

WHO JUDGES THE JUDGES? ADDRESSING INTEGRITY AND SECURITY GAPS IN THE SINDH JUDICIAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

^{1*}Hasan Rasheed Siddiqui

^{1*}LLM. University Of Bedfordshire, UK Educator, Author, Lawyer, Advisor, Zarai Taraqiyati Bank Limited Pakistan.

Corresponding Author:

Hassan.r.siddiqui@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The transparency, fairness, and adequacy of the criteria used to select candidates for the position of Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) in Sindh have long been a source of concern. Given the ASJ's critical role in adjudicating both criminal and civil matters, the integrity of the selection process is fundamental to upholding judicial standards. However, the current testing mechanism has faced criticism for its limited ability to effectively distinguish between candidates and its emphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical legal competence. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the subjectivity and potential biases in the selection of interview panel members.

This paper examines the existing framework governing the ASJ recruitment process in Sindh, identifying systemic challenges and proposing actionable reforms. Key issues explored include the lack of transparency in exam administration, inconsistent levels of difficulty across examination papers, and insufficient emphasis on evaluating practical legal skills, which are essential to the judicial function. The study advocates for the implementation of clear, objective evaluation criteria and standardized procedures for both the written examination and interview stages. These reforms aim to minimize discretion and reduce opportunities for bias, ensuring the selection of the most competent and deserving candidates. Ultimately, this paper recommends a comprehensive overhaul of the ASJ recruitment system in Sindh to reinforce judicial integrity, promote merit-based appointments, and uphold the foundational principles of justice.

Keyword: *Judicial Selection Process, Transparency in Judiciary, Judicial Appointments Reform, Legal Examination System*

INTRODUCTION

Judicial examination, namely Sindh Additional Session Judge examination, is the most well-known and dignified examination for the officer of Pakistan's junior judiciary. The exam in its current design and execution, however, raises real questions about the fairness, effectiveness, and alignment of the exam with the broader needs of the legal system. The examination is held by the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sukkur, a business school which has no law faculty or specialized in law, a little concerning due to the fact that both advocates and judges is hyper specialized profession.

BACKGROUND OF JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS IN PAKISTAN

The judiciary in Pakistan is one of the three fundamental pillars of the state, enshrined through the 1973 Constitution which ensures independence of the establishment. It is a multi-tiered system, ranging from civil and criminal courts (lower courts), to the High Courts in respective provinces, before finally reaching the Supreme Court of Pakistan the highest court in the land (Farooq, 2017).

Judges exercise an essential duty within our democracy when they provide consistent enforcement of the rule of law, read, maintain and give meaning to our legislation, and protect our constitutional rights. This is why their appointments are hugely important for delivering and maintaining justice, supporting our democratic values, and ensuring the public still has faith in the legal system (Iqbal, & Khan, 2017).

Judicial appointments in Pakistan have historically changed with the political dynamics of the time. In the beginning, it was the President of Pakistan who was granted vast powers to appoint judges, usually on the advice of the executive branch. But the threat to independence of judiciary prompted the amendments in the constitution [most prominently 18th and 19th amendments] under which the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) and the Parliamentary Committee were formulated. These organs were charged with making a more open and merit-based process for the selection of judges (Javed, & Akhtar, 2018).

Despite these reforms, ongoing debates persist regarding the balance of power between the judiciary and the executive, the transparency of the judicial appointment process, and the criteria employed in selecting judges. Also, the focus on judicial appointments — and the history behind those appointments and the people making them — allows one the chance to discuss judicial reforms and judicial independence, both of which are very political issues in Pakistan today (Kundi, & Sultana, 2017).

IMPORTANCE OF THE ADDITIONAL SESSIONS JUDGE (ASJ) ROLE IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

There is great importance of Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) filed for judicial scheme of Pakistan. Among other key figures of the subordinate judiciary, the ASJ, who mostly hear criminal matters, handles serious offences, such as murder, robbery, and all other crimes triable in Sessions Court. ASJ is also responsible for hearing appeals against decisions of magistrates, providing a vital level of judicial review and oversight. Their rulings affect the fates and freedoms of people, so their position demands knowledge of legal principles, neutrality and the rule of law. Many district Session Judges are also Administrative Session Judges or ASJ, which shows the administrative element of the post. Moreover, ASJ's decisions are so often the basis for successive appeals to higher courts that their decisions are, by definition, foundational in the legal process. Considering the number and nature of cases coming, the efficiency and competence of Additional Sessions Judges are paramount for timely delivery of justice and maintaining public confidence (Qureshi, & Nadeem, 2016).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADDITIONAL SESSIONS JUDGE EXAMINATION

The Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Exam is an very important examination for recruiting competent, knowledgeable, and morally-appropriate individuals for a crucial position in the judicial system. Serving as the merit based entry point to the profession; it helps in filtering out appropriate and qualified candidates for serving as ASJs, in Pakistan particularly in Sindh judicial system. The examination process, comprising both written and oral components and, in some instances, psychological and psychometric evaluations, is highly competitive, aiming to not only assess the candidates' knowledge of law and procedural rules, but also their analytical prowess, decision-making capacity, and overall judicial demeanor (Rashid, & Sami, 2018).

The role of Additional Sessions Judge in Sindh is wide-ranging and crucial. ASJs generally hear serious criminal cases involving an offence punishable by death or life imprisonment, and appeals from the orders of lower courts. They are a vital component of ensuring that justice is equitable and proportionate, not infringing upon citizens' rights and adherence to the Constitution. Beyond adjudicating complex criminal issues, ASJs are responsible for overseeing administrative matters, including supervision of staff and the effective use of court time. Therefore, the ASJ exam is more than a gate keeping mechanism. It is a key cornerstone in ensuring not only the integrity and effectiveness of but also the public confidence in the judiciary of Sindh (Raza, & Khan, 2018).

CURRENT EXAMINATION PROCESS

Overall, the test process is rigid and ensures that qualified candidates are provided with the ASJ seat in Sindh. The examination process usually begins with a written test, which assesses the knowledge of candidates on civil and criminal laws, constitutional provisions, legal drafting, and analytical reasoning. Theoretical and academic based knowledge of the law is demonstrated at this stage, which is the court work (Shaheen, 2017).

Shortlisted candidates are then called for the interview which is usually chaired by a panel of senior judges and members of the Sindh Judicial Service Commission. The interview is meant to assess the candidate's personality, ability to make ethical decisions, ability to articulate a legal topic clearly and handle judicial boom under pressure. It brings context to the candidate's temperament and qualifications for the bench (Yousaf, 2018).

The final selection is made on the basis of aggregate performance in written and interview assessment and professional experience, if applicable. It is undertaken in several steps and ensures a comprehensive review of not only the person's legal expertise and analytical ability but personal traits that are necessary for the delivery of judicial service. These all stages serve as vital filters for filtering out those who may not be qualified or have integrity, thereby protecting value and credibility of Sindh judiciary (Usman, 2018).

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The appointment of Additional Sessions Judges in Sindh has been the subject of several concerns, criticism and controversies with respect to its fairness, transparency and effectiveness, so there is an urgent need to critically evaluate the current examination system for the appointment of Additional Sessions Judges in Sindh. Legal experts and aspirants have questioned if the same evaluation criteria was applied uniformly, seeking more transparency on interview processes and possible bias in selection. Such worries have highlighted the need to reassess whether a reliable meritocratic and impersonal system is followed when judicial jobs are given out by the government.

This study seeks to explore potential gaps in the existing examination and selection process. This paper intends to recommend some practical reforms that can help in making the recruitment mechanism more credible and efficient by identifying certain systemic gaps/weaknesses. They might include suggestions for how to standardize evaluation procedures, increase transparency in the interview process and strengthen feedback for applicants who don't succeed. The study is intended to help maintain the integrity of the process, so only the best of the best are taking the bench, it says.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current study addresses issues related with the examination process for appointment of Additional Sessions Judges in Sindh province. It seeks to find procedural, structural and administrative deficiencies that could prevent the selection of the best qualified candidates. Rather than a narrow focus on Sindh, which is what this research aims to provide insight into, it is also looking for a contextual summary of the system — how it works currently and how its challenges manifest for willing candidates.

The study will be based on empirical analysis comprising data from previous examination series and input from different stakeholders including members of the legal- profession, candidates and judicial officers, among others. The purpose of this research is to understand the selection process that is meant to be follow-through this approach patterns of inefficiency or perceptions of unfairness will be revealed. The interpretation of the findings will be aimed at drawing actionable insights and formulating evidence-based recommendations that could lead to a better examination framework — one that is more transparent, consistent, and merit-based, in the appointment of Additional Sessions Judges in Sindh.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the current examination framework for the ASJ in Sindh.
2. To identify key areas of concern such as transparency, biases, and assessment gaps.
3. To propose reforms that would improve the overall integrity of the selection process.

CURRENT EXAMINATION FRAMEWORK

Under the incumbency of new Chief Justice of Sindh we may change the axis of this profession to be of, as per various selection procedures for posts of Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) in Sindh, which cover academic knowledge and practical aptitude as a judicial officer (Shafiq, 2015). There are three broad stages in this:

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

It is the first stage in which candidates are tested for their knowledge based on various branches of law, for example, civil law, criminal law, constitutional law, and procedural laws. You would be evaluated on the written exam, which checks the depth of knowledge in legal matters, and also checks analytical reasoning and application of legal principles to complex scenarios (Zafar, 2017).

INTERVIEW

Those who pass the written exams are interviewed with a panel (usually comprised of senior judges and legal scholars/experts). This stage assesses the candidate's legal reasoning, ethical analysis, communication abilities, and overall fitness for the position. The interview also gives a sense of the candidate's temperament and ability to take on the duties of a judge (Munir, 2017).

FINAL SELECTION

The final selection depends on the cumulative performance of the candidate in the written test and the interview. Such an all-encompassing assessment is designed to ensure that those chosen have not only a sound knowledge of the law, but exhibit the characteristics required to apply justice dispassionately and effectively. While it intends to maintain meritocracy in court appointments, there are apprehensions about its overall transparency and standardization, due to which, it has been critically assessed and calls for more reforms have also been made.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Judicial appointments, particularly into certain positions, such as the Additional sessions judge (ASJ), have been widely researched in different jurisdictions, including Pakistan. Researchers have recognized multiple factors affecting the judicial selection process, including transparency, fairness, meritocracy, and political factor in politics. In Pakistan, it is imperative that appointments are based on merit and competency because of the significance of the judiciary to the rule of law. Nonetheless, previous research has identified multiple issues in the judicial selection process, such as the absence of standardized examination and the degree of subjectivity involved in assessing candidates (Mahmood, 2017).

Similarly, the Sindh province's ASJ candidates' exam is given a zero in the department's report for having no uniform assessment process, which candidates in cycles of the written exam claimed had varying degrees of difficulty. Second, although interviews have developed to assess candidate potential, the process itself is unregulated and subjective, presenting similar challenges around bias and favoritism. This leads some of the researches to put up a more rigorous evaluation process, outlining objective criterion and very specific yardsticks (Khan, & Ali, 2017).

Likewise, a missed opportunity has been that practical legal assessments have not been appropriately emphasized in systems of judicial selection like the ASJ examinations in Sindh. Various studies recommend the integrated examination should test examinees on real-life scenarios such as mock trials or case studies to check their decision-making and capabilities of applying legal knowledge in complex scenarios. Moreover, there is a growing international trend towards greater transparency and standardization of selection processes including for example making public assessment criteria, syllabi and past exam papers in order to instil public confidence in the appointive process to the judiciary (Awan, & Akhtar, 2016).

This sheds light on the areas that need to be improved in the ASJ examination process and in particular highlights that Sindh junior judges should be subjected to a more transparent, standardized and practical in nature examination routine. These existing studies pave the way for further exploration of the problems regarding the examination and also shed light on how the other jurisdictions have dealt with concurrent challenges (Jamil, 2017).

A number of studies suggest that the lack of transparent and publicly available information about the examination process, including the syllabus, marking schemes and criteria for selecting candidates, accounts for perceptions of unfairness and bias. This is a huge problem in the case of the Sindh Additional Sessions Judge exam, where candidates often do not know what they are being compared to. Others suggest that greater transparency in the process – such as the publication of examination designs, evaluation criteria, and the reasoning that led to final selection decisions – will go some way towards restoring public confidence (that candidates will be assessed solely by merit). Furthermore, international literature surrounding judicial appointments highlights the advantages of implementing a more transparent system. Studies conducted in India and the USA; for example, indicate that increasing public accessibility of data related to the evaluation process can substantially cut down on opportunities for nepotism and political involvement. Evidently these global best practices can be tapped to argue for reforms that would encourage greater transparency, meritocracy and accountability in the system of judicial selection in Sindh so that only individuals with the highest qualifications are appointed to such pivotal judicial and quasi-judicial roles (Hameed, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study follows a mixed-methods research design in order to provide a holistic and unbiased exploration of the examination process for the appointment of Additional Sessions Judges (ASJs) in Sindh. Qualitative and quantitative techniques work in concert to explore both the systemic structure and the experience of stakeholders (Khan, 2016)

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts mixed-method research design which is beneficial to possess comprehensive and balanced picture of the existing pattern of examination to appoint Additional Sessions Judges (ASJs) in Sindh. Combining qualitative and

quantitative techniques enriches our understanding of systemic structure and the experiences of stakeholders (Khan, 2016).

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Key informants directly involved in the ASJ examination process, affected stakeholders, or potential experts in the subject research constitute the study population. These include the legal practitioners, the recently participated former candidates for the ASJ examination, the judicial officers who have previously participated in the recruitment or assessment process and the members of the Sindh Judicial Service Commission. To ensure that the perspective is balanced, a specific sampling strategy has been devised. The sample consists of 40 recent candidates who took the ASJ examination, purposefully sampled to ensure both relevance and direct exposure to the process. It includes 20 legal professionals purposively sampled based on the convenience, availability and willing to participate. For informational perspectives on procedural and evaluative dimensions, 5 have been included using a snowball sampling technique, whereby the researcher has drawn on professional networks to identify and reach out to people with relevant knowledge. This adds to the diversity of the research, allowing a wide array of experiences and insights as an input for the analysis of the examination framework.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Both primary and secondary data sources will be used in order to gain a deeper understanding of the ASJ examination process. The main method that will be used to collect primary data information is through questionnaires and interviews. Structured questionnaires will be distributed to former candidates for the ASJ examination to elicit quantitative data regarding their perceptions, experiences and opinions of the examination process. The candidates and employers feedback will help identify patterns and trends. This will be supplemented by semi-structured interviews with judicial officers, legal academics and members of the Sindh Judicial Service Commission.

These interviews were conducted to gain qualitative insights into the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the current examination framework in addition to a deeper understanding of the system from a professional perspective. For secondary data, formal examination guidelines, previous examination papers, evaluation criteria, relevant legal provisions and policies will be reviewed. This will allow the results obtained from the primary data to be contextualized and to ensure that the study is ultimately grounded in a solid theoretical and legal foundation. Additionally, it will acquire insights from past research studies, journal articles, and legal commentaries to produce more generalizable observations on judicial recruitment processes. These different methods for data collection will be used together to create an overall picture of the ASJ examination system in Sindh.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Data will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to serve a complete and accurate summary of the outcomes. The statistical analysis for quantitative data will conduct frequency analysis and cross-tabulation to investigate the relationships among variables collected through the questionnaires. Examination Process through Tracing and Measuring Trends in Candidate Reactions and Experiences For analysis a statistical software will be used like SPSS or Excel which allow you to get comprehended analysis of a single set of a full data.

Thematic analysis will be performed for the qualitative data collected from interviews and open-ended responses. This method includes coding the data and uncovering the commonality of themes, patterns and issues presented in the participants narratives. Through the thematic analysis, it will allow the researcher to derive insight, overall strengths and weaknesses of the examination with potential improvement areas that can be garnered, hence able to go beyond numerical data. The combined use of these data analysis techniques will guarantee a more holistic and balanced interpretation of combinatory and descriptive data, which will allow us to extract a deeper understanding of the current examination structure in ASJ position in Sindh.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As this is a study involving human participants, ethical considerations have been put in place to ensure that all human participants are treated with respect and the integrity of the research process is upheld. Informed consent will also be obtained from all participants prior to study participation. This will involve clear and thorough conversation around the purpose of the research, the procedures, potential risks, and the fact that their participation is voluntary. You will be informed that your participation is purely voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Also, anonymity and confidentiality will be thoroughly guaranteed during the research process. Your results will be anonymised so that the individuals cannot be identified, and pseudonyms will be used as opposed to personal identifiers. Findings will only include either aggregate data or coded material in order to protect the privacy of participants. Such protocols are designed to be as rigorous as possible to preserve the integrity of research and protect the rights of all participants.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study does contain limitations that may restrict its scope and generalizability. 1- Internal documents related to the Sindh Judicial Service Commission, including its standard operating procedures, guidelines and evaluation criteria is likely to remain limited; hence, the official examination methods and evaluation metrics may be hard to come by. Failure to gain access to this kind of documentation may hinder the study's ability to consider the full range of policies that govern the ASJ selection process.

Second, it is based on self-reported data from participants, many of them in the legal profession or former candidates. This data can provide valuable insights, but there is a risk of bias in participants' responses. They might give socially desirable answers unintentionally or have subjective views that do not necessarily reflect the objective realities of the examination system. This bias may affect the precision of the results.

Finally, the results of this study might be limited to the province of Sindh and may not directly translate to the other provinces of Pakistan. Other regions may have differences in judicial systems and examination processes in terms of structure, policy, and practice, limiting the generalizability of the recommendations put forth. These should be considered as limitations when attempting to generalize the findings to areas beyond Sindh.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Survey Participants (n = 40)

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	24	60%
Female	16	40%
Age		
31-35 years	24	60%
36-40 years	8	20%
41-45 years	4	10%
46 years and above	4	10%
Experience Level		
1-3 years	16	40%
4-6 years	14	35%
7+ years	10	25%

Demographic characteristics of the 40 survey participants are summarized in this table. The participants included 60 % males (24) and 40 % females (16). The largest portion of the respondents (60%) was aged between 31-35 years, followed by 36-40 years, 41-46 years (10%), and above 46 years with 10%. In terms of professional experience: 40% had 1-3 years of work experience, 35% had 4-6 years of work experience and 25% reported having more than 7 years of work experience. These demographics have served to summarize the gender, age and professional experience of the candidates reflectively.

Table 2 Survey Responses: Perception of the Written Examination Process (n = 40)

Question: How would you rate the clarity of the written examination guidelines?	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very Clear	2	5%
Clear	18	45%
Somewhat Clear	14	35%
Not Clear	6	15%
Question: Do you feel that the written examination adequately tests your legal knowledge?	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	4	10%
Agree	20	50%
Disagree	12	30%
Strongly Disagree	4	10%

This table summarizes the participant's perception regarding the written examination process. For the clarity of the written examination guidelines, 45% of respondents rated them as Clear, 35% rated them Somewhat Clear and 15% rated Not Clear. Just 5% of respondents rated the guidelines as Very Clear. When it comes to how adequately the written

examination tests each participant's legal knowledge, 50% Agree that it properly assess their knowledge, while 30% Disagree, and 10% responding respectively Strongly Agree or Strongly Disagree. The overall picture is positive, showing that exam takers believe the examination is clear and a test of legal knowledge; however their opinions on effectiveness are concerning.

Table 3 Correlation of Candidate Performance and Interview Evaluation (n = 40)

Variable	r (Correlation Coefficient)
Written Exam Score & Interview Rating	0.72
Written Exam Score & Candidate Confidence	0.60
Interview Rating & Candidate Legal Knowledge	0.68

This demonstrates the correlation coefficients in the examination process between different performance variables. This means that we see a strong positive relationship between Written Exam Score and Interview Rating with a correlation coefficient of 0.72, i.e. as the Written exam score increases, we see the interview score rating increases too. Candidates who performed well on the written exam also had higher Candidate Confidence leading to a moderate positive correlation (0.60) between these two variables. Furthermore, for Interview Rating with Candidate Legal Knowledge, its correlation is equal to 0.68 which is a strong positive correlation indicating that candidates rated highly in interviews generally also have a strong knowledge of the law. Thus, these findings provide evidence that both the written exam and interview ratings are informative about candidates' general competence and readiness for the ASJ role.

Table 4 Key Themes from Interviews with Judicial Officers (n = 5)

Theme	Example Quote	Frequency (n)
Transparency Concerns	"There is a lack of transparency in the selection process, particularly in interviews."	3
Bias in Evaluation	"There are instances of bias, especially when certain candidates have connections within the judicial system."	2
Gaps in Assessment	"The written exam doesn't always test practical skills needed for the job."	2
Suggestions for Improvement	"We need more objective evaluation criteria, and better feedback mechanisms."	4

This table presents the common themes identified from the 5 judicial officer's interviewees. Transparency Concerns3 Noted lack of transparency during the interview process. Bias in Evaluation was identified by 2 interviewees, who noted that "some candidates are connected with the judicial system," which may affect the selection process. The theme Gaps in Assessment was also raised by 2 officers but one noted that "the written exam doesn't always test practical skills needed for the job." Lastly, Improvement Suggestions were offered by 4 contributors, who called for "more objective evaluation criteria, and better feedback mechanisms." This includes criticisms of assessment methods to date and reform for improved selection.

Table 5 Proposed Reforms Based on Stakeholder Feedback (n = 40)

Reform Proposal	Stakeholder Support (%)
Standardize Interview Criteria	80%
Increase Transparency in Selection Process	85%
Introduce Clearer Feedback Mechanisms	70%
Revise Written Examination to Focus on Practical Application	75%

The proposal which received the highest level of support (85%) was for Increase Transparency in the Selection Process. This will help to assure candidate's for the positions open, that the exams and interviews will be done through a fair, transparent and accountable processes. Standardizing Interview Criteria received the second-most support (80%), emphasizing the importance of a consistent and non-biased interview process. Revising the Written Examination to Focus on Practical Application received the highest support (75%) from stakeholders wishing to see changes that would ensure the exam measures legal skills applicable to practice. Confusing and frustrating, the concept of Introducing Clearer Feedback Mechanisms was the most positively received action taken at 70%. Many such reforms have been proposed over the past few years and they represent a wide consensus among the interested public as to what aspects of the selection process can be improved in terms of fairness and effectiveness.

FINDINGS

Some insights revealed by the findings of the study regarding the ASJ examination process currently in practice in Sindh are as follows: Our survey data shows that whilst the vast majority of participants found the Examination doctrine to be clear or somewhat clear, they qualified their responses with concerns around the doctrine's ability to adequately assess the legal knowledge of candidates. In addition, the correlation analysis reveals that written exam scores and interview ratings are sharply correlated with both question scores, further implicating that they are significant online indicator for prediction (Aslam, 2018).

Interviews with judicial officers highlight problems around transparency, bias in evaluations and gaps in assessment, with participants calling for more objective evaluation criteria and better feedback mechanisms. Feedback from stakeholders shows general support for proposed reforms, including enhancing transparency in the selection process, standardizing interview criteria, and reworking the written examination to emphasize practical skills. These findings reveal the necessity for reform to serve existing concerns and enhance the integrity and effectiveness of the ASJ selection process (Khan, 2015).

DISCUSSION

The inferences derived from this study can guide the administrators regarding the strengths and limitations of the existing ASJ examination process in Sindh. Most candidates consider the written examination rules to be relatively clear; however, the fact that a considerable number of candidates said they were somewhat clear or not at all clear shows that there is still room for improvement in terms of clarity and explanation. The strong associations seen between written exam scores, interview ratings and candidate confidence, imply a strong interrelatedness between the two components of the selection process but also suggest a questioning of the adequacy of the selection criteria (Ghulam, 2016).

Judicial Officers have also wondered whether bias in the evaluation process exists, and whether the assessment tests all skills necessary, including practical skills that happen in the area of law. The overwhelming support for proposed reforms — especially the demand for increased transparency and standardization of interview criteria — indicates that applicants are eager to make the selection process more fair and objective. Also, some of my fellow assessors suggested me to make written examination less theoretical and more practical, which I like as a good idea to make exam closer to actual ASJ practical skills. In conclusion, the process of constituting ASJ in Sindh should be: in-depth discussions on improving the credibility, fairness and effectiveness of the process (Ali, & Tanveer, 2018).

CURRICULUM MISMATCH

Due to the nature of the curriculum and preparation materials, which are often based on the educational standards of third-world law students, candidates do not go through an adequate level of training to decide the matters with such a high level of judicial craft that is required in our court system. The curriculum is not integrated into the real-life problems and complexities of the country's legal system, resulting in ill-equipped candidates for the judiciary (Saleem, 2015).

OUTDATED COURT SYSTEM

The court system of Pakistan especially in Sindh is in such a shape that it has the final lines of it become form of aghast. This is what happens when bar associations members who have 7 years or more in practice fail judicial exams. This reflects a disparity between the demands of the exam, and the experience of practicing law in Pakistan (Alam, & Akram, 2017).

POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND CORRUPTION

This has raised more questions about the judiciary exams and concerns that political affiliations can also affect the results and worse, corruption may also be involved in the exams. We are having to contend with new sonnets under duress and the feeling, or at least the perception, of a lack of transparency throughout the examination process that may inhibit confidence in both its integrity and effectiveness (Ahmed, 2016).

QUESTION PAPER SECURITY

Candidates are not allowed to keep their question papers after the exam. This makes it sound as if the body responsible for the tests may not feel secure about the openness and effectiveness of the process, worried that candidates can discover how to pass or reveal weaknesses in the system (Ali, 2017).

LOW PASSING RATES AND INEFFECTIVE TRAINING

The failure rate for the exam is very high, which suggests systemic problems in how the exam was designed and executed. While the exam is so prestigious that failing it is a bad sign, and a group of competent judges is a good sign for the integrity of the legal system. End-of-ninth-grade examination should be able to serve its purpose, but if the candidates who pass are not well prepared in their respective jobs in the judicial system, then this examination does not serve its purpose (Awan, & Akhtar, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study serves to identify key areas where improvements are needed in the ASJ examination process in Sindh. Concerns have been raised about the current system's transparency, bias, and the adequacy of the written examination. Time was the most important and results show that the written exam scores was strongly correlated with the interview ratings and the subjects right was also correlated with the candidate's appear as competent. That said, responses from judicial officers and others highlight the importance of establishing consistent interview metrics, enhancing transparency and changing the test to focus on applied skills. The criticism has landed, as there appears to be widespread agreement that there need to be reforms, such as the feedback systems being clearer and evaluations less subjective. Adding transparency, taking accountability and ethics and morals can help in overcoming these problems and thus lead to improving the fairness, effectiveness and transparency of Sindh ASJ selection process.

The candidates who had their eyes on the position of Additional Sessions Judge in Sindh, the examination process provides them a significant opportunity to contribute to the justice system that glowingly affects the whole province. The proposed reforms also address the challenges identified in order to increase transparency, fairness and effectiveness of the selection process, leading to a more competent and unbiased judiciary in Sindh.

The selection process of Sindh Additional Session Judge examination is conducted by the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sukkur, which has been facing multiple challenges in order to impart an effective selection and training mechanism for judicial officers. These challenges include curriculum mismatches, a failing and corrupted court system, and low passing rates. Reform measures need to be taken to ensure that examination of judiciary serves its purpose and qualified judges are produced who can uphold Pakistan's legal system in an efficient and effective manner. Each of these factors contributes to weaken the judiciary or impact the legal landscape in Sindh and beyond, rectifying with the measures can play a positive role in strengthening the judiciary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

REVIEW AND REVISE THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum should be customized to fit the legal problems facing Pakistan, with an emphasis on the practical and contextual point of views of the judges of the country. Enhancing case-based learning and increasing judicial decision-making exercises would give candidates a better foundation for the roles they will fill.

ADDRESS THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN PRACTICE AND EXAMINATION

The judiciary exam must be brought in line with reality of law practice in Pakistan. A mentorship system, in which more experienced lawyers work side by side with judicial exam test takers, might close that gap and provide some realistic on-the-job training.

ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The examination must be transparent and devoid of political manipulation or corruption. Independent oversight bodies should be set up to monitor the outcomes and processes to verify transparency. The evaluation process must have clear guidelines and standards, and the general process must be available for all candidates.

ALLOW CANDIDATES TO RETAIN QUESTION PAPERS

This mechanism will enhance the trust and transparency in the process if candidates are allowed to retain their question papers. It would promote learning and understanding of the exam's structure and content.

INCREASE THE PASSING PERCENTAGE AND IMPROVE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The judicial exam was meant to prepare fit and qualified candidates for service in the judiciary. Leverage this data to focus more on the areas where candidates struggle and enable them with resources (like mentorship and practical case study exercises) to improve their chances of passing.

IDENTIFIED CONCERNS

Several issues have been raised regarding the current examination process:

This is a major concern for the Sindh government as the current ASJ examination process is facing several queries that can make the system ineffectual and unfair. Moreover, there are inconsistent standards in the evaluation process, such as different levels of difficulty of papers and the subjectivity in evaluation, which can result in differential assessments in different cycles. Another point of grievance is that practical testing is limited and most of the examination is theoretical, with ample-minimal space for practical judicial skills that are very essential for the roles of a judge. Last but not least, the merit of a candidate is often understated in the opinion and interpretation of the interviewer which can be misleading as to what can potentially impact the final decision — bias. These concerns underscore the need for significant reforms to ensure that the examination process is more transparent, consistent and reflective of the practical demands of the judicial role.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

With those criticisms in mind, we offer several crucial reforms to ASJ examination process. So first, we need to make things a lot more transparent. To do that, make sure the official Sindh High Court website has all syllabi, model papers and assessment criteria so that all candidates have the same information regarding the process. The next step would be uniformity for the papers under examination and its systematic implementation over the different cycles of examination. Having a centralized system for papers would also maintain uniformity in terms of difficulty level and content, which says a lot about whether a paper matches others or not. In addition, more emphasis must be placed on practicality exercises such as mock trials or case studies that more accurately measure candidates' ability to apply legal concepts in real-world situations. Increase objectivity: To eliminate, or at least mitigate, bias in the selection process, some evaluative approaches should be introduced, like multiple-choice questions and structured interviews. Finally, developing a system of periodic review and feedback mechanism would also allow for continual improvement of the examination system through feedback from candidates, judges and other stakeholders, ensuring that the assessment system remains fair, efficient and well-aligned with the evolving trends within the legal field. These reforms, collectively, aim to introduce a holistic and purposeful approach for improving the ASJ selection process in Sindh, with an emphasis on making it fairer, transparent and more robust.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ahmed, R. (2016). *Transparency in judicial appointments in Pakistan: Challenges and solutions*. Lahore: Lahore Law Institute.
- [2] Alam, S., & Akram, A. (2017). *Improving judicial transparency in Pakistan: An analysis of reforms*. Pakistan Journal of Justice, 12(3), 72-90.
- [3] Ali, K., & Tanveer, A. (2018). *Judicial selection and meritocracy in Pakistan: A critical evaluation*. Journal of Legal Studies, 21(2), 99-115.
- [4] Ali, Z. (2017). *Judicial appointments in Pakistan: Enhancing transparency and accountability*. Karachi: National Law Publications.
- [5] Aslam, M. (2018). *Judicial Appointments in Pakistan: Enhancing Transparency and Accountability*. Karachi: National Law Publications.
- [6] Awan, M. N., & Akhtar, S. (2016). *Judicial Selection in Pakistan: A Study of the Role of Merit and Politics*. Lahore: Judicial Press.
- [7] Farooq, H. (2017). *Political influence and judicial independence in Pakistan*. Lahore: Legal Studies Institute.
- [8] Ghulam, N. (2016). *Judicial appointments: Exploring the role of qualifications and integrity in Pakistan*. Pakistan Law Journal, 31(3), 25-42.
- [9] Gupta, A., & Sharma, R. (2018). *Judicial selection systems: Insights from India and the U.S*. Global Journal of Law, 15(4), 239-258.
- [10] Hameed, M. (2016). *Judicial appointments and transparency in Pakistan: A critical review*. Pakistan Journal of Law and Justice, 23(2), 101-116.
- [11] Iqbal, Z., & Khan, T. (2017). *Judicial selection process: Impact of political and personal biases*. International Journal of Law, 19(1), 52-68.
- [12] Jamil, R. (2017). *Enhancing the integrity of judicial appointments in Pakistan: A study of current shortcomings*. Lahore: Pakistan Legal Reforms Forum.
- [13] Javed, M., & Akhtar, S. (2018). *Practical skills in judicial selection: A case study approach*. Karachi: Legal Journal Press.
- [14] Khan, H. (2015). *Transparency, fairness, and efficiency in the judicial selection process in Pakistan*. Islamabad: National Legal Press.
- [15] Khan, M. I. (2016). *Judicial reforms and the need for systemic change in Pakistan*. Lahore: Pakistan Legal Reforms Network.
- [16] Khan, S., & Ali, Z. (2017). *Challenges to transparency in judicial appointments in Pakistan*. Islamabad: Legal Reforms Forum.
- [17] Kundi, A., & Sultana, F. (2017). *Selection of judicial officers in Pakistan: A comparative analysis*. Islamabad Law Review, 10(1), 54-70.
- [18] Mahmood, H. (2017). *Judicial appointments in Pakistan: A study of current practices and recommendations for reform*. Lahore: Punjab Law University Press.
- [19] Munir, M. (2017). *Judiciary in Pakistan: Appointment, recruitment, promotion, retirement, removal, and dismissal of judges from service*. SSRN.
- [20] Noreen, F. (2018). *A critical review of judicial recruitment processes: Lessons for Pakistan*. Comparative International Law Journal, 12(5), 120-135.
- [21] Qureshi, T., & Nadeem, H. (2016). *Judicial independence and the role of merit in selection processes in Pakistan*. Karachi Law Review, 8(2), 143-156.
- [22] Rashid, M., & Sami, A. (2018). *Bias in the judicial selection process: A critical analysis*. Journal of Pakistan Legal Reforms, 14(1), 87-101.
- [23] Raza, M., & Khan, S. (2018). *The role of bias in judicial appointments in Pakistan*. Islamabad: Law and Politics Review.

- [24] Sabir, R. (2016). *The politics of judicial selection in Pakistan: Implications for judicial independence*. Law and Politics, 8(3), 89-101.
- [25] Saleem, M. (2015). *Pakistan's judiciary: Appointment, independence, and accountability*. Karachi: South Asian Legal Press.
- [26] Shafiq, M. S. (2015). *Judicial appointments in Pakistan: Transparency and challenges*. Lahore: Lahore University Press.
- [27] Shaheen, S. (2017). *Judicial recruitment and selection in South Asia: Lessons from Pakistan*. Comparative Judicial Studies, 14(3), 142-158.
- [28] Usman, S. (2018). *Examining the transparency of judicial appointments in Pakistan's legal system*. Journal of Law and Public Policy, 25(1), 34-50.
- [29] Yousaf, M. (2018). *Judicial recruitment and governance in Pakistan: The road ahead*. Pakistan Public Law Journal, 22(4), 179-198.
- [30] Zafar, M. (2017). *Reforming judicial appointments in Pakistan: An exploration of new ideas*. Journal of Pakistan Law, 12(4), 201-220.
- [31] Books,
- [32] Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui, *Aviation Law and Commercial Practices* (2013).
- [33] Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui, *Beyond Blue Skies* (2014).