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From Fir's To Convictions: Mapping Legal Efficiency In Communal Riot Cases In India (2016–2020)

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Abstract: Indian communal violence has long been a subject of academic curiosity, especially as regards the causes and political dynamics. Brass, Varshney, and Wilkinson have offered influencing frameworks that correlate riots to political incentives, civic structures, and elite mobilization. Yet the judicial aftermath of riots and the filing of cases going to arrests, chargesheets, and conviction had been remained comparatively understudied. This lack of study is surprising since justice delivery remains central to avoidance, accountability, and restoration of trust in the governance and the system which rules the common man of this country. The paper seeks to fill this particular gap by analyzing the state-level data from the NCRB for the years 2016 to 2020 and covers the cases of reported communal riots, charge sheeted cases, convicted cases, and similar statistics for arrest and conviction of persons. From these variables, we created three indicators, namely Charge-sheeting Ratio (CSR), Conviction-Ratio (CR), and Arrest to Conviction Ratio (ACR) which further used to conduct systematic comparisons of the state-level efficiency in processing riots cases through the different stages of the criminal justice system. The reality after reviewing the several papers revealed glaring discrimination in justice administration. While riot cases are recorded grossly, Bihar and Utter Pradesh witness less than 5% conviction rates, none being recorded for Andhra Pradesh and Assam which looks almost like impossible as if we see the Indian newspapers. On the other-hand southern states fare comparatively well. Such trends assert that the efficiency with which law is administered and also it measures of state capacity, political will, institutional arrangements and need reforms in many aspects especially in investigation processes, judicial processes, witness protection and transparency.

Keywords - Communal riots, Legal efficiency, NCRB data, India, Conviction ratios.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communal riots have been an irreversible feature of the Indian social and political framework since independence which becomes scar the largest democracy of the world every time it happens. They are different from the other forms of collective violence in their sudden onset of violence, wide mass participation can be seen and deep political reverberations. While the Indian Constitution declares secularism and equal protection to every individual in this country, such communal conflicts periodically challenge these very commitments, casually taking human lives and placing masses into displacement. Also, something more seriously eventually in the interruption of inter-group relations with the worst scars on every living soul. From a researcher's point of view, many have focused on why riots occur, emphasizing electoral incentives, civil society engagement, and elite manipulation. But the aftermath of the riots the ability of criminal justice systems to actually held accountability have very much less attention. This neglected civic sense towards the individual rights in the country dilutes our understanding of deterrence, impunity, and the very making of Indian democracy.

The paper analyzes judicial aftermaths of communal riots, NCRB data is taken between 2016 and 2020. Through constructing comparative indicators of justice delivery, the paper brings out very sharp disparities across States. It argues that differences in conviction rates reflect not simply the incidence of episodes but more importantly, differences in State capacity, political will and institutional culture. It adds to an important but neglected dimension of literature on communal violence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Ali & Brass, 2004) discussed about the rise of Hindu nationalism and subsequent vulnerability of Muslims after Gujarat 2002. Linking India's continued issues of secular-democrat contradictions with unabated hate propaganda, the state's unwillingness to intervene, and yet another stale slogan waving of 'democracy, diversity, and dialogue' by them. The authors then highlighted the importance of state policies about whether streets were going to witness communal harmony or riots.

(Akhtar, 2023) researched on an ethnographic study of the Dholera project in the smart city of Gujarat exhibits the coexistence of right-wing populism and neoliberal dispossession. The protesting farmers who were losing their lands, were politically co-opted into BJP networks, showed the accommodation of dissent by Hindutva. The case further enriched discussions surrounding the rural anchoring of authoritarian populism and the pathways for communal mobilization.

(Anam et al., 2024) dived into the impact of Islamophobia on violent crime against Muslims in India in Modi's era. An analysis of available survey data with an array of secondary research is interwoven to define direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. The article considers that the spread of Islamophobia has been caused due to the Hindutva ideology, right-wing mobilization and certain media narratives, all of them while highlighting continued some forms of marginalization and threats to the democratic possibilities that ensure minority citizenship rights.

(Anthony & Appavu, 2025) analyzed NCRB crimes for states in 2001, 2011, and 2021 through pooled OLS regressions. Higher levels of police spending seem to bring about greater reporting of violent and economic crimes rather than lowering crimes in general. Increase in per-capita GSDP leads to a drop in violent crimes

but confirms a rise in property and economic offenses. The results call for more targeted and context-sensitive intervention rather than more spending for deterrence.

(Bulutgil & Prasad, 2023) found intra-group inequality along with less inter-group inequality to increase riot potential, using Hindu-Muslim riots as examples. Secondly, this research forwarded an instrumentalist theory like ethnonationalist politicians mobilized violence when ethnic cleavages weaken. The study employed district-level data and mainly from Muzaffarnagar case study, it seeks to constrain debates concerning political competition, inequality, and riot dynamics.

(Ghasiya et al., 2023) analyzed 15 million tweets for Hindutva-aligned Twitter networks and locate right-wing extremist themes like exclusionary nationalism, conspiracy, and anti-minority hatred. Toxicity analysed reveal Hindi tweets pertaining to conspiracies and anti-minority violence to be more toxic than English. The study reframed Hindutva within global RWE scholarship and platformed radicalization in India.

(Hazra, 2020) utilized panel data (2010-2016) across 32 Indian states and investigated socio-economic, demographic and deterrence factors influencing crime rates. The conviction rate and the rate of charge-sheets issued considerably impact the results. Another factor positively correlated with some white-collar crimes is literacy. Other results revealed institutional weaknesses within the police and in the judicial machinery which equally fits with debates over the attrition of justice in communal violence cases.

(Jacob & Kanth, 2023) traced the institutionalization of hate speech in India and how it is used in communal atrocities. Choosing the example of Delhi 2020 and the stigmatization of COVID, it analyzed how Hindu nationalist rhetoric amplified by the leaders and social media sustains impunity and heightens levels of violence to practically circumvent atrocity prevention frameworks.

(Jeffery & Seth, 2024) analyzed 26 commissions of inquiry into communal violence since 1980, the study asserted that these mechanisms mostly hide the truth and protect elites instead of bringing about accountability. While there have been instances wherein some commissions did find violations of rights, most operate as commissions of convenience and so undermine the cause of transitional justice and democratic legitimacy.

(**Jenkins**, 2005) reviewed the occurrence of riots being an incentive at the town level to elections and of state-level policing being considered political incentives. Drawing from multi-source data, interviews, archives, and regression studies, the book shows that political will is what prevents riots and contests Inclusive governance theories while providing policy implications for policing and electoral-system design for divided societies and beyond.

(Mukhopadhyay et al., 2023) constructed the Social Equity Index (SEI) for religion, caste, and domicile by comparing prison demographics with census data, the results showed deeply real patterns of discrimination in the conviction process whereby underprivileged groups are more to be in prison. Sometimes, economically lagging states can do better on equity than richer states, thus bringing to the surface systemic discriminations made in the enforcement of the law.

(O'Brochta & Parikh, 2025) compared data on public disturbances from the Indian government with newspaper reports from Times of India to appraise the event-data biases. While aggregate numbers seem similar localized correlations were weak in editorial selection and description biases influence the media counts. Government provided data are more useful in comparing incidents occurring in a single country across

time. Given this combining both sources in the analysis offered a mitigation of bias, thus strengthening inferential results.

(Paleri & Santhosh, 2023) in his ethnography of Kodungallur, Paleri and Santhosh traced Hindu nationalist organizations, apolitical cultural interventions to manufacture a 'Hindu atmosphere' in Kerala. By and large, they argue that such cultural work configures an everyday sociality that builds grassroots hegemony which later evolved to seed electoral gains. Hence, this work challenged Kerala exceptionalism and pluralist public spheres through the gradual emergence of exclusive subjectivities and infrastructure.

(Schutte et al., 2025) studied the posts from Koo between 2020 and 2022 has used 22.4 million posts and showed that divisive hashtags such as the #JaiShriRam correlate with offenses being committed on minorities while conciliatory hashtags lead to a decline in such offenses. The effects do not exist anymore during Internet outrages, thus confirming causality. Thus, the findings underscored how implicit value-signalling on the Internet leads to either the escalation or mitigation of communal violence in India.

(Sen & Jasani, 2021) unsettled binaries of Hindu women perpetrators and Muslim women victims by comparing two sets of riot-affected narratives one from Mumbai and another from Ahmedabad. The ethnography foregrounded the vulnerability of poor women-grief, bodily insecurity, inabilities to move and disillusionment about state and faith organizations which would argue for a "long ethnographies" in order to grasp the issues of survival, complicity, and victimhood during instances of communal violence.

(Slatter, 2023) reviewed anglophone and interdisciplinary geographical approaches to religion, highlighting three broad themes like spatialization, built environments, and landscapes. She opposed modern Western definitions that gave primacy to institutional Abrahamic forms and sacred secular binaries and argued for network or assemblage methodologies and feminist, postcolonial sensibilities to decentre the elites in order to expand subjects, sources, and research regarding embodied religious experiences.

(Subhash & Dr. Umesh Arya, 2025) argued that communal violence is the result of the media framing, political manipulation and the already existing communalism. Investigations of the performance of English newspapers in India, in particular 'The Hindu', have shown the negative portrayal of Muslims and the variations in the coverage, that could provide opportunity for tension escalation. Such impunity has been attained as there are no enquiry commissions of any substance. Corpus comparative studies involved the use of corpus keywords, collocates and n-grams which focuses on how language, moral criteria and specific types of negativity are employed. This work is an extension of the earlier research by inspection of The Hindu's publications on Delhi for the year 2020 and the use of some sentiment analysis tools showed how the framing and sentiment were in the coverage.

(**Tieri & Ranjan, 2023**) discussed that how COVID-19 heightened Islamophobia in India by charting the metamorphosis of the novel coronavirus into a "Muslim disease" through "Corona Jihad" narratives. Interweaving historical context and Girardian scapegoat theory, which demonstrated that epidemic fear magnifies pre-existing communal prejudices, engraining Hindu nationalist ideology in everyday discourse and imparting legitimacy to discriminatory practices across the nation.

(Verma & Gavirneni, 2006) studied relative efficiency using Data Envelopment Analysis, among Indian state police departments. This manifested discrepancies in police productivity and other factors affecting outcomes, including resource use and the institutional framework. The communal law enforcement system

faced numerous issues; accordingly, the study was significant in the analysis of justice delivery in communal riot cases.

(**Tyagi, 2023**) did a gender-theoretic study of ABVP protests in New Delhi by Tyagi in which author discussed the strategic implication of gender in student mobilization within a Hindu nationalist ideology. Choreography, speech and affect legislate femininity/masculinity to discredit left-leaning women, appropriate moral authority, and police campus space. The study illumines the micro-politics of assertion under majoritarian patronage in the highly polarized Indian university public sphere.

3. OBJECTIVES

- I. To map state-wise trends in communal riot cases (2016–2020).
- II. Constructing legal efficiency indicators (CCR, CVR, ACR).
- III. To explore Judicial outcomes/Conviction Ratios.

4. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research have used NCRB data which cover the time frame from 2016 to 2020, provided details regarding the registration of cases of communal riots, the number of cases charge sheeted, convicted, and persons arrested in all States and Union Territories of India. Based on these raw figures which were prepared by researchers from the NCRB data and there were three indicators formed to measure the effectiveness of mechanisms for the delivery of justice in the country.

i. Charge sheeting Ratio (CCR)

$$\frac{\text{CCR} = \frac{\text{Cases Chargesheeted (CCS)}}{\text{Cases Reported (CR)}} \times 100}$$
 (I)

This ratio here measures the efficiency of police investigation by showing the proportion of reported cases in which a chargesheet was filed against the individuals.

ii. Conviction Ratio (CVR)

$$CVR = \frac{\text{Cases Convicted (CON)}}{\text{Cases Reported (CR)}}) \times 100.$$
 (II)

This formula shows prosecutorial and judicial effectiveness by showing the proportion of reported cases that resulted in conviction of the individuals.

iii. Arrest-to-Conviction Ratio (ACR)

$$ACR = \frac{Persons Convicted (PCV)}{Persons Arrested (PAR)}) \times 100$$
 (III)

This formula captures systemic attrition by measuring the percentage of arrested individuals who were finally convicted. The analysis is carried out by means of descriptive statistics, comparative rankings across the states and visualizations that articulate the disparities across states. Data is taken from NCRB though prone to

constraints of underreporting, political pressures and inconsistency of classifications which continue to offer the broadest and most consistent repository upon which to carry out nationwide comparative analyses for communal riot cases is a bit tedious task.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the below **table 1** the data is taken from NCRB website and compiled by researcher to inform about crime rates that are reported at every state of the Indian region as well as the federal occupations from 2016 to 2020, also affirming the registers, filing of charges, conviction rates and arrests made including their respective percentages. This statistic on line crime disparities is evident. In states like Bihar (721 incidents) and Delhi (521) there was a very high incidence but had very low incidence of conviction rates by which any rational thinker can infer the situation as what is going in these states, whereas such phenomenon was also noticed in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Odisha where the conviction was zero even after arresting persons several times and nobody is held accountable for wasting the time of the individuals, wasting their money to prove oneself not guilty.

On the other hand, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh both the states depict very high conviction ratios (90.91 percent and 54.22 percent respectively) which however may cause problems of adequacy of data or localized judicial interventions. On the other hand, some of the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka engage in crimes that are not very high in incidence but have a decent conviction percentage. In general, the conviction to attrition rate of the whole India is only 10.24%, which signifies extreme system breakdown between arrests and convictions and suggest the existence of political, institutional as well as investigative weaknesses in the system.

Table 5.1: Results of Ratio's Calculated

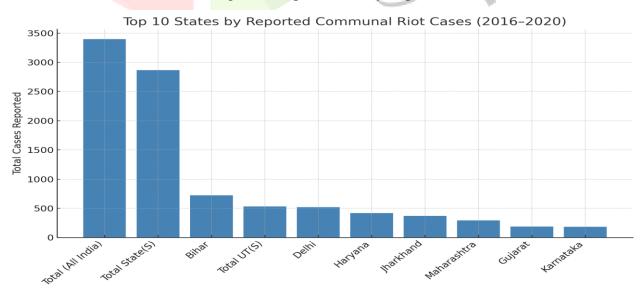
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Arrest- to-
Convicti
on Ratio
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0.0
0.0
1.67
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0.0
0.18
1.39
0.0
3.4
6.69
9.52
11.92
1.13
0.0
0.0
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33.33
0.0
0.0
74.62
0.0
42.13
2.91
0.0
24.02
0.0
1.16
5.45
0.0

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31	Chandigarh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
32	Dadra and	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Nagar								
	Haveli and								
	Daman and								
	Diu								
33	Delhi	521.0	207.0	0.0	443.0	0.0	39.73	0.0	0.0
34	Jammu and	10.0	4.0	0.0	11.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
	Kashmir								
35	Ladakh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
36	Lakshadwe	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	ер								
37	Puducherry	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
38	Total	532.0	211.0	0.0	454.0	0.0	39.66	0.0	0.0
	UT[S]								
39	Total [All	3399.0	2939.0	348.0	18512.	984.0	86.47	10.24	5.32
	India]				0				

The **figure 1** below depicts the details on the communal violence cases in India reported in between years 2016 and 2020 on aggregated and disaggregated levels. The greatest emphasis is given to the All-India and cumulative state figures in the table, highlighting the fact that almost every part of the country is prone to incidents of communal chaos. The data from NCRB shows that the states like Bihar and Delhi have suffered the most. After that comes Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka which also contributed a good chunk of the reported incident. The spatial pattern also shows that the states which are frontal and slightly central are at some risk in frequent occurrences of communal unrest and this suggests a deeper problem. On the other hand, southern states of the country such as Karnataka, though figures in the top ten but portray a lesser percentage of violence, thus the presence of more working conflict management mechanisms or the socio-political context of this region is different.

Figure 1: Top 10 States by Reported Cases



The **figure 2** below is the visual representation that offers a breakdown of how effective or ineffective the capacities of the judicial system were within the 10 states with the highest incidence of communal riot cases within the time period of 2016 to 2020. Most importantly, the solving of communal riot cases in India is at 10 percent while the 12 percent figure is somewhat less since it refers to states only, excluding the Union Territories. Nevertheless, such a good figure is almost never achieved in actual practice. This is because some

union territories such as Delhi have serious criminal cases but there are no convictions at all due to the attrition processes. On the other hand, the state's such Karnataka and Haryana give confident 4-5% rates being still not high numbers. However, similar moderate results can also be seen in many other states. Majority of the states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand is on the negative side of less than 3% conviction ratio. This data cumulatively points out to the success of how law operates in the country like India and eventually we get an idea where society is heading. The illustration familiarizes the fact that in the perspective of law in India, anything goes within the pre-discussed and constant parameters of the judicial machinery supported by law.

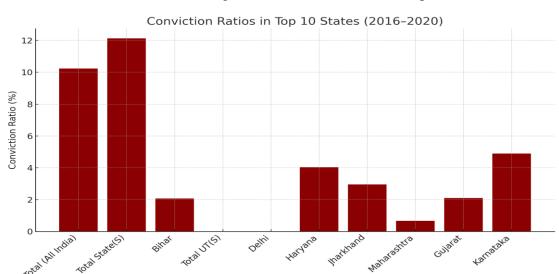


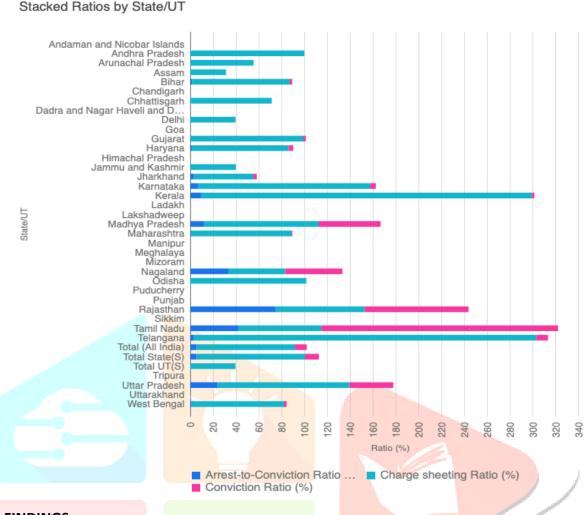
Figure 2: Conviction Ratios in top 10 states

The **figure 3** below depicts the numerical information on several operational indicators of the criminal justice sector in the state departments of India as well as the country's Union Territories. The figure is related to these three main performance parameters: the Charge Sheeting Ratio, Conviction Ratio, and the Arrest-To-Conviction Ratio.

The Charge Sheeting Ratio refers to the proportion of registered cases for which formal charge sheets are filed as an indicator of the effectiveness of police investigations. Hence, it is a measure of direct evidence of the police performing their function. The idea behind the Conviction Ratio is how well or not the criminal justice process has fared in terms of cases once they go for trial i.e., what proportion of the cases come back with a finding of guilty. This however, becomes of great input in terms of judging the quality of the evidence and whether the prosecution has been effective or not. The Arrest-to-Conviction Ratio measures the concern of the state with respect to the execution of the system by connecting the moment arrests are made with the ultimate result in the court.

Although the observations have been particularly telling that the data also suggests levels of operational effectiveness which varies significantly across the states. For example, we may have some regions where the charge sheeting ratio is too high but the conviction ratio is very low, therefore signifying that there may be a problem seperating police investigation and the court conviction. These are the metrics that are necessary for an empirical assessment of India is legal and law enforcement system in order to come out with general measures to redress the shortcomings.

Figure: 3 State-wise Efficiency Indicators



6. FINDINGS

After analyzing the data and information provided in regards to the judicial system in different Indian states and Union Territories (UT) highlights a significant variance as well as structural challenges common to these areas which are highlighted through systematic and in depth analysis. Below are some interesting findings.

6.1 Efficacy of Investigation: Charge Sheeting Ratios

The filing rate of charge sheet which is treated as an index of productivity of the investigative process has been found to vary significantly between different States. A drastic deviation from the data further proves that for the specified data collection period more charge sheets have been registered than fresh cases, retrogressively implying paving out of quantity of cases accumulated in preceding years.

In contrast, a large number of regions like Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Punjab, Sikkim and Tripura have indicated there to be no arrest to submission of charges which is commonly known as the charge sheeting ratio. This means that no cases have been reported during the period 2016 to 2020 and therefore no subsequent charge sheets show what exactly may be responsible for this kind of a low argument. Some states have depleted the figures compared to the national figure but moved to a greater than 50% loss such as Jharkhand which is above Assam with a 33.71% loss.

6.2 Judicial Outcomes: Conviction Ratios

Consequent to the above ratio the rate of convictions paints a very uneven picture. In Tamil Nadu the conviction rate reports to be an unbelievable 207.27%. This is peculiar as it suggests that more convictions have been secured than total cases graced against accused in that specific period hence implying disposal of

backlog cases again. Also, Rajasthan (90.91%) and Madhya Pradesh (54.22%) depicts high conviction efficiency.

From results very few states have prosecution success or conviction rates that reach alarming levels. Such as, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Odisha and a number of other states have a conviction ratio of 0. However, higher populated and more urban states like Maharashtra where 0.68%, Bihar with 2.08% and Gujarat with 2.11% do not secure much convictions either. There is a sharp disparity in the rate of those convicted by each of the state's judicial process, which point out a bigger problem with the quality of prosecution, the collection of evidence and the performance of the judiciary across the country. I would say that these dismal results in the greater part of the India do raise the issue of the criminal justice system in response to the situation in which the victims find themselves.

6.3 Linkage Between Arrest and Conviction

The arbitrary nature of the Arrest-to-Conviction Ratio indicates the problem of law enforcement and the judicial mechanism in some countries. Because a vast majority of the individuals who have been detained end up behind bars, many of these persons are acquitted, leaving almost all the states with numbers of prosecutors which can be proportioned. In cases reported in 'Bihar' for instance, out of 5,022 arrests only 84 individuals were found guilty resulting an arrest to conviction ratio of 1.67%. Similarly in 'Gujarat' out of 2,228 arrests only 4 got convicted leading to 0.18%.

However, in this metric, it is noted that there are certain abnormalities. In this respect, Rajasthan is the outlier with the most powerful Arrest-to-Conviction Ratio of 74.62%, which is evidence that successful prosecutions are more likely to be pursued by those who are under arrest. The results for Tamil Nadu (42.13%) and Nagaland (33.33%) are also above average. However, they point towards a substantial difference between the two stages of the criminal justice process- arrest aimed at completing investigation and arrest aimed at making a conviction.

In conclusion, the data confirms information on the length and breadth of the criminal justice system in India and how it functions inefficiently in many regions. There are some regions in which the performance is satisfactory in one or more aspects but for the most part, the overall level of performance is low and especially in the obtaining of conviction.

7. CONCLUSION

The analysis of India's criminal justice system as undertaken the present study points to a disturbing picture of ill-functionality and geographical disparities. In an audit of operations in states it is clear that there is a unclear matrix ranging from some states with more 120% charge-sheets to those with zero charge-sheets to either a failure to sustain an initial charge in most Jurisdictions. This is highlighted by statistical data showing an increased rate of every arrest being made while a significant decrease rate is seen in the number of prosecution addressing successful convictions as this goes against severe criticisms of the system including but not limited to curb criminal activity and manipulation of the court. This does not only indicate a deficiency in terms of numbers as it involves the incapability in ruling out socio-political aspects of any case, where the location plays a bigger role than the substance of the case. In fact, an encouraging and practical way is by

engaging technology in the reforms in justice sector that may aimed at improving accountability and transparency.

An easier way out is presenting through the feasibility of having a mandatory structured existing database of crime statistics which is why the establishment of a National Criminal Justice Dashboard could be ground-breaking. The system would depict the exact information of interest on the empowerment and satisfaction of the people in terms of objective review and monitoring of such parameters.

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