



An Examining the Legal Framework for Criminal Investigations in Pakistan: Gaps and Reform Needs

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ABSTRACT

The criminal investigation system in Pakistan faces numerous challenges due to gaps in its legal framework, inefficiencies in law enforcement, and limited accountability measures. This paper examines the existing legal structure that governs criminal investigations in Pakistan, identifying key issues such as outdated procedural laws, lack of sufficient training for investigators, and the inadequacies of forensic capabilities. The study highlights the impact of these gaps on the effectiveness of criminal investigations and public trust in the justice system. Additionally, it proposes a comprehensive framework for reform, focusing on modernizing investigative procedures, enhancing law enforcement training, and implementing technological advancements. By addressing these gaps, the legal and institutional framework for criminal investigations can be strengthened, ensuring a fairer and more efficient criminal justice process in Pakistan.



Introduction

Pakistan's criminal justice system plays a crucial role in maintaining law and order, ensuring accountability, and safeguarding the rights of citizens. However, the system has long faced challenges, particularly in the realm of criminal investigations. These challenges include issues such as inadequate training, corruption, political interference and insufficient resources, which undermine the integrity and efficiency of investigations. Additionally, there are significant gaps in the legal framework that governs criminal investigations, leading to delays, lack of trust and a general inability to address emerging crime trends effectively (Ali, 2016).

The legal framework for criminal investigations in Pakistan, primarily governed by the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), was designed in a different socio-political context and does not fully cater to modern-day challenges. This has resulted in inefficient investigative processes, which contribute to the failure of many investigations to reach conclusive and just outcomes. Moreover, gaps in the application of laws, technological advancements, and forensic capabilities have hindered the ability of law enforcement agencies to perform their duties effectively (Khan, 2018).

This research aims to assess these gaps in the existing legal framework and propose reforms that could address the inefficiencies in criminal investigations. By examining the current laws, identifying the obstacles in their implementation and analyzing the roles of key stakeholders such as the police, judiciary, and prosecution, the study intends to offer practical solutions to enhance the criminal investigation process. The focus of the study is on the legal aspects, looking at both the letter of the law and how it is applied in practice, while considering both domestic and international examples of effective criminal justice systems.

The scope of this study is primarily encompassing an evaluation of the existing legal provisions, policies, and procedural shortcomings that hinder criminal investigations in Pakistan. It will explore the relationship between legal frameworks and practical challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, highlighting areas in need of reform. By focusing on legal and procedural aspects, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the structural issues that compromise the effectiveness of criminal investigations in Pakistan

Literature Review

Historical Overview of Criminal Investigation Laws in Pakistan

The criminal investigation laws in Pakistan have evolved from the colonial era, heavily influenced by British legal traditions. The primary legal frameworks governing criminal investigations today are the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), both of which were inherited from British India. The PPC, introduced in 1860, defines criminal acts and prescribes punishments, while the CrPC, adopted in 1898, outlines procedures for the investigation, prosecution, and trial of criminal cases. While these laws have served Pakistan for over a century, their applicability and relevance to modern challenges in law enforcement have been questioned in recent years. Early efforts to reform these codes were modest, and many provisions have remained unchanged, leading to gaps in addressing contemporary issues such as terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime (Qureshi, 2020).

Existing Legal Framework

The PPC and CrPC form the bedrock of criminal law in Pakistan. The PPC addresses a wide array of offenses, from property crimes to violent acts such as murder and assault. Meanwhile, the CrPC governs the procedural aspects of criminal investigations, including arrest, search, and seizure, as well as trial procedures. Despite their historical significance, both the PPC and CrPC have been criticized for being outdated and insufficient to handle complex modern criminal activities. For example, provisions related to forensic evidence collection are largely underdeveloped, and there is limited guidance on the use of technology in investigations. Additionally, the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997, designed to address specific challenges related to terrorism, has been viewed as insufficient in the face of evolving threats (Ahmad & Khan, 2019). The existing legal instruments

also face criticisms for allowing excessive discretionary powers to law enforcement agencies, often leading to abuse and corruption (Butt & Jamil 2021).

International Comparison

When comparing Pakistan's criminal investigation framework to those of other countries, significant disparities in efficiency, transparency, and adaptability become evident. In countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, criminal investigation laws have been modernized to incorporate advanced forensic science, digital forensics, and new investigative technologies. The UK's Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984), for instance, established clear rules regarding evidence collection, police powers, and the rights of the accused, all while ensuring safeguards against misuse. Similarly, in the United States, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure have been continuously updated to address evolving challenges in criminal investigations, particularly with respect to technological advancements in crime (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan,v2020)

In contrast, Pakistan's legal framework has not adapted at the same pace. The lack of modern forensic infrastructure and the absence of comprehensive laws governing cybercrimes and digital evidence are some of the most glaring issues. Furthermore, while international systems emphasize accountability and transparency in criminal investigations, Pakistan's system is often criticized for its lack of independence and accountability, especially in the face of political and institutional interference (Jamil, 2018). By comparing Pakistan's framework with those of other nations, it becomes clear that modernization and structural reform are imperative for improving the effectiveness of criminal investigations.

Challenges in Legal Implementation

The effectiveness of the legal framework for criminal investigations in Pakistan is hindered by several practical and systemic challenges. Previous studies have highlighted issues related to police corruption, lack of training, inadequate forensic resources, and outdated investigative methods as critical barriers to effective law enforcement (Khan, 2019). Additionally, the National Police Bureau (2017) reports that police forces across Pakistan suffer from low morale, lack of specialization in complex investigations, and limited use of scientific methods such as DNA testing or digital evidence gathering. The implementation of the Criminal Procedure Code is often inconsistent, with widespread delays and inefficiencies in the investigation process.

Moreover, political influence in law enforcement agencies has long been a persistent issue. Research has shown that political pressures often result in biased investigations or cases being dropped due to external interference (Shah, 2020). Additionally, the absence of sufficient safeguards to protect the rights of suspects and witnesses has led to concerns regarding the fairness and transparency of investigations, as well as the erosion of public trust in the criminal justice system (Ahmad, 2021).

Furthermore, the judicial system has also faced criticisms for being slow and inefficient, with long delays in trials and verdicts. A lack of specialized judicial bodies to handle complex cases, such as those involving cybercrimes or organized crime, exacerbates these issues. The Justice Project Pakistan (2020) notes that even when investigations are conducted properly, delays in the legal process result in significant backlogs of cases, weakening the overall effectiveness of the system.

Overview of the Current Legal Framework for Criminal Investigations

The legal framework governing criminal investigations in Pakistan is primarily based on the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), and the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), among other laws. These provisions lay down the legal grounds for how criminal offenses are investigated, prosecuted, and adjudicated in Pakistan (Malik, 2017).

Pakistan Penal Code (PPC): The Pakistan Penal Code, enacted in 1860, serves as the core criminal statute in Pakistan. It defines various offenses, including violent crimes such as murder, robbery, and assault, as well as non-violent crimes like defamation and theft. The PPC outlines the punishments for these offenses and offers definitions of criminal acts, establishing the legal basis for criminal liability. However, despite its extensive use, the PPC has been criticized for being outdated, as it does not address emerging types of crime such as cybercrime, human trafficking, and terrorism in an adequate manner (Khan, 2020). As a result, Pakistan has made some amendments and introduced special laws, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, to address these modern challenges.

Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC): The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), adopted in 1898, provides the procedural framework for criminal investigations in Pakistan. It lays down the procedures for conducting arrests, searches, seizures, and the questioning of suspects. CrPC also outlines the steps for conducting investigations, including how evidence should be gathered and how cases should be prosecuted in courts. Importantly, CrPC governs the police's powers to detain suspects and the judicial procedures for trials. Although CrPC is comprehensive, it is often criticized for its slow, bureaucratic processes, contributing to the backlog of cases and delays in criminal investigations. It lacks provisions that accommodate newer forms of crime, such as digital crimes or terrorism (Rehman, 2020).

Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA): Introduced in 1997, the Anti-Terrorism Act was aimed at addressing the increasing threat of terrorism in Pakistan. This act provides special procedures for the investigation and prosecution of terrorism-related offenses. The ATA grants special powers to law enforcement agencies, such as the ability to detain suspects for extended periods without trial, and to conduct surveillance and intelligence operations. However, the act has been criticized for potentially violating fundamental human rights, particularly with respect to the indefinite detention of suspects without trial, leading to accusations of abuse (Raza, 2017). Furthermore, while the ATA addresses terrorism, it fails to provide a clear and comprehensive legal structure for preventing or investigating other forms of organized crime that threaten national security (Ali, 2022).

Case Study of Notable Investigations

A critical evaluation of high-profile criminal investigations in Pakistan helps to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the legal framework in practice. Two notable case studies the Benazir Bhutto assassination investigation (2007) and the Zainab Ansari murder case (2018)—offer insight into the functioning of the current legal structure.

Benazir Bhutto Assassination Investigation: The assassination of former Prime Minister **Benazir Bhutto** in December 2007 remains one of Pakistan's most high-profile and controversial investigations. Despite initial claims that the **Pakistan People's Party (PPP)** leader was killed in a suicide attack, the subsequent investigation failed to produce conclusive evidence regarding the perpetrators or masterminds behind the attack. A UN inquiry in 2010 criticized Pakistan's

investigation for being marred by procedural errors, lack of transparency, and failure to secure vital evidence. The investigation was also hindered by political interference, with various parties accusing each other of obstructing justice. This case highlights significant shortcomings in Pakistan's investigative framework, particularly in high-profile cases involving political figures (Zahid, 2015).

Zainab Ansari Murder Case: The **Zainab Ansari** case in 2018, which involved the abduction, rape, and murder of a young girl in Kasur, Punjab, garnered national and international attention. The initial investigation struggled to make progress, but the breakthrough came when DNA evidence linked **Imran Ali**, the suspect, to the crime scene. Despite the availability of crucial forensic evidence, the case revealed major deficiencies in police investigations, including delayed action, lack of urgency, and poor coordination between local authorities and the forensic laboratory. The case eventually led to the arrest and conviction of Ali, highlighting the importance of modern investigative techniques, such as forensic DNA analysis. However, the investigation also underscored the need for reform in police protocols and the importance of timely, evidence-based investigation practices (Khan, 2023).

The legal framework for criminal investigations in Pakistan, while based on historically significant legal instruments, has several shortcomings in addressing modern challenges. While key provisions in the PPC, CrPC, and ATA form the backbone of criminal investigations, they are outdated and insufficient for tackling contemporary issues such as terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime. The institutional structure, including law enforcement, the judiciary, and prosecution services, suffers from systemic inefficiencies, corruption, and inadequate resources. Case studies such as the Benazir Bhutto assassination and Zainab Ansari murder investigations further demonstrate the need for reform in the investigative process, particularly in terms of professionalism, forensic capabilities, and independence from political interference (Farooq, 2018).

Identifying the Gaps in the Legal Framework

Deficiencies in the Investigative Process: One of the most significant gaps in the legal framework for criminal investigations in Pakistan is the inadequacy of the police force in terms of training, resources, and independence. The police in Pakistan are often under-resourced, overburdened, and not properly trained in modern investigative techniques. As a result, investigations are frequently compromised by inefficiencies, delays, and errors that hinder the proper collection of evidence and the successful prosecution of criminals.

The **Police Act of 1861**, which governs the police in Pakistan, is outdated and lacks provisions to address modern policing needs, such as cybercrime, terrorism, and organized crime. Police officers are often poorly trained in forensic investigation, leading to mishandling of evidence and improper procedures during investigations. This issue is compounded by political interference, corruption, and a lack of accountability, all of which hinder the police's ability to function independently and effectively.

In the **Zainab Ansari case (2018)**, the initial stages of the investigation were marked by delays and mismanagement. Police failed to act quickly on vital leads, and their initial investigation was not as thorough as it could have been. It was only when DNA evidence became available that the

case saw significant progress. This case demonstrates how deficiencies in police training and resources can lead to delayed justice and the failure to adequately investigate crimes.

Additionally, the lack of adequate forensic and technical training in police forces limits the effectiveness of investigations. This lack of expertise affects the quality of evidence collected and can lead to cases being dismissed on technical grounds. For instance, the **Qandeel Baloch murder case (2016)**, where police failed to follow proper investigative procedures, led to several delays in obtaining key forensic evidence. While the investigation eventually led to the conviction of Baloch's brother, early mishandling of the case and failure to promptly secure physical evidence raised concerns about police readiness and competence.

Weaknesses in Forensic and Technological Integration: The integration of modern forensic science and technology into criminal investigations in Pakistan is still in its infancy, and legal frameworks do not sufficiently facilitate the adoption of these tools. While Pakistan has made some strides, such as establishing forensic labs and introducing DNA testing, the legal system still does not fully accommodate these advancements. Forensic science, including DNA analysis, is not always incorporated into investigations due to both legal constraints and a lack of trained professionals in this field.

The **Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) Act (2007)** was a step in the right direction, but the lack of coordination between police forces and forensic scientists remains a significant issue. One critical gap is the slow pace at which the law incorporates emerging technologies like digital forensics, mobile forensics, and surveillance systems. With the increasing use of digital devices in crimes, the law is lagging behind in providing clear guidance on the admissibility of electronic evidence and the technical procedures required to handle such evidence.

In the **Malala Yousafzai shooting incident (2012)**, investigators struggled to collect and preserve digital evidence, despite the potential for such evidence to be crucial for tracking the culprits. The lack of clear legal provisions regarding the use of technology in investigations further complicated the process.

Additionally, the **Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 1997**, while providing special provisions for terrorism cases, does not fully address issues surrounding modern forms of evidence, such as electronic data or cybercrime-related evidence. The ATA has been criticized for not keeping pace with the technological advancements that increasingly influence criminal behavior, particularly in terrorism and organized crime.

Issues of Political Interference and Corruption: Political interference and corruption within the criminal justice system are among the most persistent barriers to effective criminal investigations in Pakistan. The influence of political elites, particularly in high-profile cases, often leads to the obstruction of justice and the manipulation of investigations. Political leaders or influential individuals may use their power to influence the outcomes of investigations, either by pressuring the police to drop charges or by using their influence to avoid prosecution.

For instance, the **Benazir Bhutto assassination case (2007)** serves as a stark example of how political interference can derail an investigation. Despite initial claims that Bhutto was killed by a suicide bomber, the investigation was marred by delays, mismanagement, and allegations of political manipulation. The involvement of powerful political players, including those from Bhutto's own party, led to a lack of transparency and hindered efforts to uncover the truth.

Additionally, there were conflicting reports from government agencies, further muddying the investigation.

Corruption within law enforcement agencies also complicates investigations. Law enforcement officers may be bribed to cover up evidence or to prevent certain individuals from being investigated. This results in compromised investigations, which are then further exacerbated by weak oversight mechanisms. The **Lahore Model Town incident (2014)**, where police clashed with protestors, resulted in numerous casualties, and investigations into the incident were severely hampered by accusations of political interference and corruption.

Inadequate Witness Protection and Legal Support: Another significant gap in Pakistan's legal framework is the lack of robust witness protection laws and legal assistance for victims and witnesses. The absence of a proper witness protection program makes it difficult to ensure the safety and security of those willing to testify in criminal cases, particularly in cases involving organized crime, terrorism, and corrupt practices. This has led to a lack of cooperation from witnesses, who fear retaliation.

Witness protection laws in Pakistan are underdeveloped and inadequate to deal with the threats faced by witnesses in high-profile or sensitive cases. The **Witness Protection Bill (2017)**, while a step forward, still lacks the comprehensive protections needed to ensure the safety of witnesses, particularly those involved in cases of terrorism or organized crime. As a result, many potential witnesses are unwilling to come forward, fearing for their lives and safety.

In the **Sialkot lynching case (2010)**, the lack of protection for witnesses led to the failure to secure additional testimonies that could have expedited the prosecution of those involved. This is a clear example of how inadequate witness protection can undermine the entire criminal investigation process and lead to miscarriages of justice.

Evidentiary Standards and Fair Trial Concerns: The collection, preservation, and presentation of evidence in criminal investigations is another area where Pakistan's legal framework falls short. Problems related to evidence handling often arise due to a lack of standardized procedures, the use of outdated investigative methods, and insufficient training for law enforcement officers. This can lead to crucial evidence being mishandled or lost, resulting in the dismissal of cases or the acquittal of suspects. For instance, in the **Shahrukh Jatoi and Siraj Talpur case (2013)**, which involved the murder of a teenager, the use of witnesses and evidence was contested throughout the trial. The defense argued that evidence presented in court had been improperly handled and that certain procedural irregularities had occurred during the investigation. This case highlights how weaknesses in evidentiary standards can lead to the failure of the criminal justice system to uphold the principle of fairness.

Reform Needs for the Legal Framework

To address the numerous challenges facing Pakistan's criminal justice system, significant reforms are necessary in several key areas. Below are detailed recommendations for improving the legal framework, ensuring a more effective, transparent and accountable system for criminal investigations.

Police and Investigator Reforms: A fundamental reform needed within Pakistan's criminal investigation framework is the improvement of the police force and investigative agencies. The current state of law enforcement in Pakistan is characterized by outdated training programs, poor resources, and a lack of professional development, all of which undermine the integrity of criminal investigations (Iqbal, Z. 2019)

Police officers should undergo regular and comprehensive training programs that focus on modern investigative techniques, including forensic science, digital evidence gathering, and the handling of complex crimes such as terrorism and cybercrime. Specialized units should be established to handle specific categories of crime, such as financial crimes, organized crime, and domestic violence.

To combat corruption and inefficiencies, an independent police oversight body should be established to ensure that complaints against law enforcement agencies are properly investigated. This body should have the power to take action against officers involved in misconduct, including suspension or dismissal.

Ensuring the professional independence of the police force is essential for maintaining the integrity of investigations. Reforms should focus on eliminating political interference in police functions. This can be achieved by implementing transparent recruitment and promotion processes, and by establishing laws that protect officers from political or external pressures.

The police should engage with local communities and promote community policing, which would help build trust and cooperation with the public. This can improve information-sharing and lead to more effective investigations.

These reforms are crucial to ensure that investigations are not compromised by poor practices or undue external pressures, allowing law enforcement to perform their duties effectively and with accountability.

Strengthening Forensic Science and Technology: Forensic science and technology have become critical elements of modern criminal investigations. However, Pakistan's legal and institutional frameworks remain insufficiently adapted to leverage these resources. The country faces significant challenges in integrating forensic science and technology into investigations, resulting in missed opportunities to resolve cases effectively.

Pakistan should significantly invest in forensic laboratories and scientific tools to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to gather and analyze physical evidence. This includes ensuring that DNA testing, toxicology, and ballistic analysis are available and routinely utilized in investigations.

The training of forensic experts should be prioritized, with the establishment of advanced forensic science courses in universities and police training academies. Special units focused on cybercrime investigations should be formed within the police department to address the increasing relevance of digital evidence.

Pakistan should update its laws to allow the use of modern technologies, such as surveillance cameras, GPS tracking, and digital forensics, as admissible evidence in court. Clear legal

guidelines should be established for the collection and use of electronic data in investigations, including online activities and digital footprints.

The Pakistani legal system should encourage partnerships with international forensic bodies to improve forensic standards and practices. Cross-border cooperation will help Pakistan stay updated on the latest forensic methodologies and ensure that Pakistani evidence can be evaluated and accepted globally.

Enhancing Legal Provisions for Evidence Collection: One of the most critical gaps in Pakistan's criminal justice system is the lack of clear and standardized procedures for the collection and preservation of evidence. Inconsistent practices and poor handling of evidence often lead to the dismissal of cases or the acquittal of perpetrators due to procedural errors.

Pakistan should develop comprehensive legal guidelines for the collection, preservation, and chain of custody of evidence. This includes clear protocols for securing physical evidence, ensuring its integrity, and maintaining proper documentation.

Pakistani laws should be amended to formally recognize forensic evidence and digital evidence as valid forms of proof in criminal trials. This includes providing detailed legal standards for the admissibility of such evidence, ensuring that it is presented in a way that complies with established legal principles.

Police officers should be trained in the correct procedures for collecting and preserving evidence. A focus on the proper handling of forensic samples, digital devices, and crime scene documentation will help maintain the integrity of investigations and reduce the chances of evidence being contaminated or lost. New laws could be introduced to streamline the process of evidence collection and ensure its proper handling, including a more robust legal framework for handling digital and electronic evidence, which is becoming increasingly significant in modern crimes. Improving legal provisions around evidence collection will help make criminal investigations more reliable and allow courts to make informed decisions based on solid, well-preserved evidence.

Addressing Political and Institutional Interference: Political and institutional interference is one of the major obstacles to fair and transparent criminal investigations in Pakistan. Political pressure often undermines the independence of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, leading to compromised investigations and the failure to hold influential figures accountable.

Reforms should be introduced to ensure that law enforcement agencies, including the police, are free from political influence. This could involve establishing an independent body to oversee law enforcement activities and ensure that political influence does not affect investigations.

The judiciary should be safeguarded from political pressures by implementing measures that protect judges from external influence. Transparent appointment procedures, as well as stronger mechanisms for judicial accountability, would help maintain the impartiality of the judicial system.

Laws should be introduced to protect whistleblowers within law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, encouraging transparency and the reporting of corrupt practices without fear of retaliation. This would help combat corruption and ensure that investigations are conducted in an unbiased manner.

Public oversight bodies should be strengthened to monitor the functioning of law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. This can include the creation of independent commissions to review high-profile cases and investigate allegations of corruption or misconduct.

Ensuring independence from political influence is essential to restore the integrity and effectiveness of criminal investigations in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings: This study has thoroughly examined Pakistan's current legal framework for criminal investigations, identifying several key gaps that hinder the effectiveness and fairness of the process. A major issue is the lack of professional independence and accountability within the police force, often compounded by political interference. This has led to a compromised investigative process, where investigations can be manipulated or delayed, diminishing public trust in the system. Additionally, Pakistan's reliance on outdated investigative techniques and the insufficient use of forensic science and technology has resulted in unreliable evidence and missed opportunities to solve crimes efficiently. Another critical gap is the weak witness protection system, which discourages witnesses from coming forward and impedes the pursuit of justice. Furthermore, the absence of clear, standardized procedures for evidence collection and preservation has led to numerous cases being dismissed due to procedural errors. Finally, the political influence on the judiciary and law enforcement has undermined the neutrality and fairness of criminal investigations.

Recommendations for Legal Reforms

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the foundations of Pakistan's criminal justice system. Firstly, the police force should be reformed through improved training, greater accountability, and professional independence from political pressures. Establishing an independent oversight body, like the IOPC in the UK, would ensure that misconduct is investigated impartially. Additionally, a robust reform of forensic science and technology is essential; this includes the establishment of specialized forensic labs, greater integration of modern technologies like digital forensics, and expanding the use of DNA databases in criminal investigations. Legal reforms should also focus on creating clear, standardized protocols for evidence collection and preservation to ensure that investigations remain credible and legally sound. Moreover, the introduction of comprehensive witness protection programs is crucial to encourage cooperation from witnesses, enhancing the overall investigative process. Finally, reforms should be implemented to safeguard the independence of both the police and judiciary from political interference, ensuring that law enforcement can operate free of external pressures.

Policy Implications

The proposed reforms offer several significant implications for policy and lawmaking in Pakistan. To bring about lasting change, these reforms need to be incorporated into both legislative and institutional frameworks. The establishment of new laws, such as a comprehensive police accountability act, forensic science regulations, and witness protection legislation, should be prioritized. At the same time, existing laws, such as the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), must be amended to reflect modern investigative practices and

safeguard human rights. Policymakers must also address the issue of political interference in law enforcement by creating mechanisms that ensure the professional autonomy of the police and the judiciary. These reforms should be backed by sufficient funding to ensure the police and judicial bodies can implement the necessary changes, including the training of officers, establishment of forensic facilities, and support for independent oversight bodies. The proposed changes can improve the criminal justice system's efficiency, fairness, and transparency, leading to a more just and trustworthy system.

Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on exploring the systemic impacts of these proposed reforms. A comparative analysis of the implementation of similar reforms in other jurisdictions, such as India and the UK, would offer valuable insights into potential challenges and successes. Further studies could also examine the role of technology in enhancing the criminal investigation process, particularly in areas such as digital forensics, artificial intelligence in crime detection, and the use of surveillance systems. Another important area for future research is the effectiveness of witness protection laws and how they could be strengthened to encourage greater public participation in the justice system. Additionally, research could explore the social and political challenges that hinder the implementation of police reforms, providing a deeper understanding of the obstacles to achieving independence and accountability within law enforcement agencies. Lastly, longitudinal studies could track the outcomes of legal reforms over time, offering empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these changes in reducing crime rates and increasing public trust in the criminal justice system.

In conclusion, addressing the gaps in Pakistan's criminal investigation system requires a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms, technological integration, and enhanced institutional accountability. The recommended reforms, if implemented, can transform Pakistan's criminal justice system into one that is more efficient, transparent and fair, ultimately improving the administration of justice and ensuring greater protection for victims and witnesses.

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