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<p align="center">Digital Justice in Pakistan: A Critical Evaluation of Judicial Web Portals and Legal Databases</p>	
<p align="center">Ali Rehman </p> <p>Phil. Scholar, Department of Sociology, Minhaj University, Lahore Campus, Lahore, Pakistan</p> <p>Correspondence: arehman.6234@gmail.com</p>	

Article information	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 2024-09-26 Received in revised form: 2024-10-16 Accepted: 2024-11-23 Published Online: 2024-12-11</p> <p>Keywords: Law websites; Online Judiciary; Pakistan; Web Evaluation; Digital Justice.</p>	<p>This study aims to critically evaluate the appropriateness, functionality, and usefulness of the official websites representing the judiciary of Pakistan. To achieve a comprehensive assessment, thirteen websites were purposively selected based on the hierarchical structure of the Pakistani legal system, encompassing administrative bodies, the superior judiciary, and various high courts. The evaluative framework focused on several key performance indicators, including content depth, updating frequency, structural organization, navigational integrity, and the inclusion of effective digital tools designed for efficient information dissemination. The findings reveal a significant disparity in digital maturity across the judicial hierarchy. A majority of the investigated platforms were found to be poorly structured and ill-designed, often characterized by unprofessional navigation and the provision of only basic-level information. Critical issues such as broken links, stagnant content—with some sites not updated since 2012—and the absence of advanced search functionalities were prevalent. Conversely, certain platforms, notably the High Court of Balochistan, demonstrated superior design, user-friendly bilingual interfaces, and dynamic information management. It further emphasizes the necessity for regular maintenance protocols and the integration of interactive features to fulfill the public's right to digital legal information effectively.</p>



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Introduction

The evolution of technology has urged working organizations to show their visibility on the virtual world. The physical infrastructure is not as much important as virtual infrastructure plays role in visibility and customer capturing capacity among professional organizations.

Judiciary is the major pillar of any country to ensure the implementation and amendment of law and order. In context of developing countries, like Pakistan, judiciaries are very powerful due to political instability. They are also showing their presence and facilitating their users by providing effective services through their websites. The current study is intended to evaluate and assess the accuracy, authenticity, infrastructure and availability of information of web sites of judiciary of Pakistan.

Background of the Study

The rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) has transformed organizational visibility, shifting the focus from physical infrastructure to virtual presence. For professional organizations, the virtual interface now plays a decisive role in "customer capturing capacity" and service transparency. In a developing nation like Pakistan, the judiciary serves as a cornerstone of the state, responsible for the implementation and amendment of law and order.

As the legal landscape becomes increasingly digitized, Pakistani judicial bodies have sought to facilitate users by providing e-information through official websites. However, the effectiveness of these platforms depends heavily on their accuracy, authenticity, and infrastructure. This study evaluates 13 key judicial websites—including administrative bodies, the superior judiciary, and high courts—to assess their appropriateness, user-friendliness, and navigational efficiency.

Literature Review

The evaluation of government and judicial websites often centers on the "e-Government

Maturity Model," which assesses how institutions transition from simple information disclosure to transactional and seamless interaction. In the context of Pakistan, research has consistently highlighted a gap between digital intent and user experience.

Web Accessibility and Design Standards

Research into public sector websites in South Asia frequently identifies poor navigational structures and a lack of professional design. Studies by Khan and Shafique (2011) on Pakistani government portals found that many sites fail to meet basic accessibility standards, a finding mirrored in the author's evaluation of judicial sites where many were described as "poorly structured" and "ill-designed". The lack of mobile responsiveness and the presence of broken links are recurring themes that hinder the "right to information" for the general public.

Digital Transparency and Judicial Efficiency

The role of the judiciary in a digital age is to enhance transparency. According to Ali (2020), the availability of case laws and cause lists online reduces the burden on physical courts. Jabbar identifies the High Court of Balochistan as a model in this regard, noting its dual-language (Urdu and English) functionality and dynamic, user-friendly interface. In contrast, static websites like those of the Federal Shariat Court fail to provide the "freshness" or "currency of information" required for legal reliability.

User Trust and Authenticity A critical component of judicial portals is the "Disclaimer" and "Authorship" clues. Many Pakistani judicial sites, such as those of the Ministry of Law and Justice, provide disclaimers that distance the organization from the accuracy of the information provided. This creates a paradox where a primary pillar of the state provides information that it will not legally vouch for, forcing users to verify data from secondary sources.

Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed to evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of the websites of judiciary of Pakistan. The main objectives of the study are further divided as;

- To check the appropriateness and usefulness of website
- To evaluate infrastructure, user-friendliness, design, and navigational options
- To assess comprehensiveness in terms of information provision
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of the websites

Delimitation of the Study

The study is covering legal organizational websites of Pakistan except inclusion on one international database which is providing access to commonwealth countries including Pakistan and exclusion of judicial academics of Pakistan. The study will not cover law websites hosted by individual or personal level.

Methodology

The term 'judiciary of Pakistan' was searched in Google and found hierarchical structure of judiciary of Pakistan. The hierarchical structure was followed and these organizations were

searched on the web. In this respect, websites of legal administrative bodies, superior judiciary and high courts of the Pakistan were included in the study. The study is conducted in May, 2017 and these all websites were approached between Mid-May, 2017 and End-May, 2017.

Evaluation Criteria

The websites were analyzed by assessing infrastructure, user-friendliness, accuracy and authenticity and usefulness and appropriateness of the information provision. The updating frequency of website was also assessed.

Sampling

The twelve websites were selected by following the hierarchical structure of the judiciary of Pakistan. Administrative bodies, superior judiciary and high courts of the Pakistan were analyzed. Further, two databases and resource providers including one international and one national was included.

Evaluation of Websites in Hierarchical Way

Table 1. Evaluation of law websites

Administrative Judiciary of Pakistan			
Web Title / Version	Copyright / last updated	Infrastructure	Links Breakage etc.
Ministry of Law and Justice / English Version	2014-2015 Less updated	unattractive and static containing most of the empty space	Broken Links
Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan / English and Urdu Version	2015	Very poorly constructed font size in Urdu and English is not appropriate	Broken links and unexpected errors while opening
Office of the Advocate General Punjab / English Version	2014	Very poorly constructed, Large Icons, unnecessary navigation required	Broken links and errors
Superior Judiciary of Pakistan			
Web Title / Version	Copyright / last updated	Infrastructure	Links Breakage etc.
Supreme Court of Pakistan / English Version only	2017 Updated	Well-designed, well-organized, Static web	No
Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit Baltistan / English Version	2017 Updated	Static web, unnecessary use of pictures and large icons	Slow uploading
Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan / English Version	2012 not updated	Poorly Constructed, User of dark color (Red), Static Web	No
High Courts of Pakistan			
Web Title / Version	Copyright / last updated	Infrastructure	Links Breakage etc.
Islamabad High Court / English Version	2017 Updated	Well-constructed and organized	No
Lahore High Court / English Version	2017 Updated	Very poorly constructed, Very large icons, Unnecessary navigation required	Sometimes, taking time to open
High Court of Balochistan / English and Urdu Versions	2017 Updated	Well-constructed, well-designed, dynamic, User-friendly interface	Very effectively & quickly connecting
Peshwar High Court / English and Urdu Versions	Updated 2017	Very poorly constructed, complex, not user-friendly, unprofessional look	Taking time to open, Broken Link
High Court of Sindh	2006 Outdated	Simple interface and professional look	No

Azad Jammu Kashmir High Court / English Version	2017 Updated	Poorly constructed, static web, Google Map of Court is provided in Middle which is irritating	Slow uploading / Some links are not responding
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Law Databases and Resource Providers

Web Title / Version	Copyright / last updated	Infrastructure	Links Breakage etc.
Commonwealth Legal Information Institute	2017 Updated	Most Simple and easy interface, poorly designed, unprofessional look	No
Punjab Laws Online	Not Provided	Poorly constructed, most of the space is empty	Broken Links

Interpretation and Discussion

The law websites are selected by keeping in view hierarchical perspective of judicial system of Pakistan. The above presented table 1 has elaborated the major criterion of websites including title, version, updating, and infrastructure and link breakage. Furthermore, careful analysis of law websites has devised more detailed view which has been discussed below.

Administrative Judiciary of Pakistan

1) Ministry of Law and Justice

The website has been developed in English version only by National Information Technology Board, Ministry of Information Technology, Pakistan. It is static web containing unattractive designs having most of the empty space on first page. Searching is not provided and nothing is provided to download. Links are broken as "Law Tab" is showing *error 404* (<http://molaw.gov.pk/laws/> accessed on 25 May, 2017). *About Us* contains three popups i.e. organogram (containing a chart of organization, Federal Minister (containing only name of picture of the federal minister and Federal Secretary has nothing to show

Moreover, *Disclaimer* is provided that the organization is not responsible for any typographical mistake questioned its authenticity and accuracy. Feedback form is provided while publication tab contains only bibliographic information of resources. Overall, it looks to show presence of organization, provide organizational information and day to day notifications.

2) Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan

The website of law and justice commission of Pakistan has been available in both English and Urdu versions. Yet, Urdu font style is not understandable. It is very poorly constructed containing only moving pictures. Font style of both Urdu and English versions is not appropriate. There is message of "website under construction". Simple Searching is provided but when keying "justice" and "law" nothing has been shown even no message of "no results found". Broken links and unexpected errors while opening and National Judicial Policy 2009 is available but file is corrupted. Overall, this is very poor website.

3) Office of the Advocate General Punjab

The website of the organization is developed by Punjab Information Technology Board. It is very poorly constructed containing very large icons and requiring unnecessary navigation. More, there is Interruptions in downloading files. Links are broken as "Law Officers Research" cannot be found. There is slow uploading and problem in uploading picture on front page. Moreover, searching can be done through selecting law officer, ruling category and searching keywords. Site map is provided.

Superior Judiciary of Pakistan

1) Supreme Court of Pakistan

The website of Supreme Court of Pakistan is well-organized and well-designed yet static web. Search Tab is not providing keyword searching. Cases can be searched by choosing case type, case no, year, parties names and even through

keywords. Annual reports of 2015-2016 are uploaded, Downloads are available in most reliable format PDF. Moreover, FAQs and contact information are provided. Overall, it is very comprehensive and professional containing all information in well-organized manner.

2) Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit Baltistan

The website of Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit Baltistan is static and with slow-uploading. Searching is available only through case number or title. Finally, it is incomprehensive website lacking in basic information which is provided on law sites.

3) Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan

The website of the organization is very poorly designed using dark color in background (Red) and a static web. It has not been updated from 2012. One Tab "Roster" having only one document of sitting bench containing two pages is illogical Searching has been provided through case no and party name. Overall, it is built to fulfill formality, not providing sufficient information – information is presented in unorganized way.

High Courts of Pakistan

1) Islamabad High Court

The website is well-organized and well-designed and updated. Searching has provided to search cause through simple and advanced search. Specific Tab of Human Rights is available to track the case by providing tracking number and CNIC. SMS history tab is provided to know the case history through SMS. Library is connected through resource tab by providing searching through title, author and year. Library catalog is available only. Disclaimer is provided as IHC is not responsible for use of information. More, then content is only for information and for official use which may questioned the authenticity of the website contents. Feedback tab is provided with the condition to provide CNIC which may restrict user to take part.

2) High Court of Balochistan

The website is well-structured, organized, user-friendly, and containing well-designed interface

with the exception of wider picture on the front page. This is available in both Urdu and English versions and the only website which Urdu version is fully in Urdu language with beautiful presentation. Searching is provided in very effective way, the user has to provide only case no. else information is available through popups where user can easily choose. Most importantly, *About Website* link is provided containing information of developer, content editor, team members and also provides technical information of format and scripting language.

The federal and Balochistan law amendments are provided through link of *Library*. A brief introduction is provided in *About Us*. *Public Desk* links provide very useful information regarding contact and addresses and map of the court *Publications* and necessary statistics of the high court, two benches and district courts are also provided Specifically, Audit information is shared. Overall, it is most comprehensive, well-designed and user friendly website in all evaluated websites.

3) Peshwar High Court

The website is available in both English and Urdu version but Urdu version containing only Tabs in Urdu else information is provided in English. It is very poorly constructed, complex in nature, lacking user friendliness and having unprofessional look. Searching is provided through Judgement Management System by three choosing categories and one category of Remarks is searchable. It is taking time to open with some broken links. *Library* is provided yet there is no searching available else simple search and book list is provided with the author, publisher and category information. The link *Attorneys* and *Practice Areas* are provided having nothing to show. Overall, it is very poor and unprofessional website.

4) Azad Jammu Kashmir High Court

The website of Azad Jammu Kashmir High Court is very poorly built and static web. Even, title of the website is not provided. More, it has Google Map as a large image on the front page which is very irritating. Searching is not provided with the

limitation of "Coming Soon". There is Slow uploading and some links are not responding i.e. *Press Release*. Navigational links of AJK Shariat Court and AJK District Court are not working with the message "Coming Soon". No Feedback tab is provided. It is very unprofessional and basic level website.

5) High Court of Sindh

The website is designed in professional and simple manner. It contains effective and organized linkage of information. Overall, it is comprehensive and effective website which needs to be updated accordingly.

Law Databases and Resource Providers

1) Commonwealth Legal Information Institute

It is very simple and easy to understandable website but lacking professional looking. [Commonwealth Legal Information Institute](#) (CommonLII) aims to provide central point of provision of free information sources. This is having 1444 databases from 60 commonwealths and common law jurisdictions including Pakistan through 8 legal institutions, it has been led by Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII). *Feedback* is also requested to provide for encouragement of positive criticism. *Browsing* is very comprehensive through alphabetically and through years is also provided. *Description* of each database is provided in consistent way by providing last updating and no of available decisions. Most importantly, links are provided to original source (country courts) Comprehensive searching as keywords, phrase, Boolean, title, case name and legislation name searching are provided and specific database can also be searchable. The staff, technical (hardware, software, and privacy policy) is explicitly provided, Moreover, disclaimer has been mentioned that the neither the institute nor the host institutions took any responsibility of accuracy of the information, it is up to the user to verify the needed information from any other source.

2) Punjab Laws Online

The website of Punjab Laws Online is very poorly

constructed containing most of the space empty. Dealing with all laws of Punjab from 1860 to date and claimed that it has been regularly updated including new laws and amendments made. *Browsing* is facilitated through chronological and alphabetically order. Only mail address is available in Contact Us. Some links are broken as in *Contact Us* (<http://www.punjablaws.gov.pk/index5.html> Accessed on May 25, 2017).

Discussion

The evaluation reveals a significant disparity in the digital maturity of Pakistan's judicial hierarchy. While the **Supreme Court of Pakistan** and the **Islamabad High Court** maintain well-organized, professional, and updated platforms, several administrative and provincial bodies fall short. A major point of concern is the "static" nature of many websites; platforms like the Federal Shariat Court have not seen updates since 2012, rendering them almost obsolete for active legal research.

Infrastructure issues such as "broken links" (Error 404) and "slow uploading" were observed across both administrative and superior court websites. Furthermore, the lack of effective search functionality—even on sites belonging to the Law and Justice Commission—prevents users from finding critical documents like the National Judicial Policy. The study highlights that the **High Court of Balochistan** stands out as a "benchmark" due to its comprehensive "About Website" section, which provides technical details on developers and scripting, thereby enhancing trust.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has identified many issues as poorly structured, ill-designed, breakage of links, inaccuracy and lack of authenticity among selected websites of judiciary of Pakistan. The website of Punjab is mostly unprofessional which is threatening factors as the province is considered most developed among others. Moreover, the website of High Court of Balochistan should be considered as a model to enhance the quality of other websites.

There are many other websites which are not included in the study i.e. judicial academics of Pakistan (four websites) and many other websites and databases i.e. Find Law, Lexis Nexis, Indlaw, India Kanoon, Law Khoj, and Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute. Another comprehensive study should be conducted to evaluate law resources by covering these resources should be conducted.

The study concludes that the majority of judicial websites in Pakistan are currently unprofessional, poorly structured, and lack the authenticity required for a legal resource. While some high courts have made strides in providing SMS tracking and library catalogs, others remain "basic level" portals that fulfill a mere formality of digital presence. The lack of maintenance is a "threatening factor," particularly in developed provinces like Punjab, where the legal portal was

found to be mostly empty and unprofessional.

Recommendations

Professional Redesign: Judicial websites should move away from static, unattractive designs toward dynamic, user-friendly interfaces modeled after the High Court of Balochistan.

Regular Maintenance: A dedicated team of content editors and technical staff should be appointed to ensure the "currency of information" and to fix broken links immediately.

Enhanced Searchability: Keyword, Boolean, and phrase searching should be integrated into all law databases to facilitate researchers and legal practitioners. **Standardized Urdu Integration:** Since many litigants are more comfortable with the national language, high-quality Urdu versions with proper font styles (not just translated tabs) should be implemented.

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