

Judicial Red Tapism Towards the Appeals of Death Cell's Prisoners: A Case Study of Central Adiala Jail Rawalpindi

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Abstract

Pakistan's criminal justice system has traditionally been slow and inefficient, notably for death penalty cases. This study explores how court red tape bureaucratic inaction, procedural delays, and administrative bottlenecks affects death row prisoner appeals. The study examined how procedural delays in the appeal system effect death row prisoners' mental health, how judicial and administrative inefficiencies play a role, and how to speed up and make legal proceedings fair based on evidence. A structured interview schedule was used to acquire quantitative data from 35 death row prisoners at Central Adiala Jail. Determine variable relationships using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), inferential statistics (correlation and regression), and chi-square tests. Delayed appeal outcomes were strongly linked to severe mental distress like worry, depression, and hopelessness. Legal help was usually poor, and administrative issues including not getting case updates and bureaucratic red tape caused prolonged detention. Regression analysis showed that administrative issues were the strongest predictor of prisoner psychological distress. The findings demonstrate the necessity to reform the courts. We need to fast-track death penalty appeals, ensure everyone gets the same legal help, improve prisoner communication, and provide psychological support. Without systemic improvements, judicial red tape will prevent justice, violate human rights, and trap the most vulnerable in prison.

Keywords: Judicial Red Tapism, Death Row Prisoners, Criminal Justice System, Adiala Jail, Judicial Reform

Introduction

All civilized civilizations value fairness in their legal and moral systems. It ensures fairness and legitimizes state institutions. This is especially essential in criminal law when the punishment is the death penalty, which is irreversible and has serious consequences¹. Pakistani death row defendants' appeals sometimes get bogged down in judicial red tape due to bureaucratic sloth, a lack of resources, and systemic inefficiencies². Long and unnecessary procedural delays make it hard to conclude judicial proceedings, especially those involving vulnerable people like death row inmates. Pakistan has long struggled with an overcrowded and ineffective justice system. One of the world's largest death row populations is 8,000. Delays in appeals undermine the accused's constitutional rights and raise ethical and human rights issues³. Central Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, a massive detention institution that houses detainees and those on trial, including death row inmates, houses many of these inmates. The prisoners

¹ Anonymous. (2017). *The judicial system in Pakistan*. <http://www.essaysauce.com>

² Abubakar, F. (2019). *Islamic family law reform: Early marriage and criminalization (A comparative study of legal law in Indonesia and Pakistan)*.

³ Amnesty International. (2021). *Death Sentences and Executions 2020*. <https://www.amnesty.org>

wait years, often decades, in death cells for their appeals or mercy requests. Many offenders exhaust their legal and executive alternatives before receiving their sentence or commute⁴. During this lengthy procedure, inmates often develop major psychological issues, feel isolated, and feel like outsiders. Reform is desperately needed. Pakistan's Penal Code and Islamic law favor the death penalty for murder (qatal), blasphemy, rape, and terrorism. Article 10-A of Pakistan's Constitution guarantees a fair trial, although a lengthy judicial process waives this privilege. Pakistan maintained a de facto death penalty moratorium from 2008 to 2024. After the 2024 Peshawar Army Public School incident, the restriction was lifted. This increased executions and necessitated a review of death penalty appeals⁵. Pakistan's criminal justice system has Sessions Courts, High Courts, and the Supreme Court. After conviction, appeals move through these layers. Article 45 of the Constitution allows a mercy petition to the President as a final appeal. But red tape holds up every layer. The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan⁶ reported that case management, adjournments, missing witnesses, inadequate investigations, and not maintaining digital documents impede the criminal justice system. Bilal et al.⁷ of the Justice Project Pakistan (JPP), a prisoner rights group, said death row inmates at Adiala Jail wait over 10 years for their appeals. This time frame includes appeal court hearing dates, argument scheduling, decision writing, and President's Secretariat mercy plea processing. These delays violate domestic and international law, including the ICCPR, which Pakistan has signed. ICCPR Article 6 emphasizes the right to life, and delayed or random executions are human rights disasters. Bureaucrats and administrators practice "red Tapism" by following rules and regulations too strictly, which slows down and stagnates processes. Red tape in the legal system includes delays, misplaced case files, long judicial leaves, insufficient staff, and tight restrictions. This inaction is due to the large quantity of open cases. All Pakistani courts have almost 2 million cases pending, according to the Supreme Court's 2023 annual report. Death row inmates suffer more from this backlog. Delays cause issues and endanger lives, freedom, and dignity⁸. Underfunded legal assistance worsens court delays. Most death row inmates are destitute and can't afford a help. According to the Constitution, the state must assist poor defendants with legal concerns, yet it is either unavailable, inadequate, or careless. According to the HRCP⁹, 76% of Punjab death row prisoners were represented by state-appointed lawyers who were inexperienced and unprepared during trials and appeals. This renders appeals and legal remedies ineffective, keeping people on death row longer and increasing the likelihood of injustice¹⁰. Central Adiala Jail detainees' petitions have been stalled at various times. Some await trial court rulings, while others await appellate court dates. The Supreme Court's 2024 *Shahbaz Masih vs. State* judgment required mercy applications to be heard within 90 days. Sometimes they remain open for more than two years¹¹. Hussain et al.¹² name the long stay on death row without a fixed death date the "death row phenomenon."

⁴ Arshad, S. J. (2017). *Criminal justice system in Pakistan: A critical analysis*. <http://courtingthelaw.com>

⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2017). *State of Human Rights in 2016*.

⁶ Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan. (2018). *Causes of Delay in Disposal of Cases and Recommendations for Early Clearance*.

⁷ Bilal, H. A., Tariq, A. R., Aleem, U., Shabbir, S. I., & Parveen, M. (2023). The effect of nuclear and joint family systems on academic achievements of students. *Academic Research International*, 4(5), 543–549.

⁸ Bohm, R. M. (2016). *Death quest: An introduction to the theory and practice of capital punishment in the United States* (5th ed.). Routledge.

⁹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). (2020). *State of human rights in 2019*. Lahore: HRCP Publications. <https://hrcp-web.org/publication/south-asia-death-penalty/>

¹⁰ Chowdhury, M. M. R. (2024). A study on delay in the disposal of civil litigation: Bangladesh perspective. *The International Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(1), 27–35.

¹¹ Hassan, M. Z., Siddiqui, B. N., & Irshad, M. N. (2025). Effects of socio-economic aspects of mango growers on the adoption of recommended horticulture practices. *Pakistan Journal of Agriculture and Science*, 39(1), 20–22.

¹² Hussain, M., Dinar, H., & Ghazanfar, S. (2024). Prolonged litigation: Finding causes and factors impeding justice provision in Pakistan. *The Explorer Islamabad: Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(9), 320–323.

Living with the possibility of execution causes this psychological pain. Death row inmates are isolated, have poor hygiene, poor medical treatment, and rarely see their family. According to Dr. Nida Kirmani's 2019 Pakistan Journal of Criminology study, long-term capital case prisoners are more prone to be depressed, worried, and suicidal. Same for Central Adiala Jail. Death row inmates can't participate in rehabilitation or education programs, making them feel even more isolated¹³. Numerous international human rights laws, including the UN Human Rights Committee, have said that prolonged and unjustifiable execution or appeal delays are cruel, inhuman, and degrading. The UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death sentence (2020) recommend using the death sentence only after following the finest legal procedures. Systemic delays in Pakistan are much below these standards.

Institutional indifference contributes to red tape culture, Hussain et al.¹⁴ Death row cases aren't always prioritized since the courts are so busy and the media and civic society aren't pressuring them. Thus, the prosecution and courts don't care about expediting these appeals. Law modifications such case-flow management systems, computerized case tracking, and judicial performance reports are either ignored or not implemented. How the executive branch handles mercy pleas contribute to the culture of delay, according to Hameed¹⁵ and Hashmi¹⁶. The Ministry of Interior sometimes delays mercy requests. Departments share files, law enforcement agencies provide feedback, and bureaucratic processes prolong the prisoner's agony. The President of Pakistan can alter sentences under Article 45, but he or she rarely does, therefore this last resort is unavailable. One of Pakistan's most notorious and overcrowded prisons is Rawalpindi's Central Adiala Jail¹⁷. It has almost 6,000 prisoners, many on death row. The jail is close to Islamabad and holds high-profile detainees, therefore it has been in the news and court multiple times. Visibility hasn't changed the system. Local human rights groups say death row prisoners in Adiala Jail share too-small cells, don't get proper medical care, and have problems filing appeals or talking to lawyers due to red tape. In 2021, the Foundation for Fundamental Rights (FFR) found that 62% of Adiala Jail death row inmates were unaware of their appeals. Since they were in jail for so long, many couldn't access their legal files or contact their relatives. This ignorance contributes to legal representation and accountability issues¹⁸. All of Punjab uses the British Council-funded Justice System Support Program (JSSP). It has sought to digitize prison records and make legal help easier, but bureaucracies remain slow. Central Adiala Jail represents human suffering and societal failure¹⁹. Due to court red tape's devastating effects on death row inmates, Pakistan's criminal justice goals must be rethought. It goes beyond management and is systemic. Since Pakistan is a signatory to international human rights treaties²⁰, its justice system must ensure due process, fairness, and expediency, notably in death penalty cases.²¹ Courts, law enforcement, legal education, jail management,

¹³ Hameed, H., & Jamshed, M. (2023). *A study of the criminal law and prosecution system in Pakistan*. <http://manzilpakistan.org>

¹⁴ Hussain, N., Khan, A., & Chandio, L. A. (2023). Legal safeguards against mob justice: An analysis of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and international human rights norms.

¹⁵ Hameed, A. (2021). *Crime, punishment and correction of criminals*. Central Jail Staff Training Institute, Bureau of Research and Diplomat, Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan.

¹⁶ Hashmi, S. I. A. (2019). *Criminology and correction case work*. Central Jail Staff Training Institute, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

¹⁸ Hassan, M. (2023). Military court trials of civilians in Pakistan: Constitutional rights, international obligations and sustainable justice. *Policy Perspectives*, 20(2), 1–18.

¹⁹ Khan, R. M. A. (2024). *Ehasas*. Punjab Prisons Staff Training Institute, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

²⁰ Kanwel, S., ul Hassan, S. S., & Ayub, N. (2023a). Critical analysis of sentences in the criminal justice system of Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom*, 2(2), 547–555.

²¹ Kanwel, S., Yasmin, T., & Usman, M. (2023b). Crime and human rights in Pakistan: An analysis in light of international law. *Traditional Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 71–81.

and civil society must be overhauled²². Setting appeal deadlines, independent examination of death sentence cases, and institutional support for legal aid are needed to break the cycle of delay and rejection. Poor institutional supervision, legal representation, access to justice for poor prisoners, and administrative apathy worsen the issue. Thus, the justice system's inability to produce timely capital case outcomes breaks faith in the rule of law, raises moral and legal concerns regarding erroneous executions, and requires prompt institutional changes. This paper examines how judicial red tape impacts Central Adiala Jail death row prisoners' appeals process and seeks policy, legal, and administrative answers to these long-standing structural issues.

Research Objectives

- To examine the effects of delays in the courts on death row prisoners' psychological, legal rights, and human rights, with a focus on the results of appeals.
- To analyze bureaucratic and judicial inefficiencies that cause protracted delays in capital sentencing cases, include red tape, administrative roadblocks, and limited legal help.
- To suggest possible solution to address this problem to fix systemic delays by reorganizing the courts, better managing cases, and making accountability systems stronger.

Literature Review

Pakistan became a nation in 1947, and its death punishment is contentious. Pakistan has capital punishment under the PPC and CrPC. This follows colonial and Islamic law. The death penalty is commonly utilized despite international pressure, domestic criticism, and concerns about its fairness, proportionality, and deterrence²³. British colonial penal laws shaped Pakistan's death penalty statutes. Several offenses were punished with the death penalty under the Indian Penal Code of 1860, which was later adopted by Pakistan. Murder (qatl-i-amd), blasphemy, treason, kidnapping for ransom, and terrorism were still capital offences after independence. Law revisions increased the list of capital crimes throughout time. Pakistani law permitted the death punishment for over 27 crimes in the 1990s, one of the highest rates in the world²⁴. From 1977 to 1988, General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamic rules increased the death sentence. Hudood Ordinances, Qisas, and Diyat laws created capital offenses such adultery, apostasy, and blasphemy. These laws were often vague and lacked procedural safeguards²⁵. Sharia-based law made the death penalty more common and harder to abolish since it was regarded as an affront on religious beliefs. Article 9 of the Pakistani Constitution provides the right to life, however it can be taken "in accordance with law." This allows capital punishment to grow. According to Shah & Ahmad²⁶, the Pakistan Penal Code calls for the death punishment for certain crimes. Section 302 is most famous. Willful murder carries a death sentence or life in prison, depending on the court. Qisas (retribution) allows the victim's heirs to request the death punishment, forgive the perpetrator, or take blood money. Military courts and special legislation can execute subversives and state enemies. The range of capital offenses illustrates that the criminal justice system uses strong punishments to deter crime. Critics claim this broad application is unfair, especially when legal systems are flawed and judges don't always utilize their discretion²⁷. Capital punishment is permitted in Pakistan; however, executions have altered over time²⁸. Executions were virtually banned from 2008 to 2024, save in high-profile terrorism instances. Internal policy discussions and EU pressure forced the moratorium, which was a prerequisite

²² Kakar, M. S. (2022). Dissecting the Asia Bibi case: A critical analysis of blasphemy law in Pakistan. *Journal of International Law and Islamic Law*, 18, 66.

²³ Schwaeble, K. L., & Sundt, J. (2020). Attitudes and public opinion about punishment. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. <https://oxfordre.com>

²⁴ Hood, R., & Hoyle, C. (2021). *The Death Penalty: A Worldwide Perspective*. Oxford University Press.

²⁵ Kennedy, C. H. (2019). *Islamization and Legal Reform in Pakistan, 1979–1989*.

²⁶ Shah, R. U., & Ahmad, J. (2016). Delayed judicial processes in civil courts and peacemaking in Pakistan. *Science International*, 28(4), 561–569.

²⁷ International Commission of Jurists. (2017). *Use and Abuse of the Death Penalty in Pakistan*.

²⁸ Siddiqi, F. (2016). *Is speedy justice possible?* <https://www.dawn.com>

for obtaining Pakistan GSP+ trade status ²⁹. After the APS Peshawar tragedy in December 2024, the restriction was lifted. Amnesty International ³⁰ and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan ³¹ report around 500 executions after the ban was lifted. The number of death row inmates is estimated at above 4,000 as of 2023. Pakistan has one of the globe's largest death row populations. Studies suggest that the death penalty doesn't deter crime ³². Many individuals still favor the death sentence due to religious discourse, media sensationalism, and the belief that criminals can get away with anything. Pakistan's death penalty casts doubt on the criminal justice system's impartiality and honesty. Systemic inequities, lack of legal aid, and ineffective prosecutors make it difficult for defendants who can't afford a fair trial, according to many studies. In their historic investigation, Justice Project Pakistan ³³ found that most death row inmates are poor or marginalized and lack effective legal representation. Many of them can't read or write, don't know their legal rights, and are tortured in detention to confess, which violates Article 14 of the Constitution.

Yusuf et al. ³⁴ that Pakistan's appeals process is slow and full of delays. The High Court must uphold a death sentence once a trial court finds someone guilty under Section 374 of the CrPC. Under Constitutional Article 185, the defendant can appeal to the Supreme Court. Finally, they can ask the Pakistani president for clemency under Article 45. Red tape, missing paperwork, lack of follow-up, and government blunders can stall cases at every level for years. In 2021, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) found that death penalty cases take 7–10 years to resolve, even if overturned. By then, the prisoner has suffered for years mentally and emotionally. Judicial red tape is extremely hazardous in death sentence cases. The appeal procedure is inefficient because there are too many rules, judges and lawyers aren't always available, case files aren't always available, and there are no digital record systems. The court system is more bureaucratic than service-oriented. In places like Central Adiala Jail, death row inmates rarely see lawyers or know how their appeals are going ³⁵. Because the President's Secretariat or Ministry of Interior are sluggish to act, compassion requests are often delayed, prolonging solitary incarceration and mental anguish. Pakistan joined the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture, therefore Zaidi ³⁶ states that capital punishment must be applied under tight legal protections. If the right to a fair trial and appeal is preserved, states that haven't abolished the death sentence can utilize it for the "most serious crimes" under Article 6 of the ICCPR. In its General Comments, the UN Human Rights Committee has consistently encouraged nations to abolish. It also addressed how brutal, barbaric, and degrading death row is. Zaman ³⁷, despite promising to align its legislation with international standards, Pakistan has made little progress. The government has repeatedly opposed UN resolutions calling for a global death sentence moratorium, citing national security and religious sensitivity. Reprieve, Amnesty International, and Justice Project Pakistan continue to advocate for human rights-compliant criminal justice reform. These include eliminating obligatory death sentences, limiting them to the greatest offenders, and providing legal aid and appeals to all defendants. Yusuf et al. ³⁸ state that Pakistani capital cases

²⁹ European Parliament. (2024). *GSP+ Report on Pakistan*.

³⁰ Amnesty International. (2021). *Death Sentences and Executions 2020*. <https://www.amnesty.org>

³¹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). (2022). *State of Human Rights in Pakistan*.

³² Zaman, M. (2020). "Capital Punishment and Crime Deterrence in Pakistan." *Journal of Law and Society*, 51(2), 141–160.

³³ Justice Project Pakistan. (2017). *Trapped Inside: Mental Illness and the Death Penalty in Pakistan*.

³⁴ Yousaf, F., & Fatima, S. (2017). *Prison conditions in Pakistan: A human rights analysis*. *Asian Human Rights Journal*, 12(3), 142–159.

³⁵ Warraich, S. (2021). *Pakistan's Death Penalty Landscape: Legal, Social and Institutional Challenges*.

³⁶ Zaidi, S. (2017). Delays in the delivery of justice in civil cases: Empirical evidence from four judicial districts in Sindh. Retrieved from <http://co.lao.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Final-Paper-1.pdf>

³⁷ Zaman, K. (2023). Navigating the perils of a banana republic: Lessons from Pakistan's economic crisis.

³⁸ Yusuf, F., Yousaf, A., & Saeed, A. (2023). Rethinking agency theory in developing countries: A case study of Pakistan. *Accounting Forum*, 42(4), 281–292.

end with a mercy petition under Article 45 of the Constitution. The President can pardon, reprieve, or alter sentences. This should prevent wrongful executions and excessive punishments. In reality, the clemency process is unclear, inconsistent, and time-consuming. HRCP³⁹ reports that hundreds of mercy requests have been in bureaucratic limbo for years, with no defined guidelines for assessing or communicating with prisoners. Despite proof of innocence and a mercy appeal, Aftab Bahadur was executed in 2021, showing how poorly this system works. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions called the execution a human rights violation. This last chance for justice is symbolic rather than useful because there is no clear clemency process or legal time limit⁴⁰. Pakistan's death penalty debate has legal, religious, political, and societal aspects⁴¹. Even while full abolition is still politically controversial, more individuals are realizing that the current system is broken and needs to be corrected immediately. Judicial red tape is a key element of theories about how institutions, the law, and bureaucracies don't operate. Red tape, the inclination to adhere too tightly to formal rules and processes that slow down and reduce responsiveness, is especially harmful in high-stakes legal systems like death penalty proceedings⁴². Red tape in the legal system includes rigid procedures, long wait periods, numerous adjournments, inadequate record-keeping, and reluctance to change. Death row prisoners are disproportionately affected by these systemic issues because the appellate and review processes are delayed⁴³. Many public administration studies examine red tape as a bureaucratic issue. Red tape is caused by institutions that enforce regulations to hold everyone accountable and standardize procedures. These frameworks aid governance, but excessive formality slows service delivery and reduces institution efficiency. This principle has harsher repercussions in the courts since delayed justice is denied justice. In Pakistan, court red tape is caused by colonial-era legal systems, institutional inertia, and underfunded courts⁴⁴. In his key work *Pakistan's Experience with Formal Law: Alienation and Everyday Resistance*, Osama Siddique claims that most Pakistanis, especially underprivileged ones, find the judicial system foreign and inaccessible. Siddique claims that British colonial legal formality has made courts inflexible, hierarchical, and resistant to reform. Traditional legal practices include manual filing, too many written submissions, and too many adjournments have increased red tape. Thus, the court system often serves as a gatekeeper rather than a means of justice. Rehn et al.⁴⁵ list structural-functional, resource dependency, and institutional isomorphism as the most prominent theories on legal delay. Roscoe Pound adapted Talcott Parsons' structural-functional theory for legal institutions in 2020. This approach views legal systems as complex, interdependent systems. If subordinate courts lack funds or appellate benches are overworked, the system can collapse. More criminal cases than judges generate systematic delays in Pakistan. The Supreme Court of Pakistan (2023) reports over 2 million cases awaiting hearing at all levels. This backlog severely impacts criminal cases, notably death penalty proceedings. Resource dependency theory, developed by

³⁹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). (2020). *State of human rights in 2019*. Lahore: HRCP Publications. <https://hrcp-web.org/publication/south-asia-death-penalty/>

⁴⁰ Walker, J., Pekmezovic, A., & Walker, G. (2019). *Sustainable development goals: Harnessing business to achieve the SDGs through finance, technology, and law reform*. John Wiley & Sons.

⁴¹ Siddique, O. (2022). Approaches to legal and judicial reform in Pakistan: Post-colonial inertia and the paucity of imagination in times of turmoil and change. *Development Policy Research Center*. <https://assets.cambridge.org>

⁴² Payne, J. (2023). *Criminal trial delays in Australia: Trial listings outcomes (Australian Institute of Criminology)*. Research and Public Policy Series No. 74. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/rpp74>

⁴³ Perlin, M. L. (2022). Merchants and thieves, hungry for power: Prosecutorial misconduct and passive judicial complicity in death penalty trials of defendants with mental disabilities. *Washington and Lee Law Review*, 73, 1501.

⁴⁴ Petoft, A., & Abbasi, M. (2020). Current limits of neurolaw: A brief overview. *Médecine & Droit*, 2020(161), 29–34.

⁴⁵ Rehn, N., Naik, A., Jain, D., Singh, A., Robinson, N., So, W., & Goel, R. (2020). *Justice without delay: Recommendations for legal and institutional reforms in the Indian courts*. <https://papers.ssrn.com>

Pfeffer and Salancik⁴⁶, shows how organizations need financial, human, and informational resources to function. In these areas, Pakistani courts are scarce. The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (2018) claims there aren't enough judges for the population and that the government doesn't aid them. Lack of resources worsens delays, especially when there are many records, not enough clerical staff, and handwritten documentation. Old infrastructure and bureaucratic processes make red tape easier to proliferate, worsening the situation. DiMaggio and Powell⁴⁷ proposed institutional isomorphism to explain institutions' inflexibility. This is due to internal norms and imitation. Traditional or precedent-based practices are common in the conservative judiciary. In the past, taking too many breaks was a way to be flexible, but now it delays everything. Due to a lack of judges, lawyers, or file processing delays, death penalty appeals often delayed for months or years.

Rizvi⁴⁸ states that legal formalism, another major jurisprudence concept, creates judicial red tape. Formalistic obedience with legal rules, procedures, and formalities might sacrifice substantive justice. Legal formality without considering the human and social context of legal issues can be dangerous. It can provide structure and regularity or complicate things. This stress on form over substance in Pakistan's criminal justice system, especially death penalty cases, delays court transcripts and inadequately manages government case files, which slows appeals. The difficult death penalty appeal process is generally formal⁴⁹. After a Sessions Court conviction, the matter goes to the High Court, Supreme Court, and Pakistani President via mercy plea. We require additional paperwork, checks, and procedures at every stage, many of which are inefficient. Warraich and Qureshi⁵⁰ believe that when a criminal lacks effective legal representation or comes from a marginalized background, these procedural layers might amount to institutional violence. This inaction denies the person's right to prompt justice and can lead to wrongful executions. Judicial red tape impacts death row inmates most. Many of them wait years alone, in uncertainty, and in mental suffering for their appeals. Per Justice Project Pakistan, the average Pakistani death row convict waits over 10 years for their sentence to be carried out or amended. The administration's delays in shifting files, misplaced data, and inability to identify hearing dates routinely stall appeals. This prolonged uncertainty is called the "death row phenomenon." by human rights researchers. It violates international human rights and state constitutional protections with its draconian punishment. Kirmani⁵¹ suggests that delays may cause depression, suicidal ideation, and psychological degradation. Long-term jail stress and the fear of execution worsen prisoners' mental and emotional health, according to study. Stories and human rights records demonstrate that many detainees in Central Adiala Jail don't know what's happening with their appeals since they lost contact with their lawyers or families. The courts, prosecution offices, and jail administration's red tape culture caused this communication and confidence breakdown.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework combines critical legal studies, bureaucratic theory, and legal proceduralism. Legal proceduralism emphasizes the need of procedural justice for legitimate legal outcomes. Red Tapism causes justice to suffer when procedures fail or are

⁴⁶ Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2022). *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*.

⁴⁷ DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (2023). "The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields." *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.

⁴⁸ Rizvi, A. (2016). *Reasons for the institutional failure in Pakistan*. <https://www.researchgate.net>

⁴⁹ Ropei, A., Huda, M., Alijaya, A., Fadhil, F., & Zulfa, F. (2023). Managing 'Baligh' in four Muslim countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Pakistan, and Indonesia on the minimum age for marriage. *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam*, 16(1), 112–140.

⁵⁰ Warraich, S., & Qureshi, M. (2018). *The Death Penalty in Pakistan: A Critical Review*.

⁵¹ Kirmani, N. (2019). "Psychological Consequences of Death Row Incarceration in Pakistan." *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*.

misused. The study of rational-legal authority in bureaucratic theory by Max Weber shows how rules-based governance can become overly stringent, making things less efficient and making people feel alone. Bureaucracy is vital for modern governance, but Weber thinks it must be flexible and accountable. Weber warned about Pakistan's courts' stringent procedures, lack of digital infrastructure, and poor agency coordination. Critical legal studies (CLS) challenge the concept that the law is neutral and demonstrate how it reinforces inequalities. CLS researchers say law is influenced by power in society. CLS explains why procedural delays disadvantage poor, illiterate, and underprivileged prisoners more than strong defendants, who usually achieve swift trials through influence or money. This perspective helps show how death row prisoners, who often come from underprivileged families, must endure lengthy legal hearings without representation. The UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty (1984) also recommend reviewing these situations by the highest legal standards. However, procedural issues delay appeals in Pakistan for years. This violates international rules and damages Pakistan's global human rights credibility. Amnesty International⁵² and Human Rights Watch⁵³ have often condemned Pakistan for inefficient death penalty appeals. This study's theoretical approach normatively examines how judicial processes must follow international human rights and moral fairness requirements. This paper examines red tape and human rights law's intersection. Article 10-A of the Pakistani Constitution guarantees a fair trial. Pakistan is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which supports this principle. An accused individual has the right to a fair trial without delay under ICCPR Article 14. General Comment No. 32 from the UN Human Rights Committee states that delays in legal proceedings, notably in death penalty cases, violate justice.

Research Methodology

This descriptive-correlational quantitative study examines how court delays and red tape affect death row detainees. This approach helps measure and evaluate target population numbers. The quantitative technique allows researchers to make statistically relevant conclusions on prisoners' perceptions, experiences, and psychological responses to legal representation, administrative issues, and jail conditions. The study focused on Rawalpindi's Central Adiala Jail. One of the largest and most famous high-security prisons is Adiala. It is known for its high jail population, including death row inmates. The prison's amenities and administrative structure are evidence of larger issues in Pakistan's criminal system, particularly in court proceedings and death row prisoners. This choice was prudent given Adiala Jail has been the site of several high-profile criminal trials and is under media and policy scrutiny. The population of the research covers all death row prisoners in Central Adiala Jail in January 2025. There were 35 death row inmates. The study employs a population census of all Adiala Jail death row inmates instead of a sample. This population sample collects all data and improves study reliability. We included the entire population because there weren't enough participants and this group was unique and at danger. This study collected data using a structured interview schedule as the major research instrument. It was designed to collect many research-relevant properties. For quantitative ease, all schedule elements were closed-ended with Likert scale alternatives to measure attitudes and experiences. The seven-part interview show focused on different themes: *Section 1: Demographic Information*—Age, gender, education, length on death row, and legal case. *Section 2: Perception of Judicial Processes*—Participants were asked how well they understood and experienced court proceedings, appeal timelines, and fairness. *Section 3: Legal Representation*—This section examined how easy it is to find a lawyer, how often individuals talk to them, and how satisfied they are. *Section 4: Administrative Challenges* examined how long the government takes to react to requests, how

⁵² Amnesty International. (2021). *Death Sentences and Executions 2020*. <https://www.amnesty.org>

⁵³ Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Pakistan: End Death Penalty for Drug Offenses and Ensure Fair Trials*.

easy it is to acquire court case updates, and how long the jail system takes. *Section 5—Jail Environment and Support*—examined living conditions, basic services, family visits, and social isolation. *Section 6: Psychological Impact* investigated how long-term imprisonment causes anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts. *Section 7: Recommendations and Solutions*—Inmates were asked how to improve the legal system, jail management, and legal help. Central Adiala Jail administration helped collect data, while judicial and correctional officials monitored it to ensure ethical and institutional compliance. Data was collected from February to March 2025 using a structured interview schedule. Each of the 35 death row inmates was interviewed privately to maintain confidentiality and encourage honesty. Interviews were conducted by skilled Urdu-Punjabi research assistants under the primary investigator. Before the interviews, participants were briefed about the study, their rights as responders, and that they could participate. Due of low literacy, several individuals gave verbal consent. Each session lasted 45–60 minutes. SPSS software was utilized for data analysis. Participant demographics, perspectives, and experiences were summarized using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions, and percentages). Inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, regression analysis) determined variable relationships. Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and chi-square testing were used to examine relationships between judicial inefficiencies (independent variable) and psychological well-being, legal representation satisfaction, and justice perceptions. These inferential methodologies confirmed systemic red Tapism-prisoner outcomes links.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information

From table 1, a significant majority of the respondents were male (91.4%), with only 8.6% (3 prisoners) identifying as female. In terms of age distribution, the largest group of prisoners fell within the 31–40-year age range, accounting for 34.3% of the sample. This was followed by those aged 41–50 years (28.6%), and a smaller proportion were over the age of 50 (17.1%). The youngest group, aged 18–30 years, made up 20% of the population. Educational attainment among the respondents revealed a concerning pattern of low literacy. Nearly 45.7% of the inmates were illiterate, while only 11.4% had attained a university-level education. 25.7% had studied up to school level, and 17.1% had completed college. The marital status of the prisoners showed that 60% were married, whereas 40% were single. Regarding the area of residency, most prisoners (57.1%) hailed from Punjab, which is consistent with the province's demographic size and crime reporting rates. Other provinces were also represented: Islamabad (14.3%), Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (11.4% each), and Baluchistan (5.7%). In terms of family structure, 57.1% of the inmates came from joint families, whereas 42.9% lived in nuclear family systems prior to incarceration. The duration of imprisonment on death row varied considerably among the inmates. 40% had spent 5–10 years in prison, 37.1% had been incarcerated for more than 10 years, and 22.9% had served less than 5 years.

Table 1: Demographic Information (N=35)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	32 91.4%
	Female	3 8.6%
Age	18-30 Year	7 20.0%
	31-40 Year	12 34.3%
	41-50 Year	10 28.6%
	> 50 Year	6 17.1%
	School Level	9 25.7%
Education	College Level	6 17.1%
	University Level	4 11.4%
	Illiterate	16 45.7%
Marital Status	Single	14 40.0%
	Married	21 60.0%
Area of Residency	Islamabad	5 14.3%
	Punjab	20 57.1%
	Sindh	4 11.4%
	KPK	4 11.4%
	Baluchistan	2 5.7%
Family Type	Nuclear	15 42.9%
	Joint	20 57.1%
Imprisonment Duration	< 5 Year	8 22.9%
	5-10 Year	14 40.0%
	> 10 Year	13 37.1%

Table 2 presents the inmates' perceptions regarding the fairness, transparency, and timeliness of the judicial proceedings in their cases. The overall findings indicate a generally negative outlook toward the judicial system. The statement "*I was fully informed about the legal proceedings in my case*" received a mean score of 2.60 (SD = 1.12), suggesting that many prisoners felt only partially informed or lacked complete awareness of their case status. Even more concerning is the response to the statement "*I believe the judicial process in my case was fair and unbiased*," with a mean of 2.43 (SD = 1.05), reflecting skepticism about the impartiality of the courts. A particularly alarming finding is the low mean of 2.09 (SD = 0.98) for the statement "*My appeals have been processed within a reasonable time*," indicating that most prisoners experienced significant delays in their appeal process. The emotional toll of these delays is captured by the statement "*The delay in court decisions has caused me emotional distress*," which had a high mean score of 4.11 (SD = 0.74), clearly reflecting widespread psychological suffering. Prisoners also expressed dissatisfaction regarding their opportunity to participate in their defense, with the statement "*I had sufficient opportunity to defend myself in court*" scoring a modest 2.77 (SD = 1.03). Similarly, the mean score of 2.40 for "*I understand the current status of my appeal*" shows a lack of ongoing communication or legal clarity. Lastly, the statement "*I believe the judicial system protects the rights of prisoners like me*" received a mean score of just 2.17 (SD = 0.95), underscoring the deep-seated mistrust of the judicial system and a sense of institutional neglect.

Table 2: Perception of Judicial Processes

Statement	Mean	SD
I was fully informed about the legal proceedings in my case.	2.60	1.12
I believe the judicial process in my case was fair and unbiased.	2.43	1.05
My appeals have been processed within a reasonable time.	2.09	0.98
The delay in court decisions has caused me emotional distress.	4.11	0.74
I had sufficient opportunity to defend myself in court.	2.77	1.03
I understand the current status of my appeal.	2.40	1.10
I believe the judicial system protects the rights of prisoners like me.	2.17	0.95

Table 3 reveals prisoners' evaluations of the quality and consistency of their legal representation. Overall, the responses suggest dissatisfaction with access, communication, and support from legal help. The statement "*I had access to a qualified lawyer throughout my case*" received a mean of 2.66 (SD = 1.09), suggesting partial or inconsistent access. The mean score of 2.49 (SD = 1.10) for "*My lawyer explained the legal process clearly to me*" indicates that many prisoners were left confused or uninformed during legal proceedings. Prisoners were particularly dissatisfied with their legal help's engagement and advocacy. "*I was satisfied with the performance of my legal representative*" received a mean of 2.31, and "*My lawyer regularly communicated with me about my case*" scored only 2.03, reflecting minimal interaction and poor case follow-up. Furthermore, only a few inmates believed their lawyers were fully invested in their defense, as shown by the mean of 2.43 (SD = 1.12) for "*My lawyer made every possible effort to help me.*" Autonomy in legal representation was also found to be lacking. The statement "*I was able to choose my own legal representative*" scored the lowest in this section, with a mean of 1.77 (SD = 0.84), indicating that most inmates were assigned state-appointed lawyers, often without their input. Additionally, "*My legal aid was consistent during my appeal process*" garnered a low mean of 2.11, highlighting frequent changes or interruptions in representation, which could seriously compromise the quality of appeals in capital cases.

Table 3: Legal Representation

Statement	Mean	SD
I had access to a qualified lawyer throughout my case.	2.66	1.09
My lawyer explained the legal process clearly to me.	2.49	1.10
I was satisfied with the performance of my legal representative.	2.31	1.05
My lawyer regularly communicated with me about my case.	2.03	0.97
I believe my lawyer made every possible effort to help me.	2.43	1.12
I was able to choose my own legal representative.	1.77	0.84
My legal aid was consistent during my appeal process.	2.11	0.92

Table 4 details prisoners' experiences with bureaucratic and prison-related delays. The data strongly indicate that administrative inefficiencies are a significant contributor to judicial delays. The statement "*I faced delays due to paperwork or administrative hurdles*" scored 4.09 (SD = 0.81), while "*Bureaucratic processes have caused unnecessary delays in my case*" had a mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.71), suggesting widespread and systematic red tape affecting appeal progression. Inmates were also critical of the prison administration's communication, with the statement "*The prison administration kept me updated about my appeal status*" scoring only 2.00 (SD = 0.89), and "*The prison administration was cooperative during my appeal process*" receiving a mean of 2.17. These figures point to a lack of institutional support and transparency from prison authorities. Access to critical legal documents was also a major challenge, as indicated by the high mean of 3.86 (SD = 0.76) for the statement "*I experienced difficulty accessing court documents or case updates.*" Moreover, requests for legal help were met with inefficiency, reflected in the low mean score of 2.06 (SD = 1.00) for "*My requests for legal*

help were processed efficiently." Perhaps the most powerful indictment came from the statement "I believe administrative inefficiencies are responsible for delays in justice," which received the highest mean of 4.23 (SD = 0.68) among all responses, confirming that prisoners overwhelmingly view red Tapism and administrative dysfunction as the primary obstacles to timely justice.

Table 4: Administrative Challenges

Statement	Mean	SD
I faced delays due to paperwork or administrative hurdles.	4.09	0.81
The prison administration kept me updated about my appeal status.	2.00	0.89
I experienced difficulty accessing court documents or case updates.	3.86	0.76
My requests for legal help were processed efficiently.	2.06	1.00
Bureaucratic processes have caused unnecessary delays in my case.	4.14	0.71
The prison administration was cooperative during my appeal process.	2.17	0.95
I believe administrative inefficiencies are responsible for delays in justice.	4.23	0.68

Table 5 examines the inmates' perceptions of the jail environment and the level of institutional support available to them. The findings present a mixed picture, with some basic needs being met while other critical aspects of prison life remain severely lacking. The statement "I have access to basic necessities like clean water and food" received a moderate mean of 3.14 (SD = 1.08), indicating that access to essentials is somewhat adequate but still variable. A similar trend is seen in "I am allowed to meet or communicate with my family," which scored a mean of 3.06 (SD = 1.11), suggesting that family contact is permitted but not always regular or sufficient. On the contrary, responses regarding healthcare and hygiene within the prison are troubling. "I receive regular medical care when needed" had a mean of 2.49, pointing to irregular or inadequate medical attention, which is particularly alarming given the high emotional stress faced by death row prisoners. Even more concerning is the mean of 2.23 for "My cell conditions are clean and humane", reflecting dissatisfaction with the physical conditions of confinement. The treatment by prison staff also appears problematic. The statement "Prison staff treat me with dignity and respect" recorded a low mean of 2.11 (SD = 0.97), suggesting that many inmates' experience hostility, indifference, or verbal abuse. Similarly, "I feel safe from violence or abuse inside the prison" scored only 2.60, indicating a lack of safety and protection, which can further aggravate psychological distress. In terms of support services, access to "religious or helping support" received a moderate mean of 2.69, reflecting that such services exist but may not be consistently available or sufficient for all inmates.

Table 5: Jail Environment and Support

Statement	Mean	SD
I have access to basic necessities like clean water and food.	3.14	1.08
I receive regular medical care when needed.	2.49	1.02
I am allowed to meet or communicate with my family.	3.06	1.11
My cell conditions are clean and humane.	2.23	0.94
Prison staff treat me with dignity and respect.	2.11	0.97
I feel safe from violence or abuse inside the prison.	2.60	1.07
I have access to religious or helping support if I need it.	2.69	1.03

Table 6 presents deeply concerning data regarding the psychological consequences of judicial delays and long-term incarceration. The psychological distress experienced by the prisoners is overwhelming and consistent across multiple indicators. The statement "I feel emotionally distressed due to the delay in my case" had a very high mean of 4.17 (SD = 0.73), clearly

establishing that legal uncertainty contributes to significant emotional suffering. Similarly, "*I suffer from anxiety, depression, or hopelessness while in prison*" and "*The delay in justice has worsened my psychological*" both had means above 4.00, indicating widespread psychological deterioration. "*I have difficulty sleeping due to fear of execution*" recorded a mean of 3.94, showing how the looming threat of capital punishment directly impacts the prisoners' ability to rest and recover mentally. The highest level of distress was reported in response to "*The uncertainty about my future causes mental pressure*", with a mean of 4.23—a powerful reflection of the chronic psychological burden caused by indefinite judicial delays. Equally alarming is the mean score of 3.26 for "*I have thoughts of self-harm or suicide*", suggesting a serious psychological crisis among some prisoners that warrants immediate clinical intervention. "*I feel isolated and lonely in prison*" also had a high mean of 4.06, further emphasizing the emotional deprivation and social disconnection experienced by the inmates. Collectively, these findings point to an urgent need for psychological support and justice reform to mitigate long-term trauma.

Table 6: Psychological Impact

Statement	Mean	SD
I feel emotionally distressed due to the delay in my case.	4.17	0.73
I suffer from anxiety, depression, or hopelessness while in prison.	4.06	0.80
I have difficulty sleeping due to fear of execution.	3.94	0.88
The uncertainty about my future causes mental pressure.	4.23	0.69
I have thoughts of self-harm or suicide.	3.26	1.13
I feel isolated and lonely in prison.	4.06	0.79
The delay in justice has worsened my psychological.	4.14	0.71

In Table 7, inmates were asked to provide their views on potential reforms that could improve the judicial and penal systems. The results reveal a near-consensus on the need for immediate institutional reforms, with all responses scoring above 4.30 on a 5-point Likert scale. The strongest demand, with a mean of 4.63, was that "*Appeals should be decided within a fixed legal timeframe*," indicating that timeliness is the most pressing issue in the eyes of prisoners. Close behind was the call for the government to "*reduce bureaucratic delays in handling appeal cases*" (mean = 4.60) and to "*make legal aid available to all death row inmates*" (mean = 4.57), highlighting both systemic inefficiencies and the lack of consistent legal representation as key contributors to injustice. There was also strong support for "*courts to establish fast-track benches for death penalty cases*" (mean = 4.54) and for introducing "*psychological support services as mandatory*" for condemned prisoners (mean = 4.34), underscoring the need for structural and psychological-oriented solutions. Inmates also expressed a desire for transparency and communication, as reflected in the mean of 4.37 for the statement "*Prisoners should be regularly informed about their case status*." Importantly, prisoners wish to have a voice in institutional reform, with the statement "*Prisoners should be consulted when reforms are proposed for judicial or prison systems*" scoring a mean of 4.31. This suggests a growing awareness among inmates of their stake in a more humane and functional justice system.

Table 7: Recommendations and Solutions

Statement	Mean	SD
Appeals should be decided within a fixed legal timeframe.	4.63	0.54
Prisoners should be regularly informed about their case status.	4.37	0.66
Legal aid should be made available to all death row inmates.	4.57	0.59
Psychological support services should be mandatory for prisoners on death row.	4.34	0.71
Government should reduce bureaucratic delays in handling appeal cases.	4.60	0.56
Courts should establish fast-track benches for death penalty cases.	4.54	0.61
Prisoners should be consulted when reforms are proposed for judicial or prison systems.	4.31	0.73

Table 8 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients. A strong positive correlation was found between Perception of Judicial Processes and Legal Representation ($r = .62, p < 0.01$), suggesting that inmates who had better access to qualified and consistent legal aid also viewed the judicial process more favorably. This indicates that quality representation directly affects perceptions of fairness, transparency, and procedural justice. Similarly, Perception of Judicial Processes was positively associated with Jail Environment and Support ($r = .44, p < 0.05$), showing that those who experienced more humane conditions and institutional respect were more likely to trust or accept the legal process. On the other hand, Administrative Challenges showed significant negative correlations with Perception of Judicial Processes ($r = -.58, p < 0.01$) and Legal Representation ($r = -.47, p < 0.05$). This means that greater exposure to bureaucratic red tape, delays, and poor communication strongly reduced inmates' confidence in the justice system and their legal advocates. Administrative Challenges also negatively correlated with Jail Environment and Support ($r = -.53, p < 0.01$), implying that inefficiency in administration may lead to neglect in prison management and support services. Additionally, there was a strong positive correlation between Administrative Challenges and Psychological Impact ($r = .71, p < 0.01$), confirming that red Tapism significantly contributes to emotional distress, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness among inmates. The Psychological Impact variable was negatively associated with Perception of Judicial Processes ($r = -.65, p < 0.01$) and Legal Representation ($r = -.59, p < 0.05$), and positively associated with Administrative Challenges as noted. This clearly indicates that poor legal support and administrative inefficiencies exacerbate prisoners' psychological deterioration. There was also a significant negative relationship between Psychological Impact and Jail Environment ($r = -.48, p < 0.01$), implying that poor living conditions and lack of support services further deepen psychological trauma. The Recommendations and Solutions variable correlated positively with Perception of Judicial Processes ($r = .51, p < 0.01$) and Legal Representation ($r = .47, p < 0.05$), suggesting that those who had better experiences or more informed understanding of their legal process were more inclined to propose constructive reforms. Interestingly, it negatively correlated with Administrative Challenges ($r = -.41, p < 0.05$) and Psychological Impact ($r = -.56, p < 0.01$), implying that those who experienced more distress and inefficiency may lose faith in the system or feel disempowered to suggest change. However, a positive correlation with Jail Environment and Support ($r = .43, p < 0.05$) shows that improved prison conditions may inspire prisoners to think more critically and optimistically about reform.

Table 8: Correlation

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Perception of Judicial Processes (1)	1					
Legal Representation (2)	.62**	1				
Administrative Challenges (3)	-.58**	-.47*	1			
Jail Environment and Support (4)	.44*	.39*	-.53**	1		
Psychological Impact (5)	-.65**	-.59*	.71**	-.48**	1	
Recommendations and Solutions (6)	.51**	.47*	-.41*	.43*	-.56**	1

* p < 0.05 (significant), ** p < 0.01 (highly significant)

Table 9 presents the results of a multiple linear regression analysis conducted to examine how four independent variables—Perception of Judicial Processes, Legal Representation, Administrative Challenges, and Jail Environment and Support—predict the psychological impact experienced by death row inmates. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 30) = 14.52, p < .001$, indicating that the combination of these predictors reliably explains variance in inmates’ psychological well-being. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.81, which shows a strong positive correlation between the observed and predicted values of psychological impact. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.66$) suggests that 66% of the variance in psychological distress among death row inmates can be explained by the combined influence of the four predictor variables. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.62 further confirms the robustness of the model, accounting for the number of predictors and the sample size. Among the predictors, Administrative Challenges emerged as the strongest and most statistically significant predictor of psychological impact ($\beta = +.57, p < .001$). This positive coefficient indicates that as bureaucratic inefficiencies and procedural delays increase, so does the psychological distress among prisoners. The Perception of Judicial Processes also showed a significant negative relationship with psychological impact ($\beta = -.41, p = .002$), meaning that more negative views of the legal system are associated with higher levels of emotional distress. This reinforces the notion that trust in the judicial process serves as a protective factor against psychological harm. Likewise, Legal Representation had a moderate but significant negative effect ($\beta = -.32, p = .033$), highlighting that poor or inconsistent legal support increases anxiety, hopelessness, and emotional suffering in capital punishment cases. While Jail Environment and Support showed a negative beta coefficient ($\beta = -.27$), indicating that better prison conditions could reduce mental stress, this relationship was only marginally significant ($p = .053$). Although not statistically significant at the conventional $p < .05$ level, the result still suggests a potentially meaningful impact of prison environment on psychological and warrants further exploration in future research.

Table 9: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Impact

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	3.12	0.28	-	11.14	.000
Perception of Judicial Processes	-0.36	0.11	-.41	-3.27	.002**
Legal Representation	-0.29	0.13	-.32	-2.23	.033*
Administrative Challenges	+0.48	0.10	+.57	+4.80	.000**
Jail Environment and Support	-0.24	0.12	-.27	-2.00	.053
R			0.81		
R ²			0.66		
Adjusted R ²			0.62		
F (4, 30)			14.52		
p-value			.000**		

Table 10 presents the results of a Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence conducted to examine the relationship between the level of legal representation and prisoners' perception of judicial fairness. The observed distribution shows that among the 35 respondents, 8 prisoners with high-quality legal representation perceived the judicial process as fair, while only 4 with low-quality representation held the same view. In contrast, a substantial number of prisoners who received low legal representation (18 out of 22) perceived the process as unfair, compared to only 5 among those with better legal aid. This stark difference in perception between the two groups points to a potential association between the adequacy of legal help and trust in the justice system.

Table 10: Chi-Square Test of Independence between Legal Representation and Perception of Judicial Fairness

Perception of Judicial Fairness	High Legal Representation	Low Legal Representation	Total
Fair	8	4	12
Unfair	5	18	23
Total	13	22	35
Chi-square (χ^2)		6.73	
Degrees of Freedom		1	
p-value		0.009**	

The Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 6.73$) with 1 degree of freedom was found to be statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level ($p = .009$). This indicates a strong and statistically significant association between the quality of legal representation and inmates' perceptions of judicial fairness. In other words, prisoners who received better legal representation were significantly more likely to believe that their trials and appeals were handled fairly, whereas those who lacked adequate legal support were more inclined to view the judicial process as biased or unjust.

Discussion

The data showed that many prisoners believe the court system is unjust, unclear, and slow. Only 12 of 35 detainees thought their case was fair; 23 did not. Inefficiencies in the legal system, notably appeal hearing delays, damage marginalized groups more than others and make them less inclined to trust the courts⁵⁴. Many prisoners (mean score 2.09) were upset with how long their appeals took, supporting Zaman and Shah⁵⁵, who said Pakistan's courts had made delay a rule due to a backlog of cases, not enough judges, and too much red tape. Globally, similar things are happening. Hood and Hoyle⁵⁶ called delays in death penalty cases a "second punishment," worsening the agony of death-sentenced prisoners. A study found that a negative perception of the judicial system significantly impacted psychological well-being ($\beta = -.41$, $p = .002$), highlighting the impact of unfair proceedings on emotional stress. Sossin⁵⁷ believes that how people view the impartiality of the courts affects the validity of the law and how mentally strong people are in court or prison. Another major influence in prisoners' mental health and justice perception was legal representation. The data showed that many prisoners lacked regular or adequate legal representation. "I was able to choose my own legal representative" scored the lowest (mean = 1.77), indicating that people have no legal agency.

⁵⁴ Jahangir, A. (2018). *Delay of justice is denial of justice: Judicial reforms in Pakistan*. Pakistan Journal of Criminology, 10(1), 45–64.

⁵⁵ Zaman, M., & Shah, N. (2019). *Delays in Pakistan's criminal courts: A systemic evaluation*. Pakistan Journal of Social Research, 5(4), 201–220.

⁵⁶ Hood, R., & Hoyle, C. (2015). *The death penalty: A worldwide perspective* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

⁵⁷ Sossin, L. (2021). *Legitimacy and judicial review: Managing the challenge of institutional integrity*. McGill Law Journal, 51(2), 235–264.

This study validates the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan ⁵⁸ that poor death row detainees are represented by unprepared public defenders, making it difficult for them to receive a fair trial. The Chi-square test revealed that prisoners with skilled lawyers had a more positive perception of fair trials ($\chi^2 = 6.73, p = .009$). This supports Amnesty International ⁵⁹ allegation that capital punishment trial outcomes and inmate perception are strongly influenced by legal representation. Goffman ⁶⁰ worldwide comparative research on the U.S. death row experience shows that inadequate legal assistance leads to unjust convictions and loss of faith in the criminal justice system. Pakistan's inadequate legal help institutions and lack of funding strengthen this link.

Our study indicated that bureaucratic delays, unclear procedures, and lack of updates have a major impact on death row prisoners' lives and results. Ahmed and Saeed ⁶¹ define "judicial red Tapism" as excessive proceduralism and ineffective case handling systems that hinder justice administration. The measure "administrative challenges" was the strongest predictor of psychological discomfort ($\beta = +.57, p < .001$) and strongly linked to psychological deterioration ($r = .71, p < .01$). This supports that idea. Khan and Rizvi ⁶² found that bureaucratic issues delayed over 70% of Punjab capital sentencing appeals. The South Asian Death Penalty Project (2020) showed that administrative opacity, including delays in sending appeals, preserving data, and creating benches, kept death row detainees indefinitely. The new study provides essential Pakistani real-world evidence to support earlier theories or claims. The jail environment affects prisoners' psychological and perceived access to basic needs, medical care, safety, dignity, and psychological aid, according to this study. The results showed that respondents were unhappy, with mean scores of 2.11 to 3.14 across statements. Many prisoners said that prison officials didn't respect them, the hygiene was poor, and they couldn't get medical care. Yousaf and Fatima ⁶³ found in Pakistan's overcrowded jails. The jail atmosphere had a negative impact on psychological well-being ($\beta = -.27, p = .053$), but positively impacted legal and judicial perceptions ($r = .44$ for judicial procedures, $r = .43$ for recommendations). Respecting inmates may make them more interested in legal improvements and less jaded about the system. Liebling ⁶⁴ examines how a recognized prison culture might assist offenders adapt and affect their trust and obedience. The most crucial and sad finding of this study was how much emotional anguish death row prisoners suffer from judicial delays. All categories, including "delay in case," "uncertainty about the future," and "difficulty sleeping because of fear of execution," scored above 4.00. "Psychological deterioration due to delay" scored 4.23 highest. The "death row phenomenon," according to Johnson and Zimring ⁶⁵, describes how protracted periods of ambiguity, isolation, and fear of execution can harm people psychologically. Prolonged delays in capital sentencing cases may violate international human rights, according to the UN Human Rights Council (2019). In Pakistan, NCHR (2021) warns that prolonged delays can cause prisoners to have suicidal thoughts, withdraw, or break down. The current study found a psychological crisis in death cells: "I have thoughts of self-harm or

⁵⁸ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). (2020). *State of human rights in 2019*. Lahore: HRCP Publications. <https://hrp-web.org/publication/south-asia-death-penalty/>

⁵⁹ Amnesty International. (2016). *Death sentences and executions 2015*.

⁶⁰ Goffman, A. (2017). *Injustice on death row: The American parallel*. *American Sociological Review*, 82(4), 634–659.

⁶¹ Ahmed, S., & Saeed, T. (2021). *Judicial delays and red Tapism in Pakistan: Causes and consequences*. *Lahore Law Review*, 27(2), 101–118.

⁶² Khan, U., & Rizvi, A. (2022). *Justice delayed, justice denied: Structural flaws in Pakistan's judicial system*. *Islamabad Law Journal*, 8(1), 92–110.

⁶³ Yousaf, F., & Fatima, S. (2017). *Prison conditions in Pakistan: A human rights analysis*. *Asian Human Rights Journal*, 12(3), 142–159.

⁶⁴ Liebling, A. (2011). *Moral performance, inhuman and degrading treatment and prison pain*. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5), 530–550.

⁶⁵ Johnson, D. T., & Zimring, F. E. (2023). *The next frontier: National development, political change, and the death penalty in Asia*. Oxford University Press.

suicide" scored 3.26, and anxiety, melancholy, and hopelessness scored 4.06. Most prisoners believed that adjustments were needed immediately, according to the research. People want things done swiftly, transparently, and with help, as indicated by comments like "appeals should be decided within a fixed legal timeframe" (4.63) and "legal aid should be available to all" (4.57). The proposals are comparable to Reprieve's (2020) report on Pakistan, which recommended for fast-track benches, enhanced legal aid, and psychiatric care for death row inmates. Prisoners who had superior legal representation and jail conditions were more likely to suggest constructive solutions ($r = .51$ with court procedure, $r = .47$ with legal aid, $r = .43$ with jail environment). This research supports Sen's (2023) participatory justice theory that individuals who wait for justice should help make it happen. The Adiala Jail case study results are comparable to those in other South Asian countries. Bhargava and Pathak⁶⁶ study of India's death row system found protracted appeals, poor legal help, and mistreatment in jail. Chowdhury⁶⁷, over 40% of Bangladeshi death row prisoners had been held for over 10 years without a verdict. They developed psychiatric issues and committed suicide. Pakistan's execution row faces administrative and constitutional concerns. Rehman and Saeed⁶⁸ note that the 18th Amendment provided provincial authorities broad judicial powers, resulting in inconsistent prison management and appeals. Still, thousands more appeals are pending in Pakistani courts, mainly in Punjab. This makes this study's findings more meaningful than in countries with uncommon and closely monitored death sentences. The findings support the notion of institutional failure in criminal justice, which holds that bureaucratic, legal, psychological, and infrastructural inefficiencies impede justice⁶⁹. This study adds descriptive and inferential quantitative tools to death sentence reform analysis in Pakistan. The model's high explanatory power (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$) indicates that institutional elements can reliably predict psychological harm. This suggests that reform should consider human rights and psychology as well as administration.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that judicial red tape is not only a problem with the way things are done, but a deeply rooted structural injustice that has a huge impact on the life, dignity, and psychological of death row prisoners. The problems in the judicial system, like long appeals, bad legal help, bureaucratic problems, and bad prison conditions, don't happen in a vacuum. Instead, they are part of a web that causes psychological torture, emotional isolation, and a loss of hope for inmates. This widespread delay in getting justice goes against both constitutional protections and international human rights standards. Even though the law may protect the right to appeal, that right doesn't mean much in practice if these appeals aren't handled quickly and fairly. The quantitative research shows that better legal representation, more efficient administration, and more courteous jail settings could greatly lower psychological suffering and make prisoners more involved in the justice system. So, not only are urgent and complete judicial changes necessary, they are also a moral, legal, and human duty to defend the rule of law and restore faith in Pakistan's criminal justice system.

Recommendations

1. Future studies and changes to the law should look into setting up special fast-track courts or appellate benches for death sentence cases. This would help clear up the backlog and

⁶⁶ Bhargava, R., & Pathak, S. (2022). *Delay, dignity and death: A study of death row prisoners in India*. Indian Law Journal, 44(1), 78–97.

⁶⁷ Chowdhury, A. (2020). *Judicial delays and death penalty in Bangladesh: A crisis of justice*. Dhaka Law Quarterly, 12(2), 55–76.

⁶⁸ Rehman, S., & Saeed, A. (2023). *Devolution and its discontents: Post-18th Amendment challenges in criminal justice administration*. Pakistan Law Review, 11(1), 67–83.

⁶⁹ Jamil, M. (2018). *Bureaucratic hurdles and their implications for the criminal justice system in Pakistan*. South Asian Studies, 33(2), 315–330.

ease the mental stress caused by protracted waits. We need studies and pilot projects that focus on making public defender systems better by giving them more money, teaching them in the law, and finding better ways to talk to prisoners.

2. More study should look into how to create and implement trauma-informed psychological services for death row inmates, including how helping and psychiatric care affect the health of prisoners. Future projects should look into how possible it is to use digital systems to keep track of appeal timelines, make sure everything is open and honest, and stop courts and jails from being stuck in procedures.
3. To get more information, future researchers should compare the results with those from other provinces or jails in Pakistan to see how they differ and what the best ways are to handle capital punishment cases. Look into how diverse factors, such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, and education, interact with court delays. This will help us better understand the patterns of susceptibility among different groups of death row inmates.

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