

## ACQUITTAL IN PAKISTAN: NAVIGATING THE LEGAL REALITIES AND PUBLIC SENTIMENTS

**Tauseef Adeel Hassan**

Ph.D (Law) Scholar, Times Institute Multan, Pakistan.

[tauseef\\_adeel85@yahoo.com](mailto:tauseef_adeel85@yahoo.com)

**Dr. Shaukat Hussain Bhatti**

Associate professor, Hajveri Law College, Times Institute Multan, Pakistan.

[shaukathussain78682@gmail.com](mailto:shaukathussain78682@gmail.com)

(corresponding Author)

### Abstract

*This paper examines high of acquittal in Pakistan's criminal justice system, legal realities and public sentiments. The research includes qualitative interviews with legal professionals i.e. Judges from District Judiciary, Public Prosecutors, Lawyers dealing with criminal cases and legal Inspectors/DSPs serving in police department along with doctrinal analysis. Analysis has been characterized by key issues comprise of procedural deficiencies, inconsistent judicial decision making characterized influence of political and personal biases, poor investigations and limited use of forensic evidence. Accordingly, the research seeks for all reforms inclusive specialized jurisdiction for judicial officers, clear sentencing guidelines, increased forensic capability, and improved investigative capability in order to reduce acquittals and improve public trust. The result emphasizes the requirement for system wide modernization to get to grips with these systemic problems, in order to provide fair, timely and consistent justice.*

**Keywords:** Acquittal, Legal realities, public sentiments, Police Investigation, Criminal Courts, Judge, Public prosecutor, accused.

### Introduction

In the study conducted about the Criminal Justice System which is indulged in Pakistan, the same system is facing several challenges and among all the high rate of acquittals is severely effect on ability of the Criminal Justice System to provide justice. Pakistani law (Khadam et al., 2019), despite being anchored in the foundation principles of fairness, justice, and equality, does not prove effective in handling criminal cases and there is a plethora of incidents where those accused of serious crimes are released. Furthermore, this is significant issue in such, this issue is most concerning in a public safety context as it is problematic in the sense that it questions the legitimacy and effectiveness of the legal system (Shah et al., 2022).

Many structural and procedural inefficiencies within the CJS contribute to a high acquittal rate. Legal loopholes, poor evidence collection and training of police further compound these inefficiencies (Iqbal, Saleem and Baig, 2023). Zahoor et al. (2019) noted that the Pakistan CJS has not always been able to address the systemic issues pertaining to the criminal investigation. Political interference and corruption add to the impediment, allowing the powers to buy their freedom from the law by paying a bribe or by some sort of manipulation of the legal procedure (Iqbal, Saleem, and Baig, 2023). Due to this, miscarriages of justice occur, and there is widespread discontent with the judicial process (Bibi et al., 2022).

Trials are extremely slow and there is a backlog of cases to an extent that delays the administration of justice, which in turn benefits the accused (Korai, Ghaffar and Samad, 2023). There are no strict deadlines for trials and the abuse of procedural means by defence attorneys to postpone the proceedings (Arshad, 2017) and this worsens things. Systemic

delays make it more of a culture where the guilty goes unpunished, exacerbating people's suspicion of the justice system (Ahmed and Von Wangenheim, 2021).

The broad purpose of this study is to explore the structural, procedural, legal factors that play an important role in contributing to a high acquittal rate of Pakistan in light of insufficient operation of the Criminal Justice System. It analyses these deficiencies' influence on the conviction process and suggests possible reforms to raise the criminal justice system's efficiency and fairness. This research attempts to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on legal reform in Pakistan by identifying the root causes of acquittals and providing evidence based solutions, so that policy makers or researchers can have useful insights for them to contemplate change and for future research in the field.

## Literature Review

### *Systemic Inefficiencies in Law Enforcement*

In function of the high acquittal rates it is one of the most outstanding contributing factors the inefficiency of law enforcement agencies. And as investigators are poorly trained, and often do not bother to collect evidence in the field, and by that, do not follow standard investigation procedures, studies point toward inadequacies in investigative practices. They demonstrate that due to a lack of law enforcement officer access to modern forensic tools, the quality of the evidence collected is decreased and therefore the prosecution's case becomes weaker. This issue is further compounded by the way evidence is mishandled during the investigative stage to such an extent that a case is dismissed for a lack of preserving important information. It also plays a major part on political interference and corruption within investigative agencies, as the latter usually renders the investigating process not credible. Consequently, the system faces public distrust, and this affects legitimacy of judicial outputs (Mehmood, Seror and Chen, 2023).

### *Challenges in Prosecutorial Performance*

Furthermore, the prosecution participates decisively in ensuring that the criminals are brought into line; however, such a branch of the criminal justice system is undermined in its effectiveness by lack of resources, underfunding, and loss of trained legal expertise (Ali, Bari and Zia, 2023). Kolencik (2021) states that insufficient case preparation results from poor coordination between police investigators and prosecutors, making these weaknesses worse. It also means defence attorneys can play the technicality and procedural deficiencies to acquittal's advantage. In addition, Pakistan does not have witness protection programs which worsens this situation. For instance, since they are afraid of being retaliated against for testifying, key witnesses do not testify, and as a result, the prosecution lacks vital testimony that is usually crucial to obtaining convictions (Shaikh and Ahmed, 2023).

### *Judicial Inefficiency and Backlogs*

A key factor of Pakistan's high acquittal rates is judicial inefficiency. In fact, the country's criminal justice system is full of delays, overburdened judges, and outdated legal frameworks that impede timely dispensation of justice (Sultan and Fatima, 2024). As noted by Shah et al. (2023), these delays add on to the already high case backlog and hinder prompt trials while degrading evidence, especially where cases take numerous years to progress. Trial processes are often prolonged in which accused persons have to be acquitted for not having sufficient or reliable evidence to convict them. In addition, to this, gender and class biases in the very cultural world, in which the space of judicial power operates, also influence judicial decision making, thus eroding fairness and impartiality as well (McDermott, 2016).

### ***Corruption and Political Influence in the Judiciary***

The problem of corruption in the judiciary is deeply woven into the fabric of the criminal justice system. According to various studies, bribery, nepotism and political influence are considered important reasons for high acquittal rate in Pakistan. In the case of Friedman (2015), she states that wealthier accuseds or 'wired in' accuseds (those with political connections) can manipulate judicial outcomes through bribery, relationships and other such means, resulting in trials going in the accused's favour even when all other conditions would suggest guilt. The occurrence of such corrupt practices not only corrupt the results of an individual case but also lead to the decline of the public trust in the legal system. Additionally, legal proceedings involving very costly bills act as a barrier to economically disadvantaged people in getting a lawyer and provide a pool for inequity in the justice process (Biju, Hambly, and Joshi, 2021).

### ***Public Sentiments on Acquittals in Pakistan***

High rate of acquittal in Pakistan is casting an adverse impact upon the public at large. Public reactions to acquittals in Pakistan exist on a spectrum from doubt to endorsement and these reactions depend on local socio-political aspects and media representation along with details of the committed offense. Strong emotional public reactions frequently occur after acquittal verdicts become public mainly when famous figures or influential accuseds are involved. Public opinion poll results from Gallup Pakistan Research Center demonstrate that 60% of survey participants did not believe court decisions represented justice fairly (Gallup Pakistan, 2020). People usually view court acquittals which affect political elite and corruption cases as indications of fundamental corruption patterns spread throughout the legal system. Due to the frequent acquittal of accuseds even from the genuine cases, the victims or the legal heirs of the victims as the case may be are forced to take the law into their hands, they are compelled to take the revenge and pacify their grievances at their own ends.

Certain parts of the population maintain that acquittals help to maintain fair justice practices and defend accused's rights but others disagree. The belief that individuals remain innocent before prosecution drives public thought but media-created narratives about well-known persons tend to obscure this principle. According to a Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) (2021) survey 45% of Pakistani citizens agree that court decisions to release accuseds stem from outside influences yet 32% believe that defective trial procedures should result in acquittals.

Socio cultural factors apart from institutional inefficiencies are responsible for the high rate of acquittals. Societal norms based on honour, tribal influences and use of informal justice systems (jirgas and others) often override process of formal justice systems. Such practices, in addition, make victims withdraw a case or resolve dispute outside of the formal judicial system making the legal procedure even more detached from its essence (Clamp et al., 2022). Biju et al. (2021) further observe that in most cases, informal justice mechanisms are relied upon by individuals, and their decisions do not conform to legal principles, which induces individuals to completely bypass the formal system. For example, such dynamics do not only reduce the credibility of the criminal justice system, but also bring courage to perpetrators who rarely face any legal trials for their actions.

### ***Proposed Solutions and Reforms***

In order to fix these systemic deficiencies, scholars have suggested various reforms for hardening the Pakistani criminal justice system. It's critical though to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to be able to do better modern training, better training with forensic technology, better accountability mechanisms. Kolencik (2021) states that to ensure that cases are adequately prepared for trial there is a need for developing the coordination

among the investigators and prosecutors. Reforms in police department are indispensable. Additionally, judicial reforms aimed at introducing specialized courts to handle backlogs in cases, to ensure that cases are heard expeditiously as well as trials conducted in a timely manner should be also instituted. Moreover, improving the operation of the witness protection programs and tackling corruption within judiciary is necessary to regain the public trust in the system (Ali, Bari, and Zia, 2023; Mehmood et al., 2023).

### ***Need for Legal and Cultural Shifts***

The literature on acquittals related to crimes against women in Pakistan highlighted a heavy need for legal, procedural, and wider social reforms to deal with such a high acquittal rate. Reforms of the law and at the service of the law have to tackle inefficiencies and loopholes within the process of investigation and prosecution. Nevertheless, according to Clamp et al. (2022), these legal reforms must be supported by cultural shifts in the legal system and in the wider society in order for a sustainable change to occur. The reduction of the acquittal rate and in general better functioning of the criminal justice system will also result from addressing deeply ingrained biases, increased transparency and public awareness of legal rights and procedures.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Theory of Procedural Justice***

Procedural justice stresses the need for fairness and transparency in the legal procedure, suggesting that people to agree with a legal end when they consider the process to be just (Schaap and Saarikkomäki, 2022). Although these acquittals concern outcomes of the criminal justice system, this theory holds that the legitimacy of said criminal justice system is dependent on how fairly people feel they were treated in legal proceedings. For example, in Pakistan context, Procedural flaws e.g. Investigation bias or mishandling of evidence may compromise public's faith in the procedure (Sargeant, Davoren, and Murphy, 2021). When these perceptions of unfairness are combined with a general loss of faith in the judicial process, scepticism and an absence of confidence in acquittals and other judicial decisions will only perpetuate the process of public disillusionment. As such, enhancing procedural fairness is important to restore legitimacy and enhancing public trust in the criminal justice system.

### ***Theory of Crime and Social Control***

The Theory of Crime and Social Control complements this understanding of high acquittal rate by placing more emphasis on social structures, economics, and institutional corruption that form the basis of criminality and judicial decisions (Billis and Nandor, 2018). This theory holds that social controls including effective law enforcement and the existence of socio economic structures contribute a great deal towards the maintenance of the societal order. In Pakistan, systemic corruption in law enforcement and judiciary as well as socio economic inequalities aggravate the high acquittal rates. According to Gondal et al. (2023), corruption and poor evidence collection lead towards weak cases making it difficult to go for the conviction. In addition, the socio economic context of high poverty and unemployment, predisposes conditions which promote criminality and as such are more likely among the marginalised groups. Poor legal representation attributed to the poor socio economic conditions of the accuseds makes the criminal justice system even weaker (Ali and Bibi, 2020).

Moreover, the Theory of Social Control suggests having strong legal requirements, as well as their effective implementation, in order to avoid crime. Crime control and justice administration is complex in Pakistan due to legal loopholes by itself; Pakistani penal law is



outdated, the judicial system is filled with procedural delays, and forensic tools are insufficient (Kahan, 2019). To change this high acquittal rates and develop a functional criminal justice system, reforming the judicial system, enhancing law enforcement training, modernizing the legal infrastructure, and even introducing more coherence and organisation at the local level (Brutti and Montolio, 2021) among others are essential.

### Materials and Methods

This research employs a combined qualitative and doctrinal research method to investigate the fact that Pakistani criminal justice system has recorded high acquittal rates. Stakeholders such as prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement personnel are interviewed structured interviews that help to shed light on the practical challenges, practicalities and perceptions of those running the justice system, for example length of delays, inefficiencies and corruption. Legal text doctrinal analysis of statutes and precedential judicial decisions may identify gaps or ambiguities either in the legal framework (e.g., evidentiary standards that are inconsistently interpreted among decisional units) that become a cause for acquittals. Through this study, the researcher integrates these methods to provide a complete multi-dimensional account of what are the factors leading to acquittals and the procedural distortions in the system, where empirical data and the legal theory march together to suggest the appropriate reforms (Cilesiz and Greckhamer, 2020; Shukla, 2023; Schaefer and Alvesson, 2017).

This research's target population includes judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal inspectors/DSPS (legal) have been selected as key actors in Pakistan's criminal justice system. These groups were chosen given their central positions in the evaluation, prosecution, and protection and judging of cases, which each and every one result in the high acquittal rates. Judicial discretion and procedural delays were covered by judges, while prosecutors looked at difficulties in presenting evidence and in securing convictions. Legal representatives acknowledged shortcomings in coverage, while legal inspectors pointed out deficiencies in the investigation. To further achieve diversity in age, gender, professional experience, and geographic distribution, the former ensured that their research covered a broad spectrum of opinions on the systemic impediments that influence acquittal rates. Additional insights derived from geographic differences between urban and rural areas included forensic resources that are not present in rural areas in comparison to those that are overburdened dockets in urban centres. By taking an inclusive approach, the research could thus take on the problem of lower rates of acquittal within the criminal justice system in Pakistan as a multifaceted phenomenon. This has also allowed the researcher to observe public sentiments on Pakistani criminal justice system.

The sample of 120 participants were involved in this research divided equally into the four categories of the four key stake holder in Pakistan's criminal justice system being thirty (30) Judges, thirty (30) prosecutors, thirty (30) advocates and thirty (30) police Inspectors. To achieve data saturation, where no new themes emerged from further interviews, which means that the sample was rich enough to thoroughly address the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2019), this sample size was selected. Through interviews, qualitative data were gathered in diverse experiences of stakeholders, such as from those with different work duties and from different regions, to help a comprehensive understanding for systemic issues. Furthermore, legal document analysis was also embedded twenty years backward, dealing with case law, statutes, and judicial reports providing historical and legal context for the qualitative findings. This combination of primary and secondary data sources enabled the research to pick up both current challenges and long term procedural fluxes. Since diverse

demographic variables, for example, age, Gender and region were included in the inquiry, this made the sample inclusive in the sense that it involved a wide variety of opinions regarding gender prejudices, regional inequalities, and experience in the work. The structured interviews and the legal document analysis together thus constituted a robust and triangulated approach of probing the underlying factors responsible for the high acquittal rates in the criminal justice system of Pakistan.

Thematic analysis is used by the research as the first method of data analysis to look at both qualitative interview data and doctrinal legal research (Christou, 2022). Using Braun and Clarke's six phase framework (2006) this method offers a systematic way to identify and deduce patterns from the data to investigate the systemic failures that underlie highly acquittal rates of criminal justice system in Pakistan. The process starts with familiarizing the data, generation of the initial codes and the theme search in which similar codes are clubbed in the bigger themes. They are then reviewed, defined and named to encapsulate major problems of ineffectiveness in forensics, inadequate investigative coordination and witness intimidation. The last phase is to integrate the findings into a single narrative consistent addressing of qualitative insights with legal precedents and scholarly literature. A concrete example of this is in the form of one of the main themes, witness intimidation, which is identified in a thematic analysis as an obstacle for them to get convictions where both judges and prosecutors see it as a serious deficit in the legal framework. Moreover, the study also applies doctrinal analysis to analyse statutory provisions, case law and judicial interpretations to assess how legal inconsistency and judicial discretion contributes in acquittal trends especially in the specialized courts i.e. Anti-Terrorism Courts (Singh, 2020). In what follows, the research explains high acquittal rates by means of combining thematic and doctrinal analysis of the procedural inefficiencies and legal gaps.

## Results and Discussion

### *Thematic Analysis*

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed six key themes contributing to the high acquittal rate:

Table 1: Themes and Description

Theme	Description
Defective Investigation and Weak Evidence Collection	Backed by improper investigations, outdated techniques, and lousy forensics, Torture handling seriously worsens the cases and results in acquittals.
Prosecutorial Weaknesses and Lack of Coordination with Police	The main issues in this field are that the police forces and the prosecutors can fail to present strong and relevant cases and that the side of the defense positions of the prosecution.
Procedural Loopholes and Legal Complexities	Still, criminal cases' legal and procedural characteristics activate lawyers to argue and get clients acquitted based on contradictions.
Judicial Discretion and the Benefit of Doubt Principle	The evidential value of the benefit of doubt principle is overestimated, and accusds are acquitted in even cases with strong circumstantial evidence.
Corruption and External Influences	This represents a serious problem because corruption in the police, prosecution, and judiciary hinders investigations and trials, adversely affecting cases.
Lack of Training and	Lack of training and use of previous investigation practices

Outdated Legal Practices	significantly affect evidence gathering and trial justice.
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### *Defective Investigation and Weak Evidence Collection*

Judges of district Judiciary, public prosecutors, lawyers at criminal side and police officers (legal) among the respondents agreed that faulty and defective police investigation served as the main reason of high rate of acquittal in Pakistan. The system faced several major weaknesses because police officers failed to appropriately gather evidence and broke down forensic evidence when also using obsolete investigative techniques (Hashmi & Adnan 2024). Respondents confirmed that police officers fail to keep up with modern investigative standards and skills because of which their prepared court cases fall below required legal standards. During an interview with judge of district judiciary Punjab, he observed, “*Bad investigation is the main problem.*” A legal inspector from KPK had similar views, saying, “*Old patterns and new techniques are not taught in training.*” Thorough evidence handling breakdowns lead to both substantial damage as well as important evidence loss which substantially diminishes the prosecution's ability to proceed. The GB judge of district Judiciary recently described a particular case of mishandled forensic evidence in which it was revealed during trial proceedings that the evidence had been mistreated, “*the DNA sample used in the court was not well preserved, thus had to be thrown away to commit an acquittal.*”

### *Prosecutorial Weaknesses and Lack of Coordination with Police*

Public prosecutors and judges frequently mentioned police-prosecution non-cooperation as a cause for the presentation of weak cases in court proceedings. A public prosecutor stated that “*defective investigation serves as the foundation of all Pakistani evils.*” According to a different prosecutor an improperly obtained evidence will result in an ultimate case dismissal. Organizational breakdown between police and prosecution forces the preparation of inadequate cases that defense attorneys use to exploit evidence gaps and inconsistencies during trials. The judge from district Judiciary Punjab noted there were frequent instances in which the prosecution personnel were unprepared because police did not provide them with all case details. The public prosecutor of Sindh revealed difficulties securing convictions due to defective and missing evidence in investigation reports that the office receives. The principal difficulty which prevents prosecutors from achieving success exists in the inadequate communication between police investigating authorities and public prosecutors. The Balochistan’s judge from district Judiciary explained that lack of document visibility between investigators and prosecutors creates judicial errors which defense attorneys capitalize into their advantage.

### *Procedural Loopholes and Legal Complexities*

The participants' responses demonstrated that the legal complexities that are present in the Pakistan judiciary benefit the defense. This added that the accused is free to take pleas, making it even more cumbersome. A judge also remarked, “*The criminal justice system always needs a quality investigation in a criminal case.*” Usually, defense attorneys seek to exploit loopholes such as inconsistencies and contradictions of the statement given by the essence of the opposite party. Many bore witness; for example, a public prosecutor in Punjab remarked, “*The prosecution is under obligation to win the case, whereas all defense has to do is create doubt.*” Crime victims often fail to get justice because individuals with no genuine reasons manage to avoid conviction even though they are actually guilty. A Sindh’s legal inspector stated during an interview, “*Many of them are triumphant on contradictions here rather than the substance of the case.*”

### *Judicial Discretion and the Benefit of Doubt Principle*

The concept of benefit of the doubt stands as a principal concern throughout Pakistan's legal system because judges and legal inspectors alongside prosecutors identify this issue as a major problem (Hussain, 2023). The principle exists to defend people against baseless criminal case but judges observe that it gets misused frequently causing numerous acquittal. In the above statement a legal practitioner described his experience saying, *"This is a universal principle of criminal law, but in Pakistan, it is used unnecessarily for the acquittal."* One of the judges from Punjab specified, *"While they are minor discrepancies, they are enough to set any accused free."* One of the judges from Punjab specified, *"While they are minor discrepancies, they are enough to set any accused free."* Several respondents expressed concern and said that while it is evident that the accused is guilty, the courts compromise the matters and release the accused persons. A public prosecutor from KPK, regretfully supporting the statement of his counterparts from KP, said, *"Judges no longer do anything daring. They think small technicalities may help the defense team on appeal."*

### *Corruption and External Influences*

Political influence or pressure, inefficiency or corruption within the police, judiciary, and prosecution were often the causes of wrong acquittals. Most of the interview participants demonstrated their dissatisfaction about external conditions which corrupt trial proceedings due to bribery alongside political pressure and other performance-related tactics. A legal inspector from Punjab said, *"There is [an effect of corruption and bribery], and they do halt in some cases till acquitting."* According to some participants police investigations suffer from bribery problems that cause officers to manipulate evidence which allows cases against accused to become weaker. The public prosecutor from Sindh stated in an interview, *"Sometimes, police make some aspects of a case withheld or mess up enough so that the case does not prove anywhere."* Independent investigations become unavailable for each party because of which powerful individuals successfully escape punishment despite the law's intended authority. Ordinary citizens lose all power because justice remains inaccessible to them in this current social environment.

### *Lack of Training and Outdated Legal Practices*

The interview participants highlighted that inadequate training practices and old-fashioned legal processes function as major problems. Survey results highlight an insufficient understanding by legal professionals consisting of police investigators alongside prosecutors along with some defense attorneys about current legal practices. The lack of proper comprehension about modern forensic analysis leads to unreliable case evidence which results in unjustified acquittals. One legal inspector noted, *"It is sheer wrong to learn things through recipes other than the prescribed standard operation procedures."* Numerous interview subjects stated their understanding that police organizations depend on proven techniques instead of evidence-based procedures for their investigations. Most people in Pakistan hold the view that police investigations suffer from disorganization because officers use outdated techniques which fail to meet current legal requirements.

### *Doctrinal Analysis*

Public reactions toward judicial decisions including business leader and politician acquittals frequently become intense because citizens debate that judicial systems are potentially biased because of their association with wealth and power. Digital platforms maintain opposing discussions about verdict results because opponents of acquitted figures condemn them with force yet defenders view such decisions as beneficial for judicial processes. Judicial independence along with the concept of fairness generate opposition because they represent opposing perspectives about fundamental legal matters. The Pakistani



public displays diverse perspectives about acquittals since some see them as vital tools for ensuring justice yet other people interpret them as indications that the judicial system requires reform.

The lack of coordination between police personnel and prosecution creates numerous failure for criminal cases throughout Pakistan. A successful prosecution process demands investigators to maintain active cooperation with prosecutors so evidence presents sufficient legal standards before the trial begins. The contradictory work approach between Pakistan's police and prosecutors creates inconsistent statements of evidence and witness testimonies during investigations. Lack of proper forensic evidence collection together with unlawful witness testimony from police results in unfinished case files which prevents prosecutors from constructing robust cases. Interagency failures to operate together fail to produce strong legal cases leading to trial failures (Baloch 2024; Khadam et al. 2019).

Delays together with procedural delays have turned into consistent elements within Pakistan's criminal judicial framework. Legal protections designed for citizen rights serve both defense attorneys and accuseds who make use of them to delay proceedings or secure dismissals of court cases. Defense attorneys typically file baseless procedural questions as part of their adjournment strategy. Criminal proceedings become lengthier while losing focus on essential case details because of defense attorneys who rely primarily on bits of legal details (Khan et al., 2023). The extended trial duration causes evidence to decay and allows intimidation and influence to prejudice the legal case against the accused (Lal et al., 2023). The application of dilatory procedures helps obstruct the progression of criminal cases involving assault and theft alongside robbery even when prosecutors demonstrate clear evidence regarding accused individuals.

The justice system of Pakistan follows adversarial court procedures because they demand the prosecution team to establish criminal wrongdoing past what the jury can reasonably doubt. The Pakistani judiciary together with the Supreme Court upholds that prosecution bears the responsibility to establish criminal cases beyond any reasonable doubt. The judicial system requires strong substantial evidence to make convictions because court authorities reject evidence that is superficial or uncertain. The legal principle received further recognition through judgments including "*Muhammad Asif Vs. The State*" (2017 SCMR 486) and "*Muhammad Mansha Vs. The State*" (2018 SCMR 772) the judicial body declared suspicion by itself cannot fulfill the requirements of legal evidence. Furthermore, in case law titled "*Sajid Ali Vs. The State*" (2019 PLD 725) the Supreme Court analyzed the significance of stable unbiased witness statements while questioning altered testimonial evidence. Reliable forensic evidence becomes unavailable when inconsistent details exist between witnesses or facts which creates reasonable doubt that leads frequently to accuseds freedom through acquittal. Many criminal trials in Pakistan depend on eyewitness testimony but this fundamental evidence proves unreliable because both police intimidation and natural decay of memory affect witnesses throughout the proceedings (Umar & Khan, 2022). The criminal prosecution system loses its power to obtain convictions when such situations occur.

The criminal law foundation of Pakistan exists through the Pakistan Penal Code which was established during 1860. The Pakistan Penal Code organizes criminal offenses according to their status as cognizable and non-cognizable as well as bailable and non-bailable and compoundable and non-compoundable. The Pakistan Penal Code extensively covers various criminal acts from murder to theft and embezzlement and treason but its inconsistent application particularly in sentencing produces ongoing legal obstacles (Aziz et al., 2024).

## Conclusion

The research studied all major systemic elements which contribute to Pakistan's criminal justice system producing high acquittal percentages. Several vital obstacles and procedural shortcomings were recognized which diminish fairness and reduce efficiency throughout the legal system because of judicial freedom together with investigative weakness and limited forensic use. The research examined legal structures together with court conducts and investigation operations to discover improper acquittal origins while offering necessary reform solutions.

The study established that judicial discretion stands as a main factor within criminal justice system operations because judges inconsistently implement legal guidelines. Judges in Pakistan regularly use their discretion to decide cases which ultimately leads to significant differences between verdicts in what seems like parallel cases. The research indicated that judicial freedom helps deliver justice through specific cases yet demonstrates inconsistent and non-transparent use by judges. A range of elements like personal biases together with political pressure and the absence of official sentencing rules cause these inconsistencies. When high-profile cases gain extensive media attention and political involvement it becomes perceived that courts may grant acquittals despite formidable evidence because of external forces. The absence of standardization between verdicts creates major problems that damage the trust people have in the judicial system while increasing doubts concerning just treatment of everyone. Public faith in rule of law diminishes and wrongful acquittals rise because public opinion sees judicial decisions as arbitrary when they yield various results from similar cases.

Future researchers should perform extended research following legal policy changes to study their enduring influence on trial outcome results. Although this analysis uncovers core factors in high acquittal rates through judicial authority as well as procedural requirements and investigative challenges it fails to deliver comprehensive research on how proposed legal transformation would affect criminal justice operations throughout time. Research should focus further on judicial discretion because it continues to produce many acquittals. Future studies need to study judicial decision-making processes in criminal trials along with the elements which guide judges' verdict decisions because judicial discretion serves as one main cause of verdict inconsistencies. Research should explore judicial conduct regarding political and powerful accused's cases to establish whether these categories increase judicial use of discretion?

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