

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FOOD SAFETY LAWS IN PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract

Food safety is a highly significant aspect of population health, as well as a factor of consumer protection and sustainable development. Lack of coordinated legal frameworks, ineffective enforcement frameworks, and ineffective institutional coordination which was largely enhanced in the aftermath of the 18th Constitutional Amendment that decentralized food related regulatory requirements to the provinces in Pakistan, has escalated the problem of insecure and contaminated food. It is also a critical review of the legal environment of food safety in Pakistan, analysis of the law and its application, and judicial interpretation concerning the protection of the health of the people. Adopting doctrinal and qualitative research methodology, the research paper will be founded on statutory research, case law review, policy documentations, media coverage, and academic literature to identify the structural and enforcement related shortcomings/lapses. The findings have revealed that although the provincial laws on the regulation of food safety are prevalent, the enforcement has not been uniform because of limited resources, overlapping jurisdiction, inefficient prosecution and absence of national food safety policy.

Safe food is mentioned in the constitution as a right to life, yet the use of the practice remains inadequate. This paper has established that the problems of food safety in Pakistan are multidimensional and require their intersection of laws, greater institutional coordination, greater capacity of enforcement and it is imperative to ensure that these problems are aligned with international food safety standards. The paper will offer practical legal and policy recommendations that will be used to enhance the food safety governance and protect the health of the Pakistan population.

Keywords: *Food Safety Laws; Public Health; Food Adulteration; Regulatory Framework; Enforcement Mechanisms; Consumer Protection.*

INTRODUCTION

Food safety is universally acknowledged as a key exposure to the most important of population health as well as a mandatory component of sustainable development, consumer security as well as economic stability. More than two hundred diseases are caused by unsafe food that contains harmful bacteria, chemicals or contaminants and can pose mild gastrointestinal diseases or life-threatening conditions globally (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). In well developed countries such as Pakistan, the food safety problem is particularly acute because of the low effectiveness of the legal framework, low rates of hygiene, low consumer awareness, and the poor unity of the legal frameworks that regulate food production and distribution (FAO, 2021). This is because food safety is not merely a question of the community's health but also the national and international commitments of the state to ensure that there is food safety.

In Pakistan, there is an ongoing increase of foodborne infections, food adulteration and distribution of foodstuffs of inferior quality in the local markets, restaurants and food processing facilities (Dawn News, 2024). It is often reported that there is contaminated milk, unhygienic street food, unsafe packaged snacks, and the misuse of dangerous chemicals in food substances, which is life-threatening to human health (Hanif, 2021). Such problems demonstrate gaps in the system of food safety regulations in Pakistan and provoke severe doubts about the efficacy of the current food safety regulations and food safety organizations (United Nations Pakistan, 2025). Legally, food safety regulation in Pakistan is decentralized which is especially

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the case following the 18th Constitutional Amendment that had decentralized health-related issues to the provinces. This has led to establishment of various food authorities in different provinces, some of which are: the Punjab Food Authority, Sindh Food Authority, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority and Balochistan Food Authority (Punjab Food Authority, n.d.). At the federal level, a body was established to control the safety of food imported and exported to and from the country; the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA). Although such a multi-tiered structure is designed to enhance regulation, it has led to the situation of overlapping jurisdiction, unequal standards, and a lack of coordination between federalistic and provincial authorities (Awan and Fatima, 2023).

Although these laws and institutions are in place, they are not effectively enforced and this is one of the greatest challenges. The main constraints that affect food safety authorities include a lack of funding, lack of qualified inspectors, political interference, and the poor systems of monitoring. In addition, food safety laws impose fines that are often not enough to prevent infractions, and prosecution actions are also slow and unsuccessful, as they do not stop violators (Hanif, 2021). The awareness of civil society about the rights of food safety and the legal remedies is also small and the accountability mechanisms are only weakened.

The focus of international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is on the so-called farm-to-fork approach, which presupposes the regulation of the whole food chain, including the production of agricultural products, and the final consumption (FAO, 2021). Nevertheless, Pakistan does not have a single national food safety policy, which incorporates all the food chain stages within a consistent legal and institutional framework (Business Recorder, 2025). This lack of effectiveness compromises with the fact that Pakistan is able to effectively defend the health of the people and adhere to international food safety standards, especially in the global trade environment.

In this respect, the food safety legislations in Pakistan should be critically analyzed with the view of focusing on their suitability, implementation issues, and compatibility with the international best

practices. The study will assess the current legal framework of food safety in Pakistan and assess the gaps in the law and its enforcement and come up with realistic legal and policy-based recommendations. In this way, the study aims at making contributions to the current discussion of food safety regulation and offering advice on how legal means can be advanced to provide consumers in Pakistan with safe, hygienic and quality food.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1. What is the legal framework governing food safety in Pakistan, and how has it evolved after the 18th Constitutional Amendment?*
- 2. What are the major legal and institutional challenges in the implementation and enforcement of food safety laws in Pakistan?*
- 3. How effective are Pakistan's food safety laws in protecting public health and consumer rights?*
- 4. What legal and policy reforms can be recommended to strengthen food safety regulation in Pakistan?*

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The problem of food safety in Pakistan is examined by various researchers in different aspects. These analyses demonstrate that there are issues of inconsistency in the control and regulation of food, awareness, acts of enforcement, and application of policies. To begin with, a recent research that was carried out in Faisalabad was based on food safety behaviors concerning street food vendors. The study revealed that the food safety laws and regulations were less known to most of the vendors with approximately 72.5% not having any idea of what the legal requirements were. The research also documented inadequate hygiene practices including the use of gloves and proper cleaning and the researchers stressed the significance of more training and frequent inspection of food authorities in order to increase compliance and establish less health risk. (Ali et al., 2024). Also critically evaluate the laws concerning food safety in Pakistan in the context of international regulations, examples include, but are not limited to, the International Health Regulations 2005 and the Codex Alimentarius and it is important to note that budgetary constraints and unequal legislation across the provinces are some of the reasons why effective implementation and adherence to the international standards are not possible. Individual

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regulatory frameworks at federal and provincial levels are the source of the confusion and weakening of enforcement mechanisms, which is why their work recommends some harmonization of rules to uphold domestic safety as well as the international trade standards (Awan and Fatima 2023). Policy-based studies also point to the structural flaws of the Pakistani regulatory framework: evaluate food safety improvement strategies in Punjab and find out loopholes in the contemporary inspection procedures, out-of-date regulations, and the lack of adjustive policies to deal with new threats. They propose active regulatory action that would be founded on globalized best practices, technological advancement, and consultation with stakeholders to reinforce food safety (Dogar, & Yaqoob, S. 2023). In addition to the institutional and procedural difficulties, more general survey of legal frameworks of food and nutrition security reveals a multiplicity of actors and laws in the food regulatory space in Pakistan: look at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR), the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), and provincial food authorities, where even with recent reforms (e.g. new regulatory body floated) there are still gaps in coordination and enforcement constraints. Their analysis indicates as well that the legislative evolution has not been able to follow the complexity of the modern day food safety requirements (Afzal et al. 2025). Moreover, when a national policy debate is concerned, it is indicated that Pakistan does not have a coherent food safety policy that can be used to control the chain of food across its production and consumption. A press release by the Government before the Senate Standing Committee of 1st May 2003 confirms that lack of total national policy on food safety is still a formidable limitation and that there is no actual difference between the intent of the legislation and actual achievement of food safety goals. Lastly, existing empirical research findings on food safety outcomes in the supply chain also support the regulatory literature in that inappropriate hygiene practices and weak quality assurance are underlying factors to foodborne risks. Notes to critical control points within the supply chain in which enhanced monitoring and standardized procedures may have alleviated food safety hazards that point to the viability of legislative and enforcement

inadequacies. (Hassan et al. 2023)

RESEARCH GAP:

Although there has been a lot of work done on food safety in Pakistan, there are a number of gaps in the research that should be filled through further research. The literature mainly captured existing gaps that review the deficiencies applied in practice: awareness of vendors, hygiene, and supply chain monitoring (Ali et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2023). In as much as these studies focus on the problem of compliance at the ground level, the systemic and legal aspects of food safety regulation, such as overlapping provincial and federal jurisdictions, legislative fragmentation, and institutional constraints to capacity, are not adequately addressed (Awan and Fatima, 2023; Dogar and Yaqoob, 2023). Besides, as an example, in contrast to policy-oriented research, which states structural flaws and the necessity of harmonising standards leads to the identification of the problem, there is little empirical data on the effectiveness of the existing laws to protect the health of the population, especially in rural regions and amongst small-scale food enterprises (Afzal et al., 2025). The effect of the 18th Constitutional Amendment on regulatory consistency and the application of uniform standards between the provinces is under researched and there is lack of insight into how the legal decentralization influences the concrete food safety results (Awan & Fatima, 2023). The next major point of difference is a lack of a national food safety policy. Despite acknowledging this gap in the discussions of the Senate committees and government reports, however few studies examine critically how this policy gap manifests in the creation of regulatory inefficiencies, poor monitoring mechanisms and poor public protection (Business Recorder, 2025). Lastly, international laws and policies such as the Codex Alimentarius and International Health Regulations 2005 are the factors used to direct food safety management, but the amount of research on how Pakistan complies with the guidelines remains limited, especially in terms of her legal conformance, institutionalization, and implementation of technological and stakeholder-focused strategies to enhance adherence (Awan and Fatima, 2023; Dogar and Yaqoob, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

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The study of the issues of food safety laws, their enforcement and policy such as the realization of the law on food safety in Pakistan requires a doctrinal which is apt since the issues under consideration are legal in nature. The research uses secondary resources of law and literature mostly to critically examine the constraints and success of the current legislation. The methods of data collection and analysis to be used in the research include combination of case laws, statutory provisions, newspaper articles, and past research papers. Firstly, case laws offer practice based information on the interpretation and application of food safety laws by the courts, and depict the attitude of the courts on the violations, penalties and safeguarding the people. Such judicial cases contribute to defining difficulties in the enforcement procedure and restrictions of the legislation that exists. Second, those parts and articles of federal and provincial legislation (Punjab Food Authority Act, 2011), federal food regulations, and other appropriate acts concerning food rights and other provisions on the subject of food safety are examined to get aware of the legal provisions, authority delegations, and legal provisions. Thirdly, newspaper articles are used as the recent source to draw attention to the existing food safety concerns, lack of enforcement, and discontent among the citizens. They are also giving evidence of real-life issues and infringements that are yet to be tackled in official records or legal rulings. Lastly, the examination of past research papers and scholarly literature is done to get a sense of what has been discovered in the past, pinpoint on issues that have been faced previously, and what gaps exist in the current amount of knowledge. These approaches, in combination, can enable a complex and balanced consideration of legal, administrative, and social aspects of food safety in Pakistan.

The data gathered under such scenarios is carefully examined, and critical analysis with a view to revealing the shortcomings in logic of legislation, loopholes in the enforced practices in a given institution, institutional issues and policy and legal areas of improvement. Such methodology ensures that the research is anchored on both the law and evidence, which allow the provision of practical recommendations to ameliorate food safety governance and the people's health protection.

DISCUSSION:

1. Statutory Framework and Legal Authority of Food Safety Laws in Pakistan

A doctrinal review of the food safety regime of Pakistan shows that the laws of food safety are largely controlled by provincial laws especially after the 18th Constitutional Amendment that devolved the issue of health and food to the provinces. To this, individual food safety laws were passed by all provinces (such as Punjab Food Authority Act, 2011, Sindh Food Authority Act, 2016). Taken together, these statutes create the legal framework of the control of food standards, hygiene, and safeguarding the health of the population on the provincial level.

Provincial food authorities under these laws are endowed with a wide regulatory and enforcement jurisdiction. Like, Section 13(a) of the Punjab Food Authority Act, 2011 authorizes food safety officers to enter and take samples of any food or any substance that appears to be meant for sale as food, and section 13(c) states “Enter or seal any place where the officer believes food is being prepared, preserved, packaged, stored, transported, distributed, or sold. The officer may check the food and also inspect anything used, or that can be used, for these purposes. Similarly According to Section 22(1): Anyone who sells or tries to sell food that is adulterated or does not follow this law, its rules, or regulations can be punished with imprisonment of 1 to 6 months and a fine of 100,000 to 1,000,000 rupees. The same rules of food safety can be observed in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which demonstrates that the law has a clear idea of preventing the crime related to food. Although these laws will provide strong powers to the authorities, unfortunately, studies indicate that they are still weak and only partially effective in various provinces. According to experts, regulations are not very effective as there are no standardized sets of food safety requirements and the provincial governments lack co-ordination between each other (Awan & Fatima, 2023). The laws, inspection styles and penalties in every province vary and this leads to inconsistent enforcement and protection of the consumers in the country. Food safety regulations at the federal level largely include international trade. The National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA) has the role of ensuring that imports and exports are of

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international standards as far as food safety is concerned. Pakistan however lacks a robust federal legislation on domestic food safety, which creates loopholes and overlapping jurisdiction between the federal and provincial authorities. Such a minimal role of the federal government minimizes central control and complicates the control of food safety threats in the country (Afzal et al., 2025). Due to several provincial legislations and insignificant federal participation, Pakistan has a decentralized yet divided food safety system. Although the idea of giving powers to provinces was supposed to make the system more efficient and more accountable, the reality is that this has turned the system into being less coordinated and consistent. Consequently, food safety enforcement is not consistent, institutions are not strong, and there is no balance between the legislation, which undermines the protection of the general health of the population.

2. Judicial Interpretation and Case Law Analysis

The case law analysis shows that the Pakistan courts recognize that the state has the constitutional responsibility of safeguarding people against illnesses. There is quite limited food safety specific litigation, although more extensive rules in the field of public health address the issue of state responsibility.

*In the case of **Iftikhar Ahmad alias Billu v. The State**, the Lahore High Court believed that the sale of adulterated food is a very serious crime as it can pose a threat to the lives of people. The Court refused the pre-arrest bail and made no mistake that it was not a trifle crime. Contrary to the previous case, as it has been demonstrated, food adulteration is not a minor or technical violation, but a very serious one, which can be potentially dangerous to human health. It also highlights the role of the State and food authorities in ensuring that the food safety laws are well enforced to protect the people. Similarly **Shehla Zia v. Water and Power Development Authority**, The Supreme Court indicated that Article 9 of the Constitution is not only right to life, but it also includes healthy and safe environment. This case shows that anything that would cause a health risk would be in violation of this right. This can be applied in food safety as food contaminated or not safe may cause the ruin of human health. As illustrated in the case, the State has its role of controlling and stopping any activity that will*

cause harm to the health of the people, including unsafe food practices. Furthermore, in **Ch. Riaz Ahmad Yazdani v. Federation of Pakistan**, Lahore High Court, took the case of a contaminated milk being sold to the people to consume it and understood that this food is a great killer or dangerous and health hazard to the human beings. The case also states that the State authorities bear the responsibility of not distributing harmful food, and instituting food laws in order to maintain the health of the citizens. Moreover, in **Mauji v. The State**, The conviction to sell adulterated milk was upheld by the Lahore High court of law under the provisions of the pure food ordinance, 1960 and food adulteration was viewed as a serious crime. The Court overruled the technical reasons and brought out the fact that milk is essential foodstuff that people consume on a grand scale and most significantly, the vulnerable groups such as children and patients. The decision shows that it is not a minor violation of regulation but it is a matter of health to the citizens. The Court imposed harsh punishment to show the penalties of effective food safety laws implementation and the responsibility of the government to protect the health of citizens. Additionally, in **Chief Secretary to the Government of East Pakistan v. Muhammad Gulzar Hussain and another**, the Supreme Court accepted that the State had a role to play in regulating the flow and sale of food to the greater good of the people. The Court considered food as a very essential need of human life and that the government ought to control the food to ensure that it is availed fairly to the citizens. Although the case is not directly related to the problems of food safety and health risks, it supports the principle that the State can legally regulate the matters related to the food to achieve the safety of the population. Additionally, in **Cantonment Board, Peshawar v. District Sanitary and Food Inspector**, the Supreme Court discussed the use of the food safety legislation in the cantonment areas and resolved an issue of provincial versus federal food legislation. The Court held that the competent authority could enforce the food safety regulations in compliance with the statute in place only by the establishment of the clear jurisdiction in the food control problems. This judgment demonstrates that an efficient food safety enforcement is the key to proper legal power and cooperation among the regulatory bodies. Using the case, one can state that food safety regulation could be compromised either by confusion or by overlapping of enforcement and, thus, it will affect the population in general.

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Moreover, *Municipal Corporation of Delhi v. New Kwaliti Sweet House*, the Supreme Court of India dealt in the sale of adulterated food according to the food adulteration laws. The Court also held that minor procedural defects like slightly less of the sample of the food sent to be analyzed should not be used to exclude the intent of the food safety laws as long as the sample sent was substantial enough to be tested. This case highlights that food safety laws are supposed to be interpreted in a reasonable manner to ensure that the health of the citizens remains unaffected by the Although, it is a foreign case law, but it has the convincing support of the harsh and purposive view of food adulteration to safeguard the health of the consumers. In addition, *United Sugar Mills Ltd. v. District Magistrate, Sukkur*, In this case the Sindh High Court made it clear that the government could regulate the supply and movements of food related but only when there was a good reason that is enshrined in law. The Court held that the emergency powers given under section 144 cannot be utilized arbitrarily and should be linked to the necessity to ensure the security of the order of people, health or safety within concerned ground. Although the case is not supportive of food safety or food adulteration, it still shows that food control must be legal. This adds to the fact that proper legal mandate is needed to regulate food and safeguard the interest of individuals. Moreover, in *Mrs. Anjum Irfan v. Lahore Development Authority*, Lahore High court held that environmental pollution, food, water, and air pollution, directly affect human health and quality of life that are assured in Article 9 of the Constitution. The Court observed that failure of the governmental authorities to execute their statutory roles had resulted to gross health risks on the citizens.

3. Enforcement Practices and Institutional Challenges

The success of food safety laws in Pakistan is primarily related to the enforcement practice and institutional capability. Even though the provincial level has robust statutory frameworks, their implementation is nevertheless inconsistent and weak as it is criticized by policy reports and the media coverage.

In June 2025, the inspections of Multan, Vehari and Khanewal and other food units led to the seizure of 115 litres of adulterated milk, expired foodstuff and contaminated spices by the law enforcement as a result of the

inspections. Moreover Data as given through the enforcement statistics of the PFA also prove the intensity of enforcement and the perpetuating problems. There were hundreds of inspections, hundreds of millions of rupees in fines, the sealing and adulteration of thousands of units of food preparations, including milk, oil, drinks and spices were disposed. Similarly, the government of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority reports that there were huge processes when hundreds of thousands of samples of food were tested, thousands of poor results were detected, and many food facilities had been informed about the improvements or shut down. These enforcement statistics, though, put uniformity and deterring effect of food safety laws in question. Such a large percentage of fines is insignificant compared with the risk to the health of the population associated with harmful food products, and large manufacturers and large food corporations do not tend to receive corresponding fines because of a weak control and political influence. It is listed in the media and consumer reports on regular occasions of poisoned milk that is loaded with harmful chemicals like detergent, salt among others (that raised a red flag in the public health) and that were reported in over 55 percent of the tested samples in Karachi and the crack down by the police and food authority followed although there has been a systematic prevalence of such contamination.

The way the food safety laws are enforced reflects on bigger problems in the system in operation. The food safety officials lack resources, adequate testing laboratories, administrative challenges, and there is a hard time tracking the food facilities on a regular basis and punishing the violators. They also experience lengthy court battle, inefficiency in prosecution and lack of proper coordination of agencies to reduce the overall accountability. Because of this it has resulted in even though there are sometimes these enforcement drives and the media may show that authorities are attempting to address the issue of food safety, it also proves that there are some gaps, selective emitting and ineffective punishments. This would cripple the validity of food safety institutions and promote further risks to the health of individuals.

4. Synthesis of Academic and Empirical Findings

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A comprehensive implication of various academic literature and empirical data reveals that the food safety issues in Pakistan are not only in the sphere of the operational and behavioral weaknesses but also in the structural and legal weaknesses themselves. Even though empirical research confirms that there are general breaches of hygiene and lack of compliance with hygiene through food producers and vendors, legal and policy studies have shown that weak regulatory systems, inadequate enforcement, and institutional failures are the underlying factors that facilitate these evils.

As an example, the qualitative study by Sultan, Noman, and Raza (2025) demonstrates that the current food law regulation in Pakistan has a high number of weaknesses, namely, the decentralization of the power among many administrative bodies, the archaic system or insufficient training of food handlers training, the lack of proper coordination between the federal and provincial governments. The authors assert that the structural weaknesses have a direct impact of derailing sound food safety governance and that they appear as additional risks to the health of the people.

In addition to it, The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies underlines that the issue of enforcement is not limited only to the statutory power, but to the judicial and administrative one as well. The issue on the matter specifically is that, there is no workaround to prosecute food safety violations timely, unless they have specialized courts that deal with food safety, and in most cases there is the delay in legal proceedings. The other aspect that the research indicates is the fact that the provincial governments such as Punjab Food Authority increase their inspections and fines but they are not able to do it because of the bottlenecks of the judicial system and insufficient institutional capacity.

Along with legal and governance research, interdisciplinary research, such as the one conducted by Rehman et al. (2023) about food and drug safety management, contribute to the demonstration of the conclusion that the main factors which influence the effectiveness of food safety in Pakistan are poor regulatory frameworks, corruption, lack of resources, and ignorance of people. Although this research study addresses the matter of food safety as well as drug safety its identification of systemic challenges is

of immense use in the interpretation of food safety enforcement issues.

All these academic and practical sources confirm the fact that the problem of food safety in Pakistan is multi-dimensional. The empirical research indicates behavioural and compliance failures at the vendor level, legal and policy research indicates structural, institutional and regulatory roadblocks that are deep in the structure that renders the implementation of food safety laws consistent. This synthesis justifies the argument that a strategy of providing better food safety governance in Pakistan must be grounded on the basis of legal change, institutional adjustment, capacity development and international best practices, rather than unilateral enforcement actions.

FINDINGS:

The statutory analysis, judicial decisions, enforcement practice, and empirical literature analysis all yield some deep results regarding the condition of the food safety regulation in Pakistan. These findings are put together in line with research questions of the prescribed research.

- 1. The food safety regulatory system of Pakistan is highly disintegrated; primarily due to the 18th Constitutional Amendment which has decentralized health and food related affairs to the provinces. The provincial legislatures have vested in the provincial food authorities the powers of regulatory authority and enforcement by provincial laws such as Punjab food Authority Act, 2011 and Sindh food authority act, 2016. This is because such laws allow inspection of food facilities, sample taking, prohibition of unsafe food, and fines and imprisonment of the culprits (Section 13 and Section 22) No matter how powerful these authorities are, the absence of a central federal legislation on domestic food safety results in regulatory gaps and jurisdiction overlaps among the provincial and federal authorities including National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA) that regulates the importation and exportation of food primarily (Afzal et al., 2025). This kind of fragmentation is translated to dissimilar protection to consumers and lack of coordination across the country (Awan and Fatima, 2023). The decentralized system of food safety in Pakistan though with a purpose of empowering the provinces has resulted to lack of consistency, disunity*

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- in the control and loopholes in regulation that undermines uniform implementation of food safety.*
- 2. The judicial review of the cases over food safety proves the fact that the courts recognize that it is constitutional responsibility of the courts to safeguard the well being of the society. An example of such a case is that of Iftikhar Ahmad alias Billu v. The State, Shehla Zia v. Water and Power Development Authority, and Ch. Riaz Ahmad Yazdani vs Federation of Pakistan emphasize that the right to life (Article 9) is to be followed by the right to healthy environment and safe food. Food adulteration has been given a serious consideration by courts and it has struck out technical objections and has enhanced the power of State in preventing harm to the general health of the people. However, the example of the judicial support in the case law also demonstrates that it is not enough. Lags in the process, the lack of scientific arguments, and a limited number of prosecutions decrease the pragmatic impact of court decisions to the improvement of food safety enforcement (Hanif, 2021).*
 - 3. Empirical studies indicate that food safety laws are misplaced and ineffective. Adulterated food has been confiscated by provincial authorities such as the Punjab Food Authority and the Khyber Pakhtunkhaw Food Safety and Halal Food Authority and non-conforming units have been closed down and fined. However, these measures are typically discriminatory, targeting small suppliers and sparing big manufacturers any punishment due to laxity of rules and regulations and the power of political influence (Dawn News, 2024; Business Recorder, 2025). Institutional issues also increase the lack of enforcement. Insufficient funding, the absence of sufficiently equipped laboratories, and the absence of trained and qualified inspectors, as well as the inability of the authorities to cooperate with other agencies, restrict the abilities of the authorities to evaluate the food safety status on a regular basis. In addition, bad prosecution systems and slow legal measures also reduce the accountability of food safety laws and undermine its deterrent power (Sultan, Noman and Raza, 2025; Rehman et al., 2023). The food safety laws in Pakistan are neither well-enforced,*

nor well-resourced, nor well-institutionalized, and this lowers the level of protection of the population, as well as reputation of food safety bodies.

- 4. The fact that the health of individuals is still being risked by contaminated food is supported by the empirical studies and media reports. There have been numerous incidences of milk, spoiled spice, unhealthy packed snacks, and cancerous chemicals observed during food products inspection. To illustrate, more than fifty percent of milk samples tested in Karachi were found to be polluted, which proves the current threat to the population and the ineffectiveness of the enforcement (Dawn News, 2024). Even legal control and frequent inspections there exist high risks of foodborne contaminations due to the fact that enforcement is less than perfect, penalties are not chosen randomly and non-adherence of food vendors and manufacturers is massive even with legal regulation.*
- 5. Overall Synthesis: Including laws, court cases, reports and research studies in one, one would find that the issues of food safety in Pakistan are caused by many reasons, which include legal, weak institutions, poor enforcement and behaviour of people. The holistic approach to food safety should be considered in Pakistan and this means revising the legislation, improving the law enforcement system, boosting the integration of government actions, creating awareness among the population and complying with international standards.*

RECOMMENDATION:

According to the discussion of the statutory framework of Pakistan, judicial interpretations, and enforcement practices, and judicial practice, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance the food safety governance in Pakistan:

1. Legal and Regulatory Reform:

- Standardize provincial food safety laws to establish similar standards of inspection, sampling, penalties, and prosecutions in all provinces. This will eliminate confusion and overlapping of authority as well as assure uniform protection of the consumers.*
- Implement a federal law of food safety of domestic production,*

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distribution and consumption. This law must supplement provincial laws and provide centralized food safety policy in the country.

- *Revise and amend old legislation or laws such as Punjab Food Authority Act, 2011 and Sindh Food Authority Act, 2016 to include new food safety standards, new technological ways of detection and even severe punishments to contravention.*

2. Strengthening Enforcement Mechanisms:

- *Support provincial food authorities in terms of budgetary resources to enhance inspection ability, laboratory testing and monitoring.*
- *Carry out frequent training of food inspectors, enforcement officers, and judicial officers in order to enhance their detection, analysis, and prosecution skills with regards to food safety violations.*
- *High-risk food, including milk, street food, and processed food, should be prioritized to conduct inspections using a modern testing method to determine adulteration and contamination in food.*

3. Institutional Coordination:

- *Establish an institution to facilitate the collaboration between the federal and provincial governments, harmonize the enforcement process, and provide uniform surveillance.*
- *Increase cooperation between the ministry of national food security and provincial food authorities of the government, Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and the local government bodies in order to harmonize regulation.*

4. Judicial and Legal Support:

- *Specialized Food Safety Courts: It is worth considering how to make food safety or environmental health courts to fast expedite prosecution, minimize delays, and provide specialized judicial expertise in the handling of cases.*
- *Continuously implement prescribed punishments on violators, such as giant or large-scale food business, as a preventive measure and to maintain responsibility.*

CONCLUSION:

This research indicates that Pakistan still has a poor food safety despite

the existence of the good laws at the provincial level. The poor coordination, low enforcement and low institutional capacity are the major issues. Following the 18th Constitutional Amendment, food safety was devolved to the provinces. This produced overlapping jurisdiction, dissimilar criteria in every province, and an uneven protection to consumers nationally. Though provincial food authorities have the legal authority to inspect food, act against unsafe food and punish the perpetrators of such food, the authority is not exercised properly. This is primarily attributed to shortage of resources, inadequate laboratory, political influence and weak legal prosecution against offenders. In Pakistan, safe food is considered by the courts to be a constitutional right to life and healthy environment. Court support however has not been sufficient to prevent violations due to delays and weak enforcement. Reports and studies indicate that food adulteration continues to be prevalent, the small vendors are usually the ones who are scrutinized, and the large food companies are never made responsible. The paper finds out that food safety issues in Pakistan are not only practical challenges but are also closely linked to institutional and legal gaps. To address such issues, Pakistan requires enhanced inter-provincial coordination, national food safety framework, enhanced enforcement, improved institutional capacity and compatibility with international food safety standards. In the absence of these reforms, food safety will still threaten the health of people and decrease consumer trust or confidence.



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