



AI for Access to Justice: Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in India's Judicial System

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Abstract:

Ensuring access to justice is a core objective of the Indian constitutional system; however, the judiciary continues to experience serious structural challenges, including excessive case pendency, limited judicial capacity, procedural delays, and restricted access for disadvantaged sections of society. These challenges weaken the effectiveness of justice delivery and delay legal remedies for citizens. In this context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as an important technological intervention capable of supporting judicial reforms by improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility.

This research paper examines the potential of AI in strengthening access to justice in India. It analyses the application of AI-enabled systems such as e-Courts, digital case management, virtual hearings, legal research assistance, and technology-based legal aid platforms. Using recent judicial data on case pendency, the study evaluates whether AI can assist in reducing delays and improving court administration. The paper also discusses concerns related to ethical use, data security, algorithmic bias, and the digital divide. It concludes that AI, when implemented as a supportive mechanism under judicial supervision, can play a meaningful role in enhancing the effectiveness of India's justice delivery system.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Access to Justice; Indian Judicial System; e-Courts; Case Pendency; Legal Technology.*

Introduction:

Access to justice forms the foundation of a democratic legal system and is closely linked with the principles of equality and rule of law. In India, constitutional guarantees under Articles 14 and 21 ensure fairness, equality before law, and protection of life and personal liberty. Despite these guarantees, the justice delivery system faces persistent challenges that restrict timely and affordable access to courts.

One of the most critical problems confronting the Indian judiciary is the growing backlog of cases. Courts at all levels—ranging from trial courts to the Supreme Court—are burdened with pending litigation, resulting in prolonged delays. Factors such as inadequate judicial strength, complex procedures, frequent

adjournments, and administrative inefficiencies further contribute to this situation. These delays disproportionately affect economically weaker and socially marginalized groups.

Artificial Intelligence refers to advanced computational systems capable of performing tasks such as data analysis, language processing, and pattern recognition. In recent years, AI has been increasingly adopted in public administration and governance. The Indian judiciary has also initiated the use of digital and AI-assisted tools through the e-Courts Mission Mode Project to modernize court functioning. This paper explores how AI can contribute to improving access to justice in India by supporting judicial efficiency and transparency.

Review of Literature:

Existing academic literature recognizes the potential of technology to reform judicial systems and improve access to justice. Scholars studying court administration have observed that digitization and automation reduce administrative workload and improve procedural efficiency. Research on judicial delays highlights that technological interventions can assist courts in managing large volumes of cases more effectively.

Studies focusing on the Indian context emphasize the impact of the e-Courts Project in digitizing court records, enabling online filing, and improving access to case-related information. Literature on AI-based legal research tools indicates that such technologies help legal professionals identify relevant judgments and statutes more quickly, thereby saving time and effort.

At the same time, critical scholarship draws attention to the limitations of AI in judicial processes. Concerns related to lack of transparency, potential bias in algorithmic systems, data privacy risks, and exclusion of digitally disadvantaged populations are frequently highlighted. Scholar's stress that AI must function as an assistive tool and should not interfere with judicial discretion or decision-making. Overall, the literature suggests that AI can enhance access to justice if implemented within appropriate ethical and legal frameworks.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the concept of access to justice in the context of the Indian judicial system.
2. To analyse the extent and nature of case pendency in Indian courts and its impact on justice delivery.

3. To study the role of Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies in judicial administration through the e-Courts system.
4. To evaluate how AI-enabled tools can contribute to improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in courts.

Research Methodology:

The study adopts a qualitative and analytical research methodology. It relies exclusively on secondary data collected from books, academic journals, government publications, judicial statistics, and policy reports related to artificial intelligence and judicial reforms in India.

A descriptive approach has been used to explain the concepts of access to justice and AI-based judicial reforms. Analytical methods have been applied to examine trends in case pendency and the role of technological interventions in addressing judicial delays. The study does not involve any primary data collection such as surveys or interviews.

Data and Analysis:**Case Pendency in Indian Courts:**

Judicial statistics indicate that the Indian court system is facing an unprecedented level of case pendency. Recent data shows that more than five crore cases remain pending across all levels of courts. A substantial majority of these cases are concentrated in district and subordinate courts, while High Courts and the Supreme Court also face significant backlogs. This distribution suggests that delays originate primarily at the trial stage of litigation.

The increasing pendency can be attributed to several factors, including insufficient number of judges, rising litigation rates, and procedural inefficiencies. The judge-to-population ratio in India remains considerably lower than global

standards, limiting the judiciary's capacity to dispose of cases within a reasonable timeframe.

Illustrative Case Examples:

Recent judicial observations and reported cases reflect the seriousness of prolonged delays. Instances such as criminal trials remaining unresolved for more than two decades and large backlogs in special category cases like those under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act highlight systemic inefficiencies. In certain High Courts, records show cases pending for several decades, raising concerns regarding effective justice delivery.

Role of AI in Addressing Judicial Delays:

AI-enabled tools under the e-Courts framework aim to support courts by automating routine administrative tasks. Digital filing systems, online case tracking, and virtual hearings have reduced paperwork and physical dependency on court premises. AI-assisted legal research, document summarization, and language translation further help reduce time spent on repetitive tasks.

Although these technologies do not directly decide cases, they enhance institutional efficiency and assist judges in managing heavy caseloads more effectively.

Limitations and Concerns:

Despite measurable improvements, challenges remain. Unequal access to digital infrastructure limits the reach of technology-based justice solutions. Concerns regarding data protection, cyber security, and potential bias in AI systems necessitate careful regulation. These issues underline the need for responsible implementation of AI in judicial processes.

Conclusion:

Artificial Intelligence has the potential to serve as an important supportive tool in improving access to justice in India. By enhancing administrative efficiency, facilitating digital access, and assisting legal research, AI can help reduce delays and improve transparency in the judicial system. However, AI cannot substitute human judgment, which remains central to judicial decision-making.

For AI to contribute meaningfully to justice delivery, its use must be guided by ethical standards, transparency, accountability, and continuous human oversight. Additionally, efforts must be made to bridge the digital divide and ensure that technological reforms benefit all sections of society. With appropriate safeguards, AI can play a constructive role in strengthening India's justice delivery system.

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