

A Study on Role of Plea Bargaining in Reducing Case Backlog in Criminal Courts

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Abstract: *This empirical study explores the role of plea bargaining in reducing case backlog in criminal courts, with a specific emphasis on its implementation within the Indian judicial system. As criminal courts across the country continue to face overwhelming pendency, the adoption of plea bargaining is often seen as a viable mechanism to ease the burden on the judiciary and ensure timely justice. The study **aims** to assess the awareness, acceptance, and effectiveness of plea bargaining among various stakeholders, including legal professionals, judicial officers, and accused persons. The **objective** is to investigate the challenges associated with its practical application, such as concerns about fairness, voluntariness, and legal representation. The research adopts an empirical **methodology**, relying on primary data collected through a convenience sampling method. A total of 209 respondents participated in the study, providing a valuable cross-section of opinions and experiences related to plea bargaining. The sample was selected based on accessibility of the researcher, offering diverse insights while acknowledging the limitation of potential sampling bias. The **findings** reveal a mixed perception of plea bargaining—while many recognize its potential to expedite justice and reduce case backlog, others remain cautious about its misuse and implications on legal rights. The study **concludes** that although plea bargaining has the capacity to streamline the criminal justice process, greater awareness, institutional safeguards, and consistent implementation are essential to enhance its credibility and effectiveness. These insights are critical for informing policy reforms and judicial practices aimed at improving efficiency and upholding fairness in the Indian criminal justice system.*

Keywords: Plea Bargaining, Case Backlog, Criminal Justice System, Judicial Efficiency, Legal Reform

