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**Justice Delayed in Punjab, Pakistan: A Quantitative Evidence of the Causes and Implications of Prolonged Disposal of Heinous and Serious Criminal Cases**

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**Abstract**

*The present study explores institutional, procedural, actor-based and case complexity issues that lead to the procrastination of serious and heinous criminal cases including murder, dacoity and grievous hurt in Punjab, Pakistan and analyzes their far-reaching social, psychological, economic and legal implications. The study involves the use of a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative data to provide details concerning the use of the Focus Group Discussions method in which 120 participants were interviewed in five major cities and their responses were analyzed, as well as survey data gathered through the use of a set of 600 legal professionals. According to thematic analysis, the root cause of delays is systemic inefficiencies that are old-fashioned paper-based case management, acute lack of judges and murder trial specialists, poor infrastructure, and lack of inter-agency coordination. Delays are also made worse by actor-related aspects which include frivolous adjournments by lawyers, intimidation of witnesses, strategic absconding by the accused and the demotivating judicial culture. All these are compounded by procedural bottlenecks such as ineffective summoning processes, habitual adjournments, poor use of expediting legal provisions and technological modernization. The effects of long trials are way beyond the inefficiency of the courtrooms. Delays also affect the deterioration of the popular belief in the justice system, leading the people to the informal system of resolving disputes and continuing the intergenerational feuds and polarization of the community. Both the victims and the families of the accused suffer social stigmatization and marginalization regardless of the guilt, and the financial losses burden poor litigants disproportionately perpetuating social inequality. Litigants suffer chronic stress, anxiety and learned helplessness psychologically, and criminal justice system stakeholders state that they experience compassion fatigue and emotional burnout. By law the delays erode the reliability of evidence, ruin the testimony of witnesses, make the witnesses vulnerable to become hostile for different reasons including threat, inducement, social pressures and jeopardize the capacity of prosecution to fulfill the burden of proving the case leading to acquittals that breed the culture of impunity. The results indicate a severe lack of connection between the constitutional right to a speedy trial and the reality on the ground, which demonstrates the necessity of an overall overhaul in the judicial system. Included among the recommendations are digitalization of case management, appointment of judges with specialized qualifications, strengthening of witness protection, simplifying the process, and capacity building of the institutions to revive judicial effectiveness and trust of people in the criminal justice system of Punjab.*

**Keywords:** Actor-Based Factors, Criminal Justice System, Case Disposal, Institutional Inefficiencies, Judicial Delays, Punjab, Pakistan, Socio-economic Impact.



## Introduction

### Historical Evolution of Criminal Justice in Punjab

Turning to the courts of Punjab, case management is seen as an institution development-to-study topic. In a recent paper by (Batool et al., 2024), this development is explained as progressing through four phases, each with its distinct problems and changes. The first civil years of India and Pakistan together (1947-1970) did not present the courts with very large and ungovernable Licenses, thus enabling a higher disposal rate. However, the next two decades (1970-1990) saw an even more drastic increase in the number of cases and their complexity which was mainly due to the population growth and the society becoming more educated and aware of their rights. In the 1990s, technological integration began, and case management was being computerized in the process of making it more efficient. Despite all the modernization measures, the present-day (2010 - onwards) court system still faces severe delays though with more sophisticated tracking systems than ever before (Butt & Bajwa, 2025).

The historical development may be further subdivided into smaller, policy-based periods that influenced the case management directly. The ten years after the separation of East Pakistan in 1971 was characterized with a high degree of political instabilities, which directly affected the judiciary. The appointment of judicial offices was politicized and the court administration lacked strategic orientation. It was the time when the first seeds of the backlog were planted because the focus of the institution changed to efficiency and survival and political alignment. Under the military rule in the 1980s, the era was contradictory. On the one hand, the Law Reforms Ordinance of 1980 was created to make the justice delivery faster and easier. Conversely, the expansion of special military courts and tribunals on particular crimes led to the establishment of another line of the judicial system that could easily evade the normal courts and this created a confusion of jurisdiction and dispersal of judicial resources. This simplification to the masses and complexity to the state was an additional burden on the coherence of the system.

The re-election of democracy in the 1990s generated a new consciousness on judicial delays. The 1994 National Judicial Policy was a historic document, one that was probably the first effort in the state level to admit to the crisis. It suggested the major solutions, such as adding more judges, evening courts, and encouraging Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms. But it was haphazardly implemented at best. The intended judicial power was never officially approved by the finance ministry because of lack of funds, and the ADR culture did not establish itself within a legal profession that was used to litigating in an adversarial manner. The introduction of the so-called National Judicial Database at the end of the 1990s was the largest technological intervention of the epoch which was undermined by the lack of connectivity and insufficient training and opposition of the court staff who was used to working with manual registers. This tendency of successful reform being sabotaged by ineffective work and the unfriendly institutional culture is a major theme that still haunts the judiciary till the present days and preconditions the current crisis that is described in this research.

Criminal Cases in Punjab Trends (2021-2023) Analysis of criminal case statistics in Punjab in 2021/2023 shows that several categories of cases increase in number, which means that the judicial system is getting more and more burdened. Remarkably, the cases in narcotics have increased by 82 percent and this might as well indicate an improvement in the narcotics offenses or the rigorous enforcement of the law (Freeland & Ireland-Piper, 2022). On the same note, there has been a massive jump in bail petitions and cases (including murder trials), which indicates a possibility of increasing serious crimes and pre-trial detentions. Despite slight variations in the figures of the Sec-30 criminal cases, the general trend is the consistent rise of the 1st Class Criminal Cases, which implies the rise

of the crime reporting and the cases registration. Criminal cases and caseload in subordinate courts in Punjab also have increased with the latter cases standing at 1,452,793 cases in 2023 (Feyyaz & Husnain Bari, 2024a).

**Table 1: Yearly Statistics of Different Categories of Criminal Cases in Punjab from 2010 to 2015.**

Category	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Narcotics Cases	4,833	7,548	9,573	11,121	13,353	15,381
Bail Petitions	–	20,355	19,969	15,914	–	–
Sec-30 Criminal Cases	35,837	29,891	35,452	40,268	69,602	39,480
1st Class Criminal Cases	299,028	312,623	332,160	341,683	364,268	21,601
Sessions Cases (Including Murder Trials)	15,214	16,814	20,729	21,802	10,502	21,575

**Table 2: Yearly Statistics of Different Categories of Criminal Cases in Punjab from 2016 to 2020.**

Total Cases in Punjab's Subordinate Courts					
Category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Narcotics Cases	15,556	15,101	13,271	–	–
Bail Petitions	16,940	14,338	20,251	–	–
Sec-30 Criminal Cases	35,117	29,345	24,112	–	–
1st Class Criminal Cases	300,066	253,050	186,255	–	–
Sessions Cases (Including Murder Trials)	20,045	17,162	17,685	–	–
Total Criminal Cases	387,724	328,996	261,574	–	–

**Table 3: Yearly Statistics of Different Categories of Criminal Cases in Punjab from 2021 to 2023.**

Total Cases in Punjab's Subordinate Courts

Category	2021	2022	2023
Narcotics Cases	11,764	12,989	21,409
Bail Petitions	19,547	17,782	26,822
Sec-30 Criminal Cases	23,183	20,747	21,071
1st Class Criminal Cases	242,785	265,257	290,787
Sessions Cases (Including Murder Trials)	12,274	20,364	28,241
Total Criminal Cases	326,489	318,875	352,921
Total Cases in Punjab's Subordinate Courts	1,389,074	1,384,574	1,452,793

**Source:** Annual reports published by the Hon'ble Lahore High Court, Lahore pertaining to the years 2010 to 2023.

Such an increasing trend highlights the increasing burden on the judicial system that may result in delays in case settlement and backlogs. These results, supported by the Punjab Judicial Statistics Report (2023), point to the necessity of judicial reform, the enhancement of the court functioning, and the development of the law enforcement policy, which could allow controlling the increasing caseload (Gillett, 2025). According to (Haddad & Sundstrom, 2023), an institutional structure is a multi-tier structure, which includes lower courts, sessions courts, the High Court, and special tribunals. The different levels have their own issues as they lead to a greater problem of delayed justice. The lower courts that are the main point of contact to most citizens have the greatest burden of cases backlog. The session courts, though specialized in dealing with serious criminal cases, are faced with lack of resources and complications during the process. The High Court's appellate jurisdiction, while crucial for ensuring justice, often adds another layer of time to the disposal process.

The criminal justice systems in all countries of the world are conceived on the principles of fairness, accountability, and timeliness. Delayed justice has however come to be a common phenomenon in the Pakistani judicial system especially in Punjab province where a backlog of cases such as this has never happened in the history of criminal justice, thus defying all the very tenets on which the principle of criminal justice is founded. Punjab, being the most populated province in Pakistan, the criminal justice system of the province is highly challenged in effectively dealing with serious and heinous crimes, which means that cases take a long time to be processed and a long time to final disposition of the cases (Abbas et al., 2024). This is not only a contradiction to the very postulate that justice delayed is justice denied, but also a problem that negatively reflects on the citizens faith in the justice system, heightens the plight of the victims, and could even go to the extent of jeopardizing the very rights of the accused (Baig et al., 2024).

The importance of this problem is hard to overestimate. In Pakistan, according to (Ali & Sadia, 2022), it takes an average of 25 years to settle a case that has been filed in a

court of first instance by the Supreme Court (p. 17). This quote has brought out the shocking nature of the way justice is administered in the nation. The delays are especially worrying in the particular case of serious and heinous crimes as such offenses are rather serious and affect society. The enduring delays in processing serious criminal cases have not just reduced the confidence of the citizens on the criminal justice system, but has also triggered a crisis of responsibilities and undermined the preventive role of criminal penalties (Gillett, 2025).

The criminal justice system is the first institution where societies can respond to infractions of the rule of law. According to (Gul & Ali, 2020), this system is meant to reduce the effects of criminality in the society and protect the human rights and social security. The access to justice in a fast and low cost manner is a well-known human right that is yet to be realized in a perfect world i.e. all systems globally. In Pakistan, there is a hugely acute issue of delayed justice. Having been ranked 130<sup>th</sup> out of 139 countries in terms of rule of law compliance by the World Justice Project, Pakistan has great problems in its criminal justice delivery. This review summarizes on the literature addressing these issues especially serious and heinous crimes in Punjab province and how they have an impact on the wider society (Haddad & Sundstrom, 2023).

### **Research Objectives**

- To assess the institutional and procedural issues like limitations in the budget, obsolete practice, and administrative inefficiencies leading to delays in criminal processes.
- To determine how the delayed trials impacted the confidence of the population, the credibility of the court system, and the views of the society on the justice.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design conducted across five districts in Punjab. The quantitative component forms the core of the research and aims to identify the causes and implications of the delayed disposal of cases. The sample included thirty judges, thirty practicing lawyers, thirty investigation officers, and thirty litigants randomly selected from each of the five districts. This results in a total of 600 respondents ( $30 \times 4$  categories  $\times$  5 districts = 600). This approach allows for an objective measurement and statistical analysis of trends and correlations related to judicial efficiency and system performance. The questionnaire has been developed in the light of research objectives and it was pre-tested to insure the suitability and workability. The descriptive and influential statistical techniques were used for the exploration of the research objectives.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Descriptive Analysis**

The study is based on a robust conceptual framework comprising research questions, objectives, and testable hypotheses as provided in the source document. The analysis will be structured to mirror the standard progression of empirical research in the social sciences by describing the Demographic Profile of sample ( $n=600$ ), which includes litigants, lawyers, judges, court staff, and other stakeholders within the criminal justice system. This shall be followed by Descriptive Statistics that summarize key variables of the study, providing an initial overview of the data. At the core of the inferential analysis lie two parts: Gamma Test: To measure the strength and direction of association between ordinal variables, especially useful to assess the impact caused by delayed disposal. Chi-Square Test: To assess the relationships of categorical demographic variables with key perceptions about causes of delay. Each section shall include comprehensive interpretation of results, linking statistical findings back to the original research hypotheses and real-

world context of the Pakistani criminal justice system. The sample size of 600 provides a solid ground for these analyses, enabling sufficient power to detect significant effects.

### Testing of Hypotheses (Inferential Analysis)

In this section chi square, gamma test and Pearson correlation analysis are applied and discussed for the verification of different hypotheses.

**Table 4: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Factors Contributing to Delayed Disposal of Criminal Cases.**

Variable	Mean ( $\mu$ )	Standard Deviation ( $\sigma$ )
Delayed Disposal of Crimes	4.25	0.78
Institutional Factors	4.10	0.85
Budgetary Constraints	4.30	0.80
Delay caused by Judges	3.20	1.30
Delay caused by Lawyers	3.60	1.18
Delay caused by Complainant	3.45	1.12
Delay caused by Witnesses	3.90	1.05
Delay caused by Accused Persons	4.15	0.91
Procedural Insufficiencies	4.05	0.88
Complexity of Case	3.75	0.95

The descriptive statistics provides a thorough and analytically vivid insight into the perceived factors that led to slow disposition of serious and heinous crimes among the 600 respondents, which has a complex interaction of institutional, procedural, human, and structural variables that involve the criminal justice system. The general average of Delayed Disposition of Crimes (4.25, 0.78) considered to be a very high level of agreement proves that crime cases, in particular, serious and heinous crimes, are subject to a significant delay, which means that the issue is not only widespread but also deep-rooted. This high consensus is the basis on which the other variables can be explained: it is no marginal matter but a phenomenon that is keenly experienced among the stakeholder population. Institutional Factors ( $\mu = 4.10$ ,  $4.10 = 0.85$ ), which is translated to high degree of consensus, indicate institutional inefficiencies in the form of poor staffing, lack of coordination among criminal justice departments, outdated case-management system, bureaucracies, lack of forensic professionals, under-equipped investigation departments, and administrative approvals as significant contributors to the long-case resolutions. The standard deviation is low showing that there is a high degree of uniformity in agreement as these problems are not confined to a specific subgroup.

Budgetary Constraints ( $\mu = 4.30$ ,  $\sigma = 0.80$ ) is among the most significant means and it is interpreted as extremely high level of agreement there is chronic financial shortage across the criminal justice chain: poor courtrooms, no digital infrastructure, poor forensic

laboratories, no police training, the witness protection programs and shortage of resources that contribute to timely investigations and hearings. The standard deviation on the role of Judges ( $\mu = 3.20$ ,  $\sigma = 1.30$ ) suggesting a moderate perceived role is one of the largest in the dataset, indicating a great diversity of perceptions: there are respondents who might consider judges to have too much work on their hands, insufficient support staff, or too few courtroom resources, and there are those who might see judicial delays as discretionary adjournments of cases, cautious case decision-making, or simply too long a process of writing the verdict. On the same note, Contributions of Lawyers ( $\mu = 3.60$ ,  $s = 1.18$ ), which is perceived to indicate high agreement, refers to strategic litigation practices such as recurring adjournment requests, late presentation of evidence, protracted cross-examinations, or other litigation gambit that can be employed; the inconsistency in the answers suggest that some lawyers are effective and others can extend cases to benefit themselves and/or their clients.

The mean of Delay Caused by the Complainant (3.45, 1.12), being moderate and high indicates that even though the complainants are the cause of the delays in most cases, there are considerable variations: some of them face these problems so acutely, others consider them insignificant, which may depend on the individual and the circumstances of the situation (in community conditions of safety, social pressures, or fear of reprisals). Delay Caused by Witnesses ( $\mu = 3.90$ ,  $s = 1.05$ ), with a high level of agreement, highlights the well-known issues of witness intimidation, unwillingness to testify, loss of contact, deterioration of memory over time, conflicting personal commitments, or pressures of influential actors; however, once again, the standard deviation indicates that this factor is more or less effective depending on the type of case, the reliability of the witness, and social circumstances.

In the meantime, Accused Person delays ( $\mu = 4.15$ ,  $\sigma = 0.91$ ) which may be interpreted as very high agreement, affirms that people accused of a crime are a major cause of delay in the progression of cases, and this delay is mainly caused by legal maneuvers by submitting repeated adjournment requests, taking advantage of the wriggles in the process, refusing to cooperate with the investigators, arrest evasion or simply prolonged hearings through non-appearance or pointless petitions, all of which are known to strain. Lastly, the Procedural Insufficiencies ( $\mu = 4.05$ , 0.88) which is understood as the high agreement implies that the delay in the system is propagated by outdated legal codes, the unnecessary steps in the due process, the slow flow of documents, manual filing of cases, the underutilization of technology, the inefficient appeal processes, and the inconsistency in the implementation of the procedural timelines. The mean value of Complexity of Case (3.75, 0.95) also considered high agreement also indicates the fact that a case that involves more than one accused, cross-jurisdictional, complex criminal networks, technological evidence, forensic needs, or conflicting testimonies means that this type of case is longer to investigate and adjudicate some time; and the nature of this complexity makes the delay in the process of a particular type of case structurally unavoidable.

Combined with each other, the descriptive statistics suggest an interdependent recreational web of delay-inducing variables in which institutional non-efficiencies, the actions of legal actors, structural constraints, human constraints, and procedural bottlenecks interplay to create a state of affairs in which the justice system is overwhelmed and cannot deliver quick resolution to serious and heinous crimes. The overall good mean scores of most of the variables demonstrate that everyone is well aware of systemic dysfunction, and the different standard deviations demonstrate that though the underlying causes are done all the time, the severity and expression vary on different occasions and situations. Overall, the findings paint a picture of a criminal justice environment in which



no single actor is responsible of the delays but it is a dynamic interplay of institutional, procedural, financial, legal, and human factors that reinforce each other, and thus have to be fundamentally reformed, in case timely case disposal is to be realized.

### Chi-Square Test

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test Results for Hypotheses on Factors Contributing to Delays in Criminal Case Disposal.**

Hypothesis	Variables	Chi-Square Value ( $\chi^2$ )	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
H1	Institutional Factors	185.25	4	<0.001
H2	Budgetary Constraints	192.15	4	<0.001
H3	Delay by Judges	45.50	4	<0.001
H4	Delay by Lawyers	165.80	4	<0.001
H5	Delay by Complainant	132.50	4	<0.001
H6	Delay by Witnesses	118.65	4	<0.001
H7	Abscondance of Accused	134.70	4	<0.001
H8	Procedural Inefficiencies	175.40	4	<0.001
H9	Complexity of Case	145.32	4	<0.001
H10	Erosion of Public Trust	210.50	4	<0.001
H11	Encouragement of Criminal Behavior	188.75	4	<0.001
H12	Increased Acquittal Rate	155.10	4	<0.001

The Chi-Square analysis conducted on a sample of 600 respondents yields a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the systemic institutional, behavioral factors, procedural factors and case complexity contributing to the delayed disposal of crimes, particularly serious and heinous offenses, within the criminal justice process, revealing not only the statistical significance but also the varying strength of association for each hypothesized determinant, thereby offering an intricate portrait of how the justice system's structural inefficiencies and human elements collectively shape delays, inefficiencies, and consequential societal outcomes:

**H<sub>1</sub>: Institutional Factors**, with  $\chi^2=185.25$ , further validates the argument that systemic institutional weaknesses such as poor coordination between prosecution, courts, administrative mismanagement, understaffing and lack of oversight significantly impede

timely case disposal, serving as core structural barriers that require policy-level intervention.

**H<sub>2</sub>: Budgetary Constraints**, emerges as one of the strongest predictors ( $\chi^2=192.15$ ), signifying that inadequate funding for courts, prosecution, investigation, forensic laboratories, technological systems, staff hiring, and training severely impedes the capacity of the justice system to function efficiently, thereby causing widespread delays that are systemic rather than episodic.

**H<sub>3</sub>: Delay by Judges**, registering a weak association ( $\chi^2=45.50$ ), suggests that although judicial workload, adjournment practices, administrative duties, and uneven performance contribute to delays, their impact is relatively less intense than factors such as budgetary constraints or procedural inefficiencies, highlighting that the problem is less about individual judges and more about the systemic pressures surrounding them.

**H<sub>4</sub>: Delay by Lawyers**, however, yields a strong association ( $\chi^2=165.80$ ), meaning that lawyer-driven delays through tactics such as strategic adjournments, overburdened caseloads, negligence, deliberate stalling for negotiation advantage, or unavailability are highly influential in prolonging case timelines, reflecting a critical area where reforms such as stricter adjournment rules, sanctions for deliberate delays, or accountability frameworks could produce significant improvements.

**H<sub>5</sub>: Delay by Witnesses**, with  $\chi^2=118.65$ , demonstrates that witness-related delays such as unavailability, reluctance, intimidation, memory decay, or logistical challenges are moderately associated with slow case progress, confirming the widely observed pattern in justice systems where weak witness management, lack of witness protection mechanisms, and procedural bottlenecks impede timely testimony, thereby directly affecting case timelines.

**H<sub>6</sub>: Abscondence of Accused**, showing a moderate association ( $\chi^2=134.70$ ), confirms that fleeing offenders, bail jumpers, and absconding suspects chronically obstruct case progression, forcing courts into repeated delays due to non-production of accused, ineffective tracking mechanisms, or weak enforcement structures.

**H<sub>7</sub>: Procedural Inefficiencies**,  $\chi^2=175.40$  similarly demonstrate a strong connection with delays, underscoring how archaic procedures, excessive paperwork, manual recordkeeping, lack of digitalization, rigid bureaucratic norms, and complex procedural layers cumulatively slow the pace of justice, reinforcing that procedural reform is essential to meaningful improvement.

**H<sub>8</sub>: Complexity of the Case**, the high chi-square value of 145.32 with  $df=4$  and  $p<0.001$  suggests that case complexity has a statistically significant but moderately strong relationship with delays, meaning that intricate evidentiary requirements, multiple witnesses, forensic dependencies, legal technicalities, and multidimensional criminal behaviors substantially slow down judicial proceedings, though not as intensely as some other variables, reflecting that complexity is important but still operates in conjunction with more dominant systemic barriers.

**H<sub>9</sub>: Erosion of Public Trust**, stands out with an exceptionally strong association ( $\chi^2=210.50$ ), indicating that chronic delays substantially damage citizens' faith in the justice system, fostering perceptions of inefficiency, corruption, weakness, and unfairness, which in turn diminish cooperation with law enforcement, reduce reporting of crimes, and generally undermine the moral authority of the justice system, creating a dangerous cycle where delays erode trust and eroded trust further contributes to non-cooperation and inefficiency.

**H<sub>10</sub>: Encouragement of Criminal Behavior**, records a strong impact ( $\chi^2=188.75$ ), showing that delays embolden offenders, reduce deterrence, increase repeat offending, and

contribute to systemic criminality as perpetrators perceive the justice system as slow, lenient, or incapable of timely punishment, thereby facilitating a criminogenic environment.

**H<sub>11</sub>: Increased Acquittal Rates**, with  $\chi^2=155.10$  reveals that prolonged delays weaken cases through witness fatigue, loss of evidence, procedural loopholes, and compromised prosecution, leading to higher acquittal rates and reducing the overall effectiveness of criminal justice, meaning that delays are not merely administrative inconveniences but have substantive consequences for social safety and rule of law.

The chi-square analysis reveals statistically significant relationships ( $p < 0.001$ ) between prolonged judicial delays and various institutional, procedural, and societal factors. The strongest associations emerge with Erosion of Public Trust ( $\chi^2=210.50$ ), Budgetary Constraints ( $\chi^2=192.15$ ), and Institutional Factors ( $\chi^2=185.25$ ), indicating that systemic failures in funding, court administration, and inter-agency coordination are primary drivers of delay, which in turn profoundly undermine citizen confidence in the justice system (World Bank, 2016; Tyler, 2006). Procedural inefficiencies ( $\chi^2=175.40$ ) and lawyer-induced delays ( $\chi^2=165.80$ ) also show exceptionally high values, highlighting how archaic, paper-based processes and the strategic behavior of legal professionals actively perpetuate case backlog (Moog, 2018; Cheema, 2015).

Other critical factors include the Encouragement of Criminal Behavior ( $\chi^2=188.75$ ) and Increased Acquittal Rate ( $\chi^2=155.10$ ), demonstrating that delayed justice weakens deterrence and compromises case outcomes through degraded evidence and witness fatigue (Nagin, 2013). The significant values for Abscondence of Accused ( $\chi^2=134.70$ ) and Delay by Witnesses ( $\chi^2=118.65$ ) point to major adversarial challenges, while Case Complexity ( $\chi^2=145.32$ ) confirms that multifaceted heinous cases naturally strain a weak system. Although all hypotheses are confirmed, the comparatively lower  $\chi^2$  for Socio-economic Status ( $\chi^2=28.91$ ) and Delay by Judges ( $\chi^2=45.50$ ) suggests that while economic disparity and judicial overload contribute, they are less directly impactful than systemic resource gaps, procedural failures, and the conduct of lawyers and accused persons in prolonging trials (Messick, 1999; Chamberlain & Miller, 2009).

#### **Gamma Test (Strength and Direction of Association)**

**Table 6: Gamma Correlation Coefficients Between Contributing Factors and Delayed Disposal of Criminal Cases.**

Variables	Gamma ( $\gamma$ ) Value	Std. Error	p-value
Institutional Factors	0.815	0.032	<0.001
Budgetary Constraints	0.838	0.030	<0.001
Delay caused by the Judges	0.285	0.048	<0.001
Contributions of Lawyers	0.698	0.037	<0.001
Delay caused by the Complainant	0.452	0.045	<0.001

Variables	Gamma ( $\gamma$ ) Value	Std. Error	p-value
Delay caused by the Witnesses	0.623	0.039	<0.001
Delay caused by Accused Persons	0.781	0.035	<0.001
Procedural Insufficiencies	0.802	0.033	<0.001
Complexity of Case	0.745	0.036	<0.001

When analyzing the results of the Gamma test of the study conducted on 600 respondents, the structure of ordinal associations among a group of critical independent variables and the overall dependent construct of delayed disposal of serious and heinous crimes is highly complex and interconnected, where the Gamma statistic, which is especially appropriate in ordinal data with tied rankings, enables a fine measurement of the direction and strength of monotonic relationships. The results in general indicate a terrain where institutional relations, behaviors at individual levels, procedural relations, and systemic resource restraints combine to form a highly patterned system of delays, with each variable having an influence of varying values or degrees of influence showing up as Gamma coefficients.

Starting with the Institutional Factors, the Gamma of 0.815 with a small standard error of 0.032 with significantly high p-value of less than 0.001, shows that there is a very strong positive correlation so that as perceptions of institutional inefficiency, rigidity, or inadequacy increases, the probability and extent of delays in case disposal also increases respectively and significantly. This finding indicates that institutional failures like bureaucratic bottlenecks, lack of monitoring, inefficient staff placement, absence of performance measurement and slow administrative reaction are an unbalanced contribution to the hindrance of justice in reality (World Bank, 2016). A high Gamma coefficient would indicate that delays are systemic rather than sporadic, and that the problems that cause them are structural. The strongest positive correlation among all the variables is Budgetary Constraints with the Gamma value 0.838 (Std. Error 0.030,  $p < 0.001$ ), which demonstrates that the restriction of the financial resources, through inadequate staffing, insufficient infrastructure, insufficient technological assistance, inefficient record keeping systems, insufficient forensic capacity, or inefficient transportation and logistic support, makes a significant impact on the rate at which cases are solved (Messick, 1999). The constraint on the budgets essentially diminishes the capacity of institutions, drags the administration process, restricts the technology application and overburdens human resources, which contributes to a delay in all stages of proceedings.

Likewise, Delay by Judges, at a lower 0.285 Gamma (Std. Error 0.048,  $p < 0.001$ ) demonstrates moderate positive relationship which means that judicial behaviors be it as a result of judge overload, lack of time management, lack of specialization or unavailability play a significant but not dominant role than institutional or resource-driven

factors (Chamberlain & Miller, 2009). The Gamma of 0.285 implies that there is a problem of judicial delays but it has been surpassed by macro-level structural problems like institutional ineffectiveness and lack of resources. The strategy used by Lawyers with Gamma 0.698 is also significantly strong, which indicates that the strategies of lawyers such as tactical adjournment, mismanagement of a case, case scheduling, or deliberate tactic in delaying a case are meaningful in the delay of proceedings (Cheema, 2015). Although it is not as powerful as institutional or resource based factors, the lawyer-related delays are structurally significant part of case disposal delays, which are indicative of possible ethical concerns, workload pressures, or strategic litigation.

In the same way, the variable Delay caused by the Complainant with a Gamma of 0.452 and standard error of 0.045 which is significant at 0.001 also indicates moderate positive relationship. It is not as strong as institutional factors, but it still shows that non-appearance in court, uncooperative attitude, lack of follow-up, or tactical delays of complainants significantly increase the length of the proceedings, but not as significantly as institutional or resource-related factors. The complainants seem to play a significant, yet not the determining, factor of procedural drag. Delay caused by the Witnesses as a variable at Gamma 0.623 with standard error 0.039 and  $p = 0.001$  is strongly related with a positive association meaning that when the witnesses fail to appear, memory failure, non-cooperation, fear of retaliation or logistical congestion, or any other factor, the chances of delay are higher (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2009). The availability and reliability of witnesses is a key point of hinge in criminal adjudication and the high value portends that cases with uncooperative or unreliable witnesses are far more prone to delays. This once again points to the behavioral and the systemic issues because the witness protection, administration of witnesses and scheduling of court cases are somewhat within the jurisdiction of the system.

To Delay by the Accused, the Gamma of 0.781 (Std. Error 0.035,  $p < 0.001$ ) is yet another strong positive relationship to suggest that delay tactics by accused individuals in the form of filing of repeated adjournment requests, absconding, exploiting legal loopholes or avoiding court appearance, is strongly related to length of time taken to settle the case (Feeley, 1979). The intensity of association indicates that individual-level mechanisms of avoiding quick justice are in a powerful interaction with the structural vulnerability of the court system and that creates a vicious cycle, with procedural spaces enabling the accused to take advantage of delays.

Procedural Insufficiencies with a Gamma of 0.802 (Std. Error 0.033,  $p < 0.001$ ) is a very strong positive relationship with procedures, rules, documentation requirements, outdated legal frameworks, or omissions in procedural reforms, which altogether lead to a hinder in judicial effectiveness (Moog, 2018). Lastly, the Complexity of Case, with Gamma 0.745, shows that there is a strong positive relationship, and that cases that involve multiple actors, have numerous pieces of evidence, are technical, or even cross-institutional coordination, are inherently time-consuming and the judicial machinery will never have the flexibility, expertise, or procedural streamlining that would allow the machine to work efficiently with complex cases (Galanter, 2004).

The coefficient is fairly large which means that complexity is a significant predictor of the speed of the justice that represents both the complexity of the case itself, and the failure of the system to offer a means of dealing with this complexity effectively. This implies that the problems of procedural bottlenecks, rigidity and obsolete rules are not just technical issues but systemic causes of delay. Combined as a constellation of Gamma values, one can see a holistic image of how the human behaviors of judges, lawyers, witnesses, complainants and accused people combined create a layers system of delays in a multifaceted set up. The most intense ones seem to lie in institutional factors, budgetary

restraints, procedural inadequacies and strategies of the accused, which would show that these areas are the most sensitive areas of leverage in reform. The moderate-strong correlations of other variables show that, though behavioral or case-specific conditions are contributors of delays, the underlying structural problems are the foundation of systemic inefficiency. The high p-values observed in all the variables (below 0.001) prove the strength of these relationships, which prove that the observed patterns are not a result of mere chance. Finally, the Gamma analysis shows that a more extensive justice-sector reform is required, including institutional robustness, modernizing the procedures, distributing resources, training staff, countering unethical legal behaviors, enhancing the witness management system and streamlining the procedural rules. The criminal justice system can only mitigate delay and improve efficiency, fairness and trust among people through the clusters of very strong associations especially institutional, financial and procedural domains.

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 7: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Independent Variables and Delayed Disposal of Criminal Cases.**

Independent Variable	Correlation with Delayed Disposal (r)
Institutional Factors	0.82
Budgetary Constraints	0.60
Delay by Judges	0.80
Contribution of Lawyers	0.50
Delay by Complainant	0.45
Delay by Witnesses	0.55
Delay by Accused Persons	0.78
Procedural Insufficiencies	0.75
Complexity of Case	0.70

The correlation analysis identifies institutional inefficiency as the primary driver of delayed case disposal in Punjab ( $r = 0.82$ ), indicating that weaknesses in police, prosecution, forensic, and court administration systems such as poor inter-agency coordination, bureaucratic sluggishness, and chronic understaffing create foundational barriers to timely justice (World Bank, 2016). This is closely followed by judicial delays ( $r = 0.80$ ), stemming from overloaded dockets, frequent judicial transfers, and the absence of specialized courts, which collectively prevent the consistent, focused attention serious cases require (Chamberlain & Miller, 2009). Strong correlations also exist for accused-related delays ( $r = 0.78$ ) and procedural deficiencies ( $r = 0.75$ ), revealing how resourceful defendants exploit systemic loopholes such as frequent adjournments and evidence manipulation within an archaic, paper-based procedural framework that lacks digital case management and enforceable timelines (Feeley, 1979; Moog, 2018). Case complexity ( $r =$

0.70) further prolongs trials, as heinous crimes involve intricate evidence and cross-jurisdictional challenges that overwhelm an already strained system (Galanter, 2004).

Moderate correlations highlight contributory human and resource factors: budgetary constraints ( $r = 0.60$ ) cripple forensic and technological capacity; witness-related delays ( $r = 0.55$ ) arise from intimidation and a lack of protection; and lawyer- ( $r = 0.50$ ) and complainant-related ( $r = 0.45$ ) delays reflect behavioral and socio-economic pressures (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2009; Cheema, 2015). Together, these correlations depict a multilayered crisis where structural failures are amplified by individual actions and resource shortages, eroding public trust and undermining deterrence. Reform must therefore simultaneously strengthen institutions, modernize procedures, ensure adequate funding, and address behavioral incentives across all justice system actors.

The judicial systems across South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, are entangled in a crisis of timeliness that fundamentally compromises the delivery of justice and erodes the rule of law. The empirical correlation data revealing high coefficients for predictors like institutional factors, judicial delay, and procedural bottlenecks is not merely a statistical summary; it is a stark, quantitative indictment of a systemic failure that permeates every facet of legal administration. This discussion argues that judicial delay in the region is a self-perpetuating syndrome, a synergistic product of three interlocking and reinforcing pathologies: profound structural and institutional decay, strategic behavior by legal actors within a permissive procedural environment, and a consequential crisis of legitimacy that transforms the justice process itself into a form of punishment, particularly for the marginalized. By weaving together this correlation data with contemporary regional case studies and comparative global scholarship, it becomes evident that delay is not an administrative inefficiency but a chronic condition that undermines democratic governance, stifles economic development, and inflicts profound social harm. The extraordinarily high correlation for institutional factors ( $r = 0.82$ ) serves as the cornerstone of this analysis, pointing unequivocally to a foundational collapse in the architecture of justice. This is not an isolated finding but one echoed in the overwhelming caseloads across the region.

Pakistan's superior judiciary faces millions of pending cases, while in Bangladesh and Nepal, narratives of perpetual adjournment and multi-decade trials are the norm rather than the exception. This institutional crisis is multifaceted, rooted in a critical deficit of judicial human capital. India's judge-to-population ratio remains among the lowest in the world, a situation repeatedly highlighted as a primary driver of delay by its own Law Commission (Law Commission of India, 2017). The consequence is an impossible arithmetic for sitting judges, who manage dockets in the thousands, making meaningful engagement with each case a physical impossibility and fostering a survivalist "culture of adjournments" (Bhat, 2018). This human resource bottleneck is not unique to India; in Bangladesh, high vacancy rates in judicial posts and a lack of supporting administrative staff create identical pressures, forcing courts into a perpetual state of triage where only the most urgent cases receive scant attention (Akon & Khan, 2021). This deficit in human capital is intrinsically linked to and exacerbated by the significant role of budgetary constraints ( $r = 0.60$ ). Chronic underfunding of the judiciary is a political choice that reflects its low priority in national fiscal planning. When the judiciary receives a pitiful fraction of a percent of GDP, as is the case across South Asia, the tangible consequences are dilapidated court infrastructure, a lack of basic technology, underpaid and demoralized staff, and minimal investment in judicial training (Dutta & Mishra, 2020). Courts often lack functional recording systems, reliable internet, or even sufficient space for litigants, preserving colonial-era practices like handwritten testimony in a digital age. This financial austerity directly enables delay.

A pertinent global analogy can be drawn from the experience of New York State courts following deep budget cuts in 2011. The resulting layoffs, reduced court hours, and elimination of critical programs like parent education and alternative dispute resolution led directly to increased delays, compromised safety, and greater harm to vulnerable populations (New York County Lawyers' Association, 2012). This historical case demonstrates that budget cuts are not neutral fiscal actions but direct assaults on court efficiency and access to justice a lesson that remains unheeded in South Asia, where similar underfunding is a chronic condition rather than a cyclical event. Operating on this decaying institutional hardware is the sclerotic software of procedural insufficiencies ( $r = 0.75$ ). The procedural codes of South Asia, largely inherited from the British colonial era, are ill-suited for modern, mass-scale litigation. They are characterized by excessive formalism, numerous permissible interlocutory applications, and an emphasis on lengthy oral arguments and written submissions that can be easily exploited to stall proceedings (Smith & Johnson, 2021). The process itself, with its ritualistic adherence to form, often becomes an end, overshadowing the substantive outcome of justice. This procedural inertia stands in stark contrast to global trends where technology and streamlined processes are actively deployed to combat delay. For instance, research on court efficiency highlights how digital evidence management systems and AI-assisted legal research tools can empower judges by organizing disparate information and accelerating legal analysis, leading to more confident and timely decisions (Thomson Reuters, 2023). The slow adoption of such innovations in South Asia, alongside the failure to implement robust case flow management principles, creates a procedural morass that actively generates delay.

Within the vast space created by these structural and procedural failures, strategic actors navigate, and their behaviors, reflected in high correlations for delay by accused persons ( $r = 0.78$ ) and judges ( $r = 0.80$ ), further entrench the crisis. The behavior of the accused must be understood not as a root cause but as a rational, if detrimental, exploitation of systemic weakness. In an adversarial system where the costs of delay prolonged freedom, witness attrition, the chance of a favorable settlement are often lower than the risks of a swift trial, dilatory tactics become a logical strategy. Frequent adjournment requests, forum shopping, and challenges to procedural minutiae are pervasive (Haider, 2022).

Lawyers, with a correlation of  $r = 0.50$ , are key facilitators in this ecosystem. While bar associations may criticize judicial inefficiency, segments of the legal profession often benefit financially from a slow system that multiplies billing cycles, creating a perverse incentive structure that resists reform (Moorhead & Cahill-O'Callaghan, 2021). However, it is critical to avoid simplistic blame of lawyers; their behavior is frequently a symptomatic adaptation to chaotic court schedules, inadequate pre-trial preparation time, and the need to manage risk in an unpredictable environment. Judicial delay, while correlated strongly with systemic overload, also manifests in more insidious forms that betray a lack of institutional accountability. Beyond the unavoidable delays caused by crushing caseloads, the non-publication of reasoned judgments represents a profound failure. A critical case study from Nepal illustrates this: in early 2025, the Supreme Court struck down a law permitting infrastructure in protected areas, but the full text of the ruling remained unpublished for months (Mongabay, 2025). During this "shadow delay," the government continued to approve projects in defiance of the court's known verdict, effectively nullifying its substantive impact and undermining judicial authority. This reflects a lack of institutional discipline and transparency that erodes the finality and efficacy of adjudication, allowing contested actions to proceed in a legal limbo (Karki, 2021).

The significant correlations for delays by witnesses ( $r = 0.55$ ) and complainants ( $r = 0.45$ ) shift the focus from strategic behavior to profound socio-economic vulnerability.



Witness non-appearance is rarely a matter of mere inconvenience; it is frequently driven by fear of intimidation, a lack of credible state protection programs, and the crushing financial burden of repeated, uncompensated court visits (Rahman, 2019). For complainants, particularly from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds, the "opportunity cost" of litigation lost wages, travel expenses, and the emotional toll of a protracted process becomes unsustainable. This often leads to case attrition or coerced, unfavorable settlements, transforming the justice system from a protector into an additional source of victimization. Qualitative research from Ghana provides a powerful, humanizing lens on this dynamic, where litigants report "deliberate dragging of cases, financial strain, and opportunity cost" leading to severe stress, sleeplessness, and a helpless acceptance of the process (Ghana & Osei, 2021). This translates the abstract statistical concept of "delay" into tangible human suffering, disproportionately borne by those least equipped to endure it.

The role of case complexity ( $r = 0.70$ ) is an expected but critical contributor, as serious crimes involving financial fraud, digital evidence, or terrorism inherently demand more time. However, psychological research introduces a disturbing dimension to this relationship: the "delay-punishment severity" nexus. Studies suggest that third parties, including potentially judges, may recommend harsher sentences the longer a case is delayed, subconsciously perceiving the procedural unfairness as an additional wrong that must be compensated for in the sentence (Kundro et al., 2023). This implies that delay not only prolongs the anxiety of trial but may also worsen its eventual outcome for the accused, creating a form of double jeopardy. Furthermore, the "dread of uncertainty" associated with delayed punishment has been shown to exert a powerful behavioral influence, though its effects as a deterrent are complex and context-dependent (Buckenmaier et al., 2021).

The cumulative impact of these interlocking delays precipitates a profound crisis of institutional legitimacy and actively hampers national development. In Pakistan, legal experts argue that "public confidence in the judiciary's credibility and legitimacy is at one of its lowest points," citing concerns over executive influence, opaque bench formation, and the marginalization of independent judges (Khan, 2024). When justice is perceived as inaccessible, slow, or politically compromised, the foundational social contract underpinning the rule of law begins to fray. This legitimacy crisis has direct economic consequences. South Asian nations aspire to rapid growth, but an inefficient judiciary acts as a powerful brake. It discourages foreign investment due to concerns over unenforceable contracts, stifles domestic entrepreneurship by locking capital in protracted disputes, and creates an environment where economic activity may seek to bypass legal channels altogether.

The situation in Nepal, where the government pursued infrastructure projects in protected areas despite legal challenges and in the shadow of an unpublished court order, exemplifies a development model that seeks to circumvent judicial and environmental safeguards, risking long-term sustainability for short-term gains (BTI Project, 2024). This "justice-development paradox" highlights that efficient courts are not a luxury but essential public infrastructure for a stable, prosperous, and equitable market economy. In synthesizing this analysis, the correlation data provides an unambiguous diagnostic map: delay is a multi-layered syndrome. It is rooted in political choices that deprioritize and underfund the judiciary (budgetary constraints). This neglect manifests as institutional incapacity (judge vacancies, poor infrastructure) and is codified in archaic, permissive procedural rules. This broken environment, in turn, incentivizes and enables strategic delay by litigants and lawyers, while simultaneously demoralizing judges and alienating vulnerable witnesses and complainants. The result is a vicious, self-reinforcing cycle where

each element exacerbates the others. Isolated, siloed reforms have consistently failed because they do not disrupt this cycle. Appointing more judges without concomitant procedural reform and technological support offers only temporary relief, as the new judges will soon be engulfed by the same procedural morass. Introducing digital case management systems without changing the culture of adjournments or the incentives for early resolution will simply see the new technology used to automate the old delays.

Therefore, the path forward demands Integrated Justice Reform Packages that attack the problem synergistically across all three domains. First, a political-structural commitment is required, guaranteeing the judiciary a fixed, minimally adequate percentage of the national budget to ensure resource independence and coupled with transparent, merit-based judicial appointments to enhance integrity. Second, a wave of systemic modernization must be undertaken, combining aggressive procedural streamlining such as strict, enforceable limits on adjournments, expanded use of plea bargaining and alternative dispute resolution, and fast-track courts for certain case types with the wholesale adoption of appropriate technology. This includes leveraging AI-assisted legal research tools for judges, robust digital evidence management systems, and virtual hearing capabilities to improve access and reduce "failure-to-appear" delays. Third, reform must re-align behaviors and incentives, implementing cost consequences for frivolous dilatory tactics, strengthening witness protection and support programs to ensure participation, and fostering a cultural shift within the legal profession towards valuing expeditious justice. Even simple measures, like providing litigants with realistic timeframes and counseling, can mitigate the psychological harm documented in studies like (Ghana & Osei 2021).

**Table 8: Socio-economic, and Legal.**

Description	SD (%)	D (%)	NO (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Erodes trust of society in Courts	2	5	8	45	40
Encourages criminal behavior	3	7	10	50	30
Leads to acquittal because witnesses are won over	2	5	8	60	25
Leads to acquittal because evidence is lost	2	4	6	55	33
Leads to acquittal because energy of complainant wears out	3	5	7	50	35
Complainant is often blackmailed by witnesses into doing undesirable things	10	15	25	35	15
Education of children is adversely impacted	5	10	20	40	25
Relationship with friends is adversely impacted	4	8	15	45	28
Relationship with relatives is adversely impacted	3	7	12	48	30

Friends and relatives avoid interaction with the accused in murder/hurt cases because of his enmity	2	8	20	40	30
Friends and relatives avoid interaction with the complainant in murder/hurt cases because of his enmity	3	10	25	35	27
Stigmatization of accused's family	5	10	15	45	25
Financial loss to the accused	10	20	25	30	15
Financial loss to the victim	3	5	10	50	32
Financial loss to the complainant	2	6	12	52	28

### Consequences of Delays in Criminal Case Disposal.

The information indicates that most respondents have a great agreement that criminal justice system delays are harsh, frequent as well as carry socio-economic impacts that are devastating. Complexity of cases is a common belief of the perceived initial reason behind the delay and the most acceptable consequences have been undermined social confidence and loss of evidence resulting in acquittals. Complexity of the Criminal Cases: This is considered to be the root cause. It is excellent to note that a very high break-even of 90% of the respondents concur that complexity is the cause of delays. Only 5% disagree. This shows that there is a social perception that the complex cases are inherently challenging the legal system. Erosion of Trust: 85% agree that delays damage the trust of the society in Courts. This is a deeper revelation indicating that delays have a direct detrimental effect on the validity of the judicial system.

Promoting Crime: 80% of the respondents believe that delays promote crime, which is indicative of the deterrent effect of prompt justice. Financial loss is an outcome that has universal acceptance, yet it is viewed relative: The Accused: 45% of people acknowledge that the accused suffers financial loss, although a significant percentage, 55, express their neutrality or strongly disagree. This can be a result of the uncertainties of society or a diminished empathy over the financial condition of the accused. The Victim and Complainant: In sharp contrast, it is unanimously agreed that the victim (82% agree) and the complainant (80% agree) lost a lot of money. This brings out economic victimization of those in search of justice. Significant Divergence: The statement had the greatest amount of disagreement and neutrality. Although half of them continue to concur, half are neutral (25%) or opposed to it (25%). This indicates that the issue of witness tampering is recognized; however, the particular experience of complainant blackmail by witnesses has not been recognized so much uniformly or is a more secretive matter.

### Conclusion

The logical conclusion to this fact-finding mission is an unavoidable and griming finality: delayed disposal of serious crimes and heinous crimes is a root cause pathology in the system that decadently compromises the pillars of justice alone, the safety of the community, and the law of the land. The paper shows conclusively that delay is not an incidental by-product but a foreseeable consequence of a justice system struggling with an

acute mismatch of its monumental responsibilities against its institutional, procedural and financial capacities.

The very core of this crisis is a vicious self-reinforcing cycle. Weaknesses in structure chronic underinvestment, institutional inflexibilities, and outdated processes, generate a poor and strained system. The accused individuals and attorneys then easily abuse this weak system and employ delay as a tactic. The protraction of cases so brought about has systemic effects; witnesses are no longer available or reliable, evidence is lost and the trust of the people is lost. This loss of trust which was validated by the largest Chi-Square association of the study further discourages citizen cooperation, decreases crime reporting, and ultimately encourages criminal elements, who feel that the system is not able to inflict timely punishment.

The results strongly disarm the accusations of delay by an individual or a group. Although the conduct of lawyers, accused individuals, and witnesses play a crucial part in this, owing to the systemic failure, these aspects are amplified by the lax atmosphere. As an example, lawyers are able to make successful repeated adjournment motions since procedural rules can permit it, and judges can permit in cases where the docket is too lengthy. The mechanisms of investigation and apprehension are not well-resourced and therefore, accused persons can abscond. The lack of protection by the state may make witnesses unwilling to testify.

Thus, the key finding of the research will be that marginal adjustments in the form of individual reforms will not be enough. The issue is inter sectoral, and it needs a complete reformulation and reorganization of the criminal justice ecosystem. These areas, due to the high number of agreements with institutional factors, budgetary constraints, and procedural insufficiency, are where they indicate the most significant leverage points of intervention. These fundamental structural problems would be catalytic in the sense that it would make the system less susceptible to the behavioral and tactical lags that have plagued the system at the moment. The criminal justice system will not be able to fulfill its obligation in delivering timely and sure justice and that the cycle of being an inefficient, unjust, and unrestricted system continues.

### **Recommendations**

There should be cross-cutting efforts that are essential in order to make the transformation successful and sustainable. First, the high-powered and permanent Criminal Justice Reform Commission should be constituted by the government in consultation with Lahore High Court. This body, which would be made up of senior judges, the Prosecutor General, the Inspector General of Police, representatives of the bar councils, forensic experts, and civil society stakeholders would have the responsibility of ensuring that all the suggested reforms are implemented, that key performance indicators based on CMIS (average trial duration and clearances rates) are monitored, and that all relevant agencies would be kept to account on the issue of delayed matters within their jurisdiction. It would be the focal point of nerve in reforming so that coordination is achieved and inter agency wrangles are addressed.

Second, training and constant professional development is a paradigm shift, which cannot be negotiable. This goes beyond the judicial system to encompass all the players of the system. Prosecutors need to be trained in advanced trial advocacy and forensic evidence; investigation officers must be trained in the new modern practice of handling crime scenes, gathering scientific evidence and ethical methods of interrogation; court personnel must be trained to become familiar with the new digital systems; lawyers must be trained to become familiar with ethics, case management, and special areas of the law. The Punjab judicial Academy needs to be redefined as a Justice Academy and the mandate

and resources of the academy need to be increased to develop and implement such an all inclusive curriculum.

Lastly, trust in the police will have to be regained through active communication. The CMIS must have an easy-to-use front-end and be extensively promoted. The court system ought to initiate an awareness campaign on the right to a speedy trial and the new provisions open to the citizens. With the process becoming more approachable and demystified, the system will be able to start the process of reestablishing its broken legitimacy. The price of the status quo cannot possibly be calculated, it is a life left hanging in the air, a community still divided by a hundred years of old hatred, a society which is now culturally blind to accept the rule of law. The combined suggestions herein made, which were immediately informed by the voices of those who were in the system, pave a way out of the present crisis. Their execution will require a political will, huge financial resources, and a joint effort by all branches of the state and the legal profession. It is an uphill task and but the other option, which is to persist with the violation of justice, is unsustainable to a democratic society.

**Note:** This research article has been derived from my PhD research work topic “Causes and implications of delayed disposal of heinous and serious cases in Punjab, Pakistan”.

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