims from the socio-political landscape. The most recent example of this was the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019), that aimed to offer Indian Citizenship to refugees or immigrants who were Hindus, Sikhs, Christian & Parsis. As a result of this Act, a National Citizen's Register was established in the Assam region, on the border with Bangladesh. When the list was made public, it excluded nearly two million Muslims many of whom had been living in Assam for generations (Khalid,2019). The effective neutralization rendered those who had been excluded from citizenship, vulnerable to deportations, detention or imprisonment.

The virus arrived in India as the situation for Muslims continued to exacerbate as violence & polarization increased. The eve of the outbreak saw lynching and riots in New

Delhi, as mobs ransacked Muslim neighborhoods, mosques & businesses (Tazamal,2020). As the first cases of COVID emerged the disease was quickly communalized with the Muslims through the Tablighi Jamaat.

As the number of cases increased, religious gatherings & congregations that are an integral part of socialization & community in Pakistan and India became contested. The Tablighi Jamaat came into notice as nearly 10 members died and hundreds were hospitalized. In an already polarized climate, the Indian media started to show Muslims rebelling against the government, by not following lockdown orders. Messages from the media followed the lines, that Muslims were promoting “corona terrorism”, while the party in particular was blamed for spreading hate and urging people to defy the lockdown. All claims that were based on made-up grounds. This is because Muslims were not the only group that were congregating or meeting – there were multiple religious gatherings occurring simultaneously across India. For instance, while the media focused on the Tablighi Jamat – a Hindu ceremony with hundreds of participants including an India Chief Minister was also happening. Even Sikhs were allowed to congregate at the same time. But the media’s active pursuance of the Muslim Community as a source of the virus has only contributed to the spread of Islamophobia in India.

Moreover, after the trigger the remaining COVID-19 lockdown saw rampant misinformation on social media. The Anti-Muslim Disinformation pushed across social media and manifested in the form of trending hashtags on Twitter such as “#CoronaJihad”, or “#biojihad” were frequently used. This resulted in Muslims becoming targets of hate crimes & commercial boycotts (Tazamal, 2020). Moreover, it left the minority Muslims scared & vulnerable (Desai & Amarsingam, 2020). Banaji & Bhat (2020) have conducted studies on disinformation campaigns, and found that Muslims were targeted through intentional disinformation. This included sharing emotionally charged content such as images, videos & illustrations.

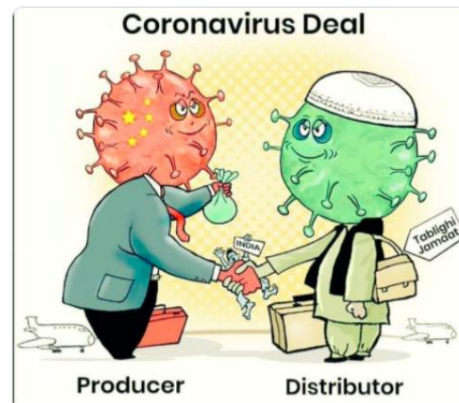


Figure 2 the two images show samples of content that were circulating in India

Tazamal (2020), Banaji & Bhat (2020) and Desai & Amarsingam (2020) have noted the increase in hatred towards Muslims during the outbreak – they have used social media messages & thematic analysis of the information shared during the time to further establish how disease has increased discrimination & violence against a minority that has been targeted since the beginning of India’s creation. Their studies have to a great extent established disease as a cause of increased xenophobia and mob violence. They have expressed this link through the rampant misinformation campaigns against the Muslims. Figure 3 (a) & (b) both provide examples of the type of content that was circulated to show how Muslims were responsible for the spread of the virus.

However, while religious fault lines in Indian society are more prominent, religious minorities were not alone in facing discrimination & hatred during the outbreak. A racist streak was also observed by Kipgen (2020), who claims that people with “Chinese” facial features were also subject to discrimination in India. McDuire-Ra (2015) explored the racism that North Eastern people face in India due to their “mongoloid” features which are considered by many to be Chinese. Since, the virus was associated with the Chinese because of the source of the disease being Wuhan, China; consequently, people who had characteristically Chinese features also faced instances of discrimination (Kipgen,2020). For instance, Bose (2020) reported instances where people were asked to prove that they were “Indians”. Other instances recorded included people being quarantined without reason, or being denied services because of the way that they looked (Karamakar, 2020). Reports of such incidences came in from all across India, including from Gujrat, Punjab and Delhi (Pandey,2020).

Kapur (2020) further builds on the implications that racism & Islamophobia will have on the society. He explains that rising marginalization of the Indian Muslims, puts them at a

greater risk of infection. Moreover, while it is acknowledged that even before COVID-19 the society in India was largely polarized, the rise in xenophobia resulting from the outbreak can result in greater polarization amongst minorities. The risks of them becoming vulnerable to extremism will also increase (Kapur,2020)

Viewed in light of our conceptual framework India offers a suitable case for this thesis as it offers a similar society as Pakistan's i.e., a collectivist society with preexisting religious and ethnic fault lines. Evidence of India's collectivism can be found in various scholarly works such as Tripathi & Vijayan (2020), whose works support the claim that India is a collectivist society. Chadda & Deb (2013) have also recognized India as a collectivist society, that was at the time classified as one that was slowly shifting towards Individualism. Currently, India classifies as a collectivist society because of the level of in-group loyalty (Jaggi & Bajpai, 2020) & strong family ties (Chadda & Deb, 2013). Moreover, outgroup xenophobia with regards to the communalizing of COVID-19 was observed, where Muslims were already marginalized group. Evidence of increased xenophobia in India's context has also been provided by Ahuja et al (2020) who further classified it as a collectivist society and extended their research to include the impact it can have on the wellbeing of the population. They observed Polarization in the society, credited to an increase in cases of virulent misinformation were observed (Basavaraj et al., 2021). The content samples provided can highlight how Muslims were targeted throughout the outbreak. Overall India is one of the countries that suffered with nearly 448,000 deaths since the outbreak (Ritchie et al, 2020).

3.1.4 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has offered a similar dynamic as the one that emerged in India – with an already widely targeted group of Muslims, Islamophobia was on the rise during the COVID-19 outbreak. According to the Islamophobia Observatory by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) the phenomenon has been on the rise in Asia. In Sri Lanka's context, two instances were recorded in the observatory – the forceful cremation of Muslims who passed away (Nazeer, 2020) and the plans to close nearly 1,000 Islamic Schools in the country (Mallawarchi,2021).

Many have argued that these acts show the manifestation of Islamophobia in Sri Lanka, where Muslims have been targeted for several years now. Suleiman (2020) notes that the COVID-19 further exacerbated the situation for the Muslim minority in Sri Lanka. Much like India, the Sri Lankan government wasted no time in promoting the idea that Islamic

practices were conducive to spreading the virus. They then decided to force cremation of the dead, a practice that goes against Islamic values of burying the dead. This act was criticized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as the OIC's Human Rights body – both bodies agreed that the act is considered Islamophobic (Khaliq, 2020).

Kapur (2020) has cited an increase in Islamophobia during COVID-19, as he claims that the pandemic allowed for routes to be created & used against a marginalized group. Before the COVID-19 outbreak the Sinhalese Buddhist, group was already at odds with the Muslim community. The general perception of the Muslim community is one of blatant disregard for the law and greater criminal tendencies (Amarasuriya,2020). In spite of having multiple different cultures with laws & traditions that do not abide by the national law – the Muslim community is the only one that is demonized for these differences (Nazeer, 2020).

Hence, while polarization within Sri Lanka's context was observed by Kadirgamar (2020) there were no instances of violence or riots against the Muslims. This could also hint at the increased repression of the people and the declining freedom of movement & speech In Sri Lanka as their military led the response to the pandemic.

3.1.4 Comparison

India & Sri Lanka have experienced greater levels of Islamophobia and racism during the pandemic; However, one of the reasons we are considering them as examples of collectivist society is because both of them have strong group formations. For instance, anti-Muslim rhetoric in India has been openly expressed since the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government came into power (Bajoria,2020). Indian society is although has been largely characterized as increasingly polarized, the COVID-19 outbreak has slowed down the speed of polarization (Sahoo,2020). However, such claims are substantiated only by a few speeches of influential figures and should not be taken seriously as they place too much value on things that seldom bring about action. Observations have shown a rather different scene as the Muslim minority is increasingly marginalized and has been the target of mob violence (Pandey,2021).

Sri Lanka is also a collectivist society where Muslims have been marginalized and have to face discrimination and anti-Muslim sentiments (Mihlar,2019) Moreover much like India, Sri Lanka also offers a largely polarized political landscape, where the pandemic has

offered a more conducive environment to polarization. However even though systemic discrimination was on the rise, there were no apparent rises in mob violence in Sri Lanka. One explanation for this difference can be found in the role that social media & the mainstream media has played in this regard. Electronic and social mediums were used in Sri Lanka as well as India, to spread misinformation about the pandemic.

USA on the other hand has been deeply impacted by the Corona Virus outbreak. In spite of being Individualist societies, the stress & fear of the outbreak has also resulted in similar rises in xenophobia against ethnic & religious minorities. One similarity between India & the USA, is that in both cases the severity of the pandemic was large. The USA surpassed China in the number of cases, in early 2021 due to the lack of willingness to comply with safety protocols (Webster et al., 2021). This can be explained through USA's individualist society. Studies have shown that in states where collectivism was higher (on a relative scale) deaths from COVID were fewer due to greater compliance with Safety practices (Bazzi et al., 2021)

3.2 The Case of Pakistan

The COVID-19 Pandemic has offered a unique opportunity for scholars from all across the globe to study the impacts of disease on the chances of intergroups conflict. Various groups across the globe have been targeted, as possible fault lines in various societies have become exposed. Although Pakistan offers the case study of a collectivist society, group divisions in the US – which is considered an Individualist society have also been exposed due to high

Scholars of Counter-terrorism & Counter Violent Extremism have observed that sectarian violence in Pakistan has not been a stand-alone phenomenon, rather the landscape of sectarian violence is rested on the regional dynamics and Saudi-Iran relations. Since Sectarian violence is not an isolated happening hence, this section will first explore the historical background and then explore the most recent happenings in Pakistan.

3.2.1 Historical Overview

Sectarian violence is defined as the violence that occurs between two sects of the same religion, the subcontinent has been no stranger to sectarian violence as Shias & Sunnis

have been existing in the region for a very long time. The onslaught of the current wave of sectarian violence has been linked back to the Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan, and the simultaneous Iranian Revolution. Although religiosity has always played a key role in the subcontinent, the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1979) introduced the threat of an atheist communist rule. In order to offset this threat in the region a heightened wave of Sunni Islam was brought forward; this marked the beginning of the Saudi lobbying of Sunni combatants for religious or political reasons. The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan brought its own set of problems for the Soviets and their health. Epidemiological studies from 1980-1988, show heightened levels of disease amongst the Soviet soldiers, as they were unable to adjust to Afghanistan's harsh climate (Grau & Jorgenson, 1995). As the political situation for Afghans became dire several studies record outbreaks of Malaria, Cholera, Cutaneous Leishmaniasis, Pneumonia & Influenza Virus. The reason for these outbreaks has been cited as mass movement, and poor sanitation & hygiene. By the end of the Soviet Invasion, the Afghan Public Health was in tatters due to the fighting of the internal factions (Acerra et al.,2009).

The Iranian Revolution has also played a significant role in the rise of sectarianism in the region, specifically Pakistan. The rise of the Saudi-Iran nexus and the role that both parties have played in supporting the militias has been widely noted by scholars of International Relations. Following the Iranian revolution – a note by the Deobandi cleric, Manzoor Naumani labelled the Shia Sect & the Iranian Revolution as “Unislamic”. Other Pro-Saudi Scholars and clerics also gave out anti-Shia statements during this time (Ahmar, 2007). These statements by clerics inevitably gave rise to the polarization of the populace. As the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia saw a chance to fill the vacuum, that maybe filled by Iran's (Anti-US) Shia Influence. In such an attempt, the sectarian rift grew as Sunni parties started receiving support from Saudi Arabia & other Gulf countries. As a civil conflict in Afghanistan erupted, Pakistan became a cottage industry for Jihadists. The economic & infrastructural support by the Saudis & the Iranians for their respective madrassas in Pakistan, laid grounds for sectarian rifts. The funding by the two also laid grounds for sectarian militant groups to arise. However, eventually all militant outfits of both sects were banned, and this brought Pakistan some respite (Yusuf,2012)

Ahmed traces the roots of sectarian violence further back, to the time of the Mughals, he argues that during the British rule & before that, the Muslim empires & caliphates sectarian violence did not occur as it does today. The conflict usually occurred between the “Sunni-Shia dynasties or caliphates.

2007- 2011 saw another wave of Sectarian violence rise in Pakistan, as nearly 631 attacks were listed, taking nearly 1649 lives. The violence that occurred then wasn't just Shia vs Sunni, instead a rise in intra-sectarian violence was also observed (Yusuf, 2012)

3.2.2 The Present Situation

During the COVID-19 upsurge, the region has been gripped by tragedy, as regional dynamics shifted owing to the pandemic's socio-economic & political impacts there have been instances of outrage for all communities. Moreover, since much of the world shifted this transition, outrage & sectarian clashes that happened on the internet have been much easier to record and analyze.



Figure 3 Tweets that were going viral in Pakistan, during the first wave of COVID-19 , referring to the issues of Shia Pilgrims

The COVID-19 pandemic was even communalized in Pakistan's case as well. Much like the Tablighi Jamaat, Shias who were performing pilgrimage to Iran were targeted for the spread of the virus in Pakistan. There was much discourse on social media, as the Pilgrims claimed that on their return they were quarantined in very dire conditions. As a result, a spat broke out between the government and these religious groups. The figure shows examples of the tweets that were being circulated at the time. On the other hand, Tablighi Jamaat was also targeted as a source of the virus. Both parties were kept from entering the country due to COVID-19 quarantine measures in place. It is worth noting that the disease was not communalized on the basis of religion or ethnicity like in the previously discussed examples but rather along the sectarian lines. This illustrates how Sectarianism plays out on the socio-political landscape of Pakistan.

Even then, there have been incidents reported of blasphemy allegations, violent outbursts & clashes between the Shia-Sunni Sects. These instances have included nearly 50 Shias being booked under blasphemy charges, and another 22 Shia Muslims being beat up & arrested by Punjab Police (Baloch & Ellis-Petersen,2020). Moreover, in September 2020 a large rally of nearly 30,000 people in Karachi – came out on the streets chanting anti-shia

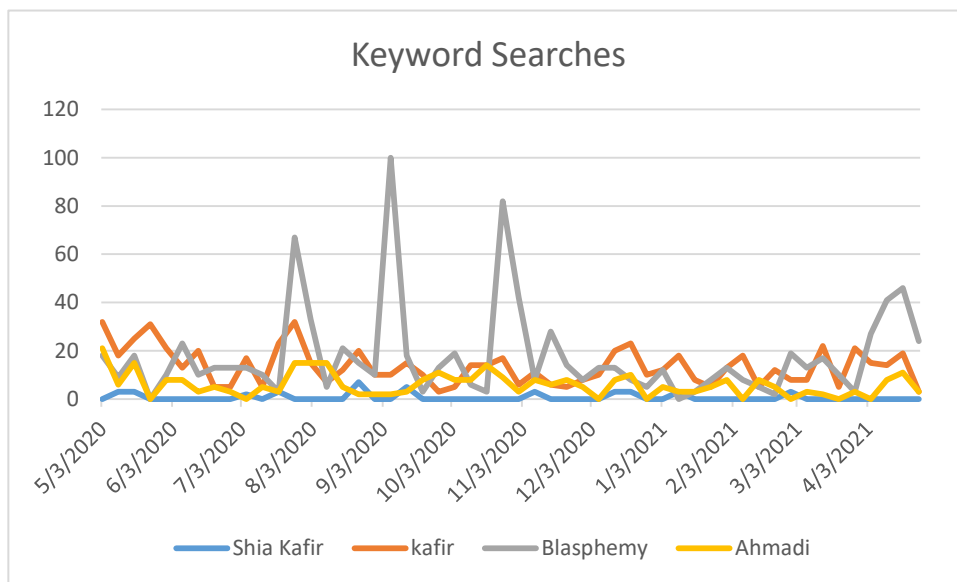


Figure 4 Frequency of searches of keywords used for this study . (Data:google Trends)

slogans (AFP, 2020). Many foreign news outlets reported on this event, as some called it “largest” anti-shia rally till date, the rising number of blasphemy cases and the rise in hate speech have resulted in analysts claiming that a collision is imminent (Khan,2020). Another major anti-Shia event was the killing of 11 Shia Hazara coal miners in Machh. Although the responsibility of the attack was taken by ISKP, the killings resulted in sit-ins all across Pakistan including, in Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur, Shikarpur, Nawabshah and Jacobabad (Dawn,2021).

Further evidence of growing Shia Sunni tensions can be found on the trends that so often appeared on social media. The Online Hate Speech Monitor (2020) & Pakistan Internet Landscape Report (2020) have dedicated entire sections to the Blasphemy allegations and the rising hate against religious minorities during the pandemic. The reports have used instances like the blasphemy charges against an Assistant Professor at Sindh University, allegations against several Christians & the killing of an Ahmedi man during his hearing to build the case for an increasingly intolerant Pakistan.

Moreover, the UCIRF has reported on the increase in tensions as it voiced “concerns” over rising blasphemy allegations that resulted in instances of “mob violence”. Evidence of increase in sectarian violence has also been recorded by CRSS Annual Security Report (2020) – which has shown an increase in sectarian violence while observing changes in its formation & dimensions. According to the report, while all other forms of violence declined – sectarian violence increased by 25%, in the year 2020. What sets this year's increase in sectarian violence apart is that a record number of Sunnis were targeted in the year 2020, which is largely characterized with the COVID-19 outbreak (CRSS, 2021). Hence, increases in online hate speech have been accompanied by increases in instances of sectarian violence – where the largest group that suffered were the Sunnis.

As the conceptual framework emphasized the increasing chances of intergroup conflict due to strengthening of group identity during the COVID-19 lockdown, we can build the case for rising Sectarian violence in Pakistan to address the security concerns that may arise from the lack of attention paid to pathogen prevalence & the role that it plays in creating opportunities for violent extremism. Rosenfeld (2011) argues that mob violence is often a function of political violence & ethnic cleansing and plays a rather important role as clashes between factions occur to prevent perceived subjugation in response to grievances that may arise.

Hence, political violence & ethnic cleansing have both been linked to the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan. Moreover, although it has not been recognized – the rise of the “Shia Genocide” sentiments has probably been in response to the anti-Shia sentiments that have arisen. However, empirical evidence as provided by the

Tying the context of this thesis, all the events mentioned above occurred in the same period as the period of our study on the effect that disease or an all-out pandemic has had on the group clashes in Pakistan. As cases of sectarian violence have come from Sindh, KPK & Punjab, and as is visible in figure 5, these 3 provinces in relativity have shown greater pathogen prevalence.

3.3 Research Limitations

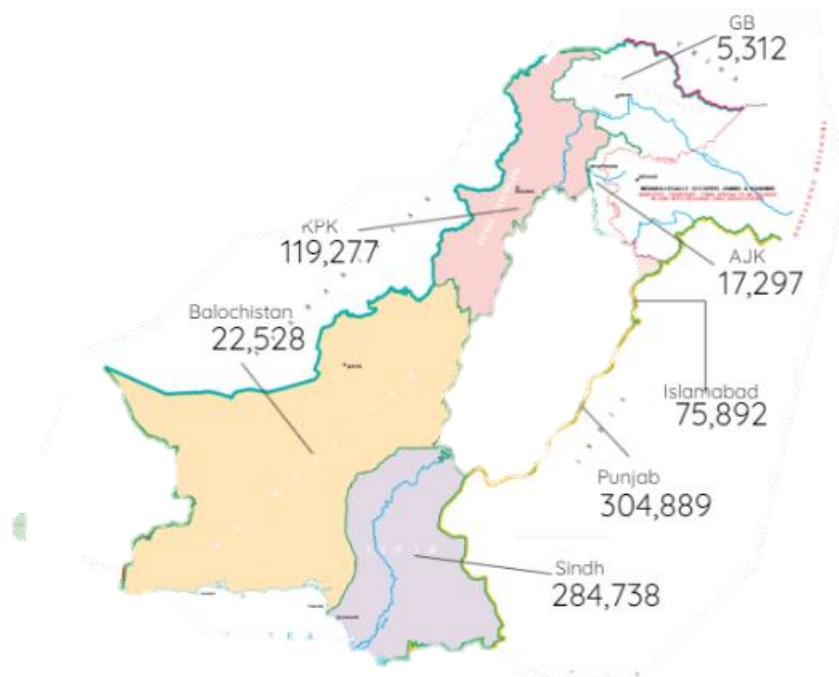
Establishing disease as the only causal factor to a region where political & strategic dynamics have been constantly in motion has been challenging. However, at this juncture it

must be made clear that the purpose of this thesis is not to establish causality, but rather explore the impacts of a disease while viewing it from a pathogen prevalence standpoint.

The very first limitation that the researcher faced was that very few studies of this nature had been carried out when the research period started – moreover, even fewer studies were conducted within Pakistan’s context. A more suitable method for such research would have been a detailed content analysis of the many tweets or posts that have resulted during the study period. However, tools required to do such analysis are designed for businesses and marketers, and hence do not suit or fulfill the needs of academic research. This is because most of these analytical tools are designed to provide information based on real-time activity – whereas academic research typically requires historical data to be able to make any assessments.

The sample taken for the study was although fully representative of the diverse population of Pakistan was rather small, however given a longer duration such a study can easily be replicated to include a larger sample. This would not only allow for a more valid study, but greater participation may allow for a better understanding of the youth. Moreover, due to the survey being conducted online, researchers were unable to gain access to young

Figure 5 total number of cases reported all over Pakistan



people from the rural areas, some of whom have recently gotten access to the internet. This

would allow the research to include unequal access to information as a consideration and allow to draw clear comparisons to identify source of polarization in this regard.

While the lack of existing research in Pakistan's context was limited, gaining access to data collected by forums & think tanks proved to be even more challenging, as many of them did not share the data as easily with external researchers. Hence, red-tape and bureaucratic culture proved to be an even greater hindrance.

Moreover, the survey was circulated using the snowball sampling method & hence also reflects how there exist echo-chambers within our society - as we faced significant barriers in getting religious minorities to respond to it. Despite repeated assurances of maintaining anonymity – the respondents seemed unwilling to fill out the survey.

With these limitations in place, the findings & discussion are discussed in detail in the following section.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Sample Characteristics

A majority of the respondents of the sample were women (78 women, 62 men), the sample covered a population of people who were aged from 19 years – 34 years old. Moreover, nearly 70% of the respondents were Sunnis. Nearly 23% were Shia Muslims, and the remaining 7% were Ahmedi, Hindu & Christians (Sunnis 98, Shia 32, Hindu 2, Ahmedi 2 & Christian 4). Respondents were from all over Pakistan, including Balochistan, Sindh & KPK. While most respondents were from Islamabad, other cities included Attock, Mardan, Peshawar, Quetta, Zhob, Bahawalpur, Muzaffargarh – Karachi, Lahore & Rawalpindi were also on the list. On the question of Identity – 44 respondents chose to identify as Pakistani, 33 chose to identify as Muslims, of the remaining respondents nearly 50 chose to respond on ethnic terms, whereas only 11 respondents responded on sectarian/religious terms. The different cities & provinces ensured that a representative sample was taken from all across Pakistan.

4.2 Social Media Exposure & Use

An overwhelming number of respondents claimed to spend more than 6 hours on social media platforms – nearly 65 respondents, making up 46.3% of our sample. Of those who spent more than 6 hours on social media, the preferred platforms used were Twitter & Instagram. Of those who spent less than 6 hours (ranging from 2-5 hours a day) a majority spent the time on Facebook & Instagram. Moreover, those who responded as users of Whatsapp & Facebook – reportedly spent less than 6 hours on average on these social media platforms. Overall, Instagram, Twitter & Facebook were the most preferred platforms to use.

Furthermore, in terms of reliance on social media as an outlet, a majority of the respondents responded in agreement, that social media really does offer a reasonable outlet for them to raise their voices & share opinions. Moreover, in response to questions about how often users engage in debates and share their opinions on social media, 56 respondents claimed to have used social media to share their opinions regularly. 72 respondents also claimed to have engaged in debates on social media on a frequent basis. This was further established in another question that gauged the activity of users – when asked about the

frequency of these debates online, nearly 20 people responded that their arguments online had increased in the past year.

4.3 Religiosity

Only a few indicators of religiosity were addressed in the survey, which included the basis on which people responded to the question of identity and how they chose to respond to the question of identity - i.e. whether their response is in the Ethnic or Religious domain. In response to the first question more people identified themselves along the ethnic lines. Another question was about an increase in participation in overt religious practices – while several respondents said that they did experience an increase in religious participation, a majority agreed that they did not participate in overt public practices of religion.

4.4 In-group Identity

In group identity indicators in the survey were measured with time spent with the family & finding a community of like-minded people online – A majority of respondents responded that their time spent with the family had increased. Family time was one indicator to measure collectivist attitudes amongst individuals and nearly 128 respondents agreed that their time spent with family had increased over the course of the past year. Moreover, many also agreed that they had indeed found a community of like-minded people online. A 112 (80% of the sample) people, responded that they had managed to find a group of like-minded people that they could relate to & shared an affiliation with.

4.5 Out-group Xenophobia

The survey was also designed to measure outgroup exposure, in the past year – 3 questions were directed to assess the exposure to other groups in society. The very first one asked the respondents how many people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds had they met over the course of the past year. Nearly 65% of respondents said they had met less than 2 people from different communities. Moreover, 30% responded that they had met 3-4 people from different backgrounds, and only 5% responded that they had met more than 5 people who they identified as an outgroup.

The following question, then asked respondents to rate their interactions with these people on a scale of 1(Friendly) to 5 (Hostile). A majority of the respondents i.e., 74 respondents rated their interaction as hostile accounting for 55.2% of the sample population. Only 6 respondents rated their interaction as “1” (4%), whereas 25 respondents rated their interactions a “4” (18%) & 35 responded with a “3” on the rating scale (25%).

The last question taken to measure outgroup exposure, was to see how often people interacted with people from the outgroup over the course of the past year – only 60 respondents claimed to have met people from other backgrounds respondents claimed to have met other people on a regular basis, whereas 80 respondents claimed to have met people from other groups “rarely”.

4.6 Grievances

Parts of the survey were also designed to assess the grievances of various groups – Questions targeted especially to ask if people had been subject to systemic discrimination. Of those who had experienced hate crimes, most of them claimed it was because of their religious beliefs or because of their ethnicity.

The second question, that assessed systemic discrimination had more “yes” responses, although all those who had experienced hate crimes, had also experienced discrimination. Moreover, those that experienced systemic discrimination, felt that it was either due to their gender, or their religion/sect.

4.7 Polarization

The survey also aimed to assess polarization amongst individuals based on their political participation & call to action. In response to the question asking how often people have participated in protests & marches, a few respondents claimed that they had not participated in any marches, whereas a wide majority claimed that they had “rarely” participated in any protests or marches.

Moreover, when questioned about how over the past year their political opinions had been shaped, majority respondents agreed that they had developed stronger opinions over this time. The survey also assessed polarization on the basis of responses to scenario-based questions. These questions were based to assess awareness of sectarian differences, gender issues & political clashes.

A majority of respondents gave rather passive responses in a scenario with political differences, however when it came to religious & gender issues respondents gave clearer responses. For instance, when asked about a situation where a friend/family member supported opposing parties – 55.2% of respondents said they would not cater to such a debate and would not respond. On the other hand, when it came to raising voices for the “Shia

Genocide” a majority (38.8%) of the respondents said they would support the movement wholeheartedly; meanwhile nearly 10.4% of respondents said that they would be willing to physically fight to disprove the Shia Genocide tag. Similarly on the matter of supporting LBTQ+ rights – a majority of the respondents disagreed with the support of the movement, but only a small percentage (3%) were willing to fight physically against the supporters.

Lastly, the respondents were asked what group they thought were the most marginalized in Pakistan – this was done to assess the understanding of individuals of the current situation in Pakistan. It was also to assess which fault lines are more prominent in the public perception. The responses varied including ethnic groups, religious minorities & women & transgenders. Nearly 27% of the respondents gave listed religious minorities as the most marginalized population.

This section presented a summary of the results gathered through a survey for the purpose of this study. The next sections will establish the findings based on the results mentioned above. We will then discuss the relevance of the findings and provide policy recommendations in this regard.

4.8 Findings & Discussion

One of the major findings that immediately became clear was that the time spent online had increased equally for all groups from all over Pakistan. Although opinions on the Social Media Platform of preference were divided, many people preferred Instagram & Twitter & Facebook. The Increased amount of time spent online as active users indicates that these people have been exposed to “fake news” as statistics suggest that nearly 60% of the news on social media is made up.

The data gathered for this study included a qualitative survey, that aimed to assess the identity formation, ingroup cohesion, outgroup interaction, religiosity, grievances & political polarization within respondents at a time when Pathogen Prevalence was at an all-time high. Based on the responses the following findings are made.

Firstly, a question that aimed to establish group identity by offering specific sect based or ethnicity-based responses to assess which fault lines were becoming more prominent, also offered two responses which indicated identity cohesion amongst various groups. Participants responded with the more cohesive identity (i.e. Muslim/Pakistani). However, since our sample size consisted of a majority of Sunni Muslims living in urban

areas, it is easier for them to accept the overarching Pakistani or Muslim identity that is painted in their picture. In spite of this, those that did not assume one of these identities, found it easier to assume an ethnic one over a religious one.

Similarly, when talking about religiosity, secondary data suggested an increase in private religiosity – based on google searches for prayers & other religion-based content. However, in terms of overt/public religious practices – based on the responses from our survey there was no evident increase in public religious practices. One factor that could explain this apparent lack of public religious practices are the lockdown measures that were placed, especially during increased religious activity such as during the month of Ramadan, Christmas & Easter. Hence, while there was an increase in private religious practices based on the data provided by google web searches, as well as the assumptions made based on Pakistan's collectivist society, the survey could not provide empirical evidence for an increase in religiosity.

However, through this survey we have established enough empirical data to support the fact that Pakistan is a collectivist society- for instance more time spent with the family indicates greater family reliance and family as a stronger institute. Especially since several respondents agreed that they were going through a period of psychological distress.

More evidence of ingroup strengthening can be found in how an increasing number of people found a community of like-minded people online. This can also be explained by how the lockdown measures impacted the way people socialized – the world was pushed onto digital platforms – since the phenomenon proved to be global – it made it easier for people to find online communities and hence resulted in an overall greater group identity.

Tensions with groups considered “others” or the outgroups was also recognized as survey results showed an overall decline in exposure & interaction with out-groups. Furthermore, the survey results suggest that those respondents who had lesser interactions with the outgroup rated them as more hostile as opposed to those who met a larger number of people from out groups.

As in-group & out-group tensions become increasingly evident the use and exposure to social media also plays a fair role. Results indicated a rise in the use of social media, and also showed that over the past year people had formed stronger opinions on topics of interest to them, however, engaging in debates has become less frequent as people are increasingly choosing to remain passive to the trolls on social media. Hence the evident indicator for

polarization has not been proven. But the variety of responses to questions of sect-based violence & issues of gender have proven that polarization has occurred as few individuals were willing to resort to violence for unmatched opinions. The role that social media has played, in this regard was also made more evident through the case studies of Sri Lanka and India. Where in India's case the media and the social media are widely used, Sri Lankan society takes its cues for group dynamics directly from the government. Moreover, the control of the state over social media in the case of Sri Lanka can also help explain the difference in how the pandemic affected these different societies. India's example should be used to highlight how polarization and mob violence can be a product of not building a culture of digital literacy and basing a national security strategy on disinformation campaigns.

However, willingness to resort to violence cannot be taken as the only indicator of possible polarization & resultant radicalization – one other indicator that helps establish that are the grievances that respondents have shared. For those people belonging to religious minorities, most of them have experienced systemic discrimination, several of them have even been subject to hate crimes. This has established their identity as the “other” in Pakistan, and has resulted in alienation, and further ingroup strengthening amongst them increasing the risks of inter-group conflict.

One last indicator of polarization has been the willingness of people to mobilize in an attempt to share their opinions with the rest of the world – again several people have shown passivity in this regard, as responses to people participating in protests and marches has been less recorded. However, contrary to this we have seen that during the COVID-19 lockdown several groups have staged protests and several people have participated in them.

Furthermore, although this survey was designed to study the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan – the survey responses were not free of the many other problems that have been highlighted. For instance, one issue that rose to the surface in multiple responses were the issues that women face in Pakistan. Moreover, other marginal groups that have been excluded from this study include the poverty stricken and the ethnic groups that experience alienation.

In terms of religiosity the study has been inconclusive, however holding high pathogen prevalence constant, the current environment that has been created in Pakistan with regards to increasing online activity has contributed to the rise in polarization that has been

observed over the study period. We can say that polarization has increased during the past year in Pakistan, as there has been an increased number of blasphemy cases.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

After a comprehensive overview of the literature present on how disease can pose a serious security threat by the impact that it can have on society – this thesis has explored the possibilities of radicalization & rising polarization that may result in intergroup conflict. There are many fault lines in Pakistan, that can be exploited by enemies and hence addressing them through a disease standpoint might help Pakistan enhance its overall security framework. Pakistan has only recently started taking in the human security framework into account as has been evidenced by its shift towards a “geo-economic” outlook. However, if Pakistan is to improve its economy, it must consider the threats that can have great impact on the largest resource that it has i.e., Human Capital. This study has conceptualized the impact of disease on the social structure of Pakistan, and the risks of radicalization that are posed by this threat. Moreover, focusing on the impact that an increased pathogen prevalence has had on the state of minorities in Pakistan with particularly the Shia Muslims, who have reported an increase in the hate that they have experienced online.

The thesis first established Pakistan as a collectivist society, that as per the Parasite - Stress Theory, is a society that is formed as a result of the infectious diseases present in the environment. The thesis then elaborated on how the risk of infectious disease can result in polarization & radicalization amongst individuals, eventually resulting in intergroup conflict.

The findings of the study concluded that Pakistan is indeed a collectivist society, that is experiencing increasing polarization due to the effect of increased social media usage and internet penetration. It has used a survey to study the impacts, while collating data from several different studies to assess how heightened religiosity – which is another determinant of radicalization – along with the prevalence of an infectious disease can impact the chances of Inter-group conflict within Pakistan by increasing radicalization and tendencies to resort to mob violence, which is an increasingly familiar way of dealing with differences in Pakistan.

One last aspect that stood out in all the cases studied is the role that governance has played on the whole. For instance, USA and India, were both cited as examples in this thesis. In spite of being different types of societies (USA is individualist, while India is collectivist), it can be argued that the mishandling of the pandemic contributed largely to the high level of violence and crime that were experienced there. In contrast, Pakistan's government was well able to avoid any major losses owing to the quick response of the government and sense of civic responsibility amongst the people. It can be hypothesized that had the government not considered COVID-19 a serious threat, the current figures would have been rather different.

Moreover, the changing situation in the region is also hinting at rising Sectarianism within Pakistan. The emerging "Indo-Iran" nexus has tried to offset the influence of the Sunni Taliban government that is now in place in Afghanistan. It is most likely, that Iran might choose to activate its proxies within Pakistan to protect its own interests, that lie with India, and the development of the Chabahar Port. This time around however, Pakistan is no longer looking for strategic depth and has shifted to a geo-economic paradigm. However, this will not keep the misinformation & disinformation campaign at bay. If anything the findings of this thesis, have highlighted Sectarianism as a cause for concern as an issue that divides us deeply. Knowing that Pakistan's strategic enemies have used these fault lines before, it should be given greater attention.

5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made on the basis of this thesis, to help reduce the risks of radicalization and sectarian violence in Pakistan's context. The very first is to improve Pakistan's response and preparedness to threats of biosecurity, as biosecurity offers a key element of Human Security.

While it is impossible to be prepared for every possible threat or risk, no possibility can be ruled out, threats of a biological nature can prove to be if not more, then at least, equally as dangerous and costly as nuclear attacks. Biosecurity and the countering of biological threats deserve attention due to the sheer scope of damage that can occur at an instance of exposure. Biological weapons are found in nature; hence, accessibility to such materials is not an issue. Biosecurity and preparedness are necessary because agents of biological warfare, such as pathogens and toxins, are living beings and can replicate and mutate themselves and affect entire cities and countries (Tucker, 2006). It is thus imperative

to improve response to threats and equally necessary to prevent these threats from transmigrating across territorial borders and improve response mechanisms - by improving public health.

The inadequacy or lack of preparedness explicate why few biological attacks in the past were unpreventable (Koblentz, 2010) hence, the imperative for preparedness geared at reducing or even eliminating the repetition of attacks, for instance, the 2001 Anthrax attacks in the US and Aum Shinrikyo's Sarin gas attacks in a Tokyo Subway station (Leitenberg,1999) Preparedness can instrumentally mitigate against the threat of biological attacks by terrorist organizations, who have threatened mass attacks and demonstrated the desire to spread disease amongst the population. However, improving biosecurity, via bio-preparedness, requires a multi-sectoral approach.

The role of biosecurity in conflict, regional stability and cooperation cannot be understated. As the nature of conflict changes over time, becoming more intra-state than inter-state, there have been links between the spread of infectious diseases (such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and other viral respiratory diseases) and internal conflicts. Internal conflicts possibly threaten biosecurity by affecting the public health infrastructure,¹⁰ creating in its wake a large number of Internally Displace Persons (IDPs), who lack access to necessities, such as food, shelter, and sanitation — creating an environment conducive for the spread of disease (Gayer and Legros, 2008). The relationship between regional stability and biosecurity has recently explored the regional responses to viruses like SARS, the Avian Flu (H5N1) and Swine Flu (H1N1). When epidemics like avian flu and Swine flu spread, the response to these viruses brought to light the shortcomings in the existing bio-preparedness levels.

Additionally, the role that biosecurity plays in conflict, regionalization, and trade is enough to establish its significance as a topic worthy of research, however even then (apart from issues of defining biosecurity⁴) there are problems that may arise when it comes to studying and promoting biosecurity research.

The very first problem identified, is that many scholars in the field do not agree with the existence of biosecurity, or the need for it. The argument presented, is that, even in history, there are very few instances where biological agents were weaponized, for instance, the anthrax attacks 2001, Aum Shinrikyo Sarin Gas Attacks (Caduff, 2014). These instances have been rare because these groups find it challenging to weaponize these biological agents

or cannot do so. Additionally, even in bioterrorism instances, the perpetrators were not States, but domestic actors. The criticism further mounts that biosecurity is rooted in

anticipated threats that may or may not occur. While these criticisms are part of the discourse, some studies suggest that by improving biosecurity and bio-preparedness, responses to threats can improve significantly, even in times of natural disasters (Davis, 2007).

Pakistan's response to the COVID-19 outbreak received adulation from across the globe, partly because the response came smoothly through the cooperation between the civilian & military wing. Even as Pakistan runs its Vaccination drive, the numbers are in Pakistan's favor. However, the social & economic inequalities that have been highlighted are yet to be addressed. In order to overcome this impact, greater effort needs to be put in to help improve social cohesion. Recently Pakistan has shifted to a "Single National Curriculum," which is one way to reducing inequalities and disparities amongst groups. But in order to further help consolidate Human security within Pakistan, it is also necessary to counter the "infodemic" by improving digital literacy.

It is further recommended that Pakistan develop a corpus of written content in all major languages, to help improve the quality of discourse on social media. Furthermore, it should build a policy that centers around countering hate speech against all religious minorities. In order to strengthen religious harmony and neutralize the sectarian divides, it is also important to create shared experiences for all communities – especially religious minorities.

Policymakers should also be sharing community guidelines with those already existing on various social media platforms. Every community has its own needs and hence these guidelines should be provided by community leaders to ensure that social media becomes a tool for generating dialog instead of resulting in Polarization.

In order to prevent the spread of radicalization, ensuring inclusive development is one of the most necessary steps to be undertaken. It is important to ensure that no group feels targeted or discriminated against.

Appendix

Survey Questions:

Age:

Gender:

City & Province:

You Identify as:

Ethnic Responses

Punjabi

Sindhi

Balochi

Pashtun

Hazara

Religious Responses

Shia

Sunni

Hindu

Christian

Sikh

Ahmadi

How many hours do you spend on Social Media?

1-2 hours

2-3 hours

3-4 hours

6+ hours

Preferred social media platform

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Snapchat

Other

Do you agree that social media is a reasonable outlet to voice one's opinions?

Yes

No

Maybe

How many people have you met in the past year - who belong to a different community - ethnic/ religious group?

<2

3-5

5+

How would you rate your interaction with people from different backgrounds? *

Friendly

1

2

3

4

5

Hostile

Please answer the following

How often do you voice your opinions on any social media platform?

How often do you engage in debate on social media platforms?

How often have you participated in a demonstration/March?

How often have you gotten in a physical altercation in the past year?

How often do you engage in overt religious practices?

How often have you met people from different backgrounds (i.e. ethnicity, religion/sect,caste)?

Never

Rarely

Quite Frequently

Regularly

Have you ever been subject to "a hate crime"? *if Yes answer the next question*

Yes

No

Why do you think you were a victim of a hate crime?

Have you ever personally experienced systemic discrimination? *If Yes, please answer the next question*

Yes

No

Why do you think you were discriminated against?

In the past year

You have experienced greater levels of stress

You have started spending more time with your family

You have spent more time on line

You have argued a lot more with people on the internet

You have built strong opinions about politics in the country

You have found a community of likeminded people online

You have met people from different background (i.e. ethnicity, religion/sect,caste)

You have experienced greater levels of stress

You have started spending more time with your family

You have spent more time on line

You have argued a lot more with people on the internet

You have built strong opinions about politics in the country

You have found a community of likeminded people online

Very Strongly Agree

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Very Strongly Disagree

How would you react in the following situation: A friend/family member has just expressed support for the opposing political party - how do you react?

Tweet/Post about it - You know your followers will relate

Argue & give up when they don't agree

Argue & fight (physically if necessary) to prove yourself right

Stay Silent - Its their opinion

How would you react in the following situation: A close friend/family member has tweeted about the ongoing Shia Genocide in Pakistan, you:

Agree with them & support them

Correct them & present a justification

Argue & fight (physically if necessary) to prove yourself right

Disagree but stay quiet

How would you react in the following situation: A close friend/family member has spoken in favor of the LGBTQ+ community in Pakistan - you

agree with them & support them

Correct them & present justification

Argue & fight (physically if necessary) to prove yourself right

Disagree but stay quiet

Who are the most marginalized people in Pakistan? (put down one one group)

Bibliography

- Ahmar, M. (2007). Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision*, 9(1), 1-19.
- Ali, S. H., & Keil, R. (2006). Global cities and the spread of infectious disease: the case of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Toronto, Canada. *Urban Studies*, 43(3), 491-509.
- Abbas, S. A., & Syed, S. H. (2021). Sectarian terrorism in Pakistan: Causes, impact and remedies. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 43(2), 350-361.
- Albert, C., Baez, A., & Rutland, J. (2021). Human security as biosecurity: Reconceptualizing national security threats in the time of COVID-19. *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 40(1), 83-105.
- Arabaghatta Basavaraj, K., Saikia, P., Varughese, A., Semetko, H. A., & Kumar, A. (2021). The COVID-19–Social Identity–Digital Media Nexus in India: Polarization and Blame. *Political Psychology*.
- Banaji, S., & Bhat, R. (2020). How anti-Muslim disinformation campaigns in India have surged during COVID-19. LSE COVID-19 Blog.
- Bano, N., Mustafa, G., & Ali, A. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Socio-Religious Integration in Developing Countries: A Case Study of India and Pakistan. *Sustainable Business and Society in Emerging Economies*, 3(2), 67-73.
- Bazzi, S., Fiszbein, M., & Gebresilasse, M. (2021). “Rugged individualism” and collective (In) action during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Public Economics*, 195, 104357.
- Bajoria, J. (2020, May 1). CoronaJihad is Only the Latest Manifestation: Islamophobia in India has Been Years in the Making. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/01/coronajihad-only-latest-manifestation-islamophobia-india-has-been-years-making>
- Bali, A., & Desai, P. (2019). Fake News and Social Media: Indian Perspective. *Media Watch*, 10(3), 737-750
- Bentzen, J. (2020). In crisis, we pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bizina, M., & Gray, D. H. (2014). Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy. *Global security studies*, 5(1).

Caduff, C. (2014). On the verge of death: visions of biological vulnerability. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43, 105-121.

Chadda, R. K., & Deb, K. S. (2013). Indian family systems, collectivistic society and psychotherapy. *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 55(Suppl 2), S299.

Charkawi, W., Dunn, K., & Bliuc, A. M. (2021). The influences of social identity and perceptions of injustice on support to violent extremism. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 13(3), 177-196.

Clissold, E., Nylander, D., Watson, C., & Ventriglio, A. (2020). Pandemics and prejudice.

Cruwys, T., Stevens, M., & Greenaway, K. H. (2020). A social identity perspective on COVID-19: Health risk is affected by shared group membership. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(3), 584-593.

Culpepper, P. (2019). The disgusted mind: investigating the effects of parasite stress on social behaviour and beliefs.

Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford economic papers*, 56(4), 563-595.

Currie, T. E., & Mace, R. (2012). Analyses do not support the parasite-stress theory of human sociality. *Behav Brain Sci*, 35(2), 83-85

Davis, M. V., MacDonald, P. D., Cline, J. S., & Baker, E. L. (2007). Evaluation of public health response to hurricanes finds North Carolina better prepared for public health emergencies. *Public health reports*, 122(1), 17-26.

Della Porta, D. (2006). *Social movements, political violence, and the state: A comparative analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge University Press.

Diamond, J. M., & Ordunio, D. (1999). *Guns, germs, and steel*. Books on Tape.

Elbaum, A. (2020). Black lives in a pandemic: implications of systemic injustice for end-of-life care. *Hastings Center Report*, 50(3), 58-60.

Fincher, C. L., & Thornhill, R. (2012). Parasite-stress promotes in-group assortative sociality: The cases of strong family ties and heightened religiosity. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35(2), 61-79.

Fincher, C. L., Thornhill, R., Murray, D. R. & Schaller, S. (2008). Pathogen prevalence predicts human cross-cultural variability in individualism/collectivism. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 275, 1279–1285.

Gayer, M., Legros, D., Formenty, P., & Connolly, M. A. (2007). Conflict and emerging infectious diseases. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 13(11), 1625.

Gravlee, C. C. (2020). Systemic racism, chronic health inequities, and COVID-19: A syndemic in the making?. *American Journal of Human Biology*.

Hafez, M. M. (2016). The ties that bind: How terrorists exploit family bonds. *CTC Sentinel*, 9(2), 15-18.

Hafez, M., & Mullins, C. (2015). The radicalization puzzle: A theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38(11), 958-975.

Höllinger, F., & Makula, L. (2021). Religiosity in the major religious cultures of the world. *International Journal of Sociology*, 1-15.

Human Rights Watch. (2020). Covid-19 fueling anti-Asian racism and xenophobia worldwide. Human Rights Watch.

Holmes, J. W., & McNeal, R. S. (2016). Social Media, Participation, and Attitudes: Does Social Media Drive Polarization?. In *(R)evolutionizing Political Communication through Social Media* (pp. 1-21). IGI Global

Iqbal, Z. (2006). Health and human security: The public health impact of violent conflict. *International Studies Quarterly*, 50(3), 631-649.

Jaggi, P., & Bajpai, S. (2020). Political Leanings in India and Identity: A Correlational Study. *Journal of Psychosocial Research*, 15(2).

Jeung, R., Horse, A. Y., Popovic, T., & Lim, R. (2021). Stop AAPI hate national report. Stop AAPI Hate.

Kerridge, B. T., Khan, M. R., Rehm, J., & Sapkota, A. (2013). Conflict and diarrheal and related diseases: A global analysis. *Journal of epidemiology and global health*, 3(4), 269-277

Kadirgamar, A. (2020). Polarization, Civil War, and Persistent Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka. In T. Carothers & A. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia Old Divisions, New Dangers* (pp. 53-66). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Khalid, S. (2019). India publishes final NRC: All you need to know on citizens' list. Al- Jazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/31/india-publishes-final-nrc-all-you-need-to-know-on-citizens-list>

Khan, S., & Butt, K. M. (2017). Cyber Technology, Radicalization and Terrorism in Pakistan. *Journal of Indian Studies*, 3(2), 119-128.

Kipgen, N. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and racism in the United States and India. *Econ Political Wkly*, 55(23), 21-26.

Koblentz, G. D. (2010). Biosecurity reconsidered: calibrating biological threats and responses. *International security*, 34(4), 96-132.

Lee, J. R. (2009). *Climate change and armed conflict: Hot and cold wars*. Routledge.

Letendre, K., Fincher, C. L., & Thornhill, R. (2010). Does infectious disease cause global variation in the frequency of intrastate armed conflict and civil war?. *Biological Reviews*, 85(3), 669-683.

Leitenberg, M. (1999). Aum Shinrikyo's efforts to produce biological weapons: A case study in the serial propagation of misinformation. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11(4), 149-158.

Levy, B. S., & Sidel, V. W. (Eds.). (2008). *War and public health*. Oxford University Press.

McDonald, M. (2002). Human security and the construction of security. *Global Society*, 16(3), 277-295.

Mukhtar, S. (2021). Psychology and politics of COVID-19 misinfodemics: Why and how do people believe in misinfodemics?. *International Sociology*, 36(1), 111-123.

Mehrl, M., & Thurner, P. W. (2020). The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Global Armed Conflict: Early Evidence. *Political Studies Review*, 1478929920940648.

Murray, C. J., King, G., Lopez, A. D., Tomijima, N., & Krug, E. G. (2002). Armed conflict as a public health problem. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 324(7333), 346–349. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.324.7333.346>

Nyadera, I. N., & Bincof, M. O. (2019). Human security, terrorism, and counterterrorism: Boko Haram and the Taliban. *International Journal on World Peace*, 36(1), 4-15.

O'Shea, B. A., Watson, D. G., Brown, G. D., & Fincher, C. L. (2020). Infectious disease prevalence, not race exposure, predicts both implicit and explicit racial prejudice across the United States. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 11(3), 345-355.

Pan, S., Yang, C. C., Tsai, J. Y., & Dong, C. (2021). Experience of and Worry About Discrimination, Social Media Use, and Depression Among Asians in the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-sectional Survey Study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(9), e29024.

Pandey, G. (2021, September 2). Beaten and humiliated by Hindu mobs for being a Muslim in India. BBC. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58406194>

Peterson, S. (2002). Epidemic disease and national security. *Security Studies*, 12(2), 43-81.

Piazza, J. A. (2021). Fake news: the effects of social media disinformation on domestic terrorism. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 1-23.

Ritchie, H., Mathieu, E., Rodés-Guirao, L., Appel, C., Giattino, C., Ortiz-Ospina, E., ... & Roser, M. (2020). Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). *Our World in Data*.

Reimer, N. K., Kamble, S. V., Schmid, K., & Hewstone, M. (2020). Intergroup contact fosters more inclusive social identities. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 1368430220960795.

Roberto, K. J., Johnson, A. F., & Rauhaus, B. M. (2020). Stigmatization and prejudice during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 42(3), 364-378.,

Rosenfeld, J. E. (Ed.). (2010). *Terrorism, identity, and legitimacy: the four waves theory and political violence*. Routledge.

Rousseau, C., Hassan, G., Miconi, D., Lecompte, V., Mekki-Berrada, A., El Hage, H., & Oulhote, Y. (2019). From social adversity to sympathy for violent radicalization: the role of depression, religiosity and social support. *Archives of public health*, 77(1), 1-12.

Sabatello, M., Jackson Scroggins, M., Goto, G., Santiago, A., McCormick, A., Morris, K. J., ... & Darien, G. (2021). Structural racism in the COVID-19 pandemic: Moving forward. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 21(3), 56-74.

Sahoo, N. (2020). Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India. In T. Carothers & A. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia Old Divisions, New Dangers* (pp. 9-23). Carnegie Endowment For International Peace.

Shiller, R. (2016). What's behind a rise in ethnic nationalism? Maybe the economy. *New York Times*.

Tazamal, M. (2020). COVID-19 IS EXACERBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN INDIA. Retrieved 30 September 2021, from <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/covid-19-is-exacerbating-islamophobia-in-india/>

Tavernise, S., & Oppel Jr, R. A. (2020). Spit on, yelled at, attacked: Chinese-Americans fear for their safety. *The New York Times*, 23.

Tripathi, R., & Vijayan, U. (2021). Collectivism: An Indian Perspective. Retrieved 30 September 2021, from https://www.iimb.ac.in/turn_turn/collectivism-indian-perspective.php

Tucker, J., & Okutani, S. (2004). Global Governance of 'Contentious' Science: The Case of the World Health Organization's Oversight of Smallpox Virus Research.

Tybur, J. M., Inbar, Y., Aarøe, L., Barclay, P., Barlow, F. K., De Barra, M., ... & Consedine, N. S. (2016). Parasite stress and pathogen avoidance relate to distinct dimensions of political ideology across 30 nations. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(44), 12408-12413.

Uslaner, E. M. (2009). Segregation and Mistrust: Diversity, Isolation, and Social Cohesion. *Isolation, and Social Cohesion* (December 15, 2009).

Wade, L. (2020). An unequal blow.

Waseem, M., Kamran, T., Ali, M. A., & Riikonen, K. (2010). Dilemmas of pride and pain: sectarian conflict and conflict transformation in Pakistan.

Webster, G. D., Howell, J. L., Losee, J. E., Mahar, E. A., & Wongsomboon, V. (2021). Culture, COVID-19, and collectivism: A paradox of American exceptionalism?. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 178, 110853.

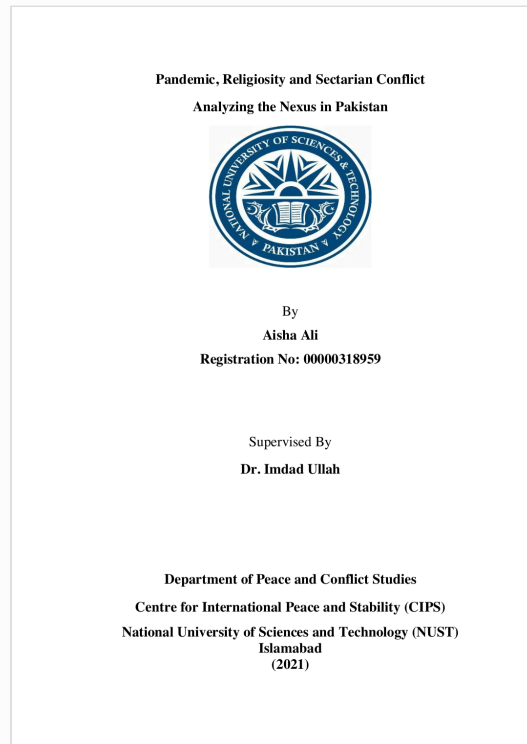


Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Aisha Ali
Assignment title: Plagiarism Detection (Sep 2021) Part 2 (Moodle TT)
Submission title: Aisha Ali MSPCS Thesis
File name: 105430_Aisha_Ali_Aisha_Ali_MSPCS_Thesis_727154_15900154...
File size: 2.6M
Page count: 64
Word count: 17,626
Character count: 96,365
Submission date: 02-Oct-2021 08:26AM (UTC-0700)
Submission ID: 1663306840



Aisha Ali MSPCS Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%

SIMILARITY INDEX

13%

INTERNET SOURCES

10%

PUBLICATIONS

11%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan Student Paper	1%
2	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%
3	link.springer.com Internet Source	1%
4	Submitted to Seoul National University Student Paper	<1%
5	etheses.bham.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
6	Submitted to La Trobe University Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to University College London Student Paper	<1%
8	wrap.warwick.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
9	Submitted to University of Durham Student Paper	<1%

exception, administrative evil, and the enemy in President Trump's rhetoric during COVID-19", *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 2020

Publication

86

Zizi Goschin, Gina Cristina Dimian. "Healthcare under pressure: modelling COVID-19 fatalities with multiscale geographically weighted regressions", *Kybernetes*, 2021

Publication

<1 %

87

bilby.unilinc.edu.au

Internet Source

<1 %

88

core.ac.uk

Internet Source

<1 %

89

harvardpublichealthreview.org

Internet Source

<1 %

90

www.antrocom.net

Internet Source

<1 %

91

zombiedoc.com

Internet Source

<1 %

92

cronfa.swan.ac.uk

Internet Source

<1 %

Exclude quotes Off

Exclude matches Off

Exclude bibliography Off