

**Timeline**

April-July 2020

**Study Type**

Randomized Evaluation

**Research Implemented by IPA**

No

# State Engagement with Religious Leaders for Effective COVID-19 Crisis Response

## Researchers

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## Abstract

The goal of this study is to test whether outreach with religious leaders in Pakistan can enhance state effectiveness at dealing with the COVID-19 public health crisis. State interactions with religious leaders present both a challenge and an opportunity: there has been lack of clarity on the official stance on whether and how congregational prayer is restricted as part of ongoing lockdowns. Many mosques in Pakistan continue to hold congregational prayer, and there have been some clashes between the state and mosques over this issue. Effective outreach to the clergy at the community level may help to address this challenge. The research team will conduct information treatment calls with a randomized sub-sample of imams to test secular and religious approaches to persuading community imams to carry out social distancing within their mosques.

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## Project Outcomes of Interest

Mosque-level implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures

## Partners

Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP)

## Key Findings

The study finds that simple one-on-one engagement significantly improves the advice given by religious leaders to congregants on preventing COVID-19 transmission in the mosque. Engagement was equally effective with or without explicitly religious content. Treatment effects are driven by the subsample who are already convinced of basic information about COVID-19 at baseline, suggesting the treatment does not work by correcting basic knowledge about the disease. Rather, it may work through the effectiveness of one-on-one engagement that reinforces existing knowledge and connects it to actions that respondents can take in their role as community leaders.

## Link to Results

Working paper can be accessed [here](#).

## Impact Goals

- Reduce COVID-19 transmission rates

## Project Data Collection Mode

- CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing)

## Implementing Organization

Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP)

## Results Status

Results