

DELAY IN JUSTICE IN HIGH-PROFILE HOMICIDE TRIALS: EVIDENCE FROM THE NOOR MUKADAM CASE IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

To start with, the issue of delay in criminal verdicts appears to be the most serious problem of the justice systems. This paper is the one that investigates the problem of justice delay at the systemic level by means of a detailed case study of the murder trial of Noor Mukadam in Pakistan. It was the Islamabad sessions court which sentenced Zahir Jaffer to death in February 2022, while his other two guards accused were sentenced to custodial terms. Besides the presence of compelling evidence and public attention, the case gives the main perspective through which the procedural impediments in the criminal courts may be dissected. This work is based on the qualitative case study method of research and uses court judgments, charge sheets, and procedural documents. An extensive timeline and process mapping technique is employed to identify major stages in the course of the investigation, prosecution, trial, and sentencing. The results indicate that besides the fact that the delivery of justice was delayed by several sources among which were the lack of coordination between the investigative and prosecutorial agencies, the repeated procedural adjournments, the delayed forensic processes, and the complexities around the treatment of the co-accused. The interview revealed that disregard to the management of cases, accountability mechanisms, and time-fixed trial practices for serious violent offenses were the areas that needed an immediate change. Through the research, it is revealed that the publicized cases do not always lead to systemic efficiency and rather, they expose the continued weaknesses of the criminal court system. The paper goes further to offer evidence, based insights that could be used for reforming courts and the correction system in the jurisdictions with similar justice structures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Timely justice delivery is considered by many scholars as one of the fundamental pillars of a successful criminal justice system (Goswami & Goswami, 2025; Croci & Gomez, 2025). In

addition to weakening public confidence in the judiciary, delays in criminal proceedings violate the rights of victims, accused persons, and society as a whole (Van Der Veen, 2025; Shahbaz & Zafar, 2025). Very often lengthy judicial decisions

have become a classic problem of an institution at many different levels in different countries, especially concerning serious crimes such as murder trials where justice, accountability, and deterrence may be at stake (Adeyemi et al. 2025). If criminal courts are unable to produce decisions within a reasonable time limit, the public trust in the justice system will be on its decline and the right to a fair trial may be at risk (Neubauer & Fradella, 2019; Prawira, 2025; Voigt, 2021).

Justice delay is very often the result of a complex interaction of structural, procedural, and institutional factors (Ullah et al. 2025). The most common ones are: court backlogs, ineffective case management practices, repeated procedural adjournments, delays in forensic examination, and lack of coordination among investigative and prosecutorial agencies (Ishola, 2025; Kemboi, 2025). In addition, in many developing and common, law jurisdictions criminal justice institutions are faced with problems such as lack of sufficient financial and human resources, administrative inefficiencies, and the use of outdated procedural mechanisms. All these have been leading to prolonged litigation and delayed verdicts (ADuke, 2025; Yunus, 2025). As a consequence, even those criminal cases that are backed by the most solid evidence and have generated great public interest are characterized by procedural delays in the court system (Dakolias, 1999; Hamnergren, 2007; Hassan & Bhatti, 2025; Voigt, 2021).

Pakistan's criminal justice system has long been a target of criticism owing to its inherent structural inefficiencies that greatly delay the processing of criminal cases (Khan et al. 2025). Academic research that deals with law and in-depth reports on reform have brought to light major problems such as the police's slow investigations, lack of coordinated effort between police and prosecutors, frequent court postponements, and judge shortage (Dwivedi, 2025). These systemic issues reveal themselves further in the trial of famous figures where the attention of the media and the public's eagerness for immediate justice simultaneously expose the shortcomings of the legal systems (Wahab et al. 2025; Pangaribuan, 2025).

Perhaps the best-known one is Noor Mukadam's murder case, which created a huge media buzz both locally and internationally. Noor Mukadam was murdered in July 2021 in Islamabad, and the main culprit Zahir Jaffer was found guilty and sentenced to death by the Islamabad District and Sessions Court in February 2022. This case not only had compelling forensic and testimonial evidence but also the public was vigorously demanding justice, yet it revealed several procedural shortcomings in both the investigation and the trial stages. The above mentioned challenges included the delay in the submission of the forensic reports, multiple court hearings and some legal intricacies regarding filing the case against co, accused persons. This paper investigates the problem of justice system delay at the level of entire system by the help of a case study of the Noor Mukadam case. It follows the qualitative research path and reliance is laid on laws records transcripts, procedure notes, and interviews with lawyers, reporters, and law enforcement officials. Timeline creation and process mapping feature as methods in this research to find out the exact steps of investigation, prosecution, and trial where delays occurred. By shedding light on a well, known murder case, this paper initiates discussions that are relevant to the efficiency of criminal courts and the reforms in the justice system through the use of criminal evidence not only in Pakistan but also in other countries where institutional problems are quite familiar.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although there are laws in place to ensure justice is served quickly and fairly in Pakistan, the majority of high, profile crimes continuously reveal the delays, loopholes in procedures, and difficulties in obtaining fair results. The murder of Noor Mukadam turned into a case in point that attracted exceptional nationwide media coverage to the working of the criminal justice system, especially to how efficiently First Information Report (FIR) is registration, investigation methods, trial date fixings, and the functioning of a judge. The FIR and the preliminary investigation were considered as

issued and fairly thorough. However, the trial got elongated; thereby the worry about delaying crime cases was made public. Meanwhile, the concerns on the appropriateness of the punishment and the family of the victim's right to justice are still the major focus of the discussion in the public and legal circles. Here, the paper points at the problem of delayed and unequal justice delivery by using the Noor Mukadam case as a study through the evaluation of the FIR registration, an assessment of the trial timelines, and an analysis of the final judgment. This work thus aims to unearth issues that may lead to the amendment of the Pakistani criminal justice system.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system are generally considered by some as the most important indicators of a country's dedication to the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Besides the notorious criminal cases, the murder of Noor Mukadam in Pakistan

is an example of a great opportunity to see how legal institutions really work from the registration of the first information report, subsequent investigation to trial proceedings and final judicial verdict. Thus, this study aims to find out how procedural timelines, the depth of investigative processes and judicial decisions still influence the delivery of justice by taking the Noor Mukadam case as the subject of research. In the first place, the study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods such as content analysis of the FIR, trial timeline mapping, calculation of a Justice Delay Index (JDI), and examination of sentencing outcomes. In fact, the project aims to not only pinpoint the systemic strengths but also at the same time identify the institutional bottlenecks in the criminal justice system of Pakistan by using such a structured analytical framework.

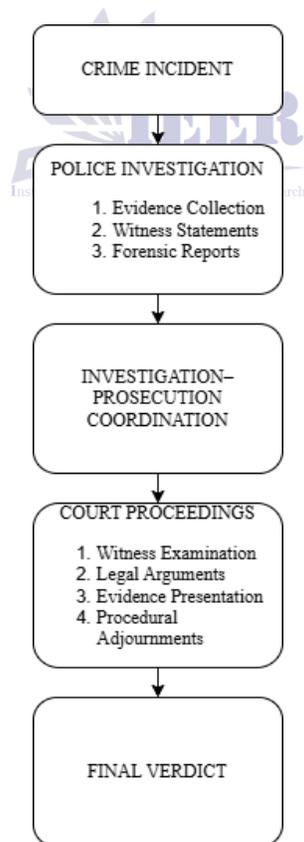


Figure 1. Institutional Drivers of Justice Delay

The research paper through analytical method studies the FIR registration and the investigations post it with a view to measuring the level of completion, procedural soundness, and overall efficacy. Besides this, it also aims to assess the judiciary in the form of a trial and the delivery of justice by examining the time schedule of court proceedings, courtroom conduct, and factors that have brought about changes or delay. Besides this, the dissertation also deals with the last ruling and the legal consequences by auditing the jurisprudential analysis of the court, the aspects of evidence, and the overall effects of the decision in the context of the criminal justice system.

1.2 Research Questions

RQ1. What was the quality level of the FIR registration and subsequent investigation in terms of completeness, detail, and timeliness in the Noor Mukadam case?

RQ2. What were the intervals between the FIR registration and the trial, as well as the final judgment, and what factors contributed to any delays in the judicial process?

RQ3. How well did the judgment, sentencing, and appeals process serve justice for the victim's family in terms of suitability, fairness, and accessibility?

2. Literature Review

Delay in the functioning of criminal justice systems has been an issue of focus at length in legal and criminological writings. Delivering justice without unnecessary delays is generally considered to be the hallmark of upholding law and a foundation of the rights to a fair trial. However, delaying crime cases for a long time not only damages the faith of people in courts but also the rights of victims and accused persons get affected. Such delay damages the justice system's reputation and its capacity to provide real accountability gets impaired (Ashworth & Redmayne, 2010; Shahbaz & Zafar, 2025). Likewise, international law mandates that legal proceedings in criminal cases must not only be fair but also timely, so that the court remains trustworthy as an institution (Boe, 2025; Voigt, 2016).

Court congestion and poor case management practices are one of the main structural reasons for delays in criminal trials (Avraham & Hubbard, 2025). Research shows that high workload, lack of judicial resources, and weak coordination of the administration often result in long proceedings and the backlog of cases (Dakolias, 1999; Yushau, 2026). In many judicial systems, the lack of effective scheduling and case monitoring procedures is what really gives space for cases to pile up over time. Besides, the performance of the judiciary depends a lot on the institutional coordination between courts, law enforcement, and prosecutors (Asif & Rehman, 2025). If these actors work in different or poorly coordinated institutional environments, inefficiency of procedures will become even more evident, especially in criminal cases that require large evidence and involve several actors, such as homicide (Buscaglia & Dakolias, 1999; Calderoni et al. 2026).

Repeated procedural adjournments is one of the main causes of delay in the criminal justice system (Azhar, et al. 2025). Adjournments are often granted when a witness is missing, a lawyer is not available, or when there is a delay in submitting the investigation report and the documents that provide evidence (Ghouri et al. 2025). In fact, adjournments are sometimes necessary to ensure fairness of the procedure and that the parties have sufficient time to prepare their case but an excessive dependence on them can easily become a major flaw of judicial systems (Adesanya, 2025). After a while, numerous adjournments result in a significant deceleration of the criminal trials. Studies have indicated that poorly designed case management systems are rarely able to control such practices effectively, which leads to the continuation of unnecessary delays in court proceedings (De la Torre Soto et al. 2025; Hambergren, 2007; Neubauer & Fradella, 2019).

Forensic evidence plays a crucial role in modern criminal trials and even helps to speed up the process and decide the results particularly in murder cases (Fatoki & Anyasi, 2025). Nowadays, criminal justice systems depend a lot on the use of forensic tests such as DNA autopsies toxics

tests, and cyber forensic evidence (Hussain, 2025). The downside of using such evidence is not only the issue of reliability but also the fact that sometimes they become available too late. For example, lateness in forensic labs, late submission of reports, or poor coordination of investigators and forensic experts can have the effect of the court getting postponed (Lopes, 2025). In less developed contexts, these issues are usually compounded by the lack of forensic infrastructure, absence of materials, and less measurement abilities, which all lead to long trial durations (Houck & Siegel, 2015; Jamil et al. 2025).

Lots of research has pointed out deep, rooted problems in the way the Pakistan criminal justice system operates, leading to delayed settlements of cases. Some of the issues are the lack of diligence in the police, institutions investigations, poor collaboration between the police and prosecutor departments, shortage of professional training, and hardly any accountability measures in the justice process (Ali & Rehman, 2025). Besides that, heavy court caseloads, and the inflexible procedural rules under the Code of Criminal Procedure often cause long court battles and late court decisions (Al, Zawahreh et al. 2026). On top of that, these institutional restrictions collectively present a systemic hurdle for the quick administration of justice in criminal cases. High, profile criminal cases, because of the level of detail and the intensity of investigation and judicial processes they involve, can shed light on some of the issues that are more "systemic" in nature within the criminal justice system as a whole (Rossmo et al. 2025). These high, profile cases often receive over, the, top coverage by the media and the public demand for accountability, immediate and without fail, is stronger than ever. However, the reality is that the very fact that these cases are in the spotlight does not always mean that they will get sorted out in the courts any quicker (Nugroho, 2025). They get such high public and media attention that justice is expected to be served very quickly, but in fact, these cases are the ones that reveal the major shortcomings in the criminal justice system: not only do they highlight the system's procedural

inefficiencies but also demonstrate the difficulties that arise from evidentiary issues and the lack of proper coordination between investigative and judicial bodies (Lopes, 2025). High, profile criminal cases frequently represent a kind of "critical lens" or "mirror" through which larger issues or challenges related to the administration of criminal justice can be identified and understood.

The killing of Noor Mukadam in Islamabad and Zahir Jaffar's trial after it serve as a detailed example of justice delay in Pakistan. Procedurally, the case zigzagged in several ways, not only throwing the criminal justice systems challenges but also the whole country's justice dilemma. A thorough review of how this case was handled, in fact, sheds light on the internal, procedural, and organizational elements that influence the pace, efficiency, and quality of murder trials in Pakistan.

3. Method

This paper employs a qualitative case study format to investigate the issue of delayed justice in criminal courts. A case study method would be very useful in revealing how complicated institutional procedures really work when at the same time the aim is to learn about procedural changes, how institutions coordinate themselves, and decision making, rather than finding statistical causal links. Selecting one single famous murder case, this research intends to get a deep understanding of how procedural methods, investigation lengths, and institutional meetings influence the speed and effectiveness of criminal justice outcomes (Yin, 2018). The murder trial of Noor Mukadam is the case that was scheduled to be discussed which was held in the month of July 2021 at Islamabad. The chief accused i.e. Zahir Jaffer was convicted and handed over the death penalty by the Islamabad District and Sessions Court in February 2022. This case is an excellent example from real life to understand how delays can occur at different stages of the criminal justice system such as investigation, prosecution, and trial procedures.

3.1 Data Sources

Most of the research relies on documents and procedural logs related to the case. The researchers were able to recreate the sequence of events and identify the factors influencing the trial's progress by examining multiple data sources in a systematic way. They closely analyzed the trial court judgment and sentencing orders in order to grasp the legal reasoning of the court, the procedural timeline of the case, and the judicial assessment of the evidence. The investigators also referred to the first information report (FIR) and subsequent charge sheets to understand the initial legal frame of the case, the nature of allegations, and the time gap between the police report and the commencement of criminal proceedings. Moreover, records of court hearings and case dockets were examined to establish hearing dates, instances of adjournments, and the general procedural flow of the trial. Autopsy reports and the documentation of forensic evidence were used to establish the effect and timing of forensic analysis on the trial and the aspects of evidence. Trustworthy and authentic media reports were only used occasionally for verifying the main dates of legal events and for supplementing implementation procedural records in case official documents were not sufficient or missing.

4. Analysis and Findings

This research is based on using timeline reconstruction and process mapping methods for the purpose of a detailed examination of the issue of time delays in justice delivery. Process mapping is indeed one of the highly practical tools in criminal justice studies which allow to visually represent the legal procedural stages of a case and identify the bottlenecks in institutional workflows. By tracking a case along the judicial system's various touchpoints, the researchers, through this method, can pinpoint the sources of

delays and assess how these delays affect the justice system's overall efficiency. The entire analytical process was done in a few stages. Initially, the paper aligned the major procedural stages in time with a sequential map, such as the investigation, the suspect's arrest, the charge, the trial hearing, and the sentencing. Conducting such a mapping activity presented a well, defined case flow overview from the initial crime reporting to the court's verdict. In the second phase, the work calculated the durations between the consecutive procedural stages with the intention of spotting the locations of delay. Looking at the time lags between the stages helped to determine if the different elements of the criminal justice system were carried out efficiently or faced considerable disruptions.

Thirdly, the research aimed to uncover any possible institutional hindrances that might have led to procedural delays in the case. Special emphasis was given to issues like repeated court adjournments, delays in conducting or reporting forensic tests, and lack of coordination between the police and prosecution. Such factors are commonly highlighted in the literature on criminal justice as main reasons for delaying court trials. On the one hand, a case, study method is useful for thoroughly understanding the procedural details of a particular legal case. On the other hand, it has its drawbacks as well. For instance, it only deals with one case and therefore its conclusions cannot be indiscriminately applied to all criminal trials in Pakistan. On the other hand, celebrity criminal trials usually mirror the institutional realities and systemic issues of a country more broadly. Accordingly, they could be very helpful in identifying the weaknesses and inefficiencies of the criminal justice system from a structural point of view.

Table 1 Justice Delay Measurement Table

Indicator	Description	Measurement Method	Example Benchmark
FIR Registration Delay	Time between incident and FIR registration	Incident date vs FIR registration date	0-24 hours (ideal)
Investigation Completion Time	Time taken by police to complete investigation	FIR date vs challan submission	14-30 days
Challan Submission Delay	Delay in submitting investigation report to court	FIR date vs submission date	≤14 days
Charge Framing Delay	Time taken by court to frame formal charges	Challan date vs charge framing	≤30 days
Trial Duration	Total duration of trial proceedings	Charge framing to verdict	6-12 months
Adjournment Frequency	Number of hearing delays during trial	Total hearings vs adjournments	≤3 adjournments
Witness Appearance Rate	Percentage of witnesses appearing when summoned	Witness attendance vs summons issued	≥80%
Evidence Collection Efficiency	Speed and completeness of evidence gathering	Number of evidence items collected vs required	≥90%
Bail Decision Time	Time taken by court to decide bail application	Bail filing vs bail order	≤7 days
Case Disposal Time	Total duration from FIR to final judgment	FIR date vs judgment date	≤1 year

4.1 Procedural Timeline of the Case

4.1.1. Incident and FIR Registration 20 July 2021

The murder of Noor Mukadam was committed at a house in Islamabad. After the crime was uncovered, the police opened a case registered as FIR No. 380/2021 at Kohsar Police Station under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code, which legally marked the start of the criminal investigation.

Observation

That the FIR was registered on the very day of the incident shows that the police made a prompt first reaction. Registration of the FIR within time is highly essential as it is the first official proof of the crime which enables the police to immediately start the process of gathering evidence, recording the case etc.

4.1.2. Arrest of the Accused

20 July 2021

Very soon after the incident, police located and arrested the main culprit, Zahir Jaffer, at the spot where the crime was committed.

Observation

Arresting immediately dramatically lessened the chance of the accused getting away and at the same time offered the investigators a rare opportunity of having the suspect within their reach at a very early phase of their investigation. Also, by holding the suspect early on, it was easier to save the evidence and even carry out the interrogation and identification of witnesses without any delays.

4.1.3. Investigation and Evidence Collection

July–August 2021

During the investigation phase, police collected multiple forms of evidentiary material, including:

1. CCTV footage from the residence

2. Forensic evidence collected from the crime scene
3. Post-mortem examination reports
4. Witness statements
5. Electronic communication records

Observation

To establish the case, the investigators had to gather a huge amount of evidence. However documenting verifying, and compiling the reinforcement took a few weeks. Besides the delays in forensic analysis and evidence processing, they also contributed to prolonging the investigation period before the case could be brought to prosecution.

4.1.4. Submission of Challan (Charge Sheet)

October 2021

After finishing the probe, police handed over the challan (investigation report) to the court as required under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Observation

The time gap from the date of the incident to the filing of the challan with the court indicates the length of the investigation phase, which is an important factor in deciding the speed of the following stages of trial. Rapid completion of the charge sheet is necessary to allow the court to officially start trial hearings.

4.1.5. Trial Proceedings

October 2021 – February 2022

During the trial phase the court conducted multiple hearings that included;

1. Examination of prosecution witnesses,

2. Cross, examination by defense lawyers,
3. Presentation and verification of forensic evidence,
4. Legal arguments by prosecution and defense.

Observation

The trial was marked by multiple procedural adjournments. Most of these delays were linked to the dates of witnesses' availability, procedural rules for showing of evidence, and legal arguments by defense attorneys. Although adjournments are a standard procedural aspect of criminal trials, their excessive recurrence will not only prolong the court proceedings but also delay the delivery of the final judgment.

4.1.6. Trial Court Verdict Date

24 February 2022

After hearing the case, Islamabad Sessions Court sentenced Zahir Jaffer to death for the murder of Noor Mukadam. Apart from him, two other accused persons were also given jail sentences for their involvement in the matter.

Observation

Only about seven months had passed since the incident when the trial was finally over. If one considers Pakistan's criminal trials which hardly terminate in less than several years, the pace of this one is clearly on the faster side. However, procedural intricacies and institutional hurdles are still very much visible in the case thereby exposing the larger issues of efficiency and cooperation within the criminal justice system.

Table 2. Procedural Timeline of the Noor Mukadam Case

Stage	Event	Date	Time Gap
Incident	Murder of Noor Mukadam	20-Jul-21	–
FIR Registration	FIR No. 380/2021 registered at Kohsar Police Station	20-Jul-21	Same day
Arrest	Arrest of Zahir Jaffer	20-Jul-21	Immediate
Investigation	Evidence collection and forensic analysis	July–Sept 2021	~ 2 months
Challan Submission	Police investigation report submitted to court	Oct-21	~ 3 months
Trial Start	Proceedings begin at Islamabad District and Sessions Court	Oct-21	–
Trial Hearings	Witness testimony, forensic evidence, arguments	Oct 2021 - Feb 2022	~ 4 months
Verdict	Death sentence for principal accused	24 Feb 2022	~ 7 months total

Table. 3 Legal Case Evaluation Matrix- Noor Mukadam Case

Dimension	Sub-Indicators	Case-Specific Observations	Score / Scale
FIR Quality	Completeness of Information	Detailed allegations by family	4
	Clarity of Allegation	Murder & abuse clearly documented	5
	Evidence Documentation	CCTV footage, forensic reports, witness statements	5
Investigation Efficiency	Time to Register FIR	Same-day FIR registration	5
	Investigation Timeline	Investigation completed in ~ 3 months	4
	Police Responsiveness	Prompt but minor procedural lapses	4
Legal Progression	Trial Commencement	Trial began within 3 months	4
	Trial Completion	Judgment delivered ~ 1 year later	3
	Conviction/Acquittal Rate	High-profile conviction achieved	5
Justice Accessibility	Victim/Complainant Follow-up	Family actively engaged with authorities	4

The case shows that recording the FIR and starting the investigation were done quickly and properly, leading to the collection of evidence on

time and correct documentation of the case. But most of the time the trial was delayed as there were many procedural adjournments and

coordination problems among the court, prosecution, and the defense which lengthened

the time of the trial and therefore the timely delivery of justice was affected.

Justice Delay Index – Noor Mukadam Case

$$JDI = \frac{T_{FIR \rightarrow Investigation} + T_{Investigation \rightarrow Trial} + T_{Trial \rightarrow Judgment}}{T_{Expected\ Justice\ Time}} \times 100$$

Timelines (266 approx.):

- FIR → Investigation = 1 day
- Investigation → Trial = 90 days
- Trial → Judgment = 365 days
- Expected Justice Time = 365 days

$$JDI = \frac{1+90+365}{365} \times 100 \approx 124.9$$

JDI ≈ 125 → Delayed justice

Major delay occurred during trial proceedings, highlighting systemic bottlenecks.

2.2 Key Sources of Delay Identified

By analyzing procedure and case, the study analyzes following factors contributes to justice delays:

2.2.1. Investigation–Prosecution Coordination

Limited coordination between police and prosecutors can delay the preparation of legal documentation required for court proceedings.



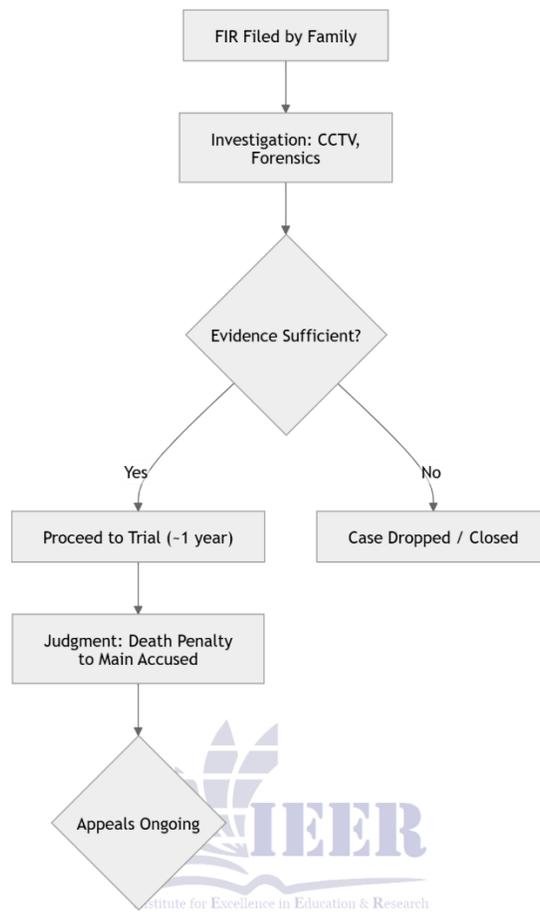


Figure 2. Visual Justice Flow Chart

4.2.2. Forensic Evidence Processing

Often, forensic reports require a certain type of laboratory analysis that might take quite a while, primarily because of the limited capacity of forensic units.

4.2.3. Procedural Adjournments

Continuous adjournments of the trial hearings are one of the main factors leading to the lengthening of the case duration.

4.2.4. Complexities of Co-Accused Proceedings

The legal steps taken for two or more accused persons at the same time usually have to be separated into different hearings and extended legal debates.

A significant result of this research is that public attention and media coverage are not factors that

will definitely speed up the judicial processes. Even though the Noor Mukadam case moved at a relatively fast pace as compared to many other homicide trials, the procedural history still shows that there are several institutional inefficiencies that hamper the overall speed of criminal justice delivery. The findings of the study show that we have to urgently improve many different aspects of the criminal justice system. For example, we have to implement better court case management systems; improve the coordination between the investigation and prosecution agencies; increase the capacity and efficiency of forensic laboratories; and enhance judicial controls over unnecessary adjournments. Addressing these issues is important in order that serious criminal cases can be handled efficiently, fairly, and within reasonable timeframes.

5. Discussion

The study results suggest that the main reason for delaying criminal justice is the inefficiency of institutions and procedures, while in a very small percentage of cases, it is the very nature of the crime that leads to the delay of proceedings. This is consistent with the research already done that points to systemic factors such as poor coordination between investigative and prosecutorial agencies, court congestion, and procedural adjournments as the main reasons for trial delays (Dakolias, 1999; Hammergren, 2007; Neubauer & Fradella, 2019; Shahbaz & Zafar, 2025; Ullah et al. 2025). In this very well, known murder case of Noor Mukadam, the judicial system, even facing the availability of extensive forensic and testimonial evidence as well as strong public pressure, still ran into procedural obstacles, which means that publicity and public attention do not necessarily bring about a faster administration of justice (Shah, 2014; Voigt, 2021; Hassan & Bhatti, 2025). The major problem that emerged from this case was the almost non-existent coordination between investigative authorities and the offices of the public prosecutors. If the police investigators, forensic experts, and prosecutors communicate and cooperate with each other well, it will be possible to make sure that evidence is collected, examined, and submitted as a court presentation in an efficient manner (Ali & Rehman, 2025; Asif & Rehman, 2025). The institutional coordination that was weak in the Noor Mukadam case brought about the inefficiency of procedures and as a result, not only the investigation phase was prolonged but also the formal commencement of the trial had to be postponed (Buscaglia & Dakolias, 1999; Ullah et al. 2025).

One of the other main reasons for delays was the over, use of procedural adjournments made during trial hearing sessions. Of course, adjournments are sometimes due to considerations of fairness. But if they are used excessively (because of the availability of witnesses, the procedures of producing evidence, or defense arguments), the trial is very much slowed down. This observation is in line with

'Hammergren (2007)', 'Neubauer and Fradella (2019)', 'Kemboi (2025)', and 'ADuke (2025)' who emphasize that inefficiencies in case management and procedural rigidity are the main causes of delayed justice. The results also show how the use of forensic evidence largely determines the duration of the trial. With advances in technology, criminal investigations can now utilize a greater variety of forensic methods such as DNA testing, autopsies, and digital forensics (Houck and Siegel, 2015; Fatoki and Anyasi, 2025; Hussain, 2025; Jamil et al. 2025). If there are delays at the forensic laboratories, or a lack of forensic facilities, these will lead to a significant lengthening of the investigation phase, especially since prisons in developing countries are usually working with limited resources. The results not only indicate the importance of the forensic evidence but also show that processes and communication between the agents of investigation and judiciary have an impact on the timelines (Goswami & Goswami, 2025; Lopes, 2025; Al-Zawahreh et al. 2026).

The trial of Zahir Jaffer wrapped up in just about seven months, which is relatively short, especially if we look at the usual duration of many criminal trials in Pakistan. However, the procedural files did unveil systemic inefficiencies that are a reflection of the larger institutional issues. So, our findings support and at the same time enhance the previous studies: that cases attracting a lot of public attention due to their high, profile nature suffer from systemic delays without any protection from them (Neubauer & Fradella, 2019; Shah, 2014; Van Der Veen, 2025; Croci & Gomez, 2025). This research, by focusing on a highly publicized murder case from Pakistan, adds to the existing literature in multiple ways. Firstly, it charts the dominance of procedural and institutional elements in determining trial lengths through a detailed empirical case study. Secondly, it draws attention to how forensic facilities, formation of teams between different agencies, and procedures together affect judicial efficiency (Prawira, 2025; Khan et al. 2025; Azhar et al. 2025). Lastly, this paper shows that cases which get a lot of public attention are at the mercy of systemic limitations, thus providing a

new angle on the delays, which support and extend the scholarly works on institutional bottlenecks, case management, and high, profile criminal trials in developing legal systems (Dwivedi, 2025; Wahab et al. 2025; Pangaribuan, 2025).

6. Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, a number of policy measures can be suggested that would lead to a more efficient criminal justice system. Firstly, the judiciary should modernize their case management systems that would not only enable judges to observe the progress of trials but would also allow for better scheduling of hearings and minimal adjournments. A digital case management system can make court administration both more transparent and efficient. Secondly, procedural judicial reforms are necessary to set clear rules on how to deal with adjournments especially in serious criminal cases such as those involving homicides. Stricter policies concerning the justification of proposals to delay hearings could be a way forward. Thirdly, to arrest delays in evidence examination, the government must deploy new labs and resource forensic workers to handle cases promptly. More rapid forensic work would also impact the investigative phase of criminal trials positively. Fourthly, police and prosecutors working together with joint teams is the best way to ensure that the evidence is prepared efficiently in readiness for court proceedings. Fifth, serious violent crimes legislation can be remedied by enforcing that courts must bring the trials to an end within the time period while still upholding fairness. Finally, more robust institutional accountability mechanisms are essential not only to keep track of delays in criminal proceedings but also to identify, on a systemic level, the inefficiencies of the justice system.

7. Conclusion

The article examined the justice delay issue by closely analyzing the court proceedings of the Noor Mukadam murder case, thereby drawing attention to how procedural and institutional aspects influence the speed and effectiveness of

criminal trials. In fact, the court reached a verdict in about seven working months which is relatively quick for a murder trial in Pakistan. However, it indicates that some structural problems still exist in the criminal justice system. Delays in the investigation phase coming to light, numerous adjournments, and lack of coordination among police, prosecutors, and judges depicted the inefficiency as being deep, systemic, and structural rather than merely case, related. More importantly, findings contradict the notion that it is only celebrity cases that receive quick judicial dispositions. On the contrary, they reveal that even high, profile cases that are well documented and widely discussed face the same institutional barriers such as procedural rigidity, lack of forensic facilities, and weak case management systems. Consequently, this implies that dealing with the issue of justice delays can be achieved only by a thorough and holistic approach that includes the entire spectrum of the legal system. It further highlights how forensic investigations and teamwork among different agencies can be very effective in determining how long a court case will last. Improving forensic capabilities, producing reports promptly, and facilitating better communication between the police and prosecutors are a few ways that the delay of a case can be dramatically reduced and the inefficiency of the trial can be practically eliminated. Moreover, a comprehensive method to case management, besides the application of tough measures to curb the misuse of the right to adjourn and proper scheduling, can present methods of overcoming the procedural hurdles and raising the level of responsibility in the criminal justice system at every stage.

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