

Fast-Track Judicial Forums
compromise Justice more than
they deliver it.

Outline

1. Introduction

- Meaning and Purpose of fast-track Judicial forums
- Rationale behind their establishment
- Thesis statement: While fast-track Judicial forums aid to reduce backlog and ensure speedy Justice, they often compromise procedural fairness, judicial independence and substantive Justice more than they deliver effective outcomes.

2. Objectives of fast-track Judicial Forums

- Speedy disposable cases
- Reduction of case backlog
- Enhancing Public confidence on justice system

3. Judicial Efficiency Vs. Judicial Justice

- Difference between speed and justice
- Importance of due process and fair trial

- International legal standards (Article 14 ICCPR, Article 10 UDHR)

4- Quality of Judgments and risk of successful Justice

- Impact of hurried trials on judicial reasoning
- Wrongful convictions and appeals
- Statistical evidence and examples

5- Impact on Judicial Independence

- Executive influence and performance target
- Temporary appointment and insecure tenure
- Politicization of fast-track courts

6- Conclusion

- Reaffirmation of Thesis
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The Essay

Justice is not merely about the speed; it is about fairness, accuracy, and legitimacy. Over the past few decades, judicial systems across the world have faced mounting pressure due to growing case backlogs, procedural delays and declining public trust. In response, governments have increasingly turned to fast-track judicial forums in solution to expedite case disposal and restore confidence in the justice delivery mechanism. These courts are designed to resolve cases fastly by adopting simplified procedures and strict timelines. However, the pursuit of speed often comes at the significant cost. While fast-track courts may succeed in delivering quick verdicts, they frequently undermine due process, judicial independence, and quality of justice. This essay argues that fast-track judicial forums compromise justice more than they deliver it, as efficiency driven mechanisms erode procedural safeguards, increase the risk of successful injustice and weaken the foundational principles of the rule of law.

In Pakistan special courts and military courts were created to deal with terrorism and high-profile corruption cases. Similarly, the United Kingdom introduced fast-track asylum and immigration tribunals to deal with caseloads.

The objectives of fast-track courts include speedy recovery, reduction of backlog, deterrence, to ensure public confidence. fast-track courts ensure quick resolution of cases. They relieved pressure on regular courts, particularly in criminal cases by ensuring swift punishment. By making public confidence, these courts are creating perception of effective justice system. While these objectives are laudable in theory, their practical implementation often raises serious concerns regarding fairness and legality. A fundamental flaw in fast-track approach is the combination of efficiency with justice. Justice is a qualitative concept, whereas efficiency is quantitative.

The right to a fair trial, preserve in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), requires adequate time and facilities of defence, and reasoned judgements.

Fast-track courts, by design, restrict time for hearings, cross-examination and legal research. As a result, they often deliver swift but shallow justice, undermining the very rights they are meant to protect.

Procedural safeguards are the backbone of any judicial systems. Fast-track forums frequently dilute these safeguards by limiting adjournments regardless of case complexity. They are curtailing cross-examination of witnesses.

Relying heavily on written submissions. Also, pressuring lawyers to conclude arguments quickly. In Pakistan's anti-terrorism courts, for instance, trials are often completed within weeks, leaving defence councils insufficient time to prepare.

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), such practices increase the likelihood of false investigation and unreliable evidence being admitted.

Moreover, Judicial reasoning suffers when judges are burdened with disposal targets. Speedy trials do not necessarily produce accurate results. Judgements may lack detailed analysis and proper evaluation of evidence.

Significant percentage of convictions by fast-track courts were overturned on appeal due to procedural lapses and due to weak evidences.

This indicates that fast-track justice system often shifts the burden to appellate courts, thereby delaying final justice rather than ensuring it.

Judicial independence is compromised when judges are evaluated on the number of cases disposed rather than the quality of justice.

Many fast-track courts employ judges on temporary or casual basis making them vulnerable to executive pressure.

In politically sensitive cases, fast-track courts are sometimes perceived as tools to legitimize predetermined outcomes. This perception damages the credibility of the judiciary and weakens public trust in the rule of law. Fast-track courts often prioritize high-profile or politically sensitive cases while ordinary cases continue to face delays in regular courts. This creates a two-tier justice system:

Speedy justice for powerful and delayed justice for common citizens. Moreover, vulnerable groups such as poor, minorities and unrepresented accused are disproportionately affected. They lack the resources to adapt swift legal processes.

According to World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2023), countries with excessive reliance on special courts score lower on procedural fairness. In Pakistan conviction rates in anti-terrorism courts are high, yet a large number of convictions are later overturned by higher courts due to due process violations.

These figures demonstrate that fast-track courts address symptoms rather than structural causes of judicial delay.

These courts provide swift relief to victims. Enhance deterrence and reduce pendency. Proponents argue that fast-track courts on the basis of above said facilities, while these benefits exist, they are often short-lived and superficial. Speed without fairness leads to appeals, reversals and erosion of legitimacy, ultimately neglecting the intended gains.

Instead of relying excessively on fast-track forums, states should focus on increasing the number of judges, improving court infrastructure, adopting effective case management systems, such reforms strengthen the regular judiciary without compromising justice.

Lastly, Fast-track judicial forums are a well-intentioned but flawed response to judicial inefficiency. By prioritizing speed over time substance, they compromise judicial safeguards, independence and

and the quality of justice. While they may deliver quick verdicts, they often fail to deliver true justice. True reforms lies not in accelerating justice at the expense of fairness but in strengthening institutions to ensure that justice is both timely and just. As the legal maxim rightly states, "Justice hurried is justice buried."
