ANALYSIS OF CASE PENDENCY AND JUDICIAL BACKLOG IN THE INDIAN JUDICIARY

Ela Agarwal, Research Scholar, School of Law and Constitutional Studies,
Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology, Deemed to be University, Meerut

Dr. Kuldeep Kumar, Professor, School of Law and Constitutional Studies,
Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology, Deemed to be University, Meerut

ABSTRACT

The judicial delay will have an impact on meaningful admittance to justice. The timely disposal of cases is a fundamental part of it and the rule of law, and that the 'rule of law' is weakened by the excessive backlog. Judicial delay becomes not just an administrative issue but one that could impact compliance and cooperation with law enforcement and confidence in the rule of law. According to the data of Annual report of Supreme Court the pendency cases has been increase year by year. The total pendency of cases by August 2025, had reached 88,181 which shows the substantial problem in India. The judiciary tried to minimize this pendency by several efforts but the number of pendency cases increased during many years. Case pendency and backlog are two key parameters indicating the ongoing issues of judicial delay. Cases pending in court at a given time are known as case pendency while cases in backlog are cases in pendency in successive periods because of the inadequacy of the judicial system to process cases at an appropriate pace.

Keywords: Judicial Delay, Case Pendency, Backlog, Judicial System.

Introduction

Delay in the justice delivery system is one of the major problems in the effectiveness of the justice delivery system in India. If legal rights and remedies are not available in a reasonable time, justice has little meaning and taking too long to adjudicate erodes their value. Judicial delay is not just about the latency of judicial decision-making, but it is a multidimensional institutional and procedural reality that is associated with case-management procedures, the complexity of procedures, administrative constraints, the capacity of judges, the infrastructure, and the operation of judicial actors. Singh and Thakur (2019)[1] emphasized that repeated postponement of hearing, judicial vacancies, inadequate infrastructure and budgetary support, and administrative limitations have been found to be factors affecting judicial delays in India. Empirical studies conducted in recent years in the Indian District Courts also underscore the significance of institutional and other issues such as court administration, categorization of cases, workload management, etc. on timeliness of disposal of cases (Aithala et al., 2024)[2].

The judicial delay will have an impact on meaningful admittance to justice. The timely disposal of cases is a fundamental part of it and the rule of law, and that the 'rule of law' is weakened by the excessive backlog. Judicial delay becomes not just an administrative issue but one that could impact compliance and cooperation with law enforcement and confidence in the rule of law.

In India the administration dimension is also considered the major aspect in judiciary. The record keeping, transfer of documents, serving summons and notices and coordination of various agencies engaged in litigation are the part of administration dimension. The lack of effectiveness in terms of administration dimension has negative impact on efficiency of courts.

The annual report 2024-25 of Indian Judiciary published by Supreme Court of India indicates a clear and persistent increase in the pendency of cases during the period 2020–2025. According to the data of Annual report of Supreme Court the pendency cases has been increase year by year. The total pendency of cases by August 2025, had reached 88,181 which shows the substantial problem in India. The judiciary tried to minimize this pendency by several

[1] Singh, T., & Thakur, A. S. (2019). Administration of justice: Judicial delays in India. *Indian Journal of Public Administration, 65*(4), 885–896.
[2] Aithala, V., Sachan, A., Sen, S., Payal, H., & Bhattacharya, C. (2024). Decision time: Illuminating performance in India's district courts. *Data & Policy, 6*, e32.

efforts but the number of pendency cases increased during many years[3].

The Supreme Court of India has also acknowledged this broader understanding of access to justice. According to the Court, ensuring access to justice involves more than simply eliminating obstacles that prevent individuals from approaching courts. Although removing such barriers remains an essential component of access to justice, the concept has a much wider scope and includes ensuring that the legal and judicial system provides meaningful, effective and equitable avenues for securing justice.

The Indian judiciary is an integral part of the constitutional structure and plays an extremely important role in the true spirit of the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights and the settlement of disputes between individuals, institutions and the State. The judicial system including the Supreme Court of India, high courts, district courts, subordinate courts, and special courts and tribunals. The constitution of India has given the power to judiciary over legislation. The courts have the power to take decision related to society aspects and government decision also. In India judiciary maintains supremacy of the Constitution and rights and authorities of citizens.

To maintain public conviction in judiciary, the justice delivery system requires being effective and having reliability of its institutions to resolve disputes quickly. It is very difficult for litigants to tolerate prolonged litigation cases that last for many years or decades, especially in today's high-tech world.

Excessive delays in case disposal may affect the public confidence towrads judicial system and in extreme cases may give increase to inducement to take law into their own hands. Although there are constitutional safeguards and institutional arrangements, the Indian judicial delivery system still faces a number of recurring problems such as high pendency of cases, judicial vacancies, length of the judiciary processes, frequent adjournments, shortage of court infrastructure, increasing litigation rates, etc.

A lengthy case disposal leads to negative aspects towards judiciary system and impact public confidence towards judiciary. (Verma et al., 2023)[4] in their study highlighted workload of

[3] Indian Judiciary Annual report 2024-25, Published by Supreme Court of India. https://sci.gov.in
[4] Verma, K., Musaddi, A., Mittal, A., & Jain, A. (2023). *Estimating time to clear pendency of cases in High Courts in India using linear regression*. arXiv.

various courts which leads to backlog of cases in India and emphasize on the efficiency of judiciary. The justice delivery can not only consider the limited number of judges but judiciary has to work on efficiency, administrative system and process.

Review of Literature

Djamaludin et al. (2023)[5] found that implementation of e-Court in Indonesia positively influenced efficiency of judicial processes. They emphasize the e-court system helps in improvement of accessibility and effectiveness of judicial procedures.

Aithala et al. (2024)[6] conducted a quantitative assessment of judicial performance using a large dataset covering more than 1,700 district courts in India during the period from 2010 to 2018**.** They evaluated the performance of courts in terms of timely disposal of cases and also examined the various factors for disposal in judicial efficiency. The major factor that they consider for delay in justice is number of judges and their workload. They found that the efficiency cannot be assessed only on basis of workload there are other factors like organizational, procedural and case management also need to be considered.

Bosio (2024)[7] emphasize on major concern in judiciary like favouring wealthy and politically influential people and it need to be reform. In the study almost last 25 years of empirical research has been analysed and examines the situation under which judicial transformation are most likely to improve effectiveness of courts. It includes four major dimensions i.e. judicial independence, admittance to justice, efficiency and quality.

Singh (2025)[8] analysed the major factors which leads to persistent pendency of cases in Indian judicial system and also highlighted various judicial reforms to overcome this major problem. In suggestions to overcome this problem includes need for comprehensive structural, procedural and technological reforms.

[5] Djamaludin, M. F. A., Ar-Rasyid, Y., & As-Sayyis, I. A. (2023). Assessing the impact of electronic court systems on the efficiency of judicial processes in the era of digital transformation. *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi, 6*(1), 1–18.
[6] Aithala, V., Sachan, A., Sen, S., Payal, H., & Bhattacharya, C. (2024). Decision time: Illuminating performance in India's district courts. *Data & Policy, 6*, 32.
[7] Bosio, E. (2024). A survey of judicial effectiveness: The last quarter century of empirical evidence. *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank*, 40, 185–210.
[8] Singh, A. (2025). Judicial reforms and pendency of cases. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 12*(2), 574–578.

Sonu (2025)[9] highlights burden on Indian judicial system caused due to increase in number of pending cases from many years. Judicial delay become major problem in Indian judiciary and this study examined the factors responsible for judicial delay. In this study the author also provide suggestions to reduce the backlog of cases and ensuring timely resolution.

Pal (2026)[10] highlighted the major challenge of backlog of cases and also highlights the effectiveness of ADR to resolve this problem and reduce the burden on judiciary. The study concluded that persistent backlog of cases represents major challenges confronting the Indian judicial system and ADR can make a significant contribution to timely justice, reduced backlog and improved efficiency of Indian justice delivery system.

Objective of the Study

- To examine the extent and trends of case pendency and judicial backlog in India.

Sources of Data

In present research study various research papers have been reviewed and consider in this study. Further various government reports and policy documents have been considered like annual report of Supreme Court of India.

Case Pendency and Backlog of Cases in Indian Judiciary

Case pendency and backlog are two key parameters indicating the ongoing issues of judicial delay. Cases pending in court at a given time are known as case pendency while cases in backlog are cases in pendency in successive periods because of the inadequacy of the judicial system to process cases at an appropriate pace. If a backlog persists, it may cause an increasing strain on courts as new cases are introduced when old cases are pending. This issue may grow more acute if the placement rate is higher than the removal rate, or if there are older cases that take a significant amount of judicial time and resources. The pendency also affects the quality and accessibility of justice, in that the longer it takes, the more litigants will become dissuaded from pursuing their legitimate claims and the more uncertainty it creates for victims and

[9] Sonu. (2025). Strengthening the Indian judiciary: Comprehensive reforms to reduce delays and ensure timely justice. *International Journal of Law, 11*(5), 115–120.
[10] Tripti Pal (2026). Effectiveness of ADR In Reducing India's Judicial Backlog. *Lex Lumen Research Journal,* https://lexlumen.site/effectiveness-of-adr-in-reducing-indias-judicial-backlog/

accused. Hence, the need for pendency reduction is not only one of improving disposal rates but also to tackle institutional, procedural, administrative and infrastructural issues that lead to the build-up of pending cases.

Table 1: Statement of Institution, Disposal and Pendency of Cases in the Supreme Court of India

Year	**Institution**			**Disposal**			**Pendency**		
	Admission	Regular	Total	Admission	Regular	Total	Admission	Regular	Total
2020	24065	1832	25897	17791	2879	20670	45866	19220	65086
2021	28106	1633	29739	22025	2561	24586	51947	18292	70239
2022	30730	5835	36565	34651	5149	39800	55073	23724	78797
2023	50032	3803	53835	45399	6559	51958	59706	20968	80674
2024	55747	5717	61464	55808	3834	59642	59645	22851	82496
2025 (up to Aug.)	45706	3965	49671	40433	3553	43986	64918	23263	88181

Source: Indian Judiciary Annual report 2024-25, Published by Supreme Court of India. https://sci.gov.in

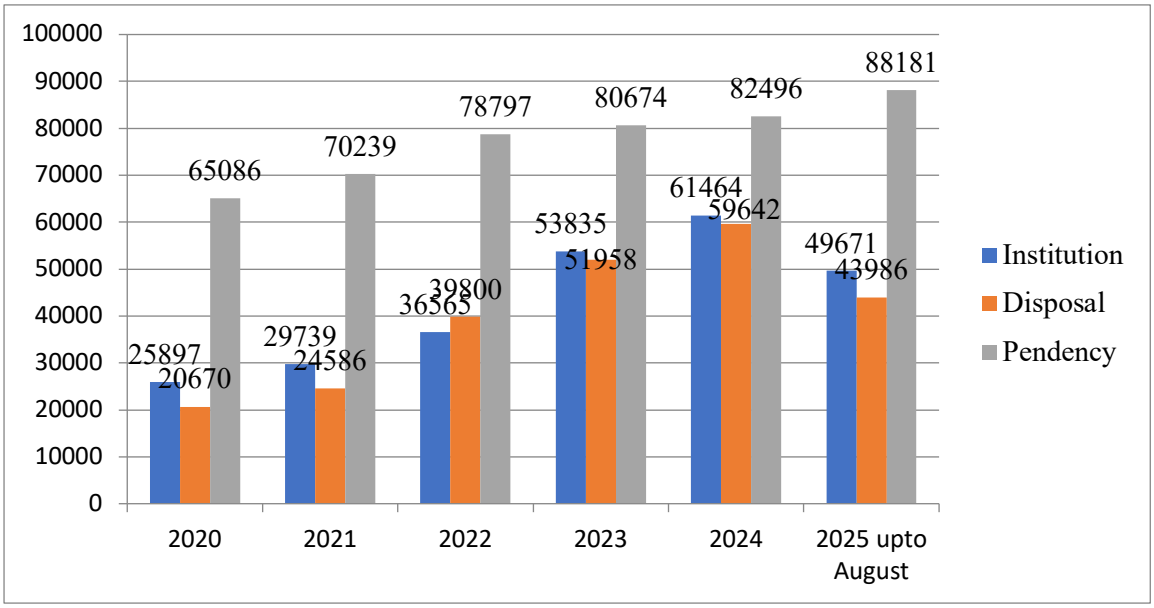


Figure 1: Supreme Court of India Institution, Disposal & Pendency From January 2020 to August 2025 (Total of Admission and Regular matters)

Analysis: The data presented in Figure 1 indicates a clear and persistent increase in the pendency of cases before the Supreme Court of India during the period 2020–2025. In 2020, the total pendency stood at 65,086 cases, which increased to 70,239 cases in 2021 and further to 78,797 cases in 2022. The upward trend continued in 2023, when pendency reached 80,674 cases, and by 2024 it had increased to 82,496 cases. By August 2025, pendency had reached 88,181 cases, representing an increase of approximately 35.48% compared with 2020. This continuous rise is significant because it occurred despite substantial improvements in the number of cases being disposed of during the same period.

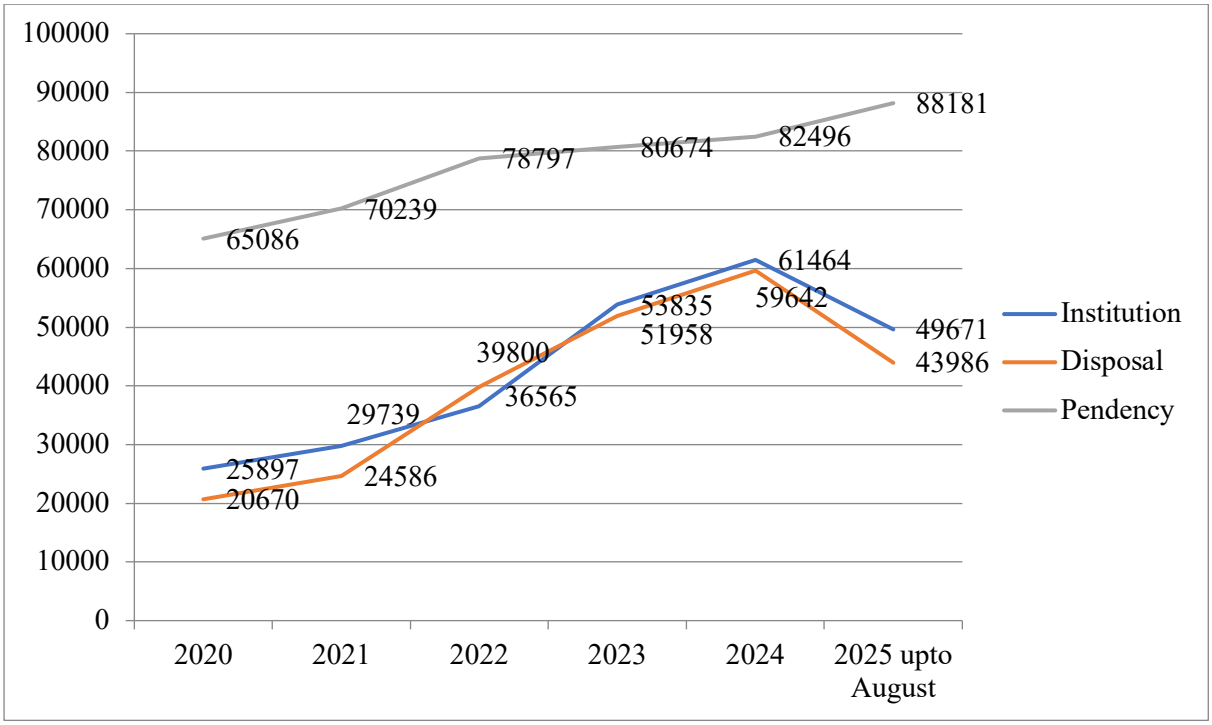


Figure 2: Supreme Court of India Institution, Disposal & Pendency from January 2020 to August 2025 (Total of Admission and Regular matters); Trend Analysis

Analysis: The most notable increase occurred between 2021 and 2022, when pendency rose by 8,558 cases, followed by a further increase of 1,877 cases in 2023 and 1,822 cases in 2024. From the year 2024 to August 2025 there is increase in pendency of 5,685 cases. Although the disposal of cases also increased substantially from 20,670 cases in 2020 to 59,642 cases in 2024, shows the role of judiciary in disposal of cases but still the pendency of cases remained in India. The total pendency of 88,181 cases by August 2025 in India highlights the need for stronger case-management practices. The data emphasize persistent challenge of judicial backlog and strengthens the importance of reforms directed towards speedy and efficient

justice delivery.

Findings

The findings indicate that case pendency in the Supreme Court of India increased consistently from 65,086 cases in 2020 to 88,181 cases by August 2025, representing an overall rise of approximately 35.48%**.** Although the disposal of cases improved substantially, increasing from 20,670 cases in 2020 to 59,642 cases in 2024, the rate of disposal was insufficient to prevent the accumulation of pending cases. The sharpest increase in pendency was observed between 2021 and 2022, followed by continued growth in subsequent years, indicating the persistent nature of judicial backlog. These findings suggest that merely increasing the number of case disposals may not be sufficient to address pendency unless accompanied by effective case-management mechanisms, adequate judicial and administrative resources, procedural reforms, and improved infrastructure. The continuing rise in pending cases may affect the timeliness, accessibility, and effectiveness of justice and highlights the need for comprehensive measures to strengthen judicial efficiency and ensure speedy and effective justice delivery**.**

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