

Exploring Defamation and Social Respect in Pakistan: A Legal Perspective Rooted in Common Law Practices

Muhammad Abid Nazir Ph.D. Law Scholar, TIMES Institute Multan, Pakistan.
abidnaziradv@gmail.com

Dr. Shaukat Hussain Bhatti Associate Professor-Law, TIMES Institute Multan, Pakistan.
(Correspondence Author) shaukathussain78682@gmail.com

Abstract: *It is through this paper that the relationship between defamation laws and social respect in Pakistan can be seen with considerations to culture, law, and the social media space. The main outcomes show that legal provisions put emphasis on reputation and social order consonant with the cultures of honor and other stereotypic societal beliefs. In addition, social media has made it difficult for legal responses to satisfactorily address the defamation as it refers to an amplified personal attack. In sum, the study emphasizes the call for an understanding of defamation beyond the legal and cultural contexts of Pakistan. Due to the nature of this research, as stated above, this work lacks real life cases or primary data collection where there is a chance to show different cases in action. Furthermore, the research work is done on the bases of the Pakistani culture as well as the laws, which can be partial in understanding the global aspects about the defamation laws. A final limitation is the relative scarcity of studies with psychological and social consequences of defamation in the literature due to available research.*

Keywords: Explore, Defamation, social Respect, Pakistan, common law

Introduction

An analysis of defamation and its relationship with social respect in Pakistan cannot be made independently of the somewhat convoluted legal framework rooted in Pakistan's cultural and historical background. Being a common law country that follows a legal tradition borrowed from the British colonial masters, the Pakistan legal system has developed over time. While it tries to solve the complex issues of the current society, it still has to deal with the fine cultural practices and beliefs inherited from the colonial masters. This evolution is a delicate dealing of balancing the past view of honor with the ever-changing world. This paper analyses defamation laws in Pakistan as an essential tool for safeguarding personal reputation and social order, meaning Pakistan is a country that believes in the liberty of expression but not at the cost of an individual's dignity (Khan & Iqbal, 2022; Ashraf, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021). The concept of 'social respect' in Pakistani culture is crucial and embedded into the general structure of interpersonal relationships and impacts social behavior, collecting business transactions, and legal procedures. Especially in honor and reputation-conscious societies, legal rules on defamation assume paramount importance and often provide the motive force for legal proceedings, alongside determining the customary approach of courts to the operation of the law. This cultural focus on respect and honor makes a juridical culture where legal norms and values are filtered through the prism of social norms and expectations, which may lead to reading meaningful legal rules differently than in other countries following the tradition of the common law (Ali & Khan, 2023; Malik, 2022; Hussain, & Ahmed 2024).

Defamation, in its legal perspective, comprises the publishing of false statements of facts that are damaging to the reputation of an individual, a business, a product, a group of people, a government, a religion, or a country. In Pakistan, as in many other jurisdictions, defamation is primarily categorized into libel and slander. Libel applies to deliberate defamation in writing or some other permanent medium, while slander is defamation through oral words or in a broadcasting medium with a temporary existence. From a historical and legal perspective, the differences that originated with the common law tradition remain important for defining the status of different defamatory messages. The structural foundation of defamation law in Pakistan is the Defamation Ordinance 2002 and the provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code. The former give ways through which one can approach the courts to recover damages for harm done to one's reputation, while the latter are normally known as exceptions to defamation that include truth, fair comment, and privilege, respectively (Qureshi, 2023; Shah & Rahman, 2024; Khan et al., 2023). Until now, defamation laws in the context of Pakistan have raised questions on the relationship between the protection of reputation and freedom of speech, which are frequently debated in the courts of law and significantly are influenced by the special characteristics of Pakistan's society. This task has become even more elaborate in the era of new media, social media, and communications technology because the collection and dissemination of information that may be libelous in certain cases, happens at dizzying speed and with an ease that is unmatched (Ashraf, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021; Ali & Khan, 2023).

This paper cannot comprehensively address Pakistan's legal regime governing defamation without appreciating the historical development of this legal principle in common law systems. Specifically, defamation law developed at medieval England and has been changing during centuries due to alterations of the society and new technologies. Defamation law has not evolved in isolation but is linked to shifts in civil society and legal culture: the growth of the cult of individual rights, the changing role and freedom of the press, and the growing appreciation of the role of public debate in modern democracies. Libel and slander have been a part of Pakistan's legal system and some common law rules and regulation like presumption of damage in cases of libel and, the requirement of proving special damages in certain cases of slander are also allowed. Nonetheless, as this paper demonstrates, Pakistan's courts have successfully molded these common law principles to 'انڀيل' s social and cultural realities and hence, while the country has adopted the common law system, its jurisprudence has inevitably developed into one that is Pakistan-specific (Malik, 2022; Hussain & Ahmed, 2024; Qureshi, 2023). From this adaptation process has evolved legal doctrines that aspire to protect an individual's reputation while protecting the society's culture or morality. The legal production that ensued is a more complex one that captures the social reality of reputation in Pakistan as not only a personal value but a collective also, as tied to families and other affiliations (Khan and Iqbal, 2022; Ashraf, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021).

The place of social respect in legal cases with defamation is even more notable in Pakistan. This element of honor or 'izzat is not restricted to a person but it is also concerning family, community and even professional honor. For this reason, the cultural value regarding respect and honor shapes reception, pursuit and determination of defamation lawsuits. It has been postulated that while delivering defamation cases arresting from Pakistan courts, the judges struggle to ascertain their decision keeping in view the cultural model as a result of which the judgement delivered assesses the social standpoint of reputational damage (Shah & Rahman, 2024; Khan et al., 2023; Ali & Khan, 2023). This is a good picture of how defamation law should be practised to maintain cultural integrity of legal systems while addressing existing concerns on possibility of free speech and investigative journalism being limited. It contributes to a dynamic legal context, where legal rules of defamation are constructed in a social context and are responding to the new social expectations as well as new technologies. This evolution is more apparent where cascading rights intersect with those of public concern or public interest in knowing or public figures who seek to protect their privacy or Image rights (Malik, 2022; Hussain & Ahmed, 2024; Qureshi, 2023).

Legal rights of defamation and social respect in Pakistan create some significant issues to be critically analyzed. Among these, there has been a constant clash between reputation and free speech, more so given the uppermost importance that respect accorded to people in society. This tension is further compounded with the emergence of digital platforms, which brings new dynamics in understanding and prosecuting defamation, which is a problem for law and culture, alike (Ashraf, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021; Ali & Khan, 2023). Social networking is one of the most important developments that put incredibly much pressure on the defamation law as a result of the fact that a clear distinction between public and private correspondences cannot be made. Three issues of jurisdiction, anonymity and pass-on defamatory statements raise serious difficulties for the application of conventional legal concepts in defamation. Furthermore, the fact that defamation laws might be abused by government or individuals to stifle free speech or opposition in matters that affect or concern that government or individual also cast doubts over the necessity of the said laws in a democratic society. These challenges show that there is a need to adopt a more complex understanding of the plurality of defamation laws in Pakistan, recognizing the legal reasoning on the subject, as well as the social and cultural environment in which it occurs (Khan & Iqbal, 2022; Shah & Rahman, 2024; Khan et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is the purpose of this dissertation to enhance the knowledge and development of the legal literature as well as give insight to the social norms in Pakistan by exploring the complex correlation between defamation laws and the cultural values of respect and honor. To this end, the milestone goals of the study are as follows: This research paper aims to review the current Pakistani law on defamation and its development from its origin in the common law legal system, and its current position to address contemporary issues. This will entail a critical evaluation of the relevant legislation, leading caselaw, and legal principles that define Pakistan's legal regime for defamation. Furthermore, the study aims at comparing legal and social cultures in defamation cases in order to find out how culture affects the law. To this end, the following concrete activities will be implemented to meet the objective: Comparison of decisions adopted by Pakistani courts, as well as legal writings, with concepts of social justice Utilising findings from the study of case law and treatment of defamation cases in Pakistan for an assessment of their social relevance. This paper also seeks to compare the position for defamation in Pakistan with other common law countries in order to assess similarity and differences. This comparative analysis will be useful in helping understand how various legal systems have judicially incorporated the principle of common law into their systems and more importantly the cultural and societal infusion to those principles (Malik, 2022; Hussain & Ahmed, 2024; Qureshi, 2023).

In addition, the study aims at evaluating the ability of current defamation laws to provide fair protection of persons' reputations without infringing on the freedom of speech. This assessment is going to involve an assessment of current high profile defamation cases, critical writing and reform measures and the international human rights standards on freedom of expression of and reputation. Last, the study will examine possible reforms or modifications of the legal framework that might help it meet the challenges of the contemporary world and at the same time recognize cultural juridical diversity. Literature review of comparative law, an interdisciplinary study of social effects of defamation laws and consultative review with legal professionals and representatives in Pakistan by Shah and Rahman (2024); Khan et al. (2023); Ali & Khan (2023). By presenting an updated review of defamation legislation in the context of new challenges and discussing how certain fundamental legal concepts work in relation to new media settings, this study answers a significant question, and enriches the continuously growing body of research on the effect of law within the process of regulating online conduct and protecting liberty interests in the technological age. These research findings have the possibility of contributing to reforming laws, participating in policy making and influencing legal preciseness of judicial system in Pakistan and other countries emerging with such basic and similar issues in defamation law, cultural sensitiveness and technology.

Materials and Methods

As part of this research, a systematic literature review approach is employed to analyze the complex interaction of defamation and social respect taking into context the discovered Pakistani scholarly and case-based literature. Given the specific objectives of the research, the study will gravitate towards a type of research known as systematic review because it enables the identification and synthesis of different categories of sources of knowledge while flagging off knowledge gaps (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). This approach helps to carry out the systematic examination of not only the legal aspect of defamation, but the social significance in Pakistani context as well.

The systematic review will begin by defining criteria for including and excluding studies, legal acts and case law. In selection criteria, priority will be given to the articles, legal researches, cases, and reviews published in refereed international journals, magazines or books in English language during the latest two decades. It means that the research does not rely on out-of-date and relatively unhelpful sources (Torgerson, 2003). The review will include studies on the existing legal status of defamation, Perception of defamation in the society and effects that the defamation can cause a person in terms of their honor and reputation in context to Pak contingent. On the other hand, the articles that do not relate to Pakistani context or the articles that have not considered legal and social aspects of defamation will be omitted in order to keep the focus of the present review.

Because of this factor, several academic databases will be used in the study, which include JSTOR, Google Scholar, and legal databases. The search process will use terms like; Pakistan defamation, social respect-legal framework, and common law practices (Cochrane, 2014). This systematic way of searching for literature will be complemented by scanning the references of some of the articles to find out if there are any other related articles which may have been retrieved by the search engines. Such a cyclical process will be useful in building a desired body of literature relevant to the study.

Primary data collection will be principally observational where all the identified articles will be downloaded and reviewed where the studies to be reviewed shall comprise of both qualitative and quantitative ones that analyze legal and social issues associated with defamation in Pakistan. Every identified study will be assessed for quality, relevance and importance of the data identified on respect for social individuals (Higgins & Green, 2011). This review process will help to establish how defamation is perceived and lived in the ambits of the legal jurisdiction in a comprehensive manner.

After data collection, the findings from the data collected will be subjected to a detailed and rigorous process of a thematic analysis so as to systematically identify, analyse and report patterns contained in the compiled literature. There are several steps when it comes to the thematic analysis process. First, they will get actually acquainted with the texts by reading them repeatedly to understand content and contextual characteristics of the chosen sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Secondly, first indices will be derived according to the key concept, ideas and themes such as defamation, and the social respect. Such coding process anticipates that all the aspects that are relevant in any literature will be coded systematically and correctly.

As soon as the first coding is done, the concern will be shifted to categorizing codes under larger themes that simply encapsulate the essence captured in the review. These themes will mirror how defamation is viewed and its consequences to social respect in Pakistan inside the legal and culturally enforced legal frameworks. Actually the identified themes will then be reflected upon, in order to eliminate any generalities, and to guarantee that indeed they are saying something valuable regarding the posed research questions. It can help in making analysis less fragmented due to continuous theme development in an iterative fashion which let us to refine and combine them for the final one.

To achieve the study aim, the findings obtained through the thematic analysis are integrated to give a description of the way defamation laws affect or do not affect social respect in Pakistan. This research takes advantage of systematic review and thematic analysis to find out how legal frameworks, cultural

perception and the personal journeys of the victims deliberate defamation. In the end, this research will endeavour to offer a theoretical contribution to the existing literature as well as a practical dossier to which future legal change in this particular area can refer to.

Results and Discussions

Legal point of view of the defamation concern with the sharing of information that is false and has an adverse impact on the character of the concerned person. since in Pakistan social respect has triumphant cultural importance then the way defamation works into the society is vital. The concept of the systematic review of the present paper is to analyze the relationship between defamation laws and social respect in Pakistan by adopting the thematic analysis of the available literature. The analysis focuses on four central themes: Introduction to Defamation Law, Cultural Perceptions towards Defamation, Effects of New Technology in Defamation and Effects on Social Interactions.

Theme 1: Legal Framework of Defamation

Defamation law in Pakistan is based both on common law and acts. According to the Defamation Ordinance of 2002, defamation can be categorized into two forms: There are libel which involves written words and slander which is spoken words (Murtaza, 2016). According to the law this has to be false, and have to have been published, and have to have the tendency of harming the reputation of the person involved according to Farooq & Khan (2017).

In addition, the laws of Pakistan represent the tension between the rights of freedom of speech and their right to protect their image. Article 19 of the Pakistan constitution guarantees freedom of speech but same can be limited with prevailing order and morality (Bhatia, 2018). This balance is quite delicate regarding the society especially because social respect determines the consequences of defamatory statements (Khan & Anwar, 2020). The sociocultural and legal environment of Pakistan forms a peculiar context in which defamation is viewed in present day context.

It has been observed that Pakistani judiciary has in the past shied away from affirming strong concepts of freedom of speech and press largely due to value of social stability over liberty (Hussain, 2019). This trend is visible to a certain extent in many precedents where the courts have preferred the sanctity of reputation over constitutional privileges of freedom of speech and expression, as described by Raza, 2019 . That way such legal precedents resonate the cultural norms of Pakistan, especially where reputation and social status matter most, calling for the need for individuals to be very clever in dealing with the legal systems.

Theme 2: Cultural Attitudes Toward Defamation

Cultural beliefs being different, dictate the kind of response that people or a certain culture give to defamation. In Pakistan, honour is associated with family and societal perimeters, recognition and reputation (Shah & Khan, 2020). The conventional perspective hold that public image is very essential and should be protected by any cost as any damage towards the same attracts social exclusion and stigmatization (Zaidi, 2020). This explains why people will go to an extent of seeking legal help through suing the defaulter and seeking his or her constitutional right of freedom of the speech to be terminated.

Also, cultural factors require that issues concerning reputation and defamation are a taboo and janvier hence we find people avoiding being open in discussions concerning such matters (Mohammad & Ullah, 2018). Constant social threats mar the image of whoever Receives such a label, that they can be discouraged from engaging authorities legally for quality justice (Hussain, 2021). Thus, cultural attitudes determine not only the notion of defamation but also reactions of persons who became defendants in defamation cases.

The present study also shows that cultural norms of honor and shame are vital predictors of readiness to report offenses of defamation (Khan, 2021). A large number of people prefer carrying out some

conflict domestically or avoiding confrontation for fear of bringing shame to their families or communities (Javed, 2019). It evidences the cultural aspect of defamation and for this reason, calls for cultural sensitivity when defining law on defamation or any aspect of defamation.

Theme 3: Impact of Social Media

This paper shows that the emergence of social media as a means of communication has presented some new issues in the area of defamation law. It recommended rapid distribution by platforms like Facebook or Twitter but at the same time the means become an instrument for the spread of lies and leakage of rumour leading to probable defamation instances (Ali & Khan, 2020). In the light of the social media presence freedom of speech can trigger social nuisance through defamation.

Studies have proven that people will tend to defame others through social media because they are not seen as themselves and they are not legally punishable (Bashir & Azhar, 2019). This has led to an increased number of defamation cases reported in Pakistan since clients feel empowered to approach the courts to seek justice regarding their reputations that have been dented by particular statements made online (Nawaz, 2021). However, as this area of the internet developed rapidly, and new forms of social media appeared, the legal system did not manage to catch up with it, so many victims of defamation remain unprotected (Khan et al., 2021).

Additionally, through social media, the oppressed groups also use the opportunity to counter the defamation and affirm their entitlements (Khan & Ashfaq, 2020). As the defamation actors narratives of activists and individuals facing defamation entail, people have taken to the online social media platform to tell their version of the event and advocate for support by creating an opsystem that counteracts the dominant mode of discourses. This has been exacerbated by the duality of social media with regard to the areas of defamation and social respect in Pakistan.

Theme 4: Consequences for Social Relationships

The consequences of defamation are not only legal but rather social impacts that are of a large extent when imposing measures on social relations and communities' functioning. They have said that exposures cause emotions such as threats of social exclusion, loss of confidence, and severed bonds between family members and friends and neighbors (Naseem, 2020). The effects of defamation occur where people most likely embrace personification as their reputations are linked to their honor and subsequent productivity (Rahman & Noor, 2021).

Psychological consequences may results from defamation where victims cannot remove the content, this result in feelings of shame, anxiety and depression (Ali & Majeed, 2018). Despite having a deep wound that may hamper one's ability to reintegrate with his or her community, emotional tolls can act as barriers within the social support system (Azhar, 2021). Furthermore, shame and fear of being socially ostracized as being defamed are often strong enough to discourage a defamed person from ever seeking help or formal justice because, without the support of their society, their fate will remain unchanged (Shahid & Khan, 2020).

On the other hand, while defamatory behavior may be rewarding, the individuals also undergo some negative penalties such as a backlash from their society (Mansoor & Karamat, 2019). This uncontrollable extremism can result in social isolation and shaming and even reciprocation and slander (Iftikhar & Bashir, 2021). The given dynamic reveals dependence between the relationships within and outside the couple as well as the society at large implications of defamation.

The systematic review and thematic analysis give an understanding of the relations between the defamation laws and social respect in Pakistan. The laws regulating defamation claims are defined by culture that values reputation and status, which means people face difficult situations when it comes to defamation cases. Also, social media has brought in new issues and possibilities in the sphere of defamation, proving that there should be preconditions for abstracting the legislation in response to the

changing procedures of communication. Finally, there are always social effects which result from defamation; this disrupts other social relations and the entire society.

Awareness of these themes is necessary for increased effectiveness of future legal approaches and recognition of defamation issue in Pakistan. Subsequent studies should examine whether defamation increasingly takes place in the digital realm and how social respect is merged within the borders of an interconnected globe.

Study Findings in Light of Previous Studies

The implication of the current research is also in line with previous literature where the authors have noted the complexities of defamation laws of grey area for social respect in Pakistan. The legal provisions related to defamation which originated from the Defamation Ordinance of 2002 underline the virtue that is associated with reputation, something that accords with Bhatia (2018) that the laws that exist seem to capture cultural related factors with Indian social DNA that stresses on orderliness that seeks to maintain harmony. This focus on social respect is further supported by Khan and Anwar (2020) because culture defines the legal procedure, which consequently often discourages people from pursuing defamatory statements since such actions will lead to social exclusion.

Moreover, a clear theme in this study is that social media has an influence on defamation, in line with Ali & Khan (2020) who stated that even though defamation law has evolved rapidly over the recent years, the use of social media makes it even harder to contain defamatory content. Research by Naseem (2020) also shows that defamation's emotional and psychological impact if found in this study; victims suffer from social isolation and emotional distress.

The study also identifies how cultural values frame the reactions to the defamation, an inference that tallies with the findings of Shah Liyakat Khan (2020) that assert that familial honor critically determines the reactions to defamation. This paper enhances the understanding of defamation in the South Asian countries focusing Pakistani norms and legal structure and disparity as metrics to deconstruct Pakistani society perception of defamation.

As a consequence, this study adds significant insight and evidence to the literature on defamation category prevailing in Pakistan. Cultural dimensions of defamation which are another critical element of the issue have been overshadowed in many previous studies, as the issue is generally analyzed in legal context only. For example, whereas Bhatia (2018) pays primary attention to the constitutional dimension of defamation, this research establishes the legal and social convergence to fill the literature gap.

Further, the analysis of the effects of social media on defamation in this study complements Ali and Khan's (2020) work but goes beyond that by reviewing the ways in which these networks build new difficulties for both victims and the legal domain. In contrast to previous publications, which analysed defamation exclusively in the legal context, this research acknowledges it as a complex process that relates to culture and social situation.

The expansion of the concept of emotional consequences also extends Naseem (2020), which contributes to the discussion concerning the psychological consequences of defamation for the victim. Thus, this research enriches the existing knowledge of Defamation Law in Pakistan through the synthesize of these multiple perspectives to support the future interdisciplinary research related to the definition of defamation cases and their legal regulation based on sociocultural contexts.

Conclusion

It is through this paper that the relationship between defamation laws and social respect in Pakistan can be seen with considerations to culture, law, and the social media space. The main outcomes show that legal provisions put emphasis on reputation and social order consonant with the cultures of honor and

other stereotypic societal beliefs. In addition, social media has made it difficult for legal responses to satisfactorily address the defamation as it refers to an amplified personal attack. In sum, the study emphasizes the call for an understanding of defamation beyond the legal and cultural contexts of Pakistan.

Due to the nature of this research, as stated above, this work lacks real life cases or primary data collection where there is a chance to show different cases in action. Furthermore, the research work is done on the bases of the Pakistani culture as well as the laws, which can be partial in understanding the global aspects about the defamation laws. A final limitation is the relative scarcity of studies with psychological and social consequences of defamation in the literature due to available research.

Subsequent studies should attempt to understand the psychological and emotional implications of defamation as a legal proceeding involves primary research using samples of individuals who have suffered this wrong. Moreover, comparing the Pakistani defamation laws with defamation laws of other countries would help in understanding how different legal rules or cultural considerations have influenced these laws. To this end, future research should consider examination of measures currently in place across various jurisdictions in dealing with online defamation, and examining areas for improvement and future reform.

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