

**The Future of Courts: Integrating ODR into Formal Judicial Systems of Pakistan**

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**Received:** 21-10-2025

**Revised:** 10-11-2025

**Accepted:** 23-11-2025

**Published:** 08-12-2025

## ABSTRACT

*This rapid digitalization of the world economies has treated the world of dispute resolution significantly and now the judicial systems are demanded to employ new mechanisms that offer efficiency, availability, and impartiality. ODR (Online Dispute Resolution) that has emerged as the extension of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has been identified to be the effective method of dispute resolution in a speedy and less expensive as well as a technology-based manner. This paper expands on the original research premises of current research on ODR in e-commerce with special reference to comparative studies between Pakistan and the developed jurisdictions to investigate the integration of ODR into the formal judicial system of Pakistan. Whereas ODR has been effectively institutionalized in some countries such as the United Kingdom by using formal legal frameworks and computerized court systems, its adoption in Pakistan is haphazard and occasional. The current legal framework, though favorable to electronic transactions, does not have a broad structure of entrenching ODR into official courts. This paper critically analyses the prospects of introducing ODR in the Pakistani judicial system in order to overcome the issues of case backlog, delay, expensive litigation process and poor access to justice. This paper has presented the advantages, issues, and opportunities of ODR in Pakistan using a doctrinal and comparative research approach. It also suggests strategic changes such as legislation creation, institutional capacity development and technological integration to convert the traditional courts into hybrid cyber justice. The paper has found that incorporating ODR in the formal judicial systems is not only an alternative but a must in the provision of efficient delivery of justice in the changing digital age in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), Digital Justice, E-Courts, Judicial Digitalization, Access to Justice, Legal Technology (LegalTech), Pakistan Judicial System

## INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is witnessing a major shift in how justice is administered, which is caused by the fast development of digital technology and the growing sophistication of the contemporary disputes. The traditional court systems which have been viewed as the major dispute resolution mechanism are now being challenged as never before by a huge case backlog, procrastination of the process, high litigation costs and the inaccessibility of the general population. These have been especially evident in developing nations like Pakistan where the judiciary is finding it hard to administer justice in time hence weakening the trust of the people on the courts and the rule of law [1].

The appearance of the digital economy has only complicated the scenery of dispute resolution. The boom of e-commerce, online service, and computer-based interaction has resulted in a multiplication of low value and considerable volume disputes e.g. consumer grievances, payment issues, and contractual disputes. The conventional litigation processes cannot effectively manage such disputes because of their formalistic processes, territorial restrictions, and resources [2]. Consequently, the demand to have new, technology-based solutions that can supplement or even revolutionize traditional judicial procedures is on the increase.

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) is one of the solutions to all these dilemmas. ODR is the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) to resolve disputes through the use of negotiation, mediation, and arbitration via computers. It is a development of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which spreads its principles to the virtual space to make them more accessible, efficient, and cost-effective [3]. ODR provides the ability to overcome geographical limitations and conduct asynchronous communication, which means that parties involved in a dispute can solve the problem quickly without the necessity of appearing in court, which saves time and money [4].

ODR has become highly popular globally as a feasible dispute resolution mechanism especially in e-commerce and international transactions. Pilot projects on the use of ODR by private platforms like eBay and PayPal proved its scalability and usefulness in settling millions of cases each year using automated and semi-automated platforms [5]. These advances underscored the possible efficiency of ODR in addressing large volume disputes, opening the way to its implementation in public structures and the judicial system.

ODR has been gradually integrated into institutionalized legal systems in developed countries particularly in the United Kingdom. UK Civil Justice Council has played a major role in advancing the establishment of the online courts especially in instances where the miniature of civil claims is minimal and there is a need to have more available and accessible justice system [6]. Besides, initiatives such as the Her Majesty Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) Reform Programme have tried to computerize the court process, permit online filing of trials, video trials, and statistical handling of cases [7]. The direction through which these reforms are made reflects a greater shift towards modernization of the justice systems in the sense that it incorporates the use of digital technologies.

Furthermore, the Regulation (EU) No 524/2013, Online Dispute Resolution of Consumer Disputes established a centralized ODR system, imposing on business the duty of disclosing the presence of ODR system to the consumers [8]. Although the United Kingdom has not been a part of the EU since Brexit, it has been active in its creation and growth of its ODR initiatives and has a long-term interest in digital justice. UK model is used to explain how ODR can by institutional means be made part of formal legal systems without losing procedural fairness, any transparency and any enforceability [9].

Pakistan is on the other hand at the early stages of ODR. Despite the great efforts the country has put in controlling electronic transactions through acts such as the Electronic Transactions Ordinance 2002 and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016, the acts are only interested in the legality of the online records and cyber crimes and not a comprehensive framework of dispute resolution of Internet-based dealings [10]. As a result, the majority of controversies that occur because of digital transactions are still being handled by the traditional court systems that tend to be slow, expensive, and are not made available to a significant part of the population.

Pakistan has a judicial system that is highly inefficient, which is well-documented. The World Bank records that contract enforcement in Pakistan would take an average of more than 1,000 days, which indicates a lot of delays in the provision of justice in the country [11]. This discourages even individuals and businesses to seek redress through legal means and this in turn slows down the economic growth due to lack of trust

in commercial transactions. In this regard, the adoption of ODR in the regular judicial system provides an interesting opportunity to overcome these challenges.

With a population size of over 120 million internet users and it is increasing with the number of smart phone users, a large percentage of the population is already in the digital activities [12]. This increased internet connectivity provides an opportune scene to the establishment of online dispute resolution systems, especially in settling e-commerce and consumer disputes.

Nonetheless, there are no obstacles to the implementation of ODR in formal legal frameworks. The problem of digital literacy, data privacy, cybersecurity, and the enforceability of the law should be discussed carefully to provide the efficiency and credibility of the ODR platforms [13]. Also, institutional support, change in laws and capacity building in the judicial system is required to enable the shift to digital justice systems [14].

Researchers have suggested that the future of courts is in the evolution of hybrid models that integrates old-fashioned judicial procedures with online technologies. These models take advantage of the strengths of the two systems, providing the authority and legitimacy of courts and the efficiency and accessibility of ODR [15]. In this respect, ODR cannot be regarded as an alternative to traditional courts but a supplementary system that makes the justice system more efficient.

The COVID-19 pandemic only helped to increase the use of digital technologies in the judicial system in all countries of the world, emphasizing the significance of remote dispute resolution systems. Courts of various jurisdiction moved to virtual hearings and online case management systems and demonstrated the effectiveness of digital justice solutions even in the legal traditionally conservative environment [16]. This paradigm shift of the globe shows that countries like Pakistan should embrace technological inventions in order to stay abreast of the global trends.

The paper will address whether it is possible to incorporate ODR into the formal judicial system in Pakistan using global best practices, which in this case is the UK. It will discuss the existing legal and institutional context in Pakistan, the principal issues, and provide the viable recommendations to the establishment of the effective ODR framework. In this way, the research would fit into the general discussion of judicial reform and digital change in the developing world.

Lastly, the introduction of the ODR into the official courts is a change in concept related to the justice system. It offers a performance avenue to attain efficiency, cost minimization, access to justice, and confidence in the judicial systems among the citizens. To Pakistan, this change is not a choice, but a must in the light of the changing socio-economic and technological realities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

ODR has proved to be a concept that has emerged significantly over the past 2 decades, and become one of the innovations of the justice management process, particularly in the context of the digital economy. The idea mentioned above was being prepared by the notion of both ODR as a form of continuation of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which was introduced by early scholarly literature [17]. Due to the large volumes of transactions being conducted through the internet, researchers began to realize that ODR was not merely a supplementary tool but a paradigm shift on how disagreements could be resolved in the technologically motivated society.

The other landmark contribution that has been made to literature on ODR is by Ethan Katsh and Janet Rifkin, who stated that the internet itself could be considered as a fourth party within the dispute resolution

process through facilitation of communication, structuring interaction, or even determination of the resolution [18]. This idea not only restructured the traditional triadic architectural framework of dispute resolution (two and a third party) but also introduced an alternative paradigm where technology has direct contributions in the decision of dispute resolution procedures. This idea was later developed by other researchers who emphasized the role of digital platforms in increasing efficiency, cutting costs, and making justice more accessible [19].

On consumer protection and e-commerce, Pablo Cortes has discussed a great deal on the application of ODR and has said that the traditional court regimes are not generally equipped to cope with the high rates of low-value litigation that occur during online transactions [20]. Cortes says that ODR offers a scalable solution which can effectively solve these disputes without being unjust and opaque. Another key theme in his work is the need to incorporate ODR into legal systems to make it enforceable and legitimate.

Gabrielle Kaufmann-Kohler and Thomas Schultz also made their contribution to the theoretical and practical knowledge of ODR by examining its issues in modern justice systems. They pointed out major concerns of jurisdiction, enforceability as well as the necessity of international cooperation in inter-country disputes [21]. According to their study, ODR has a lot of benefits, but it needs to be supported by coherent legal frameworks and institutionalization to be successful.

Another area of concern is the desire of ODR to be applied in formal courts, which is also illustrated in the literature. According to the book by Richard Susskind the future of courts, technology will redefine the justice system, which will be characterized by the birth of online courts and digital dispute resolution systems [22]. Susskind imagines a time when courts will not need physical spaces but become digital places that will be more accessible and efficient. This particularly applies to his analysis since it provides theoretical frameworks of the introduction of ODR into formal judicial systems.

The United Kingdom is a topic of intensive research regarding the developed jurisdictions and, specifically, as a dominant model of ODR integration. A report on ODR of the low-value civil claims by the Civil Justice Council proposed a 3-tier system of online evaluation, facilitation, and adjudication, which proved to be applied to influence the subsequent jury process modifications in the UK [23]. This model has been complimented by scholars because it is user-friendly and could take up the backlog of court cases and enhance access to justice.

Digital justice initiatives are also practical and found to be practiced through empirical accounts of the HMCTS Reform Programme in the UK. These modifications have introduced online solutions of claims filing, cases and virtual trigger hearings hence improving the judicial procedures and reducing the administrative burdens [24]. It has been discovered that such an initiative has made efficiency and user satisfaction, yet, there remains concerns regarding the issue of digital exclusion and data security [25].

Another legislation, the ODR Regulation (EU) No 524/2013 of the European Union has also been extensively discussed in the literature as a breakthrough project in the determination of dispute between consumers. The study has identified that it has led to the development of a central repository of cross-border dispute resolution, a factor that enhances consumer confidence in online markets [26]. However, according to other researchers, EU ODR platform has been unsuccessful because of consumer and business poor awareness and enforcement challenges [27].

On the other hand, the available research on ODR in developing economies and particularly in Pakistan, has revealed huge gaps and issues. Researchers have noted that despite the progress that is being made in regulating the digital transactions through legislation in Pakistan such as Electronic Transactions Ordinance

2002, there is no comprehensive framework on ODR [28]. This regulatory laxity has made the expansion and adoption of ODR mechanisms in the country more difficult.

The opportunities and challenges facing the implementation of ODR in Pakistan in the study conducted by Naila Amjad and Hafiz Muhammad Nasir include lack of digital literacy, technological infrastructure, and organizational endorsement [29]. These are some of the reasons why people still resort to the old system of litigation that is commonly sluggish and ineffective. The authors bring attention to the fact that ODR implementation in Pakistan requires policy reforms and capacity building.

A second serious problem that has been found in the literature is mistrust in digital systems. Syed Ali Raza emphasizes that the issue of cybersecurity and data privacy have a substantial influence on the readiness of persons to use online dispute resolution systems in Pakistan [30]. ODR systems should not achieve acceptance among the people unless they are well apportioned with protective measures and open procedures.

The picture of the factors influencing the success of ODR can be obtained with the help of the comparative research that is conducted in developed and developing jurisdictions. Research has depicted that an effective implementation will require the presence of an excellent legal system and an advantageous technological infrastructure, enlightenment of the people and an institutional trust [31]. The formal adoption of ODR in formal judicial system has been made possible in certain jurisdictions like in the UK by means of digital literacy and government subsidies.

Conversely, developing nations have systemic issues, which they must resolve in order to achieve the potential of ODR.

The importance of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain in ODR has also gained a lot of academic focus. Tania Sourdin states that AI could improve the work of the dispute resolution by automatizing the routine and predicting the outcomes of cases and helping decision-makers [32]. On the same note, blockchain technology can be used as a possible remedy to transparency and enforceability in ODR by ensuring secure and immutable documents of transactions and agreements [33]. Nevertheless, the technologies also have ethical and legal implications, such as the problem of bias, responsibility, and data security.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to the increased implementation of digital technologies within the judicial system, which has increased the significance of ODR in maintaining continuity of justice. Research has shown that the use of virtual hearings and online case management systems has become increasingly popular among courts globally, which proves that digital justice solutions are feasible and effective [34]. This change has strengthened the point that ODR is not just an alternative but is a necessity of the contemporary judicial systems.

Even though the literature on ODR continues to increase, there are still gaps. There is a need to conduct more empirical research to find out the levels at which ODR is effective in different settings and most prominently in the developing countries. In addition, legal and institutional problems that face the implementation of ODR into the formal legal system are challenging and require further research. The issue of standardization, interoperability, and applicability of ODR decisions in cross-border are not only crucial areas to be examined in the future [35].

In conclusion, the literature on ODR suggests that it may be ground-breaking and transform the practice of dispute resolution making it effective, convenient, and affordable. Despite the more developed systems of jurisdiction such as the United Kingdom having attained much in allowing ODR into their legal framework,

emerging countries such as Pakistan have many hurdles to surmount. The current literature on the topic offers a robust background to the current research, which aims to investigate the role of ODR in the formal judicial system of Pakistan and add to the current discussion on the topic of digital justice and judicial reform.

### **Research Gap and theoretical framework**

Despite the increased literature on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), a big gap exists in the literature to understand how ODR would fit well into the judicial system of developing nations particularly Pakistan. The existing papers have already given significant consideration to the ODR as a part of e-commerce disputes, consumer protection, and unofficial forums, and emphasized its effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and availability. The jurisdiction comparisons (e.g. between the United Kingdom and Pakistan) show that there is a difference in the legal frameworks, technological readiness, and support by the institution. Nevertheless, these works mostly consider ODR as a supplement to the formal court systems, rather than as a part of the system. Not much academic focus is given to ways of integrating ODR into the state judicial systems as a hybrid court model in which traditional courts and online platforms are integrated in a systemic way.

In addition, the literature is inadequate regarding the explanation of procedural, constitutional, and institutional implications of the ODR integration into the formal courts. Despite the discussion conducted by other researchers regarding such topics of issues as enforceability, jurisdiction, and technology, it is still possible to state that a certain gap exists in the explanation of a complete framework that explains the connection between all these aspects and the specific socio-legal context of Pakistan. Particularly, there exist gaps in its discussion on the compatibility of ODR and the constitutional provisions on the fair trial, the due processes, and the access of justice in Pakistan. In addition, the topic of user trust, judicial acceptance, and possibility of ODR in Pakistan lacks empirical research studies. The digital infrastructure of the public sector, judicial training, and policy coordination as contributors to the large-scale use of ODR is also not discussed in the literature.

Lack of future oriented approach towards judicial transformation is the other major gap. The majority of the studies interpret ODR not as something that functions as a driver to creating new ways of thinking about the organization and operation of the courts but as a means of eliminating the current inefficiencies. The idea of digital courts or online courts has already been studied in the developed jurisdictions, but few attempts are made to adapt these models to the realities of third world nations. Pakistan also has its own peculiarities, including digital divide, lack of legal awareness, and institutional inertia of the country, which demand a local model instead of blatant copying of foreign systems. Accordingly, it is necessary to have a localized and flexible structure that incorporates international best practices with national legal and social-economic realities.

Against these gaps, this paper suggests a conceptual framework, which puts ODR as a focal point in the reformation of the Pakistani judicial system. It is a framework that relies on the concept of a hybrid digital justice system, which would integrate traditional courts with ODR platforms to establish a multi-tier system of dispute resolution. On the first tier of the framework, there is legal and regulatory backing, such as the creation of specific laws acknowledging ODR processes, digital evidence, and enforceability of online rulings. This jurisprudential basis will guarantee that ODR systems exist within the framework of formal law, and they are legitimate and authoritative.

The second part of the framework is centered on the issue of technological infrastructure that encompasses the secure digital platforms, case management systems, artificial intelligence tools, and data protection mechanisms. The technologies will also make it easier to manage disputes, participate remotely, and be transparent and accountable. AI and automation may also be combined to increase the efficiency of

decision-making, especially when it comes to low-value and high-volume cases. Nevertheless, the framework highlights that the implementation of technology should be coupled with measures to mitigate the issues to do with bias, privacy, and cybersecurity.

The third element is institutional integration, which is seen to entail the process of institutionalizing ODR into the current judicial hierarchy. These are creation of special e-courts or online tribunals, connection with lower courts to small claims, and establishment of ODR as a pre-litigation or court-annexed method. This kind of integration enables the courts to lower their caseloads and yet still to exercise control and yet still be able to retain the complex cases to be dealt with using the traditional methods. The critical components of this component are judicial training and capacity building since they facilitate the use of digital resources and embrace new dispute resolution modalities by legal professionals.

The fourth component of the framework is the focus on the access to justice and user-friendly design. ODR platforms should be easy to use, affordable, and friendly to people with different degrees of digital skills. Multilingual interfaces, mobile compatibility and user support systems are important towards making sure that there is wide adoption. This element also responds to the requirement of instilling confidence to people by creating transparency, accountability and awareness campaigns that are needed in the legitimacy of ODR systems.

Lastly, the framework has a policy and governance aspect, which emphasizes the role of government, regulatory agencies and partnerships between the public and the private in the adoption of ODR. The coordination of policies, funding, and involvement of stakeholders are required to establish a sustainable ecosystem of ODR. The framework also appreciates the need to engage with other countries especially when dealing with cross-border conflict and the need to be involved with the global standards.

In fact, this theoretical framework envisages the shift of a purely traditional judicial system to a digitally connected model of justice, with ODR as an alternative and complement to formal courts. The framework addresses legal, technological, institutional, and societal aspects, which offer a comprehensive strategy of ODR integration in the judicial system of Pakistan. This paper seeks to address these research gaps by providing an all-encompassing contextual model that can inform policy makers, law practitioners and researchers in defining the future of Pakistan courts.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research approach taken in this study is a doctrinal and qualitative research with a view of examining the incorporation of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) into the formal judicial system in Pakistan. Since the research problem is legal and conceptual, the study will mostly use secondary sources of data, such as statutes, case laws, policy documents, scholarly articles, institutional reports, and international legal instruments. The methodology is developed to critically examine the current legal systems, compare with the best practices in other countries, and suggest a context-specific model of the country of Pakistan.

The fundamental part of this study is the doctrinal approach, which is a systematic study of legal principles, statutory provisions, and judicial interpretations of dispute resolution and digital justice. The methodology would allow the research to assess the sufficiency of the current law of Pakistan, such as legislation regulating electronic transactions and cybercrime, in facilitating the implementation of ODR in the formal courts. Moreover, doctrinal study helps deepen the investigation of the legal evolution of the sophisticated jurisdictions, especially the United Kingdom, to single out the principles and the best practices that can be transferred.

The study also adopts a comparative approach, which is necessary in the learning of the differences and similarities between Pakistan and jurisdictions that have successfully incorporated ODR in their judicial systems. The United Kingdom is chosen as the main comparative example because of its developed online courts and the digital justice programs. In this comparative analysis, the paper identifies several important elements including legislative backing, technological infrastructure, and institutional preparedness that can be used to make ODR systems effective. This analogy can be used to come up with feasible recommendations that are specific to the socio-legal context of Pakistan.

Besides this, the paper employs a descriptive-analytical method to examine the concept, development, and forms of ODR, and its place in the contemporary judicial regime. The descriptive part presents a general description of ODR mechanisms, whereas the analytical part critically assesses their efficiency, difficulties, and applicability in Pakistan. This will guarantee that both theoretical and practical aspects of ODR integration are analyzed in a balanced manner.

The primary and secondary sources are combined to obtain the data used in this research. Primary sources are the national legislation, including the Electronic Transactions Ordinance 2002, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016, and the international resources, including the UNCITRAL guidelines on ODR. Secondary sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports (e.g., World Bank, UNCTAD) and policy documents on the topic of digital justice and dispute resolution. These materials can be used to study ODR legal, technological, and institutional aspects to a larger extent.

Besides, the paper uses a conceptual framework-based method to organize the analysis. The model incorporates major aspects including the legal infrastructure, technological preparedness, institutional strength, and access to justice. This will enable the research to transcend the description analysis and come up with a systematic framework of how ODR can be incorporated in the Pakistani judicial system. The framework can also be used to assess the existing gaps and suggest specific reforms.

Although the approach is mainly qualitative, the research uses supplementary statistical and empirical evidence of reputable organizations like the world bank and Pakistan telecommunication authority to give context to the discussion. These data points can be applied to draw attention to such issues as case backlogs, internet penetration, and digital access, which are essential to evaluate the viability of ODR implementation.

There are some limitations of this methodology to be noted. The research lacks primary empirical studies like survey or interviews due to time and resource limitation. Consequently, the findings are formed on the basis of the current literature and secondary data, which might not be entirely representative of the recent changes or the views of the stakeholders. Nevertheless, the fact that various and trustworthy sources are used helps to overcome this limitation and provides the credibility of the analysis.

To sum up, the selected methodology offers a detailed and systematic way of investigating the process of integrating ODR into the formal judicial system in Pakistan. The study provides theoretical knowledge and practical advice through doctrinal analysis, comparative study and conceptual modeling. This research design will make sure that the research will make a significant contribution to the discussion on digital justice and judicial reform in the developing nations.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The discussion of the legal frameworks, international practices, and the Pakistan judicial system has shown some significant results in the viability and the need to include the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) into the official court system. The findings of the paper prove that ODR is a not only a complementary

mechanism but also a potentially transformative reform of the systemic inefficiencies in the justice delivery system in Pakistan.

One of the major research findings is that the judicial system in Pakistan is heavily congested with cases pending hearing, delays in the system, and infrastructural constraints that negatively impact on the dispensation of justice in a timely manner. The use of old litigation procedures leads to increased time durations of dispute resolution, which may take several years especially in civil and commercial cases. This organizational ineffectiveness forms a good rationale that necessitates the implementation of digital substitutes like ODR to facilitate low-value and high-volume disputes.

The research also concludes that Pakistan already has a partial legal basis that could be used to facilitate the incorporation of ODR. Electronic evidence and electronic communication are acknowledged by the Electronic Transactions Ordinance 2002 and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016. Nevertheless, these laws are not aimed at making the dispute resolution mechanisms operational in the judicial system. Thus, the existence of a legal foundation is confirmed, but it is still disjointed and not enough to implement ODR on a full scale, which emphasizes the necessity of specific ODR legislation and judicial changes.

One significant outcome of the comparative exercise is that jurisdictions like the United Kingdom have been able to implement ODR in a coordinated and gradual manner through a policy reform, technological infrastructure, and institutional redesign. The UK experience proves that with digital courts, electronic filing, and remote hearings, it is possible to improve judicial efficiency without damaging the procedural fairness. This is very different in Pakistan where the use of digital in courts is still minimal and mostly experimental.

Another observation of the study is that Pakistan has moderate but uneven technology readiness. Although urban populations are comparatively well-connected to the internet and smartphones, there is still a lot of digital marginalization in the rural population. This is the digital divide issue that poses a significant challenge to the implementation of ODR nationwide. Nevertheless, the rise in mobile penetration and the growth of internet connectivity are positive signs that can facilitate slow implementation of digital justice mechanisms.

The other significant result is associated with the level of trust with the population and the preparedness of the institutions. The research indicates that the level of trust on online systems and online legal processes is low among the masses in Pakistan. The issues of cybersecurity, data privacy, and fairness of automated systems hinder the popularization of ODR. Further, even the judiciary does not have extensive training and exposure to digital tools of dispute resolution and this further delays institutional adaptation.

The findings also suggest that ODR has a great potential to enhance access to justice especially to marginalized and low-income populations. ODR will make the resolution of disputes more inclusive by cutting down the costs related to litigation, eradicating the need to travel, and reducing the complexity of the procedure. This especially applies where there is a consumer dispute, e-commerce dispute, and small civil claims, where conventional litigation is not always feasible.

Institutionally, the research results indicate that the introduction of ODR into the Pakistan judicial system would necessitate the creation of a new hybrid model of court, in which online platforms will be integrated into the current court framework. This model would enable pre-litigation settlement, court-annexed mediation as well as online adjudication of appropriate cases and thus pressure on the traditional courts would be relieved but judicial oversight would still be in place.

The results also emphasize that the future of ODR can be improved by introducing new technologies including artificial intelligence and digital case management systems. AI-based tools may be used to aid in case triage, categorizing disputes, and predictive analysis, which would go a long way to alleviate administrative pressure on the courts. Nevertheless, the paper also concludes that the regulatory frameworks of such technologies are not yet well developed in Pakistan.

The other notable outcome is that, the international legal progress, especially in the framework of UNCITRAL and EU ODR, can offer helpful examples to Pakistan. These structures focus on transparency, enforceability, and user-friendliness, which are essential to the effective implementation of ODR. Nonetheless, these models cannot be directly transferred because of the contextual diversity, and legal and institutional frameworks have to be localized.

The work also concludes that the coronavirus has served as an impetus to digital transformation within the judicial systems worldwide, including Pakistan, where virtual hearings and online case management were introduced temporarily. Though such efforts were small in scale, they showed that remote judicial practice was technically viable and provided a basis to develop subsequent digital reforms.

In general, the findings suggest that the introduction of ODR into the judicial system of Pakistan is possible and even required, yet it should be accompanied by extensive legal, technological, institutional, and social reforms. In the absence of such reforms, the adoption of ODR will not be complete and will not have much influence.

To sum up, the results are very much supportive of the research hypothesis, that the introduction of ODR in formal court systems may be instrumental in making justice delivery in Pakistan more efficient, accessible, and effective. Nevertheless, to make it successful, it is necessary to overcome structural obstacles, create institutional resources, and make people trust digital justice tools.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to the results of this paper, it can be stated that the implementation of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) into the official judicial system of Pakistan needs a multi-dimensional approach to reforms. The following are the suggestions that can be made to guarantee effective implementation and sustainability of a hybrid digital justice system.

To begin with, Pakistan has a significant need to have specific ODR legislation. The current legislation like the Electronic Transactions Ordinance 2002 and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 offers some assistance in supporting the area of digital interactions but fails to create a full legal framework on the issue of online dispute resolution. An ODR Act should be created, which is specialized on the description of the standards of the procedure, the enforcement of the online decisions, the rules of jurisdiction and the legal character of the digital settlements. This will give ODR processes legitimacy and a legal certainty.

Second, the judiciary needs to consider a hybrid court system in which ODR is officially incorporated into the current court systems. This model must comprise pre-litigation on-line negotiation, court-annexed mediation, and full online adjudication of small and medium claims. This kind of integration will not only lighten the load on the traditional courts but will also make sure that the complex cases will still be taken care of under the conventional judicial system.

Third, the digital infrastructure and cybersecurity systems will have to be invested in heavily. ODR relies on safe, trustworthy, and convenient case filing, communication, and submission of evidence and delivery

of decisions. To guarantee integrity and confidentiality of proceedings, the government needs to come up with centralized judicial digital platforms that are highly encrypted, data protection, and backups.

Fourth, the research suggests thorough capacity building and judicial training. Judges, lawyers, and other employees of the court should receive training in digital tools, online case management activities, and online dispute resolution methods. Technological reforms will not work without institutional preparation. Artificial intelligence tools and data-driven case management systems should also be included in the training programs.

Fifth, ODR should be adopted successfully through enhancing digital literacy and awareness among the people. There are a lot of citizens who do not know about digital legal services, especially rural and underdeveloped areas. The government agencies, the bar associations, and the civil society organizations ought to work together to carry out awareness campaigns about the advantages, processes, and the availability of ODR systems.

Sixth, governments must promote powerful data protection and cybersecurity legislation to establish trust among the people in judicial systems over the internet. Issues to do with privacy invasion, identity theft, and misuse of sensitive legal information are still a significant obstacle to adoption. Strong regulatory frameworks in line with international standards like GDPR can be used to increase the confidence in digital justice platforms.

Seventh, Pakistan ought to consider having public-private partnerships (PPPs) in designing and sustaining ODR platforms. The partnership with technology firms will offer technical skills, creativity, and scalability, whereas judicial control will promote fairness and responsibility. These alliances can speed up the process of creating effective and contemporary systems of dispute resolution.

Lastly, the integration must be gradual and gradual, beginning with low-value civil disputes, consumer complaints and e-commerce cases. The pilot projects are to be implemented in selected jurisdictions prior to the implementation at the national level. It should be monitored and evaluated regularly to measure the performance, problems encountered, and improve the system.

## **CONCLUSION**

Digital innovation changing the conventional judicial structures is not only an imaginary idea anymore, but it is a necessity in the contemporary world. This paper has shown that the justice system of Pakistan though based on robust constitutional principles is limited by systemic inefficiencies such as backlog of cases, delays in the process, and poor accessibility. Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) can be considered in this regard as a potent tool to increase efficiency, access, and responsiveness in the process of delivering justice.

This study has revealed that Pakistan has a legal framework that has the potential to facilitate digital transformation, but it has not been consolidated yet and is not adequate to implement ODR on a grand scale into formal judicial systems. The comparative study of jurisdictions like the United Kingdom shows that effective adoption of ODR has to be a mix of legislative amendments, institutional preparation, technologies, and community trust.

This paper also confirms that ODR cannot be considered an alternative to the conventional courts, but as an expansion of the judicial system. A hybrid court system between physical and digital platforms will provide the most viable and sustainable solution to Pakistan. This type of model will go a long way in decreasing the workload of courts, decreasing the cost of litigation and enhancing access to justice, especially to marginalized people.

The shift to a digitally integrated justice system is not a smooth one, however. Digital divide, cybersecurity threats, poor awareness, and institutional resistance are problems that need to be addressed in terms of overall reforms and formal planning. The effectiveness of ODR in Pakistan will be determined by the political willingness of the government to innovate the law, invest in technology and build capacity in judiciary.

To sum it up, the introduction of ODR into the official judicial system of Pakistan is a pivotal move towards the modernization of justice delivery in accordance with the world trends. It has provided a possible way of dealing with old-time inefficiencies and creating a more open and efficient and accessible system of justice. When utilized in an efficient way, ODR can change the future of court in Pakistan to make justice more accessible and efficient, as well as more inclusive and equal to every citizen.

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