



The Police-Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan: Exploring Institutional Coordination and its Impact on Criminal Justice Outcomes

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Abstract: In Pakistan, the criminal justice system is largely influenced by the close relationship between the police and the prosecution. Ineffective coordination has been experienced over the years due to overlapping mandates, lack of resources, and institutional rivalries. Such fragmentation tends to impair the proceedings of cases, corrosion of trial results, and depletion of public trust. Findings show that informal "shadow" networks can speed up evidence transfer but also spread inconsistencies in evidentiary standards. The study supposes that by increasing institutional synergies, i.e., common protocols, common training programs, and performance-based rewards, case-dismissal rates may be reduced drastically, trial times may be shorter, and public confidence may be enhanced. These are needed since a justice system that is grappling with systemic inertia requires them.

Key Words: Challenges, Criminal Justice, Laws, Pakistan, Police, Prosecution

Introduction

The criminal justice system in Pakistan is literally in crisis, and I am concerned by the fact that conviction rates have consistently ranged between 5 and 15 percent. It completely distorts the rule of law and causes people to lose trust in the justice system (Ullah et al., 2025). Cases of serious crimes are often thrown out before trial, which in turn creates a sense of invincibility in criminals (Garrod, 2024). These shortcomings are further abetted by political intervention and, in turn, disintegrate the administration of justice into a fabrication that purportedly supports elite interests over fair access to all (Warraich & Butt, 2024).

Such dysfunction in the system is not only a hindrance to the effectiveness of crime prevention. Still, it is also triggering a very high level of discontent in society since the victims are forced to undergo lengthy court cases without a conclusive decision. The Police Order of 2002 was put forward to alleviate the challenges at hand by depoliticizing police operations, establishing non-partisan controls over them, and creating inter-agency cooperation (Azhar et al., 2025). However, these implementations were met with challenges that could be linked to provincial opposition and financial limitations, hence making the coordination instructions inbuilt in the order null. Later changes restored the role of executive control, thus dampening professionalization efforts and ensuring organizational silos (Warraich & Butt, 2024).

In spite of the above legislative purpose, the reality on the ground presents a major disconnect, which is often revealed through the form of institutional competitiveness, lack of communication, and divergence of priorities, which, when combined, compromise the effectiveness of the criminal justice process (Rasool & Abdullah, 2023).

Research Justification

The endemic ineffectiveness of criminal justice in Pakistan, as evidenced by appallingly low conviction rates and lengthy legal proceedings, is in need of both academic and policy analysis. One of the critical and poorly studied factors of this crisis is the dysfunctional relationship between prosecution services and police. Even though legislative reforms have required them to separate operationally to boost accountability, ensure fair trial and due process as required by the

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constitution, empirical evidence has indicated that there is still a nexus of institutional rivalry, lack of communication, and divergent goals. This failure of coordination directly produces poorly investigated cases, poor evidence in court, and high rates of acquittal, thus compromising justice and mistrust in the legal system.

This study is necessary to transcend conceptual frameworks and to objectively examine the specific structural, procedural, and cultural obstacles that impede successful coordination between police and prosecution. The systematic analysis of this institutional nexus will produce evidence-based knowledge that will reveal a single weakness in the justice system. The results will provide practitioners and policymakers with actionable recommendations, thus creating synergies between the two institutional pillars, creating better criminal justice outcomes, increasing operational efficiency, and tightening the rule of law in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

1. To discuss the historical context of the police-prosecution nexus in Pakistan
2. To highlight the theoretical context of the police-prosecution nexus in Pakistan.
3. To analyze the laws regarding the police-prosecution nexus in Pakistan.
4. To identify the key challenges regarding the police-prosecution nexus in Pakistan.
5. To explore the opportunities for the police-prosecution nexus in Pakistan.
6. To propose effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Research Methodology

This study employed a systematic review methodology, with research objectives established accordingly. A comprehensive literature review was conducted (Komba & Lwoga, 2020). Research findings were categorized based on their content (Hiver et al., 2021; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), and classified information was incorporated into the study by organizing it into headings (Gan et al., 2021; Pawson et al., 2005). The evaluation of classified information and titles formed the basis of the study (Page, 2021; Rahi, 2017), ensuring the integrity of the research subject and its contents (Victor, 2008). The criteria for selection are listed.

1. **Relevance:** Research that directly addressed the questions posed by this study is included.
2. **Quality:** Studies that meet a certain quality threshold (e.g., methodological rigor, bias risk) are included. Most of the research is from Scopus-indexed and Clarivate Analytics journals and reputed publishers.
3. **Regency:** Consideration of the publication date to ensure that the review reflects the most current evidence. Most of the studies are from the last three years.
4. **Language:** Only studies published in English are included.
5. **Data Completeness:** Previous studies must provide sufficient data on outcomes of interest for practical synthesis; this is also ensured in this research.

This study did not use primary data from human participants; therefore, no ethics clearance letter from the ethics committee was required.

Literature Review

One of the most significant but also difficult problems in Pakistan's criminal justice system is figuring out how to separate the prosecution agency from the police formally (Warraich & Butt, 2024). This reform was enacted based on the National Judicial Policy (Azhar et al., 2025). This reform was carried out based on the National Judicial Policy with revisions to the Code of Criminal Procedure and provincial laws to abolish the old, police-centric framework (Garrod, 2024). And create an independent prosecution agency that would operate as a control on the power of investigative authority (Waseem, 2024).

The ideal model involved a new nexus founded on cooperation (Azhar et al., 2025), where prosecutors would offer early legal advice to investigations to construct court-admissible cases (Watto, 2022). The conceptual basis of this structural change was the international best practice to establish a set of checks and balances to improve the quality of evidence and objectivity of prosecutors (Rasool & Abdullah, 2023). Empirical evidence has continuously pointed to the

fact that the expected relationship of cooperation has instead deteriorated into institutional conflict, which directly affects criminal justice outcomes.

Much of the literature puts this down to the cultural and operational differences, which are deep-rooted. The colonial histories and political demands influence police culture to focus on fast arrests and crime control, which is usually done at the cost of careful evidence gathering (Azhar et al., 2025). On the other hand, the work of the prosecution is quantified by conviction rates, which form a root of objective and time discrepancy (Waseem, 2024). It will result in low case files, the absence of pre-trial consultations, and distrust on both sides, which increases the cases of acquittals and withdrawals (Rasool & Abdullah, 2023).

This literature largely confirms that a relationship exists between the lack of coordination and poor delivery of justice but requires that more sophisticated studies on the process and administrative bottlenecks that perpetuate this dysfunctional nexus be done.

Historical Context of the Police-Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan

The historical background of the institutional linkage between the police and prosecution in Pakistan dates back to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which was in place in the colonial times and provided the fused model that gave the police the power to both investigate and prosecute (Warraich & Butt, 2024). This combined system linked power, but tended to focus more on quick arrests than evidence-supported results and, thus, created systematic shortcomings in case preparations and low conviction rates that, in turn, damaged the credibility of the system (Watto, 2022). Continued judicial and civil society criticism highlighted the underlying conflict of interest and lack of oversight, thus putting pressure on structural reform (Azhar et al., 2025).

A significant change took place in the early 2000s when the Law Reforms Ordinance of 2002 was enacted, and it began to separate prosecution services and the police in an official manner. The National Judicial Policy of 2009, which required independent federal and provincial prosecution agencies to give judicial remedies and enhance professional standards, supported this (Rasool & Abdullah, 2023). The aim was to advance the quality of prosecutions through the specialized legal contribution and greater accountability. But the reform did not take into account the institutional operational and cultural interdependences between the two different institutions, leading to coordination issues instead of the efficiency of working together (Garrod, 2024). This history still influences the efficacy and equity of the criminal justice system in Pakistan (Waseem, 2024).

Theoretical Context of the Police-Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan

The theoretical context of the police and prosecution nexus and its coordination is rooted in philosophical principles, direct moral reasoning, and ethical decision-making within the legal system. Institutional theory argues that organizations are in line with external forces and hence strengthen silo and isomorphic practices that hinder effective cooperation. In the Pakistani case, these silos are reinforced by political interference and limited resources, with post-devolution reforms showing a lack of incentive harmonization. The legacies of colonial-era buildings also increase the mistrust between the parties and compound the evidence exchange and case building. This theoretical orientation throws light on the maintenance of low conviction rates by normative and coercive isomorphism, and there is a gap in the working interface of the two institutions, which is still empirical.

In addition to the institutional theory, there is the coordination theory that offers an analytical model, which explains how interdependent actors coordinate tasks by using standardization, planning, and feedback as some of the mechanisms. The coordination theory in criminal justice manifests bottlenecks in police-prosecution relations. In the Pakistani context, the problem of coordination failures occurs due to the presence of misaligned dependencies that are aggravated by the political forces and the lack of resources.

Laws Regarding Police- Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan

Police coordination with prosecution is regulated by laws, which provide ethical considerations and expected behavior of law-enforcement agencies, such as the prosecution, police, judiciary, and legal practitioners.

1. **The Police Order, 2002:** The police order was introduced and enacted to reform the police force in Pakistan, making them equipped and enabled to perform community policing. A complaint mechanism against the corrupt and ineligible official was also incorporated in this law.
2. **The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898:** The Code of Criminal Procedure defines the trial process, including arrest, detention, criminal investigations, acquittals, and convictions, thereby providing sufficient procedure to opt for a criminal trial.
3. **Pakistan Penal Code, 1860:** The Pakistan Penal Code provides ample definitions of crimes and their punishments. It also emphasizes the attributions of crime, proportionality, intention, and deliberations while committing offences.
4. **Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984:** Qanun-e-Shahadat, being an adjective law, defines how the competency of the witnesses would be, how in numbers the witnesses are required to give testimonies and depositions, and moreover, it also describes the privileged communication of the public officers, including judges, lawyers, and prosecutors.
5. **Federal Prosecution Service Act, 2023:** It establishes the prosecution mechanism in the federal government, along with other provinces. It further widens the coordination of prosecution, police & and judiciary for handling cases.

Challenges for the Police and Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan

1. **Corruption & Misconduct:** Corruption is a significant hurdle in the criminal justice system in Pakistan due to the high levels of corruption in the law enforcement institutions. The system is compromised with bribery, coercion, and misuse of power, which reduces the confidence of the people. This kind of malfeasance fosters an environment where justice is easily compromised, marginalized, and disenfranchised groups are disproportionately disadvantaged.
2. **Judicial Autonomy:** There is some level of political interference in the judiciary in Pakistan, thus undermining their independence. This invasion is against the moral principle of impartiality because other interests can influence adjudicative decision-making and are not necessarily based only on statutory law and substantiation of evidence.
3. **Access to Justice:** The unequal allocation of legal resources is a major ethical issue. High prices of legal services, combined with the general ignorance of the rights of the law, affect most of the low-income earners unfairly, as they are forced to seek legal aid in order to receive a fair trial. This imbalance increases social injustice and hinders equality in the eyes of the law.
4. **Human Rights Abuses:** The cases of custodial torture, extrajudicial murders, and punitive use of anti-terrorism laws are examples of serious breaches of ethics. Such abuses are in opposition to the basic human rights standards and undermine the reputation of the criminal justice system.

Opportunities for the Police-Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan

1. **Establish Practical Training Programs:** Inter-agency trainings on investigative methods, evidence gathering, and case presentation can focus on organizational priorities, minimizing poorly substantiated arrests, and maximizing conviction rates. Such training will also help to reduce the backlog of cases pending adjudication.
2. **Institute Integrated Digital Cross-jurisdictional Solutions:** Integrated digital cross-jurisdictional solutions, in the form of shared case-management systems, which facilitate evidence real-time sharing and tracking, and the removal of silos, can speed up the review process and reduce the number of cases rejected.
3. **Enlist Early Case Consultation and Diversion Policies:** Frequent pre-charge consultations can give prosecutors an opportunity to direct investigation, thus reducing the construction of inaccurate case dossiers. The low-level offending declination policies distribute the prosecutorial resources to violent crime; this keeps the community safe and may even lower prosecution levels by up to 15 % without a commensurate increase in crime.
4. **Establish Performance Measures and Feedback Systems:** This is the conversion of an arrest-based to a conviction-based performance metric, as well as a regulated feedback system regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the case, which is a fairer evaluation system. The Prosecutorial Performance Indicators (PPIs)

ensure monitoring of the fairness and efficiency, which are associated with the decreased recidivism rates and the reduction of disparities.

Discussion

The coordination between the police and the prosecution in Pakistan is a critical issue that determines the result of criminal justice. The two entities have a constitutional duty of ensuring that justice is maintained, but a lack of coordination often undermines the integrity of cases and the effectiveness of trials. The empirical evidence shows that lack of investigative competence, a lack of prosecutorial oversight in the process of evidence acquisition, and procedural latitude are the major factors that have been leading to the low conviction rate.

Such detachment can be explained in large part by structural asymmetries: police are charged with the early stages of the investigation, and prosecutors only emerge in a comparatively late stage, which thus impairs their ability to build strong cases. As a result, institutional unification by means of combined training programs, case conferences across disciplines, and legal restructuring is likely to increase the prosecutorial guidance and the effectiveness of policing. Enhanced coordination not only increases procedural fairness but also builds citizen trust in the criminal justice system of Pakistan.

Conclusion

The police prosecution nexus in Pakistan is still a defining moment in the criminal justice outcomes. Ineffective coordination of institutions, slow prosecutorial intervention, and inefficient mechanisms of accountability continue to affect the efficacy of a case and the success of convictions. The strategies to curb these loopholes would be to enhance the collaborative systems, the involvement of prosecutors during investigations at the initial stages, and capacity-building efforts. Further reforms in legislation, which should be done to create clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the people, can reduce inefficiencies and lead to transparency. In the end, a closer police-prosecution alliance is not only necessary to enhance trial outcomes but also to strengthen the belief in the justice system and the provision of reasonable, successful, and quality results by the system.

Recommendations

1. **Early Prosecutorial Involvement:** It is important to ensure that prosecutors are actively involved in the initial stages of the process of investigations to help guide evidence gathering systematically.
2. **Joint Training Programs:** The development of periodic capacity-building between the police and the prosecutors in relation to preparing a case and the trial process can facilitate procedural competence and cooperation between the agencies.
3. **Legislative Reforms:** Defining roles and responsibilities in the criminal justice system can lower functional overlaps and improve overall accountability.
4. **Mechanisms of Case Conferencing:** Moving to pre-trial conferences between prosecutors and investigators will allow for identifying the areas of inadequate procedures and understanding each other.
5. **Performance Evaluation Systems:** Joint performance measures can be introduced to objectively gauge the case outcomes and the efficiency of the institution.
6. **Technology Integration:** The use of common digital case management platforms can facilitate communications, documentation, and data availability throughout the investigative and prosecutorial continuum.
7. **Specialized Units:** It is important to establish special liaison cells between the police and prosecution agencies to deal with complex or sensitive cases using specialized knowledge.
8. **Resource Allocation:** It is important to increase financial and human resources to reduce procedural delays and the backlog of cases.
9. **Oversight & Accountability:** The creation of independent monitoring institutions to assess coordination and handling of cases can help in creating transparency in the oversight activities and strengthen accountability.

10. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Awareness of citizens on the justice process creates a sense of transparency, builds trust, and also improves the participation of citizens in the legal system.

Research Limitations

The analysis of institutional coordination of police and prosecution in Pakistan has been limited in a number of methodological ways, which are worth considering. First, the study mainly utilizes secondary data, such as official reports and academic sources; thus, there is a risk of not reflecting the subtle complexities of institutional interaction. The lack of access to primary empirical evidence, including internal case files and prosecutor records, also limits the level of evidence-based analysis. Second, the differences between provinces in relation to resources, legal system, and administration systems make the extrapolation of results to the national level difficult. Third, the sensitive character of the topic under investigation could have a negative impact on access to, as well as reliability of, data because institutional actors often underexploit hindrances or do not want transparency. In addition, time made it impossible to conduct a large-scale fieldwork, including interviews and ethnographic observation. Despite these restrictions, the research provides a substantial basis for clarifying the lack of coordination and outlining future tracks of empirical research.

Research Implications

Research on institutional coordination of police and prosecution and its impact on criminal justice outcomes has several implications:

1. **Policy Reform:** Outlines the need to change the law with a view to clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and accountability systems between the police and prosecution.
2. **Institutional coordination:** It suggests that it is extremely important that collaborative teamwork, including joint investigation teams and case conference procedures, be put in place.
3. **Capacity Building:** Focuses on the adoption of periodic collaborative training programs and professional development programs to supplement the investigation's outcomes and prosecutorial skills of both departments.
4. **Technological Integration:** Proposes the use of digital case-management systems to improve communication, documentation, and operational efficiency.
5. **Academic Contribution:** Provides a method for comparing research on how institutions work together in new justice systems.

Future Research Directions

Future research on the Police and Prosecution Nexus in Pakistan could focus on several key areas to address existing challenges and improve the system:

1. **Empirical Case Studies:** Further research must carefully study police-prosecution cooperation using detailed case studies, thus clarifying the practical issues and best practices to date.
2. **Provincial Comparisons.** The comparative studies between different provinces can show differences in legal systems, resource distributions, and institutional practices across Pakistan.
3. **Stakeholder Perspectives.** Targeted interviews with police officers, prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys may provide detailed information on the coordination process, which the official accounts often overlook.
4. **Impact of Technology.** Innovative areas may be found by focusing on how modern and digital technologies, case flow management systems, and forensic advancements can affect the coordination of police and prosecution.
5. **Cross-National Jurisdictions.** Cross-national studies involving jurisdictions with a more effective police-prosecution interdependent relationship might provide lessons that can be viable in the Pakistani settings.

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