

Trends and Institutional Response to Human Rights Cases: A Secondary Data Analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the trends in human rights case reporting and institutional response against the backdrop of secondary data from the period 2019-2025. The primary goal is to examine trends of cases received, cases disposed and pending cases, to evaluate institutional efficiency over time. A quantitative research design was used, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to find trends and relationships between the key variables. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant decrease in the number of cases received and disposed during the study period. The regression analysis showed that the number of reported cases as well as the number of cases disposed of over time showed a significant and more pronounced decrease. This indicates that the capacity of institutions to respond to cases is diminishing, particularly when case resolution is falling behind reporting of cases. By contrast, descriptive analysis reveals that there was a trend toward a growing number of pending cases over the last few years of the study, but there was no statistically significant trend identified. The findings indicate an increasing mismatch between case intake and institutional action, suggesting that human rights institutions may not be effective in providing timely justice. A decrease in reports does not necessarily mean human rights are improving, but may result from under-reporting, lack of access, or systemic problems. The study uses administrative data for a quantitative time-series analysis and fills a literature gap by measuring institutional performance over time. It highlights the need for institutional capacity strengthening, improved reporting systems, and greater efficiency.

KEYWORDS: Human Rights, Efficiency of Institutions, Trend Analysis, Secondary Data, Regression Analysis, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Introduction

Human Rights protection is a fundamental issue in democratic societies, especially in developing countries where institutional capacity and governance issues can impact effective implementation of rights-based frameworks. Over the last ten years, the magnitude of human rights violations in Pakistan, from domestic violence and child abuse to the general human rights issues, has been rapidly rising. Although there are institutional arrangements set up and

constitutional protections in place, there are concerns about the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in addressing reported cases (Zaheer et al., 2025 ; Ministry of Human Rights, 2022).

In the international context, there has been a greater focus on documenting the incidence of human rights violations, but also on assessing the institutional response, which is reflected in how efficiently the cases are disposed of and how pendency is reduced (Pillay, 2012). Handling reported cases efficiently is an important measure of institutional performance as delays and backlogs may affect the trust of the public in the institution and discourage victims from pursuing justice (Imran et al., 2024 ; Ghani, 2020). In this context, analysis of administrative data can be useful for understanding reporting trends and over time the responsiveness of human rights institutions.

The number of cases concerning human rights has appeared to have risen in recent years in Pakistan. This trend could be due to the fact that there is an actual increase in violations, but it could also be a result of better awareness, access and reporting systems (NCHR, 2025). But it is not always possible to infer that an increase in reported cases means that justice is being delivered effectively. The effectiveness of the processing of pending cases, their disposal and the management of pending cases is also significant. In developing contexts, institutional weaknesses, delays in procedures, and lack of resources are identified as a contributing factor to case backlogs (Ali and Hassan, 2022; Imran et al., 2024).

Although administrative information is available, there has been little research yet that has systematically analysed longitudinal trends in human rights case reporting, alongside institutional performance of disposal, in Pakistan, especially with the more recent datasets. The current literature tends to be qualitative in nature and reports on either specific types of human rights abuses or particular human rights dimensions, rather than on quantitative, time-series analysis of institutional efficiency. This leaves a major gap in knowledge about over time how effective human rights institutions are in addressing growing caseloads.

Hence, the objective of this study is to analyse trend of human rights cases and to assess the response mechanisms of the institutions based on secondary data from 2019 to 2025. The study aims to look into patterns of institutional efficiency and policy implications using indicators like cases received, cases disposed of, pendency rates etc. The results are hoped to add to the current knowledge by providing a data-driven evaluation of human rights governance and institutional performance in a developing country context.

Problem Statement

Although legal mechanisms and special institutions have been put in place in Pakistan for the protection of human rights, doubts remain about the effectiveness of institutional response mechanisms to address instances of human rights violations. There is a noticeable rise in the number of reported human rights cases over the last ten years, possibly partly due to the increased violations as well as the increased awareness and access to reporting mechanisms (Zaheer et al., 2024; Heupel, 2018). Nevertheless, higher numbers reported are not necessarily a reflection of better justice delivery, especially if justice institutions are failing to process cases effectively.

Case backlog and procedural delays are among the key challenges for human rights institutions in developing countries, affecting access to justice and loss of trust on governance systems, among others (Steiner & Okai, 2022). Pendency and low disposal rates can be signs of weak institutions, resource allocation, and administrative efficiency (Khan et al., 2021). In Pakistan, although official data are available for number of cases received and disposed of, there is limited empirical analysis that assesses the trends in these data and what they reveal about the institutional performance.

Moreover, the literature on human rights in Pakistan has been largely qualitative in nature, covering specific thematic areas of gender-based violence and child protection or an assessment of violations in general. In comparison, there are few quantitative studies, conducted at a long-term scale, of administrative data in order to assess trends in case reporting while taking into account institutional efficiency markers like disposal and pendency rates (Khalid and Fatima, 2025). This gap restricts the ability to understand, at a more comprehensive level, if there is an effective response to the growing caseloads from human rights institutions or if they are simply documenting it (Raza et al., 2025).

Considering the availability of secondary administration data for recent years, there is a need to systemically analyze the trend along with institutional performance evaluation. Specifically, analyzing the timing of the relationship between cases received, cases disposed of and pending cases can help shed light on human rights institutions' responsiveness and efficiency. If the analysis is not undertaken, policy discussions will be of a descriptive nature, without any empirical foundation.

Hence, the aim of this research is to fill this gap by examining human rights case data from 2019 to 2025 and identifying trends and assessing the efficiency of human rights institutional responses. The study will, in this way, help in evidence-based policy making and bolster discussions around human rights governance in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze trends in human rights cases from 2019 to 2025.
2. To examine institutional efficiency in case disposal.
3. To evaluate patterns of pendency over time.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is a significant relationship between cases received and cases disposed

H₀₂: There is a significant trend in human rights cases over time

Literature Review

The field of human rights has come a long way in the last few decades, shifting the focus from documenting human rights violations to assessing institutional responses. Human rights reporting is more systematic and data-driven worldwide, and this is largely as a result of international organizations such as the United Nations and its affiliated organizations. There has been an increasing use of administrative and statistical data to track human rights situations in countries, as reported by the UN Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Steiner and Okai, 2022). These reports highlight that the trends of the reported cases may be due to awareness, accessibility, or reporting practices improving as well as to a real decrease in the number of violations. The study of longitudinal data has therefore become more important for addressing such issues as the magnitude of violations and the effectiveness of institutional responses.

Moreover, the principle of access to justice has become a central theme of global scholarship in which efficiency of case processing and case resolution of institutions has been taken as an important measure of human rights protection (Weston, 2022). Research indicates that failure to resolve cases in a timely manner, extended pendency rates, and weak institutional capacity have the potential to have a significant impact on the enjoyment of fundamental rights, especially in developing nations (Imran et al., 2024). This has led to ongoing efforts to incorporate quantitative techniques such as trend analysis and performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of institutions' responses to the reported human rights issues.

In Pakistan, the literature on human rights is primarily oriented towards enumerating the nature and extent of violations, especially on gender-based violence, child protection, minority rights, and so on. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has released detailed annual reports on the human rights situation that shed light on the ongoing issues, including domestic violence, honor killings, and child abuse (Zia, 2025). Likewise, data from government publications provides official data on reported cases and institutional response measures to address them. These reports are useful in establishing facts about human rights, but they tend to be descriptive, and are not necessarily carried out with statistical analysis of trends over time.

The institutional and structural issues related to human rights protection have also been studied in Pakistan. Khan (2021) suggests that poor governance, lack of resources, and inefficient processes are responsible for delays in justice delivery, for example. Other studies have focused on the importance of awareness, socio-cultural factors and legal frameworks in influencing reporting and institutional response. Much of the research has, however, been qualitative or based on cross-sectional data, and very few studies have employed longitudinal data to look at evolution over time (Ali & Hassan, 2022).

There is much existing literature on institutional efficiency in the wider public administration and governance context. In this context, efficiency means speeding up the institutions' ability to handle cases efficiently, to minimize backlogs, and to provide timely justice. Performance is measured using indicators like case disposal rate and pendency (Pillay, 2012). Empirical evidence indicates that higher disposal rates tend to indicate higher institutional capacity, but can also be due to administrative, rather than substantive, justice processes (Weston, 2022). In developing countries, institutional efficiency can be limited due to staffing issues, lack of technological facilities and bureaucratic processes (Steiner and Okai, 2022).

Although the significance of institutional performance is now well recognized, but there is a significant gap in literature especially in the context of Pakistan. Although there is a growing amount of official statistics on human rights cases, there has been little attempt to systematically analyse these statistics to assess trends in reporting and institutional level indicators of response (such as disposal and pendency rates). To date, most studies are either descriptive or target a specific type of violation, and do not use strong quantitative methods.

There are however few studies that have relied on secondary time-series data to assess institutional performance.

Research Methodology

A. Research Design

The type of research used in this study is Quantitative Research. Quantitative research is a type of research that analyzes secondary data. The quantitative approach is suitable because it enables a systematic analysis of numerical data to identify trends, relationships, and patterns in human rights case reporting and institutional response over a period of time. The study uses a time-series analytical approach which allows to monitor evolution of relevant indicators over several years.

B. Data Source

The data were collected from the Directorate of Law and Human right Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These data sets include annual figures relating to human rights cases, such as reported cases, disposed cases, and pending cases.

The study period consisted of 2019 to 2025. The selection of this time frame was done for recent trends and contemporary institutional practices to make it relevant to the current policy and governance contexts. In addition,

the period chosen is one in which reporting patterns are fairly consistent which helps to increase the trustworthiness of analysis.

C. Variables of the Study

The study is methodological, focusing on important human rights reporting indicators and the efficiency of institutions. These are the factors that are used in the analysis:

Cases Received: Number of human rights cases reported per year

Cases Disposed: This is the number of cases that are settled by the institution during the specific year.

The number of cases outstanding at the end of each year.

These variables taken together form a comprehensive measure of institutional performance in the treatment of human rights cases.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used in the study with the aim of achieving the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum as well as trend analysis of cases received, disposed and pending. Similarly line graph were used for graphical representation of the trend.

Regression analyses were performed to check the predictive relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

There were no human interaction involve directly in this study, so there is no ethical risk to individuals.

Data Analysis

Table 1

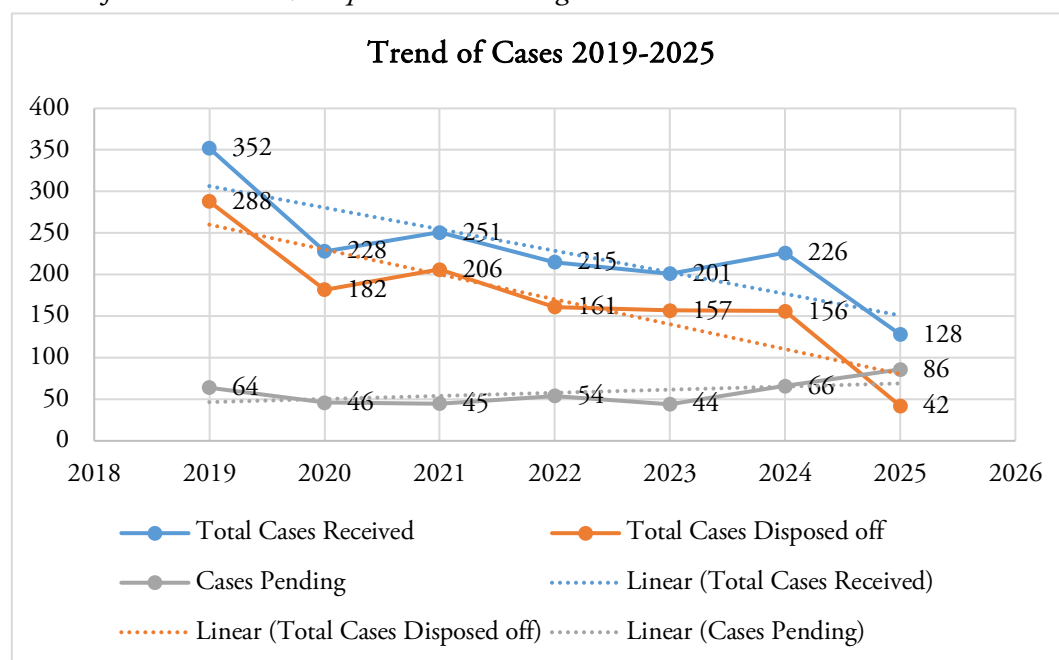
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Cases received, Disposed and Pending

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cases Received	7	128.00	352.00	228.7143	66.83740
Cases Disposed	7	42.00	288.00	170.2857	73.25006
Cases Pending	7	44.00	86.00	57.8571	15.32350

Table 2

Total Number of Cases Received, Disposed and Pending

Year	Cases Received	Cases Disposed	Pending
2019	352	288	64
2020	228	182	46
2021	251	206	45
2022	215	161	54
2023	201	157	44
2024	226	156	66
2025	128	42	86
Total	2827	2418	405

Figure 1*Trend of Cases Received, Disposed and Pending*

As is seen from Table 1 the total number of cases received has been declining over the study period. The number of cases is slightly less than the previous year in 2019 (352) and has dropped further in 2025 (128) though there was some variation between 2021 and 2024. This reduction could be due to fewer violations being reported or due to changes in how and/or to whom violations are reported.

The same trend is seen in the cases disposed, falling from 288 in 2019 to 42 in 2025. Importantly, the rate of case disposal has been declining at a rate greater than that of case reporting, suggesting that over time, the institutional response has been delayed.

Pending cases, on the other hand, have exhibited a pattern of rising and falling but generally rising. The pendency has declined slightly from 2019 to 2021 and has started to increase from 2022 onwards to the highest (86 cases) in 2025. This indicates that a lot of cases have not been resolved in the last few years.

In overall terms, this table shows that there is an increasing gap between case inflow and the capacity of institutions to dispose of them, especially in the last years of the study.

The graphical analysis clearly shows that both the received cases and the disposed cases are decreasing overtime. The rate of decline in disposed cases is, however, much greater than that for cases received, suggesting that the performance of institutions has been declining more quickly than the number of cases reported.

Regression Analysis

Table 3*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.838 ^a	.702	.643	39.94818

a. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 4*ANOVA^a*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18824.143	1	18824.143	11.796	.019 ^b
	Residual	7979.286	5	1595.857		
	Total	26803.429	6			

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_ Received

b. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 5*Coefficients^a*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	52656.286	15265.089		3.449	.018
	Year	-25.929	7.549	-.838	-3.434	.019

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_ Received

The model accounts for 70.2% of the change in the number of cases received ($R^2 = 0.702$), suggesting that there is a strong relationship between time (Year) and reported cases. The Adjusted R^2 (0.643) also indicates that the model has a good predictive ability when adjusted for the number of samples.

The result of ANOVA test showed that the regression model is significant ($F = 11.796$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that Model 2 fit better than Model 1 (no predictor) and that Year is a significant predictor of cases received.

The regression coefficient for Year is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -25.93$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting there is a significant decrease in the number of cases received with time.

Specifically, every additional year, the number of reported cases will drop by about 26 cases per year.

Table 6*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884 ^a	.781	.737	37.55900

a. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 7*ANOVA^a*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25140.036	1	25140.036	17.821	.008 ^b
	Residual	7053.393	5	1410.679		
	Total	32193.429	6			

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_ Disposed

b. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 8*Coefficients^a*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	60758.071	14352.131		4.233	.008
	Year	-29.964	7.098	-.884	-4.222	.008
a. Dependent Variable: Cases Disposed						

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_ Disposed

The model was able to account for around 78.1% of the variation in cases disposed ($R^2 = 0.781$), which was a very strong relationship between time (Year) and case disposal. Adjustment R^2 (0.737) indicates that the model still has a good fit even for the sample size.

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 17.821$, $p < 0.01$) and Year would be a good predictor of cases disposed. The Year coefficient is negative and highly significant showing a strong negative trend in the number of cases disposed over time. The results indicate that there is a significant and consistent drop in case disposal over time, which indicates that there is a problem of institutional efficiency. The number of cases reported has decreased but the number of cases being disposed of has dropped even more, suggesting that the institution's ability to effectively handle reduced caseloads has become even more challenging.

Table 9*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.529 ^a	.279	.135	14.24856

a. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 10*ANOVA^a*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	393.750	1	393.750	1.939	.222 ^b
	Residual	1015.107	5	203.021		
	Total	1408.857	6			

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_Pending

b. Predictors: (Constant), Year

Table 11*Coefficients^a*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-7524.643	5444.692		-1.382	.226
	Year	3.750	2.693	.529	1.393	.222
a. Dependent Variable: Cases Pending						

a. Dependent Variable: Cases_Pending

The model accounts for only 27.9% of the variance in the number of pending cases ($R^2 = 0.279$), which means there is only a small correlation between Year and pendency. The model's adjusted R^2 (0.135) also indicates that the model's explanatory power is limited.

The regression model results fail to be statistically significant ($p>0.05$) suggesting that there is no significant relationship between Year and changes in pending cases over time. The descriptive data indicated that the number of pending cases increased in subsequent years, but the regression results indicated that this trend was not sufficient to be statistically significant.

Discussion

This paper explored trends in reporting of human rights cases and institutional reactions from 2019 to 2025 based on secondary administrative data. The results show a statistically significant decrease in both the number of cases received and the number of cases disposed, and a non-significant and mixed pattern in pending cases. These results provide important insights into the dynamics of human rights governance and institutional efficiency.

The marked decrease in cases received indicates that over time there has been a reduction in these cases of human rights violations. This may be read as an improvement of human rights situation, but previous literature is warning against making this direct leap. Research suggests that these lower numbers of reported cases may be a result of underreporting, diminished accessibility, or a lack of awareness of violations, but not necessarily a decrease in the prevalence of those violations (Zia, 2025). But, in developing contexts, social stigma, institutional mistrust, and procedures limit the willingness of victims to report the crime (Khan et al., 2021). This study, therefore, suggests that the reduction in the number of reported cases may be because there is a problem with the reporting system, rather than any increase in human rights.

Most importantly, the study found a greater and much more significant decrease in the number of cases disposed, which demonstrates a decline in the institutional capacity to address cases. This is the same as the earlier studies that reported the problems faced by the public institutions in developing countries in resolving cases like resource scarcity, inefficient organization, and time taken to resolve cases which is a hurdle (Azim, 2021; Steiner and Okai, 2022). The improved power of the regression model to explain the cases disposed further further strengthens the argument of the sensitivity of institutional performance to changes over time and structure than to reporting. This loss of efficient disposal capability is a worry that the human rights institutions are not being able to deliver timely justice.

The regression results showed that the trends in pendency were not statistically significant, suggesting that pendency is not systematic, despite descriptive patterns suggesting a general increase in pendency over time. This variability indicates that the process of pendency is affected by occasional administrative factors like burst of cases, staff productivity, or institutional instability. The same has been noted in global research and is related to governance issues and lack of efficiency in operations (Pillay, 2012).

As a whole, the trend of declining numbers of cases reported and disposed of is of concern, with case disposal actually being reduced at a greater rate than reporting, suggesting reduced institutional responsiveness. This imbalance causes backlog in some years because the system is not able to sustain the balance between the arrival of cases and their resolution. Efficiencies, from a human rights point of view, are detrimental to the right to access to justice which is fundamental to human rights protection mechanisms (Weston, 2022).

Moreover, this indicates the need to take care when analyzing administrative data. It should be noted that trends in the number of reported cases can be influenced by policy or awareness-raising initiatives, or the way data is collected, rather than any real changes in the situation of human rights (Steiner and Okai, 2022). Therefore, the decline seen in this study must be seen in the wider context of institutions and socio-political change.

In general, this study adds to the body of knowledge that offers a quantitative, time-series analysis of human rights institutional performance, which has so far been limited in Pakistan. The study combines the use of trend

analysis with indicators of institutional efficiency in order to provide a more holistic picture of the operation of human rights systems over the years. The results highlight the importance of institutional capacity building, better reporting systems and tackling the institutional weaknesses in order to guarantee effective protection of the human rights.

Conclusion

This study explored the development of HR case reporting, along with institutional responses, from 2019 to 2025 and was based on secondary administrative data. The results show that the number of cases received and disposed have decreased significantly, with the decrease in disposal being more prominent. This suggests that, although fewer numbers of cases are being reported over time, the institutional capacity to solve the cases has decreased at an even faster rate.

The analysis also reveals that the number of pending cases does not exhibit a consistent or statistically significant pattern, but a descriptive pattern indicates that pending cases have increased over the last few years, particularly in the years leading up to 2024 and 2025. This is a lack of uniformity, and shows that the time of pendency is not governed by a regular administrative or operational pattern.

In general, the study has highlighted the increased imbalance between case handling and institutional response, resulting in less efficient dispositions while the human rights institutions have failed to be effective. Importantly, the decrease in reported cases should not be read as evidence of an actual decline in the state of human rights because it could be due to the fact that the reporting process is not accessible or robust, or that cases are under-reported.

The results highlight the importance of taking administrative human rights data with a pinch of salt and point to some serious implementation problems regarding the timely and effective delivery of justice.

Recommendations

The following is a set of recommendations based on the results of the study:

1. Strengthening Institutional Capacity

Human rights institutions ought to augment their capacities in the following ways:

- ▶ Increasing staffing levels
- ▶ Providing specialized training
- ▶ Strengthening the referral network for children and families in need of services

This will contribute to improve the case disposal efficiency observed.

2. Performing better Case Management and Monitoring

There is a need to implement:

- ▶ A digital system for keeping track of cases (Digital case-tracking systems).
- ▶ Established routine performance monitoring procedures.

These are steps that can be taken to limit the delays and avoid building up backlogs of cases.

3. Enhancing Reporting Mechanisms

Institutions should:

- ▶ Raise awareness campaigns.
- ▶ Do more awareness campaigns for the public

- ▶ Simplify complaint procedures
- ▶ Promote access to the marginalized groups

This will promote correct and timely reporting of human rights violations.

4. Promote Research and Offer Data Transparency

Institutions should:

- ▶ Ensure reliable and disaggregated data is available.
- ▶ Support research based on administrative data sources.

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