



## RESEARCH PAPER

### The Explorative Study of Challenges Involved in Delivery of Justice in Sindh

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the core challenges impeding the effective delivery of justice in Sindh, Pakistan. The primary objective is to identify institutional, procedural, and socio-political barriers within the judicial system. Despite the foundational role of the judiciary in ensuring fairness and accountability, the system in Sindh remains burdened by massive case backlogs, poor infrastructure, political interference, and limited access to legal aid. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and police officers, complemented by documentary analysis of court records and policies. Findings reveal widespread delays due to outdated laws, inadequate staffing, and inefficient case management. The study underscores the urgent need for judicial reforms, including modernizing procedural laws, enhancing court infrastructure, integrating digital tools, and strengthening legal aid mechanisms. These steps are crucial for restoring public trust, improving judicial efficiency, and ensuring accessible and timely justice for all segments of society.

**Keywords:** Delivery of Justice, Challenges, Judiciary, Pakistan, Sindh, Legal Professionals, Qualitative Research

## Introduction

It is true that the significance of a robust justice system cannot be exaggerated as it is bedrock of political stability, socio-economic development and establishment of law and order. Judicial system being panacea to all evils, builds public confidence, promotes fairness and transparency, and rejuvenates the smooth functioning of the social, economic, and political systems. In the context of Sindh, Pakistan, the delivery of justice is plagued with formidable problems of diverse nature which have affected the true transparency and delivery of justice. It has been suffering from operational and structural impediments that overshadow the effectiveness and efficacy of the judiciary.

The judicial system of Sindh is beset with innumerable issues but the most prominent challenges are highlighted here. These may include a conspicuous backlog of over **160,000** cases (as of **April 2025**), poor infrastructure, unbridled political interference, rampant corruption, absence of accountability, expensive litigation, intricacies of legal procedures, and insufficiency of devoted judges and competent staff. As a result, the sorry state of affairs has led to significant delays in the dispensation of justice and erosion of public trust in judicial institutions.

Since long, the integrity, uprightness and virtuousness of court have been compromised by political pressure and undue influence from powerful political goons. The fact can be understood from the landmark case *Sardar Attique-ur-Rehman vs. The State and others* (**2021 P Cr. L J 1216**), in which the Peshawar High Court emphasized "Justice should not only be done but should be manifestly seen to be done." Likewise, another judgment which bears testimony to the fact is *Ishtiaq Ahmed v Hon'ble Competent Authority* (**2016**

**SCMR 943**), in which the Supreme Court of Pakistan emphasized that fair trial, justice, and due process are fundamental rights to the rule of law in a constitutional democracy.

The **backlog of cases** is also the cause of not less than importance. It continues to grow in leaps and bounds because the courts are unable and incapable to meet the timelines set by the National Judicial Policy Making Committee (NJPMC). In fact, the victims of crimes and civil wrongs often bear the brunt of prolonged suffering. It gives birth to mental agony, self-inflicted torture, stress and depression in turn sense of helplessness among citizens is generated.

**Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure** in district courts has further deteriorated the situation. It includes insufficiency of courtrooms, shortage of judges, and lack of support staff. It limits the potential and capacity of judiciary. Along with these issues, the **inefficient case management**, characterized by frequent adjournments and disregard for case timelines has further exacerbated the vitality of judiciary. In nut shell, this inefficiency has badly affected the legal proceedings and resulted in increase of cost of litigation.

Moreover, a **shortage of judges and staff** has further added fuel to the fire. The overwhelming volume of cases per judge, ineffectual supervision, un-served notices, untrustworthy witnesses, frequent absences, and poor security for witnesses lead to delayed justice. According to the National Judicial Policy of **2009** there is a dire need of urgent need government investment in judicial infrastructure and personnel.

In addition to this, **outdated and legal procedures** affect the very foundations of judiciary and results in unreasonable and unsubstantiated delays of proceedings. In this connection, the laws created by colonial era like the Code of Criminal Procedure, **1898 (Cr.P.C.)** and Code of Civil Procedure, **1908 (C.P.C.)** bear testimony to the fact. These laws are not only undermines the efficiency of judiciary but also wastes time, misuses resources and swallows the talent. It has rendered many souls abortive and unsuccessful to relish the fruit of justice. Article **37(d)** of the **Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973** guarantees the right to **speedy justice**, making the modernization of these codes a constitutional imperative.

**Lengthy trials and excessive adjournments** are further detrimental. Although courts are allowed to grant adjournments under Rule **1** of Order **XVII** of the CPC, this provision is often misused without accountability. This leads to a culture of delay that benefits only a few, often to the financial advantage of certain court employees (**Asrafuzzaman & Hasan, 2021**).

A **lack of transparency and accountability** fosters an environment susceptible to corruption and undue influence, weakening public confidence in the judiciary. The need for an open and accountable legal system is central to restoring trust and promoting judicial integrity.

**Bias within the judiciary**, particularly regarding gender and socio-economic status, undermines the impartial interpretation of law. Judges are constitutionally obligated to base their rulings strictly on legal frameworks, free from personal prejudice.

**Limited access to justice for marginalized communities**, including low-income, rural, and minority populations, remains a pressing issue. These communities often lack trust in institutions, face socio-economic obstacles, and are generally uninformed about their legal rights.

**Lawyer strikes** present yet another challenge, disrupting proceedings and exacerbating delays. Although lawyers have a duty to advocate for their clients and support

the justice system, strikes to settle internal disputes directly obstruct justice delivery (Gautam, 2017).

**Lack of technological innovation** in court management, case tracking, and communication impedes efficiency. Modernization of these systems is essential to ensure timely and streamlined judicial processes.

Lastly, **insufficient training and capacity-building** programs for legal professionals further hinder justice delivery. Judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers, and court staff require continuous professional development to remain effective and competent in evolving legal contexts.

**Contributions of the Study:** This study makes a significant contribution to the field of criminology and legal reform by presenting a detailed diagnostic analysis of the systemic, institutional, and socio-political challenges that currently impede the delivery of justice in Sindh's judicial system. Drawing upon qualitative research involving judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and police officers, the study captures critical insider perspectives on procedural inefficiencies, infrastructure limitations, and governance-related constraints. Through this empirical approach, the research not only identifies core challenges but also offers a range of practical recommendations including the integration of modern technology, modernization of procedural laws, and the development of human resource capacities within the judiciary. Importantly, the paper amplifies the experiences of marginalized groups who face barriers in accessing justice, thereby highlighting the equity dimension of legal reform. Furthermore, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on judicial transparency, independence, and accountability within Pakistan's broader legal framework, advocating for systemic reforms that align with constitutional principles and international best practices.

**Structure of the Paper:** The structure of this paper is designed to provide a comprehensive and logical progression of the research. Following the introduction, **Section 2** presents a **literature review** that critically examines existing scholarly and legal work related to delays in justice and systemic inefficiencies within Pakistan's judiciary, with a particular focus on Sindh. **Section 3** details the research **methodology**, outlining the qualitative framework adopted for the study, including the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analytical tools used to interpret the findings. **Section 4** discusses the **results** and findings of the study, shedding light on key themes that emerged from interviews and documentary analysis. Finally, **Section 5** **concludes** the paper by summarizing the key insights, emphasizing the urgency of systemic reform, and proposing directions for future research and policy development.

## Literature Review

Dispensation of timely justice has always been a critical issue in Sindh, where multiple structural and procedural hurdles obstruct the effective delivery of justice. The literature in point highlights the several persistent challenges. These may include systemic delays, case backlogs, outdated legal frameworks, and socio-political interference. This state of unfairness and tyranny continues to erode the efficiency and credibility of the judicial system (Kaleem et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2014). In this respect, scholars, legal experts, and policy practitioners have always been emphasizing the meaningful reforms that may address both institutional deficiencies and external pressures in turn judicial autonomy and public access to justice may be achieved in true spirits (Afzal et al., 2023; Rajput & Benavides-Vanegas, 2022).

Recent reforms, such as the introduction of Model Courts under the Expeditious Justice Initiative, have demonstrated some success in mitigating trial delays (Bilal & Khokhar, 2021). However, most literature concludes that while such efforts are

commendable, they are not sufficient on their own. Sustainable progress can only be achieved through a comprehensive and coordinated overhaul of judicial procedures, infrastructural development, and the digital transformation of court management systems (**Kureshi, 2022; Imran et al., 2024**). The following subsections offer a detailed thematic review of the key issues identified in the literature, followed by how this study fills important research gaps.

### Case Backlogs

A significant body of literature identifies case backlogs as one of the most critical challenges facing Pakistan's justice system. **Kaleem et al. (2020)** emphasize that the continuous accumulation of unresolved cases is primarily due to inadequate staffing, where a limited number of judges are burdened with an overwhelming number of cases. This situation results in long waiting periods, which frustrates litigants and ultimately reduces confidence in judicial institutions. **Shah et al. (2014)** further argues that inefficiencies at the trial court are also responsible for systemic vulnerabilities and stagnation of litigation procedures.

The state of backlog particularly severe in Sindh is quite grim and gloomy, where poorly resourced courts and absence of technology make the process pathetic (**Imran, 2022; Lughmani et al., 2023**). As a matter of fact, when cases are being lingered on for years and years without any resolution, it result in psychological, social, and financial toll on victims and litigants. **Neudorf (2012)** points out that the delayed justice jeopardizes the judicial independence and the rule of law, especially in those societies that experience political and institutional reform. In order to eradicate backlogs, both resource expansion and system-level modernization are essential.

### Procedural Delays

Procedural inefficiencies—especially frequent and often unjustified adjournments—are a leading cause of delays in case resolutions. **Asrafuzzaman and Hasan (2021)** report that approximately 70% of court adjournments in Pakistan lack valid justification, contributing directly to mounting caseloads and procedural paralysis. **Laws (2016)** similarly highlights how court culture often permits these delays without adequate scrutiny, leading to a systemic tolerance for inefficiency. These repeated adjournments increase litigation costs and affect the morale of both litigants and legal practitioners.

Moreover, the problem is not just procedural but cultural. **Gautam (2017)** identifies lawyer strikes and protest practices as additional disruptions, while **Bayles (2012)** emphasizes that procedural fairness is central to perceptions of justice. The lack of enforceable rules against unnecessary delays—combined with ineffective monitoring—creates an environment where adjournments are expected rather than exceptional (**Van Rhee, 2004; Waldron, 2011**). Without judicial accountability and standardized oversight mechanisms, procedural delays will continue to undermine the judicial process.

### Model Courts and Expeditious Justice

To address inefficiencies, the Supreme Court of Pakistan introduced Model Courts through the Expeditious Justice Initiative. **Bilal and Khokhar (2021)** report a 15% reduction in judicial backlogs in Sindh following the implementation of this program. These courts aim to expedite trials, especially for serious criminal and family law cases, by eliminating unwarranted adjournments and streamlining procedures. As per **Afzal et al. (2023)**, the simplified trial protocols and strict adherence to procedural timelines can ensure the success of Model Courts. Nevertheless, the functioning of the model trial courts cannot be undertaken in isolation. **Hameed et al. (2022)** points out that the accountability of courts can also be guaranteed through proactive media and unbridled public pressures.

Besides, **Imran et al. (2024)** claims the achievements of Model Courts, is ascribed to sustainable reforms encompassing the entire judicial infrastructure. The practices of model courts must be institutionalized across all tiers of the judiciary to make them more effective and efficacious. These should be supported through training, resource allocation, and legal modernization. (**Chowdhury, 2004; Saha, 2010**).

### Gaps Addressed by This Study

Indeed, there remains a significant disconnection between theoretical discussions and practical realities despite the availability of a rich body of literature. Many studies have failed to incorporate and integrate the voices and reservations of legal practitioners because of structural issues. However, this study fulfills the gap while incorporating empirical data from judges, lawyers, and police investigation officers who are functioning within the justice system. **Rao (2009)** and **Ali (2015)** emphasizes that adduced reforms are often characterized by lack of real-world applicability and stakeholder buy-in due to lack of practitioner input.

Additionally, this study also aims to evaluate and analyses the socio-political influences on judicial independence. For instance, **Abbasi (2020)** and **Ali (2024)** depict the cases where coercion or political pressures have been pointed out by judicial officers which in turn affect the decision-making. Such concerns are brought out by this research through analytical framework while employing anecdotal evidence to systemic deficiencies. This research study also bridges the gap between theory and practice by focusing both qualitative narratives and institutional data, and offering a comprehensive roadmap for judicial reforms in Sindh (**Kureshi, 2022; Waldron, 2016**).

### Material and Methods

Qualitative research framework has been employed in this research in order to explore the hurdles obstructing the administration of justice in Sindh Province. Qualitative methods, such as surveys, questionnaires, and extensive interviews with judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and police investigation officers are included in the methodology in order to collect comprehensive information regarding the challenges in the delivery of the justice system. Moreover examination of legal documents, court records, and relevant literature further enhances the scope of this research.

Legal professionals-lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police investigation officers functioning within the judicial system of Sindh are the target population of this research. Respondents with direct experience and expertise who are faced with these challenges, a **purposive sampling strategy** have been implemented. Sample is comprised of diverse group from different courts, legal disciplines, and demographic backgrounds in order to confirm the comprehensive understanding of the issues. The sample size is determined through the **principle of data saturation**, which originates when there are no new themes or emergence of information from additional data collection. Twenty five (**25**) **respondents** with 5 to 20 years of experience have participated approximately and voluntarily in the study.

**Semi-structured interviews** technique has been used to obtain Primary data. It offers flexibility to explore specific issues, in that process; participants have also been allowed to share their insights and lived experiences comprehensively. In person and via online platforms interviews have been conducted, based on participant preferences and logistics. **Audio-recordings with consent** and transcribed verbatim for analysis has been kept for each session. Indubitably court records, legal policies, and relevant literature have also been conducted for **documentary analysis** in order to establish support and validation of the qualitative findings.

**Thematic analysis** has been put into practice for examination of the data. It involves coding of textual data, identification of recurring themes and organization of patterns. In order to support the organization and coding process, NVivo or similar qualitative analysis software was used. In addition to this, for corroboration of analytical rigor, consistency, and reliability across emerging themes, **constant comparison techniques** have been employed.

### Qualitative Approach

For elaboration of the methods, two primary qualitative tools: **interviews** and **document analysis** have also been used in the study.

Interviews of twenty five (**25**) legal professionals like judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and police investigation officers having different roles in the justice system were conducted. In this regard, selected via purposive sampling are being used. By this technique the inclusion of individuals with significant operational insight and frontline experience has been ensured. Provision of rich, nuanced data on judicial inefficiencies, resource gaps, and institutional limitations is also guaranteed through these semi-structured interviews.

**Table 1**  
**Distribution of Interview Respondents by Profession**

Profession	Number of Respondents
Judges	6
Lawyers	8
Prosecutors	5
Police Officers	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Unquestionably, documentary analysis has been undertaken on official reports, legal records, and literature spanning from (**2015 to 2025**) in parallel. In turn, this technique has led to nexus of interview findings with documented policies and case law. It also improves both depth and validity of interpretation.

**Table 2**  
**Sources of Documentary Analysis**

Source Type	Coverage Period	Description
Court Records	2015–2025	Data on case pendency, trial durations, verdicts
Policy Reports	2015–2025	Reports from NJPMC, Law & Justice Commission
Scholarly Literature	2015–2025	National and international peer-reviewed articles

### Research Workflow

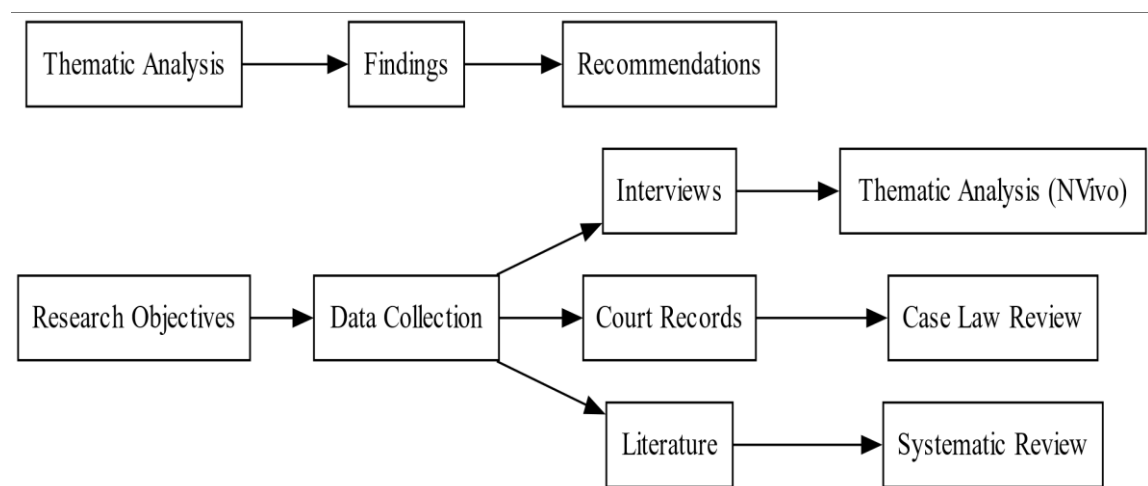


Fig. 1: Research Workflow Diagram.

Fig. 1 illustrates the logical progression from setting research objectives to formulating final recommendations that visualizes the overall research flow. This diagram depicts the collection of data from multiple sources which may include interviews, court records, and literature—and then systematically evaluated. Fig. 1 further illustrated the research workflow in which depiction of maps from research objectives to data collection is shown. It is followed by various forms of analysis (thematic, case law review, and literature review). It leads to the extraction of findings and the development of actionable recommendations. Thus, visual representation clarifies the stepwise structure and interconnected phases of the research process.

This figure illustrates the methodological backbone of the study, beginning with research objectives, moving through data acquisition via interviews and documentary sources, followed by thematic and systematic analysis. Ultimately, this process yields the findings and practical policy recommendations presented in later sections.

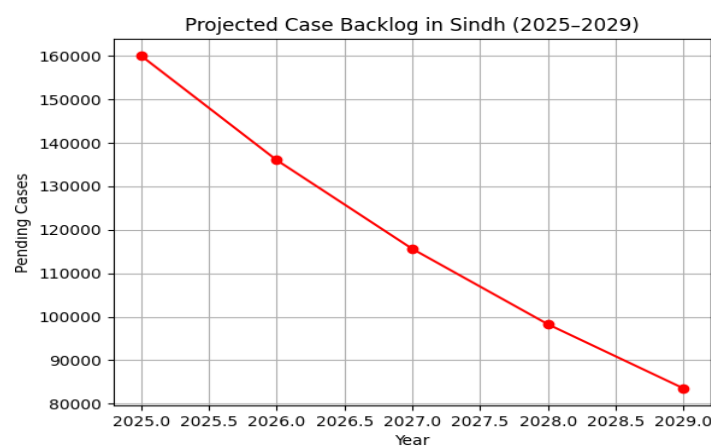
## Results and Discussion

The study's findings highlight serious challenges in the justice system of Sindh, validated through simulation and international comparison. Based on current case data, a simulation was conducted to project the potential impact of proposed reforms.

### Simulation: Projected Case Backlog Reduction (2025–2029)

To further validate the practical implications of the research, a simulation model was developed to illustrate how sustained reforms—particularly those proposed in this study—could impact case resolution over time.

Using a conservative estimate of a **15% annual reduction in backlogged cases**, the simulation demonstrates the potential trajectory of case backlog in Sindh from 2025 to 2029.



**Fig. 2** presents the projected decline graphically.

**Output:** A consistent linear decline in backlog from 160,000 cases to approximately 83,500. This projection underscores the effectiveness of integrated reforms in reducing caseload pressures over a five-year period. Tangible benefits of interventions such as ameliorated case management, increased staffing, enhanced infrastructure, and digital transformation of court processes are highlighted.

## Comparative Analysis

It is equally important to examine and evaluate the successful reform models from other jurisdictions in order to contextualize the judicial challenges in Sindh. In order to address similar issues the countries like **India** and the **United Kingdom** have implemented

targeted strategies. These strategies are consisting of delays, backlogs, and inefficiencies—with measurable success. Undoubtedly, these international practices serve as helping hand and valuable benchmarks for identifying reform opportunities that are best suited to the justice system Sindh. Two notable reform models demonstrating substantial improvements in judicial performance are summarized in **Table 3**.

**Table 3**  
**Comparative Justice Reform Models**

Reform Model (Country)	Key Feature	Outcome
Fast-Track Courts (India)	Prioritized serious cases	30% faster trial resolution
Digital Courts (UK)	E-filing, virtual hearings	40% efficiency gain

In fact, Fast-Track Courts were designed to expedite and augment the management of serious criminal cases such as rape, murder, and corruption in India. Stricter procedural timelines and a focused jurisdiction are put into practice in these courts, which in turn, enables faster resolution of critical matters. In result, durations of trials have been reduced by approximately **30%**. It displays the effects of **specialization and case prioritization** and reduces judicial burden while enhancing timeliness. On the other hand, **Digital Courts** as part of a broader judicial modernization initiative have also been introduced in the **United Kingdom**. The introduction of such courts involves the integration of **e-filing systems, case tracking tools, and virtual court hearings**. It has significantly reduced the dependence on paper-based processes and physical appearances. Meanwhile, **40% increase in efficiency** has been noted in the UK. It substantiates that fact that **technology in the justice sector has** transformative potential. It is revealed through these contrasting models that reform strategies can be different widely based on local needs and capacities. However there is no denying the fact that both experiences demonstrate the importance of **targeted intervention**. In these cases, **judicial specialization** has been focused by India while **digital innovation** has been stressed by the UK. The **applicability and scalability** of both approaches is relevant to Sindh but depending on the provincial judicial infrastructure.

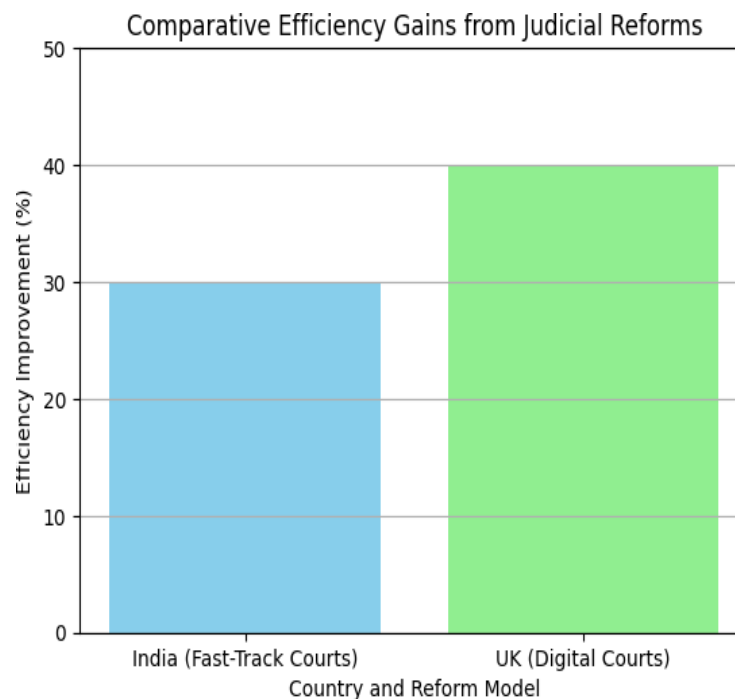


Fig. 3: Comparative Efficiency Gains From Judicial Reform Models in India and the UK.

Fig. 3 provides two reform models that compare the efficiency improvements. It is also made clear in the chart that both specialized and technological interventions can



significantly enhance and improve judicial performance when implemented appropriately. The core findings of this study are supported by these outcomes. It also reinforces a key recommendation that the **Judiciary of Sindh should adopt a hybrid reform model**, combining **specialized handling of critical cases** with **digital transformation** of court operations. The crux of the matter is that effective case processing, reduction of administrative burden, and rebuilding public trust in the legal system can be accelerated and augmented through this blended approach.

## Conclusion

The crux of the matter is that, this study depicts a true picture of justice system of **Sindh** that is under substantial strain due to a combination of **institutional inefficiencies, outdated procedural laws, inadequate staffing**, and **socio-political interference**. In turn, these systemic challenges foment delays in the resolution of cases and steadily undermine public confidence in the judiciary—particularly among **marginalized and vulnerable communities** who often lack the resources or access needed to seek justice effectively.

Besides, the introduction of **Model Courts** under the **Expeditious Justice Initiative** has shown that **targeted reforms can produce tangible results**. However, isolated efforts are insufficient to address the deep-rooted, structural problems affecting the justice system. There is dire need of institutionalizing **reforms** by embedding systemic changes throughout the judicial framework. These adduced measures encompass **modernization of the Cr.P.C. and C.P.C., the expansion of judicial and administrative capacity**, and the **adoption of digital tools** for case tracking, e-filing, and virtual hearings. Additionally, **accountability, inclusivity, and judicial independence** should be given immense importance to ensure effective, sustainable and transparent judicial framework.

Several important areas for future research and policy development also emerge from this study:

**Firstly**, there is no need of conducting **longitudinal impact assessments** of judicial reforms such as Model Courts, to evaluate their effectiveness over time and across regions.

**Secondly, User-centric approaches**—such as litigant and victim satisfaction surveys—to better understand public perceptions of justice delivery, especially among underrepresented groups should be explored in future studies.

**Thirdly, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics** into case management and legal decision support systems within Pakistan's judicial context can also be needed in further research.

**Fourthly**, the **intersection of judicial delays and mental health impacts** on litigants, victims, and legal practitioners are under-explored areas; thus, these must be given considerable relevance.

**Lastly, Collaborative justice models** involving civil society, bar councils, and alternate dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms are also complementary tools to reduce judicial burden having scope for comparative research.

If adduces measures, suggested reforms and research avenues are pursued as part of a coordinated and inclusive judicial strategy with immense care and utmost seriousness, the justice system in Sindh can make significant strides toward fulfilling its constitutional duty to deliver timely, transparent, and equitable justice. By adopting so, it will not only uphold the rule of law but also strengthens democratic governance and restoring public trust in Pakistan's legal institutions.

## Recommendations

This study provides a series of **integrated and actionable recommendations** to improve the judicial system in Sindh. These recommendations are based on the insights which have been gathered through qualitative interviews, documentary analysis, and international comparisons.

- **The foremost remedial measure**, can be increasing of judicial personnel. The number of judges and support staff, particularly at the district level, is must to manage the overwhelming caseload. **Regular training and capacity-building programs** should be launched for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and court personnel to abreast them with modern technology. These initiatives may encompass the modern case management, updated legal practices, and efficient investigative procedures. Thus, judicial personnel should be increased in order to meet the shortage of staff.
- **The Second** step should be the modernization of the colonial **procedural laws** like Cr.P.C. (1898) and C.P.C. (1908). This is the cure to curtail delays, streamlining adjournment policies and procedural loopholes. The Revised legislation and stricter enforcement can be countered through the misuse of adjournments—as exposed in stakeholder interviews.
- **The Third suggestive measure should be technological innovation.** Physical court burdens and speedy case processing can be ensured through introduction of **e-filing, real-time case tracking, digital notice services, and virtual hearings**. The importance of digitization in legal infrastructure can be understood through the successful UK model of technology.
- **The Fourth**, sagacious and prudent remedy is allocation of **adequate resources for the development of infrastructure**. It must ensure modern, well-equipped courtrooms and IT systems. At the same time, **legal aid programs** must be expanded to support marginalized and low-income groups. As result, their limited access to justice which is caused by economic and informational barriers will be addressed.
- **The Fifth, central efficacy can be eradication of corruption and elimination of political interference.** This can be countered through **strong accountability frameworks**, performance audits, independent oversight bodies and zero tolerance policy towards malpractices. The appointments in judiciary must be based on merit. The culture of meritocracy can be promoted through **diversity and transparency**. By adopting zero-tolerance policy against corruption within judicial appointments and proceedings will further restore the trust of public and confidence.
- **Finally, a collaborative and institutionalized reform agenda** involving courts, law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Law, civil society, bar councils and other relevant stakeholders is prerequisite for long-term impact and sustainability. However, the isolated efforts, endeavors and reforms may fail to produce fruitful results. Thus, nexus of all stakeholders must be ensured.

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