“Belief in Conspiracy Theories and Support for Political Violence (Vegetti F. & Littvay L., 2022): A Replication Paper”

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Abstract

This paper replicates and tries to extend the findings of Vegetti and Littvay (2022), who explored the link between belief in conspiracy theories and support for political violence. Using the original dataset collected via Amazon Mechanical Turk in 2014, the study confirms that conspiracy beliefs are positively associated with both the justification of political violence (JPV) and the legitimisation of radical political action (LRPA). The replication includes confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), correlation matrices, and multivariate regression models, which reinforce the original conclusions. As extensions, the present paper proposes the estimation of latent constructs using separate CFA models rather than a single joint model and two interaction models whose aim is to examine the moderating role of ideological extremism. Results show that the relationship between conspiracy belief and political violence is significantly stronger among individuals with extreme ideological positions, particularly for JPV. Psychological traits such as aggression and social dominance orientation (SDO) also emerge as consistent predictors. These findings support the theoretical framework that positions conspiracy beliefs as radicalising narratives, especially when combined with ideological rigidity. The paper highlights the importance of considering psychological and ideological contexts in understanding political radicalisation and suggests that interventions should address both conspiratorial thinking and ideological extremism.

Key words: replication; attitudes; conspiracy theories; political violence; radicalisation.

Introduction

In recent years, Western democracies have experienced a notable rise in both political protest activity and the proliferation of conspiracy theories. These two phenomena have increasingly intersected in ways that challenge the stability of democratic institutions. The convergence of mass mobilization and conspiratorial thinking has escalated into episodes of civil unrest and political violence. A particularly emblematic case, as cited by the authors, is the assault on the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021. Following a speech by then-President Donald Trump disputing the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election results, hundreds of his supporters stormed the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., resulting in property damage, violent confrontations and multiple fatalities. Among the rioters were numerous adherents of the “QAnon” conspiracy theory, which believes in the existence of a secret group of elites manipulating global events. This event illustrates how conspiracy beliefs can serve as a catalyst for radical political action.

The growing involvement between conspiracy beliefs and political violence has become a focal point of research for political psychologists and scholars of radicalisation. While early research on conspiracy theories primarily sought to understand the psychological and sociopolitical factors that predispose individuals to such beliefs, such as institutional distrust, cognitive biases, and feelings of powerlessness, recent scholarship has shifted toward examining the behavioural consequences of

conspiratorial thinking. There is increasing interest in how these beliefs may contribute to the legitimisation of radical political attitudes and the endorsement of violence as a means of political expression.

Federico Vegetti and Levente Littvay's (2022) study represents a significant contribution to this evolving field of research. Drawing on survey data collected in the United States via Amazon Mechanical Turk in 2014, their analysis investigates the extent to which general belief in conspiracy theories correlates with support for political violence. Rather than focusing exclusively on the antecedents of conspiratorial thinking, their work explores its potential role as a radicalising narrative, one that channels individual grievances, anger, and frustration into support for extreme political actions. The authors identify two key attitudinal dimensions in this context: the justification of political violence (JPV), which captures principled support for violence in response to perceived injustice and the legitimisation of radical political action (LRPA), which reflects the endorsement of specific disruptive behaviours under extreme political circumstances.

Their findings reveal a robust and statistically significant association between conspiracy belief and both JPV and LRPA. Importantly, these relationships persist even after controlling for a range of psychological traits, including aggression and social dominance orientation (SDO), as well as demographic and ideological variables. This suggests that conspiracy beliefs may function as more than just expressions of political discontent, they may actively shape individuals' willingness to engage in political violence.

The present paper seeks to replicate and possibly extend the findings of Vegetti and Littvay (2022) by using their original dataset and applying the same statistical techniques, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), correlation matrices, and multivariate regression models. The replication is useful not only to verify the robustness of the original results, but also to assess the reliability of the measurement instruments and the consistency of the observed associations across analytical strategies.

Beyond replication, this study introduces two theoretically motivated extensions aimed at deepening our understanding of the mechanisms linking conspiracy beliefs to political violence. The first extension involves a methodological modification, instead of estimating all latent constructs within a single CFA model, each construct is estimated separately. This approach reduces computational complexity and allows for a more focused evaluation of construct validity. While the joint model offers a more integrated estimation, the separate CFA models provide a practical alternative for replication studies, particularly when dealing with large-scale survey data and planned missingness.
The second extension explores the moderating role of ideological extremism in the relationship between conspiracy belief and political violence. By operationalising ideology as a binary variable, the study tests whether the radicalising effect of conspiracy beliefs is amplified among individuals with rigid ideological commitments. The results indicate that the interaction between conspiracy belief and ideological extremity is statistically significant, particularly in predicting justification of political violence. This suggests that the combination of conspiratorial thinking and ideological rigidity may be especially potent in fostering support for violent political action.

Together, these extensions aim to contribute to a more precise understanding of the pathways through which conspiracy beliefs may lead to radicalisation. They underline the importance of considering both psychological dispositions and ideological context when assessing the risks associated with conspiratorial thinking. By replicating and building upon the work of Vegetti and Littvay (2022), this paper seeks to contribute to the empirical and theoretical literature on political violence and psychological dynamics of radicalisation.

Theoretical framework

Belief in conspiracy theories and their role in the pathway to radicalisation

Belief in conspiracy theories has slowly emerged as a defining element in contemporary political behaviour, especially in those contexts where there is a marked lack of institutional trust and political polarisation. A wide range of political scientists and researchers has explored how those beliefs can influence not only political attitudes and ideology, but also the likelihood of engaging in violent political actions (Imhoff & Bruder, 2014; Uscinski & Parent, 2014).

The definition of conspiracy theory varies across different disciplines, but Vegetti and Littvay's study adopts the one formulated by Byford's (2011) which describes them as *narratives that explain significant events as the result of deliberate actions by a powerful and covert group*. This interpretation would suggest that conspiracy beliefs are a way of explaining significant events by assuming that they were secretly planned and executed by groups of influential people or organizations, rather than being the result of natural causes or transparent decisions. We could state that these beliefs usually offer simplified and emotionally resonant explanations for the occurrence of a certain event, which may find the perfect breeding ground during periods of crisis and uncertainty. In such contexts, for instance during the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy narratives can become powerful tools for political mobilisation and possibly foster support for extreme actions.

Some researchers suggest that conspiracy narratives might appear as the acceptance of isolated claims, but for others they reflect a broader worldview that attributes harmful intent to elites or institutions and blends with a series of psychological dispositions such as political cynicism and hostility toward authority (Goertzel, 1994; Wood et al., 2012). Scholars label this generalised mindset as a *monological belief system*, where different conspiracy theories reinforce one another even in conditions where they are logically inconsistent (Brotherton et al., 2013). Another term which is closely related to the feeling of distrust in institutions is the one called *deceptive officialdom* (Wood et al., 2012), that refers to the perception that government authorities are intentionally misleading the public. Authorities wouldn't be just mistaken or not competent, but they would also deliberately hide the truth; in relation to this, the deception would be purposeful, often to safeguard their own interests and manipulating public opinion.

In order to understand what makes some people more susceptible to conspiracy thinking than other, we can identify both dispositional and contextual factors. Several early interpretations, such as Hofstadter's (1965) concept of *paranoid style*, framed conspiracism as a form of paranoia ranging from hyper-suspicion of authority to moral dualism. If on the one hand, subjects who suffer from clinical paranoia perceive to be damaged and hurt personally, as the harm was against the individual, conspiracy believers tend to interpret injustices as if they were perpetrated to their own group, enlightening a dimension which appears to be collective (Bartlett and Miller, 2010; Sapountzis and Condor, 2013). In addition, recent studies have also emphasized the association between conspiracy belief and several psychological traits such as low self-esteem and the feeling of powerlessness and resentment (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Imhoff & Bruder, 2014). As a direct consequence, such emotions can evolve into bitterness and aggression toward those individuals or groups believed to be

responsible. Finally, the identification of a target or a scapegoat as the explanation of a complex event, can be a medium for members of a marginalised group to get that sense of empowerment back.

Regarding the association between conspiracy beliefs and the adoption of extremist positions, in literature radicalisation has long been discussed in relation to forms of extreme violence, for instance like terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005; Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010; Borum, 2011; King and Taylor, 2011; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011; Kruglanski et al., 2014). Recent research increasingly conceptualizes radicalisation as a gradual process rather than a sudden ideological shift, with individuals moving from ordinary political dissatisfaction toward the legitimisation, and in some cases, the use of political violence. This process often begins with a loss of personal or collective significance, which is a condition rooted in social exclusion and perceived injustice. In response, individuals may seek out narratives, often provided by religion, ideology or conspiracy theories, that restore a sense of meaning and agency (Kruglanski et al., 2014; 2018).

Vegetti and Littvay (2022) situate their study within the broader theoretical tradition of pathway models of radicalisation, drawing particularly from the work of King and Taylor (2011) and Kruglanski et al. (2014; 2018). These models conceptualize radicalisation not as a discrete event, but as a progressive sequence that begins with *predispositional factors*, such as psychological traits or adverse life conditions, and ends in *resulting attitudes* or behaviours. In between, we can identify some *intervening factors*, like narratives that help individuals make sense of their grievances, reframe their identity and potentially justify the use of violence to pursue political goals.

This framing can generate a sense of group identity and moral outrage, which are widely recognised as psychological precursors to radical behaviour. When embedded within supportive communities, whether online or offline, these belief systems may encourage in-group solidarity and deepen out-group hostility, especially toward political institutions perceived as illegitimate or oppressive. Conspiracy beliefs thus function as radicalising narratives since they explain one's perceived loss of control, identify a culpable enemy, and in doing so, legitimize extraordinary responses. While not all conspiracy believers endorse violence, the acceptance of violence as a justifiable means, what Jackson et al. (2013) refer to as a "middle step" in radicalisation, is more likely among those who view institutions as fundamentally deceptive or threatening.

In order to empirically examine the association between conspiracy belief and the endorsement of political violence, Vegetti and Littvay (2022) adopt an observational design based on individual survey data. Even if the central aim is to assess whether belief in conspiracy narratives is associated with greater support for political violence, they also account for a wide range of predispositional factors that may influence the susceptibility to radical behaviours of an individual.

Their analytical strategy unfolds in two main phases: first, they conduct a correlational analysis to explore the association between conspiracy belief and two indicators of political violence, Justification of Political Violence (JPV) and Legitimate Radical Political Action (LRPA); second, they run a series of regression models to test whether individuals' support for political violence can be explained by their level of belief in conspiracy theories, while accounting for different psychological, political and demographic factors.

Data and variables

This replication study uses the same dataset as the original analysis conducted by Vegetti and Littvay (2022), which was collected by the Political Behaviour Research Group (PolBeRG) at the Central European University via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in March 2014. The initial sample consisted of 694 US citizens of voting age, but after removing pilot participants and respondents with complete missingness in any of the core batteries, the final analytical sample includes 645 individuals. The online survey included a variety of experimental tasks and multiple batteries measuring demographic, psychological, ideological, and political variables. Financial incentives were offered for certain experimental decisions, and several attention checks were used throughout the survey to ensure data quality (see Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

In terms of sample characteristics, 52.7% of respondents identified as women. The age range spans from 18 to 77 years, with a mean of 35.7 and a median of 32, which is approximately 5.7 years younger than the U.S. median in 2014. The sample is more educated than the general population with the 92% of respondents having more than 12 years of formal education. Ideologically, the sample favours liberals, with 52.4% identifying as slightly or very liberal, and only 24.8% identifying as slightly or very conservative.

Regarding the ethnicity of the participants, the sample overrepresents white respondents (82%) compared to national proportions, with 5.5% identifying as African American, 3.8% as Hispanic, and 3.6% as Asian. As the authors affirm, the sample doesn't mirror exactly the broader US population, in fact it would produce biased assumptions if the goals would be presenting univariate results. However, the aim of the original study was not the estimation of prevalence levels of conspiracy beliefs or support for violence, but to investigate the associational patterns between them.

Vegetti and Littvay (2022) identified in their analysis a total of eight key indicators, multi-item constructs, each measured using batteries of survey items and confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In order to measure respondent's attitudes toward political violence, they employed two indicators: Justification of Political Violence (JPV), which was measured using 4 items adapted from Jackson et al. (2013) and estimate principled support for violence in response to perceived injustice, and Legitimate Radical Political Action (LRPA), which was personally developed by the authors and employs 5 items to capture support for specific radical actions under extreme political circumstances.

Originally, this indicator was constituted by a 6-item battery, but the authors decided to drop one due to poor correlation. Of course, another key indicator was respondents' belief in conspiracies which was measured through a 15-item battery from Brotheron et al.'s (2013) scale, assessing agreement with a wide range of conspiratorial claims such as government surveillance, cover-ups or secret organizations. All items were included in a single latent construct of general conspiracy belief based on the assumption that conspiratorial thinking tends to form a monological belief system.

	LRPA	JPV	Consp.	Aggr.	Trust	RWA	SDO	Int. Eff.
Cronbach α	0.88	0.84	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.93

Table 1. Reliability score of 8 multi-item battery

To isolate the effect of conspiracy belief, the regression models control for several psychological and political predispositions. The authors measured respondents' level of aggression via 28 items from Buss and Perry's (1992) validated aggression scale, excluding one item from the original 29-item battery. Another indicator is trust in institutions which was built through 10 adapted items from the European Social Survey (ESS). This variable covered great importance for a key potential confounder, that is individuals' general discontent and hostility toward the political system. Such attitudes might simultaneously increase susceptibility to conspiracy beliefs and support for political violence. While this measure doesn't fully capture anti-systemic sentiment, it still can provide a meaningful indication of respondents' trust in main political institutions.

To get an insight on the dimension of respondents' political ideology, the authors also considered right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), measured with a scale made by 19 items proposed by Altemeyer (2007), and social dominance orientation (SDO), following Sidanius and Pratto (2001) 16-item scale. The eighth and last factor is internal self-efficacy, measured by Chen et al. (2001) 8-item scale, serving as a proxy for perceived political agency.

In addition to the main predictors, regression models also include a set of demographic control variables. These consist in gender, coded as a binary with 1 indicating female respondents, education, centred on the middle of three categories and age, which is also standardised. Race is also added to the list as a dummy variable distinguishing between white and non-white respondents. Lastly, ideological self-placement is measured using a 7-point scale ranging from 'extremely liberal' to 'extremely conservative', centred at 4 representing the ideological midpoint.

Before getting started with the replication, it is important to say that to reduce survey length and minimize respondent fatigue, some of the multi-item batteries in this study were abbreviated. Rather than asking all respondents to complete every item, each participant was randomly assigned a subset of items for each construct (see Littvay, 2009). Since the item selection was random, the resulting missing data can be considered completely at random. This justifies the use of full information maximum likelihood (FIML) techniques to efficiently manage missing data in the analysis (see Enders, 2010).

To assess the internal consistency of the multi-item batteries used in the original paper, I replicate the authors' procedure by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the eight latent constructs. For the batteries with planned missingness, I first estimate the correlation matrix using full information maximum likelihood (FIML), a technique available through the *semTools* package in R. Once the correlation matrices are computed, the *psych* package is used to derive the alpha values.

All eight constructs show high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.84 to 0.94, fully consistent with the original study's findings (see **Table 1**). This confirms that the latent variables are measured with internal coherence and justifies their use in subsequent factor analysis and regression models.

Correlation analysis

The analytical process begins with the replication of the bivariate associations among the key latent variables employed in the study. These associations are visualised in **Figure 2a**, which presents Pearson's correlation coefficients calculated between all extracted latent scores. These scores were derived through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and include measures of conspiracy belief, the two political violence indicators, Justification of Political Violence (JPV) and Legitimate Radical Political Action (LRPA), as well as a range of psychological and ideological predictors.

To estimate the CFA models, I used the *lavaan* package in R, consistent with the methodology adopted in the original study. Due to the large number of items and latent constructs involved, the CFA process is computationally intensive and can take several hours to complete, particularly when using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation to handle missing data. To improve efficiency and facilitate reproducibility, I saved the fitted model as an *.rds* file after the initial run, which allowed for significantly faster loading in the following sessions and ensured consistency across analytical steps.

As shown in **Figure 2a**, the two political violence indicators, JPV and LRPA, are strongly correlated, providing robust evidence of convergent validity. Both variables also exhibit positive correlations with aggression and social dominance orientation (SDO). The strong link with aggression is theoretically expected, as individuals with higher dispositional aggression are more likely to endorse violent political behaviour. The association with SDO, however, is somewhat more surprising. While SDO typically reflects a preference for maintaining social hierarchies, JPV and LRPA are more aligned with protest-driven or anti-systemic attitudes. This raises interesting questions about how hierarchical worldviews might intersect with support for political disruption and whether certain authoritarian tendencies may coexist with anti-establishment feelings.

Consistent with the findings of Vegetti and Littvay (2022), both JPV and LRPA are negatively correlated with institutional trust and internal self-efficacy. This suggests that individuals who feel politically powerless or disillusioned in relation with institutions are more inclined to view violence as a legitimate form of political expression. Turning to conspiracy belief, the analysis reveals statistically significant positive correlations with both LRPA (0.27) and JPV (0.25), reinforcing the hypothesis that conspiratorial thinking is linked to radical political attitudes.

Notably, conspiracy belief shows the strongest correlation with aggression (0.35) and a pronounced negative correlation with institutional trust (–0.43), further highlighting its alignment with anti-systemic sentiment. In contrast, the correlation with internal efficacy is weak and statistically insignificant, suggesting that this variable may not effectively capture control-related attitudes in this context.

Taken together, these bivariate associations offer preliminary empirical support for the theoretical claim that conspiracy beliefs can act as radicalising narratives. While limited in scope, they provide a valuable foundation for the more complex multivariate analyses that follow and help clarify the psychological and ideological shades of political radicalisation.

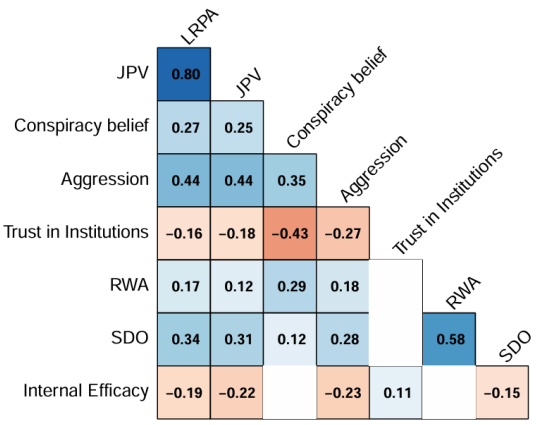

Figure 2a. Correlation plot of latent factors which were modelled simultaneously in a single CFA. Blank cells indicate non-significant correlations.

Figure 2b. Correlation plot of latent factors which were modelled separately using individual CFA models. Blank cells indicate non-significant correlations.

As a methodological extension to the original analysis, I estimate each latent construct using separate CFA models rather than a single joint model. This approach significantly reduced computational burden and allows for isolated evaluation of construct validity. To assess whether this disaggregated modelling approach influenced the measurement structure, I compare the correlation matrices of the latent factor scores from both methods.

The results reveal small differences in the strength of constructs' relationships, with the joint model generally yielding slightly stronger correlations. However, the overall structure and direction of associations remain consistent, suggesting that the separate CFAs produce robust and substantively similar constructs (see **Figure 2b**). While the joint CFA approach provides a more integrated estimation of latent structures, the separate CFA method may serve as a practical alternative for replication work or large-scale modelling where computational efficiency is a concern.

Regression analysis

To assess whether the association between conspiracy belief and support for political violence holds after accounting for psychological, ideological and demographic factors, I replicate Vegetti and Littvay (2022) work by estimating a series of linear regression models with the indicators of political violence, Legitimate Radical Political Action (LRPA) and Justification of Political Violence (JPV), as dependent variables. All continuous predictors were standardised and ideological self-placement was centred around midpoint to facilitate interpretation. For this reason, it is possible to compare the coefficients with the ones illustrated above.

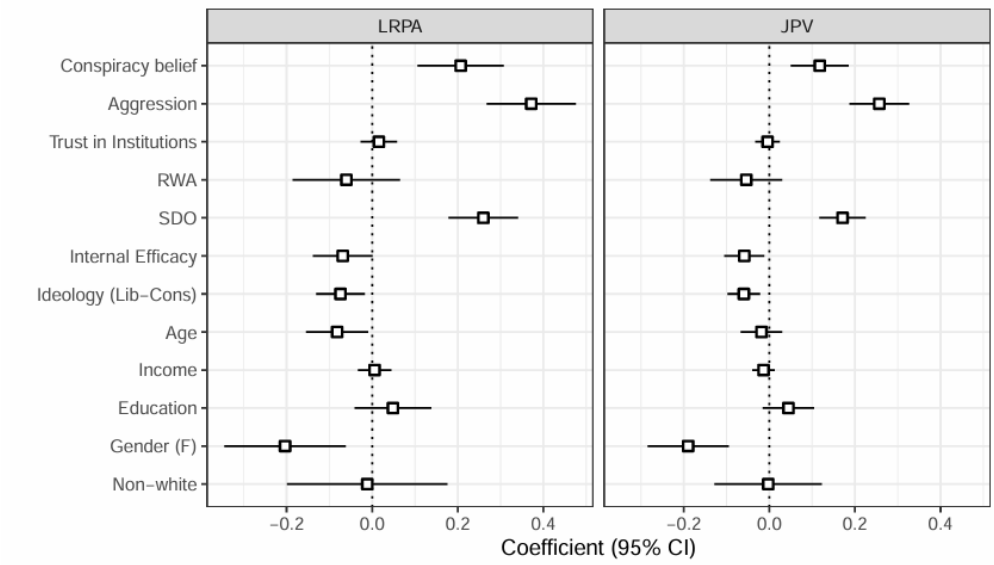

Figure 3. Coefficient plots for linear regression models of Legitimate Radical Political Action (LRPA) and Justification of Political Violence (JPV).

As shown in **Figure 3**, the results confirm a positive and statistically significant association between conspiracy belief and both forms of political violence. More importantly, the effect is stronger and more robust for LRPA with a value of 0.21, which almost double JPV coefficient of 0.12, suggesting that conspiracy belief might more powerfully influence support for specific radical actions than general justification of violence. It can be stated that this difference aligns with the theoretical distinction between abstract endorsement of violence and concrete support for disruptive political behaviour.

Other variables also show consistent effects, in fact aggression and social dominance orientation (SDO) emerge as strong positive predictors, especially for LRPA. Interestingly, trust in institutions and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), which were significantly correlated with political violence in the bivariate analysis, lose their significance in the multivariate model, suggesting that their effects might be confounded by other predictors. Among demographic controls, gender variable shows robust negative effect, implying that females are significantly less likely than men to engage with political violence. Age is also negatively associated with LRPA, indicating that younger individuals could be more susceptible to the endorsement of radical political actions.

While education and ethnicity do not show consistent effects, one notable finding is the negative association between ideology and political violence. In fact, since ideology is coded from liberal (1) to conservative (7), a negative coefficient implies that conservative respondents are less likely to adopt violent political behaviours. This runs counter to some assumptions about right-wing radicalism and may reflect the ideological context of the time, as the data were collected under a Democratic administration. However, as the authors stated, it is not possible to draw causal conclusions from this pattern given the observational nature of the data.

These regression results strengthen the initial correlational findings as belief in conspiracy theories remains a consistent predictor of support for political violence, even when accounting for aggression, SDO, RWA, trust in institutions, self-efficacy, ideology, and socio-demographic factors. This provides empirical support for the starting expectations since conspiracy belief is positively associated with

both general and specific forms of support for political violence and remains significant in the presence of key controls.

In the second extension included in this paper, I test whether the relationship between conspiracy belief and support for political violence is conditioned by ideological extremism.

Specifically, I redefine extremism in a stricter way than in previous models: only respondents who identify as “extremely liberal” (1) or “extremely conservative” (7) on the 7-point ideology scale are classified as “extreme”, while all the others (2–6) are considered “moderate”. This approach should isolate the most ideologically rigid individuals, who are theoretically more susceptible to radicalisation.

I then create an interaction term between standardised conspiracy belief scores and this binary variable. This allows to examine whether the effect of conspiracy belief on political violence is stronger among ideological extremists. Two regression models are estimated, one predicting LRPA, and the other predicting JPV, both including the interaction term and relevant psychological and demographic controls.

The table below (see **Table 2**) presents the results of these two OLS regression models predicting support for political violence. The first model uses LRPA as the dependent variable, while the second focuses on JPV. The main variable of interest, conspiracy belief, is positively associated with LRPA (0.11), suggesting that individuals who endorse conspiracy theories are more likely to support radical political action. However, its effect on JPV is smaller and not statistically significant (0.06), indicating a weaker or more variable relationship with the justification of political violence.

The interaction term between conspiracy belief and ideological extremism is statistically significant in both models. For LRPA, the interaction coefficient is 0.23, and for JPV it is 0.41. These results suggest that the effect of conspiracy belief on support for political violence is amplified among ideological extremists. Interestingly, the main effect of ideological extremism itself is not significant in either model, implying that ideological extremism alone does not predict political violence. Rather, it is the combination of extremism and conspiratorial thinking that appears to be particularly strong. This supports the idea that ideological rigidity may act as a catalyst and might intensify the radicalising influence of conspiracy beliefs.

Among the control variables, aggression and social dominance orientation (SDO) are consistently strong and significant predictors across both models, reinforcing the role of psychological dispositions in shaping political violence. Internal self-efficacy is negatively associated with JPV (-0.08), suggesting that individuals who feel politically powerless may be more inclined to justify violence. Ideological orientation is negatively associated with both outcomes, indicating that more conservative respondents are less likely to support political violence, although this effect is modest.

Demographic controls yield mixed results with gender being a significant negative predictor in both models, consistent with prior findings that women are less likely to endorse political violence. Education and income show weak or marginal effects.

Effect of Conspiracy Belief x Ideological Extremism

	LRPA	**JPV**
Conspiracy belief	0.11 (0.05)**	0.07 (0.04)
Ideological extremism	0.00 (0.12)	0.06 (0.12)
Consp. x Ideol. extremism	0.23 (0.13)*	0.41 (0.13)***
Aggression	0.17 (0.04)***	0.21 (0.04)***
Trust in institutions	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
RWA	0.02 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
SDO	0.24 (0.05)***	0.25 (0.05)***
Internal self-efficacy	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.04)**
Ideology (conservatism)	-0.06 (0.03)*	-0.10 (0.03)***
Age	-0.11 (0.04)***	-0.04 (0.04)
Income	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Education	0.06 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)*
Gender (F)	-0.18 (0.08)**	-0.27 (0.07)***
Non-white	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)
Constant	0.01 (0.09)	0.15 (0.09)*
R^2	0.19	0.24
Adj. R^2	0.17	0.22
Residual Std. Error	0.91 (df = 585)	0.87 (df = 588)
F Statistic	9.48*** (df = 14; 585)	13.15*** (df = 14; 588)
Num. obs.	600	603

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

Table 2. Interaction models for LRPA and JPV.

Overall, these results provide strong support for the hypothesis that ideological extremity moderates the relationship between conspiracy belief and political violence. The interaction effects are not only statistically significant but also substantively meaningful, especially for JPV. This suggests that conspiracy beliefs are more likely to translate into support for violence when held by individuals with rigid ideological commitments.

This extension adds a brief supplementary information to the original study by showing that the radicalising potential of conspiracy theories is not uniform across the ideological spectrum. Instead, it is conditional on the intensity of ideological identity and underlines the usefulness considering interaction effects in models of political radicalisation.

Conclusion

This replication study test and tried to expand upon the findings of Vegetti and Littvay (2022), who deeply explored the relationship between belief in conspiracy theories and support for political violence. By employing the original dataset used by the authors, the paper aimed to verify the robustness of their results and assess the consistency of their theoretical and empirical claims. The replication confirmed that belief in conspiracy theories is positively associated with both the justification of political violence (JPV) and the legitimisation of radical political action (LRPA). These associations remained statistically significant even after controlling for a comprehensive set of psychological traits, including aggression, social dominance orientation (SDO), and internal political efficacy. Such findings give strong support to the theoretical framework that conceptualises conspiracy beliefs as radicalising narratives through which individuals interpret political reality and justify extreme responses.

In addition to confirming the original results, this study also validated the internal consistency of the multi-item batteries used to measure the key constructs. This methodological robustness reinforces the credibility of the constructs used to operationalise conspiracy belief, political violence and related psychological dispositions. Furthermore, correlation analyses revealed that conspiracy belief is positively associated with aggression and negatively associated with institutional trust. These patterns align with the broader literature suggesting that conspiratorial thinking is rooted in anti-systemic sentiment and generalised distrust of authority. The negative correlation with institutional trust underscores the extent to which conspiracy beliefs may lower confidence in democratic institutions and legitimate political processes.

The multivariate regression models further demonstrated that conspiracy belief remains a significant predictor of political violence, particularly for LRPA, even when accounting for a wide range of psychological, ideological, and demographic controls. This suggests that the influence of conspiracy beliefs on political attitudes may exert an independent effect on individuals' willingness to endorse or engage in radical political behaviour. The stronger association with LRPA, compared to JPV, also indicates that conspiracy beliefs may be more closely linked to support for specific disruptive actions than to abstract justifications of violence.

This study also introduced a theoretically motivated extension by examining whether the relationship between conspiracy belief and political violence is moderated by ideological extremity. By defining ideological extremism, the analysis sought to isolate the most rigid ideological profiles and the results revealed that the interaction between conspiracy belief and ideological extremity is statistically significant, particularly in predicting JPV. This finding suggests that the radicalising potential of conspiracy beliefs is amplified among individuals with extreme ideological commitments.

This extension adds important theoretical nuance to the original study by demonstrating that the influence of conspiracy beliefs is not uniform across the ideological spectrum. Individuals who are ideologically extreme might be more susceptible to interpreting conspiracy narratives as justifications for political violence, particularly when they perceive main institutions as illegitimate or corrupt. It suggests that efforts to limit political violence should not only address the spread of conspiracy theories but also consider the broader ideological and psychological context in which such beliefs are held.

In conclusion, this replication confirms the validity and relevance of Vegetti and Littvay's (2022) findings. Future research could build insights by exploring additional moderating factors, such as media consumption patterns, social network dynamics or exposure to political misinformation. Moreover, testing the generalisability of these findings across different cultural and political contexts would help to determine whether the observed patterns are specific to the U.S. political environment or reflect broader trends in democratic societies.

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