

My dissertation is an exploration of the development of Intellectual Property laws, specifically Copyright law, in light of technological change. It is one of the few studies conducted on Intellectual Property law and policy in Pakistan. I was motivated to pursue this topic because Intellectual Property is insufficiently studied in Pakistan, despite its importance for governance of new technologies and the Internet.

There is an inextricable connection between copyright law and Access to Knowledge. However, Pakistan has not updated its copyright laws since 2000. Pakistan is not a signatory to major WIPO treaties such as the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (“the Internet treaties”). There has been vast technological change in the past few decades that has affected the access to knowledge and cultural works, and the legal system in Pakistan is unequipped to address these changes. Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. It is also one hosts a large portion of Internet users in Asia. The lack of attention to copyright and Internet laws in general means that Pakistan is unable to regulate and leverage the potential of the Internet to foster Access to Knowledge.

My research is intended to restart a critical conversation about the governance of the Internet and Intellectual Property in Pakistan. Various policy objectives and constraints have shaped the way copyright law has developed in Pakistan. In order to develop a better understanding of these objectives, this paper in particular explores the origins and relations that have shaped the present copyright laws in Pakistan. Understanding the evolution of the law is imperative in order to conceive of its possible future directions.

My presentation was a part of a panel organized by another Pakistani student, Zahra Hayat. 3 out of 4 panelists were Pakistani, and we discussed various aspects of property relations in Pakistan. Through our presentations, we were able to assert the importance of studying property relations in Pakistan. We are also grateful for the opportunity given to us by the generous support from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies.