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DIGITAL JUSTICE AND E-GOVERNANCE: TRANSFORMING LEGAL SYSTEMS IN THE ERA OF TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The study examines how digital justice and e-governance are transforming legal systems in the era of technology, with particular attention to the Indian justice sector. It argues that digital reform in law is not limited to technical modernization, but reflects a broader institutional shift involving administrative capacity, governance quality, access to justice, and data transparency. Using a qualitative, analytical, and comparative approach, the study draws on secondary sources, including legal and policy literature, official judicial statistics, and digital governance data. The findings show that digital transformation in the justice sector remains uneven across jurisdictions. Large interstate variations in non-uploaded judicial orders, digital record availability, and workload intensity suggest that the benefits of court digitalization are not uniformly distributed. National-level case-flow data indicate that disposals currently exceed new filings, yet high shares of criminal pendency, undated cases, and excessive dated cases continue to constrain judicial efficiency. The Delhi illustration further reveals that undertrial burdens are uneven even within a single metropolitan jurisdiction. The study concludes that digital justice should be understood as both a technological and governance project. Effective reform requires not only digital infrastructure, but also institutional coordination, reliable justice-data management, workload-sensitive implementation, and people-centred policy design to ensure inclusive, transparent, and accountable justice delivery.

KEYWORDS: Digital justice; e-governance; legal system transformation; judicial digitalization; access to justice.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the hallmarks of modern governance, transforming the way states structure institutions, provide public services, and engage with citizens. Among this wider change, e-governance has become a key system to enhance efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and value to the populace in administration. E-governance is taking on a more structural change in the exercise of authority and the organization of institutional processes in the digital era as opposed to just a technical modernization project (Eom & Lee, 2022; Idzi & Gomes, 2022). More recent literature indicates that digital governance is interconnected with more general developmental and strategic goals, such as state capacity, innovation, and sustainable development outcomes (Abulkhair, 2026; Yang et al., 2024). This transformation has particularly important ramifications for the legal systems. The traditional understanding of justice institutions has been characterized by complexity in the processes, paperwork administration, physical presence, and long delays in justice adjudication. Digital technologies have however, started to transform this institutional environment with e-filing systems, virtual hearings, online dispute resolution systems, digital case management, and data-driven court administration. These changes are signs that the logic of digital government is no longer an independent legal system, but rather is growing increasingly integrated into broader governance ecosystems through the integration of technology, interoperability, and digitization of services (Loo & Findlay, 2022; Nastić, 2025).

Digital justice is now a concept of significance in modern legal reform. It is the application of digital resources, platforms and governance structures to enhance access, efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness in the delivery of justice. Digitization of justice is more than computerizing the current legal procedures. It touches on procedural fairness, participation by the populace, accountability, equal treatment before the law and protection of rights in technology-mediated settings. According to recent research, there has been an increase in the utilization of artificial intelligence and digital systems in justice institutions, which has increased the discussion on legitimacy, human control, and trust by the population (Arnesen et al., 2025; Borgesano et al., 2025). The research also indicates that the efficiency of digital justice is not only technologically efficient but also legally empowered, financially accessible, and the trust that citizens have in state institutions

(Goncearenco, 2025; Haesevoets et al., 2024). Digital justice should therefore be construed as a governance and rights-based concern.

This is why recent publications discussed digital transformation as an administrative reform and a constitutional and institutional challenge that needs close attention to legal and policy issues (De Gregorio and Radu, 2022; Djuraev et al., 2025). The importance of this problem in the modern context is further supported by the trends in national and international policies. Digital strategies are being embraced by governments in various jurisdictions to enhance the performance of the state, improve service delivery, and react to the evolving expectations of citizens. It has been demonstrated that effective digital transformation is not only reliant on technology adoption but also on policy coherence, institutional capacity, as well as long-term strategic planning (Lee et al., 2024; Priharsari et al., 2023). Likewise, the digital governance performance measurements indicate that the individual state diverges significantly in its capacity to translate digital policy into the successful provision of the digital policy in the form of public services, including justice-related services (Manoharan et al., 2023; Kinchin, 2024).

These developments are particularly important in countries such as India, where the legal system carries a substantial administrative burden and where digital reforms are increasingly promoted as a means to improve judicial access and efficiency. Official digital data infrastructures such as the National Judicial Data Grid provide evidence of the scale and complexity of contemporary court administration, while international datasets such as the United Nations E-Government Knowledgebase help situate national reforms within broader comparative patterns of digital governance (National Informatics Centre, 2026a, 2026b; United Nations, 2026). Together, these developments suggest that the transformation of legal systems must be understood through both justice-sector reforms and wider e-governance capabilities. It is in this context that this study will explore the role of digital justice and e-governance in changing the legal system in the technological age. Although digitalization is a significant opportunity to enhance access, efficiency, and transparency, it also introduces new institutional, ethical, and governance challenges. Through the lens of the intersection of legal change and digital governance, the paper aims to gain a better insight into the

potentials and constraints of justice reform through technology.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine how digital justice and e-governance are transforming the administration and delivery of justice in contemporary legal systems
2. To analyze the opportunities and challenges associated with digital legal reforms, particularly in relation to access to justice, transparency, efficiency, and institutional accountability
3. To evaluate the uneven implementation of digital justice initiatives through judicial data and comparative governance perspectives, with special reference to India

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative research design that focuses on the association between digital justice and e-governance in transforming modern legal systems. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the subject involves legal interpretation, policy evaluation, institutional change, and normative concerns that cannot be fully captured through numerical analysis alone. It explores how digital technologies, such as e-courts, online dispute resolution, artificial intelligence and online platforms of digital public services, are transforming the legal administration and access to justice. The study is aimed at interpreting the trends, determining the opportunities and concerns within the structure, and the implications of technology integration to the legal institutions, governance structure, and how justice can be delivered in the digital age.

2.2 Nature and Approach of the Study

A comparative approach is used in the study, which is based on an analytical approach. This is appropriate since it considers concerns like legality, accountability, access to justice, transparency, due process, privacy, and regulatory adaptation in technologically mediated legal systems. The analytical element is applied to weigh both practical and conceptual consequences of digital reforms in the justice sector, especially concerning efficiency, accessibility of procedures, and quality of governance. Moreover, the research utilizes a comparative aspect through various jurisdictions, such as India and the top digital governance states, to place the discussion into a wider global framework.

2.3 Sources of Data and Materials

The research uses secondary sources for information and documentary analyses. These encompass laws, government policy publications, judicial reform reports, official government electronic governance frameworks, international organization publications, and academic literature. Special emphasis is placed on reports and indicators released by organizations like the National Judicial Data Grid. The use of secondary materials is particularly suitable in this research since they offer a general and key foundation of the knowledge on the development of the legal systems in relation to technological change.

2.4 Method of Analysis

The data gathered in the present research is analyzed using thematic and comparative analysis. The interpretation of legal rules, policy frameworks, and institutional mechanisms applied to the adoption of digital technologies in justice systems is done through doctrinal analysis. Thematic analysis is also used to structure the discussion based on a set of repeated themes, such as access to justice, procedural efficiency, transparency, accountability, digital exclusion, privacy, and technological ethics. The approach helps the study to describe and to define the key trends that characterize digital transformation of legal governance. The selective use of comparative analysis is to contrast the experience of various jurisdictions and to emphasize best practices and implementation problems.

2.5 Scope and Justification

The study concentrates on the nexus between technology, governance, and law with specific attention to digital justice processes and e-governance reforms that impact the administration of law. It addresses e-courts, digital filing systems, online public legal services, and the overall governance environment, within which such reforms are exercised. It is deliberately selective in scope and does not seek to undertake an extensive empirical evaluation of all jurisdictions or all technologies. Nevertheless, this methodological decision is valid due to the fact that the aim of the article is interpretive and evaluative and not predictive.

3. Results

3.1 Interstate Variation in Digital Record Availability

The analysis indicates that there is a huge interstate difference in digital access to judicial records. One of

the trends is the disproportionate amount of judicial orders that are yet to be uploaded across states. Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of non-uploaded orders in absolute terms, followed by Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. This implies that the shift in the use of digital records in the dissemination of records is not consistent across jurisdictions. Although the e-governance structure of the Indian courts has grown exponentially, statistics show that states have varying degrees of reflecting the judicial outputs in

the online platform. This imbalance indicates a significant drawback of the real-world operation of digital justice. Large backlogs of non-uploaded orders suggest that there might be formal technology system in place, but they are not implemented in an even manner. This confirms the perception that the digital transformation in the justice sector is developing, but not at equal rates and degrees across all states. Table 1 gives a summary of the national pending case composition and the monthly case flow.

Table 1. National Case Composition and Monthly Flow of Pending Cases

Indicator	Civil Cases	Criminal Cases	Total
Pending Cases	11,087,492	37,748,819	48,836,311
Share of Total Pending Cases (%)	22.70	77.30	100.00
Pre-Litigation / Pre-Trial	—	—	1,288,026
Instituted in Last Month	285,774	2,358,086	2,643,829
Disposed in Last Month	339,027	2,899,844	3,238,871
Net Change in Last Month	-53,253	-541,758	-595,042
Contested Disposals	71,669	263,698	335,367
Uncontested Disposals	267,358	2,636,146	2,903,504
Contested Share of Disposals (%)	—	—	10.36
Uncontested Share of Disposals (%)	—	—	89.64
Cases Listed Today	420,377	847,324	1,267,701
Cases Listed Today as Share of Pending (%)	3.79	2.24	2.60
Undated Cases	339,137	1,745,767	2,084,904
Undated Cases as Share of Pending (%)	3.06	4.62	4.27
Excessive Dated Cases	511,558	4,160,120	4,671,678
Excessive Dated Cases as Share of Pending (%)	4.61	11.02	9.57
Cases Filed by Women	1,839,033	2,026,728	3,865,761
Women-Filed Cases as Share of Pending (%)	16.59	5.37	7.92
Cases Filed by Senior Citizens	2,451,927	768,681	3,220,608
Senior-Citizen Cases as Share of Pending (%)	22.11	2.04	6.59

3.2 Non-Uploaded Orders Relative to Caseload

To mitigate the impact of state size, the research was conducted on non-uploaded orders as compared to the total caseload by dividing the number of orders which were not uploaded by 1,000 cases. This is a more meaningful measure to compare to absolute counts than to compare absolute counts alone. Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala and Jharkhand were found within the highest-burden states in this indicator. There were also significant non-uploaded order burdens in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, as

a proportion of case volume. This indicates that the problem is not limited to the biggest states, but the unequal management of digital records in various court systems. The results suggest that digital justice will not be measurable solely by the quantity of cases within the system since certain jurisdictions have disproportionately high disparities in the availability of online records despite having caseload-adjusted. Table 2 shows the states that have the highest absolute number of unpublished judicial orders in the digital system.

Table 2. States with the Highest Volume of Non-Uploaded Judicial Orders

Rank	State	Total Cases	Total Orders	Orders Not Uploaded
1	Uttar Pradesh	53,255,785	14,304,826	24,222,611
2	Maharashtra	32,392,827	21,774,245	9,185,859
3	Madhya Pradesh	17,516,762	7,955,296	7,734,318
4	Kerala	12,264,635	3,419,665	6,935,318
5	Himachal Pradesh	4,691,803	3,834,848	3,361,196
6	Delhi	7,538,293	28,162,603	3,233,302
7	Gujarat	20,431,869	17,138,421	2,685,509
8	Chhattisgarh	3,821,746	1,683,276	2,358,923
9	Jharkhand	3,906,805	2,765,559	1,944,603
10	West Bengal	10,369,644	15,142,899	1,413,566

3.3 Recorded Judicial Output and Orders per Case

One of the indicators that supported the study was the proportion of orders to the total cases. This was a measure that exhibited a significant variation among states. The states that display higher ratios of orders per case can be producing more digitally visible judicial activity whereas the lower ratios can reflect the fewer recorded procedural outputs or the

variation in reporting practices. This implies that the availability of online records is influenced by system design and judicial and administrative conduct in the context of digital justice. The difference found in this measure supports the more general finding that the digital transformation of court systems is a process that is unbalanced and conditioned by local procedural realities.

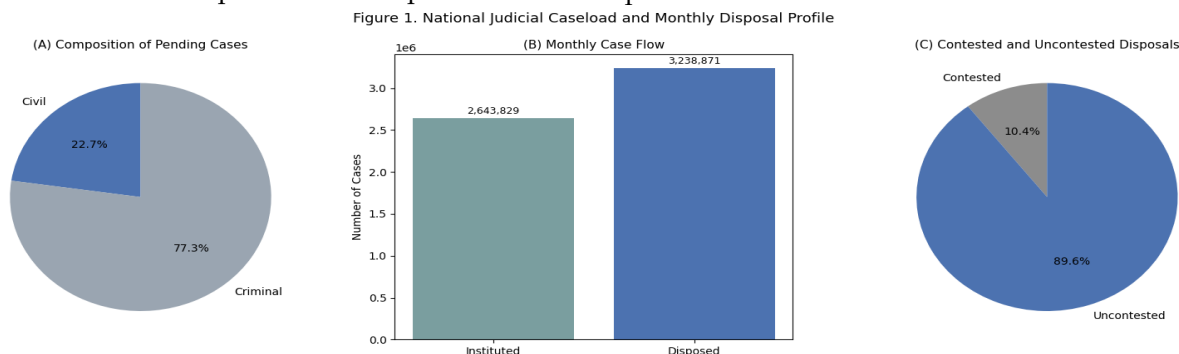


Figure 1. National Judicial Caseload Composition and Monthly Disposal Dynamics

Figure 1 shows a summary of the national judicial caseload and the current case-flow trends. According to Panel (A), the mix of pending cases indicates that the criminal cases make the largest proportion (77.3%), whereas the civil cases make up 22.7%. Panel (B) shows the cases instituted and disposed of in the last month, showing that the disposals (3,238,871) are more than the new filings (2,643,829), which leads to a net decrease in the backlog. In panel (C), the structure of the disposals is shown, indicating that almost all the cases (89.6) were uncontested, with only a minor percentage (10.4) being contested proceedings.

3.4 Institutional Workload and Cases per Establishment

The data also indicates significant variations in the intensity of workloads at judicial establishments. The cases per establishment became a significant

indicator of the administrative burden, which showed that certain jurisdictions are under a heavier burden compared to others. In high-burden jurisdictions, the mechanisms of digital governance can be more stressed, as staff and institutions in courts have to deal with both high volumes of cases and the need for a timely digital upgrade. This is particularly pertinent in the context of digital justice being an administrative procedure and not merely a technological change. The results imply that the structural burden on court units may affect the effectiveness of e-governance. In jurisdictions where the caseload per unit is very high, it could be more challenging to have a comprehensive, timely and readily available digital record, thus constraining the scope of practical technological judicial reform. Table 3 shows some of the indicators of institutional and human burden in the judicial system. The initial section of the table gives the cases per establishment.

Table 3. Institutional and Human Burden Indicators

Jurisdiction / Establishment	Indicator	Value
Chandigarh	Cases per Establishment	192,417.67
Delhi	Cases per Establishment	147,809.67
Uttar Pradesh	Cases per Establishment	90,571.06
Madhya Pradesh	Cases per Establishment	63,237.41
Haryana	Cases per Establishment	62,686.64
New Delhi (Delhi undertrial sheet)	Undertrial Parties per Case	1.47
South West (Delhi undertrial sheet)	Undertrial Parties per Case	1.32
North (Delhi undertrial sheet)	Undertrial Parties per Case	1.22
Central (Delhi undertrial sheet)	Undertrial Parties per Case	1.18

3.5 Localized Undertrial Burden: A Delhi Case

A localized example was represented using the Delhi undertrial data to supplement the state-wide

analysis. The sampled establishments exhibited a significant difference in the number of undertrial parties per case with New Delhi having the highest

ratio, then South West, North, and Central. Despite the fact that the dataset is limited in terms of the number of establishments that are covered, it gives a valuable clue that the human burden in the justice system is not distributed evenly, even in one metropolitan jurisdiction. This is important to the study of digital justice since technological changes cannot be evaluated through the prism of uploaded orders, data visibility, or administrative outputs alone. It should also be conceptualised with

reference to the realities of litigants and undertrial parties who live with the direct experience of delay and congestion. The example of local inequalities in the Delhi illustration, shown in Figure 3, thus indicates that local inequalities still exist in court systems, and this supports the larger argument that digital transformation should be followed by institutional fortification, efficiency of procedure and workload-responsive judicial reform.

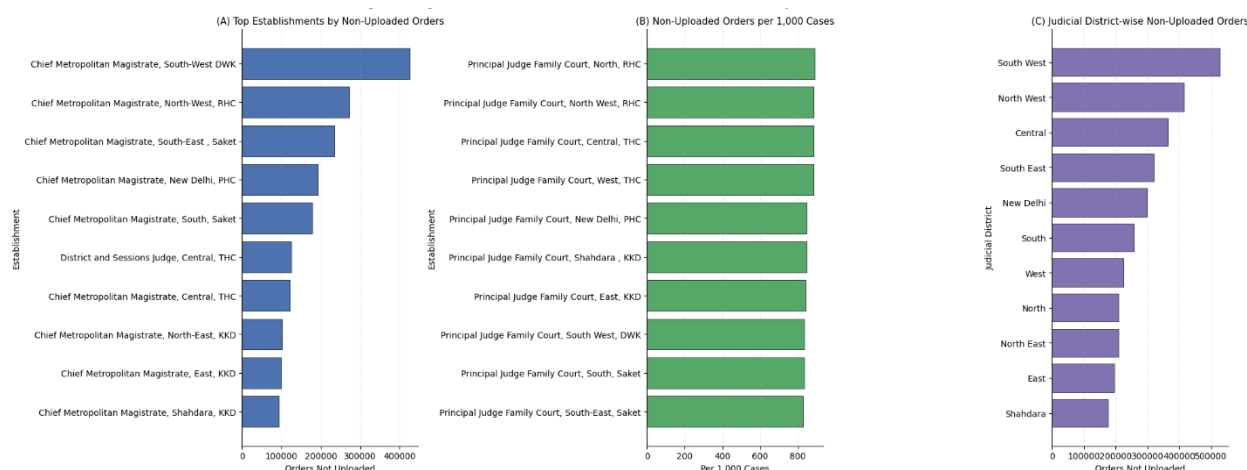


Figure 2. Intra-City Variation in Digital Record Backlog Across Delhi Court Establishments and Judicial Districts

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that there is still an unequal digital justice in India on a jurisdictional basis. In spite of the growth in court digitalization, there are many interstate disparities in non-uploaded orders, case volume, and institutional workload that suggest that technological implementation has not led to equal access to records or administrative efficiency. Digital reform thus represents varied implementation as opposed to uniform transformation. These findings imply that legal digitalization cannot rely solely on technological infrastructure. The policymakers need to focus on the institutional capacity, timely management of records, workload-sensitive reform, and uniformity of implementation standards across the states. Unless administrative coordination and e-accountability are reinforced, e-government initiatives can create gaps in judicial access, transparency, and good justice administration. The current results are generally in line with the previous literature, as well as introducing a more focused empirical view of the unequal digital adoption in Indian judicial management. Previous research has highlighted that effective digital justice does not solely rely on the implementation of

technology but equally on how well justice data is governed, the coordination of institutions, and the administration practices (Byrom et al., 2024). This is in line with the existing findings, which indicate inequalities in non-uploaded orders and the intensity of workloads restricts the actualisation of digital justice across state lines. In the same note, the focus of capacity-building, interoperability, and institutional reform in stages, observed in the various justice transformation frameworks, is also evident in the uneven record availability evident in this research (Carrión et al., 2025). The Indian context is no exception, with the findings contributing to arguments that digital legal reform is influenced by more pervasive regulatory and governance circumstances, rather than innovation rhetoric (Joshi, 2024). The Indian context further reinforces that digital legal transformation is shaped by institutional capacity, data infrastructure, and governance maturity rather than purely technological innovation, as reflected in both digital government readiness frameworks and judicial data systems (Linåker & Muto, 2025; National Judicial Data Grid, 2026c). They also substantiate the fact that technological changes may be effective in enhancing access, but only on a consistent and people-focused

basis (Saxena, 2025; Mirrlees-Black, 2025). However, the research is based on secondary and, in many cases, aggregated data, which does not allow a more in-depth understanding of ground-level implementation, user experience, and institutional behavior. Primary data, such as interviews, surveys, or case studies, should be used in the future to study the experience of judges, lawyers, and litigants with digital justice reforms in practice. Comparative research (longitudinal and cross-country) would also assist in evaluating the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and accountability in the long-term of technology-driven legal transformation.

5. Conclusion

The digital justice and e-governance are changing the nature of law through the redefinition of justice access, administration and experience in the digital age. The study has demonstrated that digital transformation within the justice sector goes beyond the introduction of technical applications like e-filing, virtual hearings, and digital case management. Instead, it is indicative of a more general institutional change where legal institutions come to be more tied to broader systems of digital governance, administrative capacity, and modernisation of public services. The results suggest that digital reforms have a great potential to make legal institutions more efficient, transparent, accessible and responsive to procedures. Simultaneously, the study reveals that digital transformation is imbalanced and multifaceted in its practice. The differences in the availability of digital records, a non-uploaded judicial order, and institutional workload propose that the advantages of digital justice are not evenly spread across jurisdictions. This implies that the success of e-governance in the legal systems does not only rely on the availability of the technological infrastructure, but also on the administrative coordination, consistency of implementation, data governance, and institutional preparedness. Therefore, the study concludes that digital justice is to be perceived as both a technological and a governance project. To achieve a more inclusive, efficient, and accountable legal system, digital reforms should be supported by people-centred policy, well-institutionalized support, and long-term adherence to delivering justice fairly.

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