



Pakistan's Flawed Forensic Investigation System in Sexual Assault Cases

A Policy Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

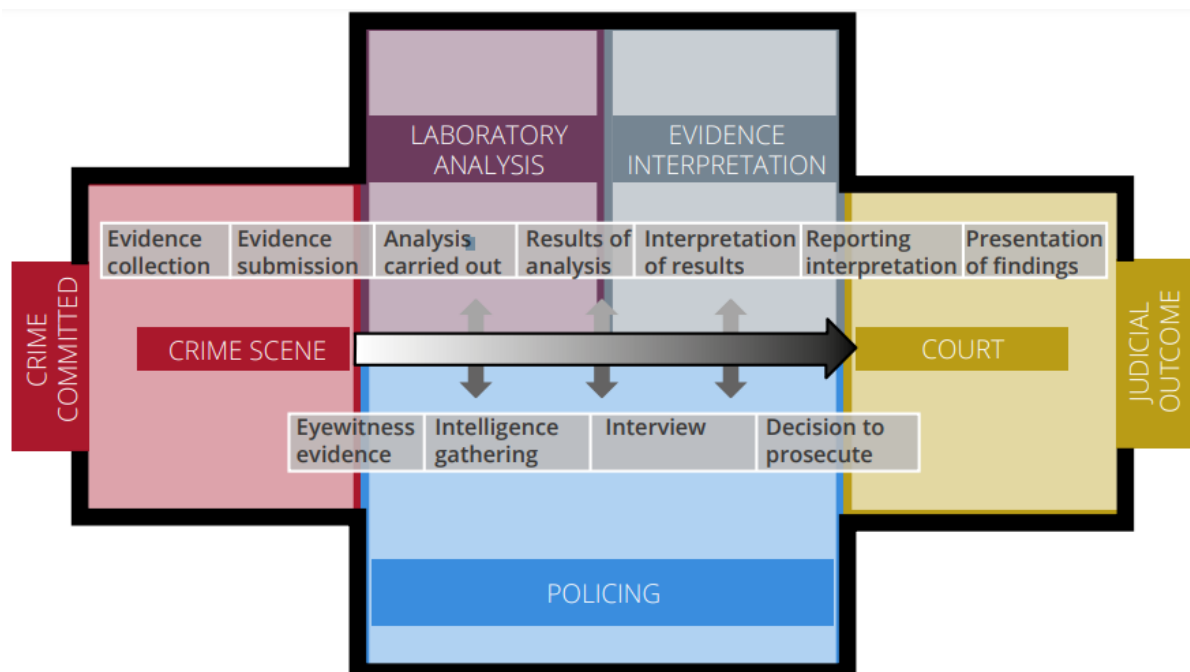
This report provides a comprehensive picture of the supply side of the forensic investigation system in cases of sexual assault. As Pakistan continues to battle with gender-based violence, rapes, and domestic abuse while conviction rates continue to remain low, it is essential to develop greater insights into the journey of sexual assault cases through our archaic criminal justice system. It is also necessary to identify key factors and key stakeholders that affect case outcomes.

We hope that through this report, there is a discourse about how the criminal justice system can improve through a collaborated effort of various stakeholders to ensure justice to victims who choose to come forward.

We will focus on adult female survivors of sexual assault as policies are mainly women-focused and discussing policies about male and underage victims will be complex. Moreover, we also focus on the secondary methods of prevention of sexual assault i.e the immediate response of victims and key stakeholders to sexual assault.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic science is a complex field that interacts with various disciplines such as science, policing, law, and governance (Borwick and Fox, 2018). It is a subject that has been under continuous scrutiny since many decades and one that demands the attention of government and all the important stakeholders. If done properly, forensic science can have significant contributions to the criminal justice systems across the world and experts view it as a process that encompasses the crime scene through to court (Morgan, Nakhaeizadeh, Rando and Dror, 2018). The figure below shows the different stages of the forensic science investigation in the developed world, Pakistan's not being so different, at least on paper.



Source: Morgan, R. M., Nakhaeizadeh, S., Earwaker, H., Rando, C., Harris, A. J. L. Dror, I. E., (2018) *Interpretation of evidence: Cognitive decision making under uncertainty (at every step of the forensic science process)*. In R. Wortley, A. Sidebottom, G. Laycock, & N. Tilley (Eds.), *Handbook of Crime Science* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp 408–420

Forensic science investigation is a growing subject throughout the world and there has been a rapid technological advancement in this field. So swift has been the progress in empirical science that the justice system at times has not been able to keep up and there is a need for frequent legal reform just to understand, interpret, and apply accurately all the scientific tools available. Even in a developed country like UK with decades of experience in this field, Dr Gillian Tully, a Forensic Science Regulator observed that “the understanding of forensic science amongst lawyers and judges appears, from transcripts and judgments, to be variable.

Judgments have on occasion demonstrated a lack of understanding of the process of scientific reasoning” (Oral evidence - Forensic Science - 2019).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Efficient forensic investigation system not only benefits the victim but has the potential to reverse unlawful convictions. In the USA, Touch DNA technique has broadened the investigators’ horizon as it helped in eviction of many innocent people years after their conviction. This advanced technique has the potential to use old genetic profiles from evidence collected from the crime scene even in the absence of biological fluid (Sessa et al., 2019).

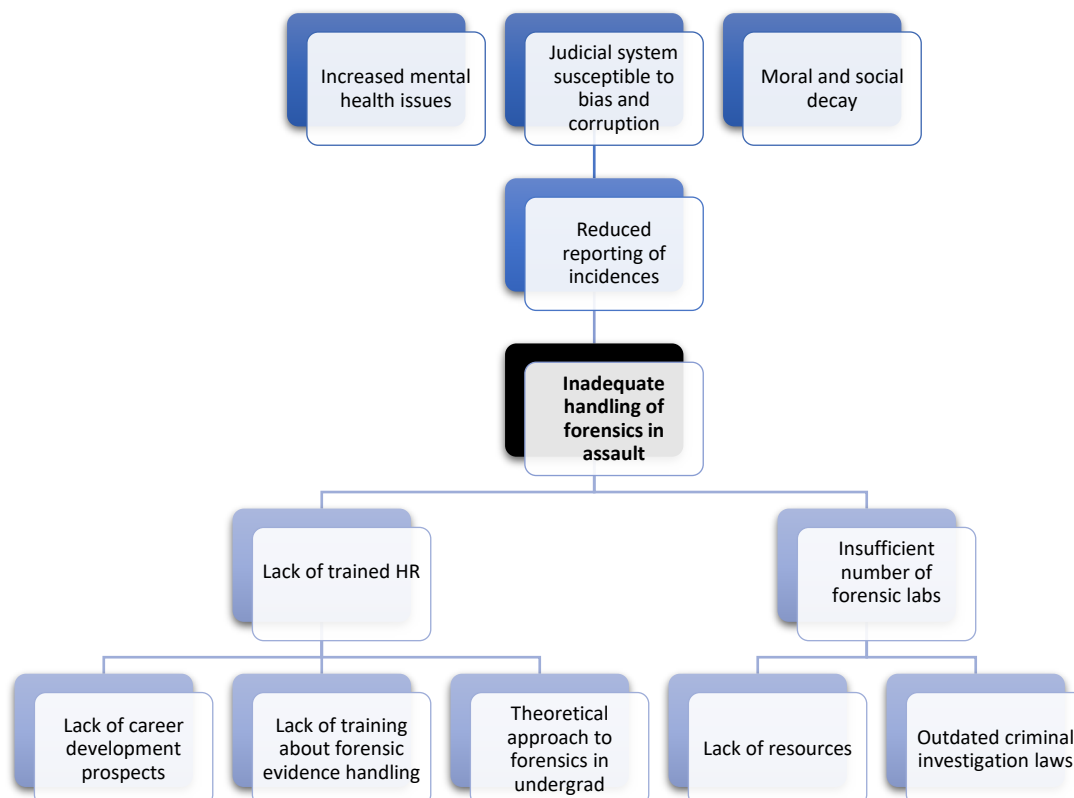
For the system to work for the benefit of people and society at large, it is extremely vital that all stakeholders perform their jobs professionally and with timely competence. An efficient criminal justice system guarantees a secure and peaceful society and thereby the opposite would create moral and social decay (Shali, 2018).

According to the IIFAB study, “in a world devoid of forensic science, murderers, thieves, drug traffickers and rapists would be roaming scot-free.”

The role of law, investigators, police and institutions is crucial but the analysis of evidence is largely dependent on forensic science. The use of scientific techniques used in forensic investigation does not leave much room for unfairness or prejudice, thereby allowing a fair trial. However extremely important steps need to be taken in order to ensure the timely and accurate application of forensic science. The key personnel are the police who receive the initial complaint and serve as a liaison between the collection of evidence and the safe receipt of evidence to the relevant labs, the medicolegal doctors that do the initial forensic and/or physical investigation including sample collection and the judiciary that has to analyze and make sense of all the evidence. Even though the technology exists to do the most sophisticated forensic investigation, it is extremely important that the whole process is done timely and professionally to ensure that the evidence collection is water tight, the initial investigation is done properly, and a strong case for the victim is presented in the court of law. Without the smooth and swift execution of all the processes, the proper utilization of forensic science in criminal investigation cannot be ensured. In the backdrop of this whole system is the government that has to ensure the timely adoption of technology, the

countrywide proliferation and strengthening of the related infrastructure, police reforms to empower the police, timely legislation and laws to incorporate latest forensic science practices, introduce and enforce strict quality controls at all stages of the system and then to timely evaluate the systems to have a practise of continuous improvement in place.

This policy report will expand on the below problem tree and try to identify the shortcomings and solutions.



BACKGROUND

The shortcomings of Pakistan's Forensic investigation are analogous to those of India and Bangladesh. According to a report "criminal justice administration is still at a very basic stage or prohibitory in nature, even though since last few decades, a tremendous technological advancement in scientific era has been made" (Shali, 2018 & Sadek, 2018).

Even though there is growing importance of forensic sciences in sexual assault cases over the past decades, there is limited published data available in the Pakistani context at present to evidently conclude the causes, shortcomings and methods for improvement regarding the subject. However, based on our secondary research, news articles, interviews with key

players involved in this field, we have attempted to do a step-by-step analysis of the policy actors that would help us identify the various problems that exist at present.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Below are some statistics of past 6 years on rape/sexual assault cases in Pakistan from a special report published in 2020:

- 11 rape cases reported everyday
- 22,000 rape cases reported to police across the country in the last six years
- 77 accused have been convicted which comprise 0.3% of the total figure
- 18,609 rape cases were registered in Punjab during the last six years, 1,873 in Sindh, 1,183 in KP, 129 in Balochistan, and 210 in Islamabad.
- 31 in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in which no accused was convicted.
- 18% of cases have reached the prosecution stage.
- In addition, out of the total reported cases, 2,727 challans — or just 12% of the total cases — were filed in the courts,
- Decision was given in 1,274, or 5% of them, with 1,192 accused acquitted.

Source: Police, Law, and Justice Commission of Pakistan, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Women's Foundation, and provincial welfare agencies

Police

The police department, also at times labelled the ‘least trusted institution’ in the country, faces numerous challenges that are both complex and multidimensional (Warraich, 2020). Lack of training, lack of resources, rampant corruption and lack of accountability are to name a few. Till some decades ago the foreign analysts considered the police just a blackmailing tool used by the political elite to pressure the opposition into submission.

We had the opportunity of interviewing Mr. Jibran Nasir who is a Civil rights activist and a lawyer by profession. He has led the difficult task of fighting cases for many sexual assault victims which gave him the chance to experience the police system up-close and personal. The over arching theme of our discussion was the immediate need for police reforms and an increased budget allocation.

At present when sexual assault victims approach the police for the First Investigation Report (FIR) they are faced with a myriad of issues. The first and most common problem is that they

are judged by their appearance. The calm and composed ones are given all sorts of titles and not taken seriously. The ones that have visible signs of an assault are considered authentic. Unfortunately, due to the lack of training and education, the police officers do not acknowledge the fact that a significant proportion of sexual assault victims do not share their experience with anyone let alone the police. For that particular nature of victim, it takes many hours of deliberation and courage to finally take up the fight against your attackers, who at times are viewed as more powerful and influential by the victim or the victim's family.

After having overcome all the challenges, if an FIR is lodged then the police is bound by law to carry out the investigation. Jibrán informed us that in almost all the cases that he has experienced, the Investigation Officer is the one that paid out of his own pocket for the medical and forensic investigation. The police is still following the outdated rules where the officers first spend their personal money and submit all the receipts to get the reimbursement from the police finance department. This whole process where the IO has to invest his own money can be considered a significant constraint in many cases. In the worst-case scenario, an IO could lose interest and abandon an investigation just because of financial constraints. This is one of the reasons why the families of the victims have experienced paying the police upfront so that it can carry out the necessary investigation and pay for fuel, tests and its petty expenses. In many cases the family does not receive its money back when the officers are reimbursed (Khan, 2011). At present around 87% of the police budget is salary expense and the remainder is to cover for other administrative expenses in fuel and utility bills (Chaudhry, 2020).

In Pakistan, the unfortunate fact is that the whole case hangs by the thread on the way the IO builds the initial case. If the penal code is not entered accurately, or the victim is not sent for medical examination in a timely manner, or if the evidence submitted by the medical officer is not processed and sent by the police to the relevant labs, the whole case can become weak and more advantageous for the perpetrator. The intentions behind these lapses are also questionable as at times it is pure incompetence and lack of professionalism by the police or sometimes the corrupt officers reach a settlement prior to the commencement of legal proceedings and the case is weakened on purpose using some or all of the above tactics. Given the multidimensional problems within the police department, it is paramount that in depth police reforms are implemented nation wide and not just a facade of reforms as in the past – making a separate investigation wing whereby it is the same untrained, unprofessional

officers that do the investigation separately. The same people and style of work in a separate department is not a sufficient remedy and a deeper revamp is required.

Medicolegal Doctors/Examiners

One of the most comprehensive documents to be released for the aid of medicolegal examiners has been the manual for Standard Operating Procedures for Medicolegal Examination of Women Victims of Violence (Health Department - Government of Punjab, 2010). It is an extremely well thought out and detailed document with complete guidelines for the medicolegal examiner. However, the existence of the document does not necessarily mean the proper implementation of those measures. During our interview with Dr. Humayoun Temoor Baig, a Consultant Forensic Odontologist with the Government of Punjab, we were informed that there is a shortage of MLO's in the government sector and they are only provided the standard salary that any doctor of the same grade would receive in the public sector. While assuming the same salary structure the most important fact is totally ignored that the MLO's are not doing a standard doctor's job. It can be assumed that the psychological impact on the MLO's dealing in sexual assault cases would be much higher than handling regular patient workload.

Therefore, some experts claim that these MLO's must be provided higher financial incentives including some additional case to case payment to carry out elaborate procedures like post mortems. In absence of these incentives and poor salaries these MLO's are lacking the motivation or will to carry out their jobs in an elaborate and professional manner. Since these individuals are the ones collecting forensic evidence including DNA samples, therefore they are key players in the effective implementation of forensic investigation in sexual assault cases. If a serious government effort is made to uplift the standard of forensic investigation in Pakistan, then these MLO's need to be considered key stakeholders in the process and their grievances need to be addressed along with accompanying policy reforms.

Judiciary

The Pakistan legal system incorporated the Islamic Shariah Law during the Islamization during the Zia era. The Qisas and Diyat law were particularly criticized by the international human rights organizations as cruel and draconian. Anarchic British era law still plagues the Pakistan legal system with misogynist and cruel laws such as the two finger virginity tests being used till the recent past.

A ray of hope came in early 2021 when the Lahore high court declared the two-finger test illegal and labelled it as inhumane and cruel (Sadaf Aziz etc Versus Federation of Pakistan etc, 2021). However, under the current legal framework, “DNA evidence is regarded as equivalent to an expert opinion, and is thus treated as corroboratory or secondary evidence” (Cheema, 2015). This effect of the laxity of the judiciary is further exacerbated by the lack of training of the investigating agencies and the constraints of the scientific resources needed for careful collection, transportation and preservation of DNA evidence.

Therefore, unlike courts in developed countries, it seems that Pakistan legal system is slower to value the new technologies and still puts scientific hard evidence as low priority. As a sharp contrast the justice system in developed countries often use forensic evidence especially DNA traces as hard evidence either to convict or evict the accused.

Government

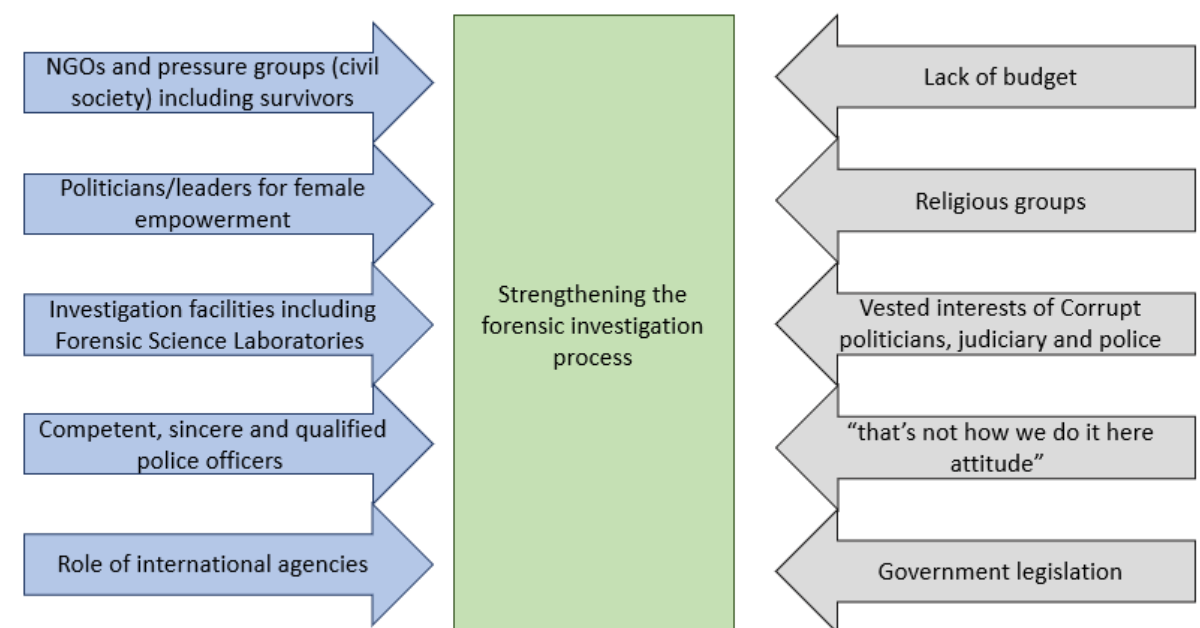
In the context of forensic science and investigation, the federal and provincial governments have a significant role to play. Developing forensic science infrastructure, police reforms, legislation, ensuring high quality of service delivery and ensuring a steady supply of forensic science human resource through the medical education system are some of the responsibilities of the government.

Since 2001, the government has been busy in revamping its forensic labs mostly due to the pressures of ongoing terrorism in the country. However, a significant portion of the forensic science infrastructure is also focused on the cases belonging to criminal justice system. Till 2018, the two major service providers for forensic analysis were the National Forensic Science Agency based in Islamabad and the Punjab Forensic Science Agency with its state-of-the-art laboratory in Lahore. Both Balochistan and Sindh have passed their respective Forensic Science Agency acts but they have yet to construct a similar infrastructure to the national and Punjab governments’ standard (Mateen, Tariq & Rasool, 2018). The existing agencies have established international collaborations with organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that till 2018 has donated Pakistan two modern mobile crime scene investigation units (MCSIU) and also held several training programs for implementation of international SOPs (UNODC.org News, 2018).

At the legislation forefront, Pakistan has made some good progress in the past few years namely the Women's Protection Bill 2006 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offense of Rape) Act 2016. Although unfortunately these policy changes have been a reactive measure after prominent rape cases surfaced especially the Kasur incidents and the Zainab case, still it is worth acknowledging that some good measures have been implemented via these acts. A prominent example is the introduction of the law that states that "for the purpose of gathering evidence of rape or gang rape, it is lawful for a registered medical practitioner employed in a Government hospital to examine the accused and collect necessary evidence, including DNA evidence." ("Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offense of Rape) Act 2016 | PCSW", 2016). Needless to say, there is much is left to be desired when it comes to effective and proactive legislation from the government.

As mentioned earlier that Police reform is a significant contributor to effective delivery of justice through forensic science investigation. Another segment where the government can improve is the provision of adequate human resource in the field of medico legal examination and forensic science. At present, the government has no such policy implemented on educational institutes that guarantees a constant and steady flow of expertise in this field. The medical colleges just briefly touch the subject of forensics and no specialized field exists for medicolegal expertise. Usually, the same government deployed medical officers are the ones carrying out medicolegal examinations, who in some complex cases require high level of professionalism and expertise both in the subject of medicine and law. At present the lack of incentive and career development is considered to be the major contributor to the absence of dedicated medicolegal and forensic examiners in the field.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS



Above is our force field analysis that identifies the forces FOR the strengthening of the forensic investigation process and also the actors that are against it. Other than the most obvious ones there are a few interesting ones such as the forensic science labs. It is assumed that once all the other actors play their part correctly the positive impact of forensic investigations will act as a positive reinforcement and a source of motivation for the labs and their personnel. Not to forget that the government incentives and strengthening of the infrastructure will also provide encouragement for these labs to perform better. The strongest opposition would be from the religious groups in the case that Islamic Shariah Laws are replaced with empirical based laws. In the case of Women's Act 2016 there was strong opposition from most mainstream religious parties (Ali, 2016). It would be especially critical how the government and judiciary handle the pressures of the religious diaspora.

ALTERNATIVE CONSTRUCTION:

No action policy analysis:

According to a report by HRW (Human Rights Watch , 2016), registration and investigation of sexual assault cases is particularly taxing for female victims and consequently, such cases are highly underreported. The misogynistic and biased attitude of key stakeholders i.e police, judiciary, and society at large are additional contributing factors to victims' reluctance to

report crimes (Human Rights Watch , 2016). A no action policy would mean harassment and intimidation of victims in perpetuity by the police and accused parties. Inaction to reform the investigative techniques associated with sexual assault cases would lead to rising backlogs, low conviction rates, and a compromised justice delivery system.

Ideal situation analysis:

A global review report about sexual assault (Loots, Dartnall, & Jewkes, 2011) indicates that very few nations have evidence based, multi-sectoral policies about sexual assault prevention. The review identifies 6 countries that have developed notable policies that address rape prevention on all three levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). Our report focuses on the analysis of secondary prevention techniques i.e immediate response of victims and investigative agencies to such cases that would protect victims from further harm (Loots, Dartnall, & Jewkes, 2011). Of the 6 countries identified, our report will briefly discuss the secondary prevention policies of the UK regarding gender-based violence with a special focus on sexual assault. The UK is discussed since Pakistan's laws are primarily an amalgamation of British-era laws and Islam-oriented guidelines. UK's gender-based violence policies are interconnected, cross-government, and supplement each other. These policies provide evidence-based interventions, identify effective prevention strategies, and employ an inter-departmental approach to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Examples of these strategies include holistic management of survivors, standardized documentation of evidence, user-friendly information services for victims, sensitizing police and court officials, and equipping medico legal facilities to adequately meet the needs of victims. (Loots, Dartnall, & Jewkes, 2011). Comparatively, the ideal situation for Pakistan will be a complete reform of forensic investigative techniques, strengthening of medico legal services, psychological support to victims, witness protection provision, and assistance in terms of legal services.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Increased funding to existing medicolegal facilities:

This includes increased funding for authorized medicolegal examination centers and police stations resulting in increased salaries of medicolegal officers, expanding the scope of medicolegal services to include rape testing kits, equipping medico legal centers with the

forensic equipment and facilities as identified in the World Health Organization's medico legal guidelines for sexual assault victims. (World Health Organization, 2003).

In addition, increased funding to police stations for transport facilities and application of latest forensic analysis equipment and techniques.

Establishing more forensic and specialized centers:

It is necessary to strengthen the infrastructure and establish more forensic laboratories to meet the increasing requirements for forensic analysis for criminal cases.

Establishing specialized centres with adequately trained staff would improve the quality of medico legal services provided to victims with a wide range of coordinated services including emergency medical care, psychological counselling, medico legal examination, evidence collection, and legal services.

Establishing national DNA databases:

The primary objective of establishing a national DNA intelligence database is the identification, prosecution, and conviction of sex offenders. (Rasool & Rasool, 2020).

Establishing a national forensic DNA database will alleviate the already overburdened medicolegal system including government hospitals, police stations, and court proceedings.

Standardization of procedures

Standardization of procedures will include the following:

- Standardized trainings and refresher trainings to police personnel and medico legal officers
- Standardized and specialized protocols adapted to manage survivors of sexual assault.
- Standardized format for medicolegal certificate across all medicolegal facilities in Pakistan
- Standardized quality assurance protocols for evidence collection
- Standardized crime scene protocols
- Evidence-based guidelines established at the national level to determine the standard of medico legal examinations and investigations.
- Detailed job descriptions for medico legal examiners established.

Capacity building of key stakeholders

Training programs for police officials for the implementation of digitized systems and modern initiatives. Police officials need to be equipped with latest equipment and forensic analysis technologies and incentivizing them is crucial to effectively sustain capacity building initiatives.

Doctors need to be given regular and mandatory trainings regarding medico legal protocols. Practical activities and competencies need to be laid out for medical students at the undergraduate level where only theoretical methods of teaching forensics are imparted.

Doctors also need to be incentivized through options for career progression, development, and financial gains.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The proposed alternatives will be evaluated based on practical and ideological criteria as mentioned below.

Ideological criteria:

Effectiveness: To what extent will the policy option accomplish goals that it has set out to achieve?

Health Equity: Will this option provide a similar standard of care that will not vary in quality due to any physical, social, or demographic factors?

Practical criteria:

Politically feasibility: Whether the alternative is politically viable and is likely to become a law and if not, is it politically beneficial for key stakeholders i.e politicians, police, doctors, court officials, victims of assault?

Administrative ease: Does the policy alternative face any implementation hurdle? If so, are the obstacles easy to overcome?

Costs: This criterion will assess policy options in terms of direct costs, indirect costs, tangible costs, intangible costs, one-time costs, and opportunity costs.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

	Effectiveness	Health equity	Political feasibility	Administrative ease	Costs
Increase funding to existing centers	High	High	High	High	High
Establish forensic and specialized centers	High	High	Low	Low	High
Establish DNA databases	High	High	Low	Low	High
Standardization of procedures	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
Capacity building of key stakeholders	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium

Increased funding to existing medicolegal facilities:

A medicolegal budget, separate from the budget for authorized government hospitals, can be allocated to medicolegal examination centers. This budget can be utilized to increase salaries of medicolegal officers, expanding the scope of medicolegal services to include rape testing kits, provision of latest equipment and facilities.

According to a report by HRW (Human Rights Watch , 2016) on police reform, one of the biggest hindrances to police functioning are financial constraints which leads to high incidences of corruption. Police are expected to generate funds themselves while the state struggles to provide them with necessities such as stationery and transport. Inadequate funds also cause hindrances for the timely dispatch of investigative tests to forensic labs. Increasing funding to police stations will, hopefully, counter these hindrances. Moreover, adequate funding for transport facilities will improve basic police functioning including prompt investigative responses.

Consequently, the effectiveness and health equity because of this policy will be high. The political feasibility will be high because no policy change is required to increase funding. The only implementation hurdle is getting increased budgetary allocation to medico legal facilities so, administrative ease will be high. The costs associated with this policy option are also high as an increased budget must be allocated to medicolegal facilities, intangible costs like the time and energy involved in the discussions and debates of the budget allocation,

opportunity costs such as another key project might receive reduced funds if money is diverted to this policy alternative.

Establishing more forensic and specialized centers:

So far, one laboratory exists at the provincial level for every province of Pakistan, except Baluchistan. With the growing utility of forensic evidence in court proceedings, one provincial laboratory will struggle to cope with ever-increasing backlogs. Accordingly, it is necessary to strengthen the infrastructure and establish more forensic laboratories to meet the increasing requirements.

Specialized centers for sexual assault victims would offer a wide range of coordinated services including emergency medical care, psychological counselling, medico legal examination, evidence collection, and legal services. Often, hospital staff, police, and court officials handle sexual assault victims with insensitivity and are motivated by voyeuristic curiosity instead of offering support and services. Establishing these specialized centres with adequately trained staff would improve the quality of medico legal services provided to victims. (World Health Organization, 2013)

The effectiveness and health equity as a consequence of this policy option will be high. Since this will require policy changes to establish specialized centers and more labs, political feasibility and administrative ease will be low. The costs associated will be high as this would require increased funds and increased resources.

Establishing national DNA databases:

The primary objective of establishing a national DNA intelligence database is the identification, prosecution, and conviction of sex offenders. Forensic laboratories, like PFSA, have made their own repositories of in-house-generated DNA profiles of suspects, detainees, convicts, victims, victims' families, and profiles generated for paternity testing and relatedness (Rasool & Rasool, 2020). Establishing a national forensic DNA database will alleviate the already overburdened medicolegal system including government hospitals, police stations, and court proceedings.

However, before these national databases can be created, our legal framework needs to be strengthened as DNA evidence is considered corroborative in court and secondary to witness testimonies. Other issues related to DNA testing include inadequate sampling technique, flawed packaging, and contamination of evidence. Laws supporting wider DNA testing must be promulgated.

The costs associated with this policy option are high as expanding DNA databases can be substantially costly. Moreover, this will require significant resources and budgetary allocation. The administrative ease and political feasibility will be low because adopting this policy might be tricky with threats of cyber-attacks, confidentiality issues, and reluctance from conspiracy theorists. However, the effectiveness and health equity will be high.

Standardization of procedures

The effectiveness and health equity due to standardization of procedures will be high. Since there will be no policy change, political feasibility will be high. Implementation hurdles that can be faced might be language barriers so, guidelines and protocols must be established in Urdu, English, and other provincial languages. Moreover, key stakeholders might find it difficult to adapt to new standardized procedures and leave their routine practices.

Consequently, administrative ease will be medium. The monetary costs associated with determining and establishing these standards will be low but there might be non-monetary costs associated with increased time and increased human resources. Moreover, trainings and refresher courses would also require increased funds and resource allocations. Subsequently, costs incurred by this policy option will be medium.

Capacity building of key stakeholders

Presently, computerized systems are available to only a handful of cities in Punjab. The rest of the police record maintenance system in Pakistan is manual with each police station maintaining 25 registers and logging in daily entries by hand (Human Rights Watch , 2016). Despite the approval of a 1.4-billion-rupee project intended to computerize police records and databases in police stations across Pakistan, implementation has been far from satisfactory which can be attributed to a lack of technical assistance and inadequate capacity building. (Human Rights Watch , 2016). To counter this, training programs need to be held for police officials for the implementation of digitized systems. Moreover, police officials need to be equipped with latest equipment and forensic analysis technologies. Incentivizing them is crucial to effectively sustain capacity building initiatives.

Doctors need to be given regular and mandatory trainings regarding medico legal protocols. In addition, practical competencies need to be laid out for medical students to follow at the undergraduate level where only theoretical methods of teaching forensics are imparted. The medicolegal field is often unattractive for Doctors due to lack of career development

prospects, and minimal financial incentives. To counter this and contribute to the capacity building of Doctors, it is necessary to incentivize them and provide options for career progression. For example, experienced Doctors undertaking medico legal work can be employed as medico legal advisors to the State.

The effectiveness and health equity of capacity building of key stakeholders are high. The political feasibility will be medium as a previous policy to computerize police records was not as successful. The administrative ease will be medium as already indicated by the implementation hurdle faced with the digitization of police records. The costs associated with developing career prospects for Doctors and aiding in the dissemination and implementation of capacity building initiatives will be medium.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short term recommendations:

In the short term, **standardization of procedures** should be the primary goal as the costs associated are lower than other policy options and there is high political feasibility. This option seems the most practical to apply in the short run. Following standardization, the focus should shift on **increasing funding for existing medico legal facilities and police stations** as the administrative ease and political feasibility are high with this option regardless of the high costs.

Capacity building of stakeholders should be the next step as costs, political feasibility, and administrative ease are medium.

Long term recommendations:

In the long run, the government should focus on **establishing more forensic laboratories, specialized centers, and national DNA databases**. The costs associated with these options are high, and the administrative and political feasibility is low. Nevertheless, these options remain the most crucial for the betterment of quality services to sexual assault victims, timely investigation of cases, and an overall improved justice system.

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