

The Digital Transformation Of Justice: Assessing The Impact Of E-Filing In Pune District Court

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Abstract:

The integration of digital technology into the judicial system has significantly transformed the administration of justice in India. The e-Courts project, a key initiative under the National e-Governance Plan, has played a crucial role in modernizing court processes, with e-filing emerging as a vital component of this digital transformation. This study empirically assesses the impact of e-filing in the Pune District Court by analyzing its effectiveness in enhancing judicial efficiency, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness. The research is based on qualitative and quantitative data collected by circulating questionnaires among advocates. The study examines how e-filing has streamlined case management, reduced physical court visits, and improved overall legal accessibility. It also explores challenges such as digital illiteracy, infrastructure limitations, cyber security concerns, and resistance to technological adoption among legal professionals. The findings reveal that while e-filing has positively contributed to judicial efficiency, further improvements in digital literacy, technical infrastructure, and policy frameworks are required to ensure its optimal utilization. This research highlights the need for continuous innovation and policy enhancements to strengthen India's digital justice system.

Keywords: E-Courts, Digital Justice, E-Filing, Judicial Efficiency, Court Digitalization, Legal Technology, Access to Justice

Introduction:

Over the past two decades, the world has undergone a remarkable transformation, with digitalization emerging as a key driving force behind this change. The advent of new technologies has revolutionized various sectors, including banking, healthcare, and commerce, fundamentally altering the way businesses operate and services are accessed. With its potential to enhance efficiency, improve accessibility, and streamline processes, digitalization has become a defining feature of the modern era.

In this evolving digital landscape, the judiciary stands as a sector with immense potential for technological integration. Recognizing the need for judicial modernization, India has taken significant steps through initiatives like the E-Courts Project and e-filing systems, adopting such technologies can significantly enhance judicial efficiency, promote transparency, reduce delays, and facilitate seamless access to justice. The Pune District Court, as part of this transition, has implemented e-filing to simplify case management and minimize procedural hurdles. However, while digital transformation presents numerous opportunities, it also brings challenges such as infrastructural limitations, digital literacy concerns, and cyber security risks.

The integration of technology in the judicial system, such as e-courts, virtual court systems, and e-filing, has significantly changed legal proceedings. E-filing in the court justice system is a pivotal innovation in the judicial system. E-filing is the electronic submission of legal papers in courts by all the parties involved in litigation. It allows plaintiffs, defendants, advocates, and judicial personnel to file cases in court electronically. In India, the E-Committee of the Supreme Court has supported the establishment of an e-filing system, which allows the filing of both civil and criminal cases before

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High Courts and Subordinate Courts that have accepted this framework. E-filing has been introduced to enable the digital submission of legal documents in Indian courts, replacing traditional paper-based filing. This system aims to promote paperless documentation, making the filing process more efficient, time-saving, and cost-effective.

This research paper aims to assess the impact of e-filing in the Pune District Court, evaluating its effectiveness in expediting legal proceedings, minimizing paperwork, and enhancing litigant convenience. Additionally, it will examine the challenges associated with its implementation and suggest improvements for a seamless transition to a technology-driven judicial system. By balancing innovation with accountability, the judiciary can harness digital solutions to drive meaningful and sustainable reforms in the administration of justice.

Objectives Of The Research

This study aims to assess the impact of e-filing in the Pune District Court by incorporating both empirical (primary data) and non-empirical (secondary data) research methods. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the implementation process, legal framework, and technological infrastructure of e-filing in the Pune District Court.
2. To analyze the level of awareness, adoption, and usage patterns of e-filing among advocates using empirical data collected through questionnaires.
3. To assess the perceived efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of e-filing based on advocates' responses.
4. To identify the challenges and practical difficulties faced by advocates in adopting e-filing, including technical, procedural, and infrastructural barriers.
5. To evaluate the impact of e-filing on case management, workload, and legal practice efficiency using both qualitative and quantitative data.
6. To gather suggestions and recommendations from advocates on improving the e-filing system.
7. To propose recommendations, based on empirical findings and existing legal frameworks, to enhance the effectiveness of e-Filing in the Pune District Court and other similar judicial institutions.

Scope Of The Study

This research focuses on assessing the impact of e-filing in the Pune District Court using both empirical and non-empirical data sources. The study covers:

1. **Primary data collection:** Conducting a questionnaire-based survey of advocates practicing in the Pune District Court to understand their experiences, challenges, and perspectives on e-filing.
2. **Secondary data analysis:** Reviewing existing legal provisions, government reports, judicial statistics, and scholarly literature to understand the broader context of e-filing implementation.
3. **Key focus areas:** Adoption trends, usability issues, efficiency improvements, and barriers in the e-filing system.

Methodology Of The Study

- A. **Research Approach:** Mixed-method research approach, i.e., Empirical and Non-empirical method.
- B. **Data Collection**
 - a. Primary data: Primary data was collected online with a structured questionnaire and
 - b. Secondary data: Secondary data was collected from different publications, **academic** articles, government reports, and previous studies on the impact of e-filing in India
- C. **Method of Research:** Qualitative and Quantitative methods of research
- D. **Research Design:** Descriptive and Analytical Design
- E. **Sample Size:** 30 Respondents
- F. **Sample Element:** Practicing Advocates of Pune District Court

G. **Limitation of Research:** The study is limited to **advocates in the Pune District Court**, and findings may not be generalizable to other courts.

EVOLUTION OF E-FILING IN INDIA

India's journey toward the digitalization of its judicial system commenced in 2005 with the establishment of the Supreme Court e-Committee. This digital transformation marks a historic shift with the potential to fundamentally transform the daily operations of courtroom proceedings. Technology is promoting more rapid, effective, and transparent legal procedures through the use of virtual hearings and e-filing systems. The e-courts project, which has simplified case management and decreased reliance on manual procedure, is one recent development that provides strong evidence in favour of the claim that "digitization is transforming Indian litigation for the better."²

E-filing serves as a cornerstone in establishing a fully digital judiciary. It is recognized as a comprehensive solution that not only enhances efficiency from the outset but also helps the judiciary minimize its environmental impact by reducing paper usage.

The e-courts project, initiated under the National e-Governance Plan, serves as a transformative step towards integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into the Indian judicial system. The project was designed to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of judicial processes through digital means.

The first phase of the project focused on the computerization of district and subordinate courts across the country. This phase involved digitizing case records, implementing case management systems, and equipping courts with essential ICT infrastructure to support digital operations. The successful implementation of this phase laid the foundation for more advanced technological interventions. Subsequent phases of the e-Courts project aimed at further ICT enablement by introducing key features such as e-filing, e-payment, and mobile applications. These advancements were intended to streamline judicial proceedings, reduce delays, and improve access to justice. The integration of digital solutions such as online case tracking, automated case status updates, and virtual court proceedings has significantly contributed to enhancing judicial efficiency. By continuously evolving with technological advancements, the e-Courts project seeks to modernize India's judicial system, making it more responsive, transparent, and user-friendly.³

The e-Filing system is a comprehensive digital platform designed for the online submission of plaints, written statements, replies, and other case-related applications. It enables the electronic filing of both Civil and Criminal cases before High Courts and District Courts nationwide. To ensure wider accessibility, the system is developed in a bilingual format (English and the local language), catering to advocates and litigants.⁴

The e-Filing System (Version 1.0) has been implemented to enable the electronic submission of legal documents, allowing lawyers to upload and access case-related files remotely, 24/7, without the need to visit the court for filing. Moreover, the case details entered in the e-Filing system are automatically integrated into the Court Information System (CIS), minimizing errors and ensuring accuracy in legal proceedings.⁵

AIM AND FEATURES OF E-FILING

The e-filing system is a helpful online service started to make legal work easier for lawyers and people involved in court cases. With this system, they can file cases and submit documents from home using a computer or mobile phone. This saves time, avoids delays, and reduces the need to go to court in person. Users can upload all the required documents online without visiting the court office. This makes the process faster and more convenient. The system also has useful features like electronic signing (e-signature), which lets people sign documents digitally. Another feature is oath

²Available at : <https://www.maheshwariandco.com/blog/courtroom-technology-in-india/>

³Available at: <https://lawbhoomi.com/how-e-filing-is-making-court-cases-faster-in-india/>

⁴Available at: <https://filing.ecourts.gov.in/pdedev>

⁵Available at: <https://doj.gov.in/efiling/>

recording through the camera of the device, where the user can take an oath online. These tools help to make sure the documents are real and trustworthy.

In short, the e-filing system makes the legal process simple, quick, and safe, allowing people to handle court matters easily from their own homes.

The following are the features of e-filing

1. **Ready-Made Templates:** This provides editable templates for different types of legal pleadings to save time and ensure uniformity.
2. **Online Vakalat Submission:** Allows advocates to create and submit Vakalatnama online without visiting the court.
3. **E-Signing Facility:** This enables multiple parties to sign documents electronically, making the process quick and paperless.
4. **Online Court Fee Payment:** Court fees can be paid securely through the portal using online payment options.
5. **Video Oath Recording:** This lets users record their oath via online video, removing the need to appear in person for verification.
6. **Multiple Application Filing:** Users can file several applications for different cases at the same time through a single platform.
7. **Portfolio Management:** Offers tools to manage all ongoing and past cases, including reminders and planning support.
8. **My Partners:** Advocates can add juniors, clerks, or colleagues as partners to assist in filing and case tracking.
9. **Interactive Dashboard:** Provides a clear view of pending and completed case-related activities in one place.⁶

WORKING OF THE E-FILING SYSTEM IN COURTS

When a litigant files a suit, they or their lawyer can electronically submit all required documents, including pleadings and Vakalatnama, and complete fee payments through the designated portal or mobile application. Support for litigants and lawyers are available through multiple channels, such as phone assistance, chatbots, or email, ensuring accessibility and ease of use.

The e-filing system must be designed to function seamlessly across various devices, allowing for the efficient uploading of large files. Additionally, specialized features can be incorporated into the portal for lawyers, enabling them to track their cases, organize tasks, and manage litigation effectively. Integrating the e-Courts database with certified third-party applications would further allow lawyers, government agencies, and public prosecutors to utilize tailored litigation management systems, optimizing workflow and handling large case volumes. These systems can be customized to streamline complex legal processes, particularly for offices such as public prosecutors.

To enhance efficiency, the platform could offer pre-designed legal document templates, suggested through automated tools that analyze case data. Built-in authentication mechanisms can be implemented to verify the legitimacy of submitted documents, while linking the portal to government databases, such as property records, compliance filings under the Companies Act, 2013, and vehicle records, can expedite both document submission and verification. Once a document is submitted and accepted, the judge can immediately grant online access to the opposing party, ensuring transparency and swift case progression.⁷

Implementation of E-Filing in Indian Courts

E-filing has been introduced at different levels of the Indian judiciary to make legal procedures faster and more efficient:

⁶Ibid 3

⁷Available at: <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s388ef51f0bf911e452e8dbb1d807a81ab/uploads/2023/04/2023042088.pdf>

- A. **Supreme Court of India:** The Supreme Court allows lawyers and petitioners to submit legal documents online. The system is available to Advocates-on-Record and Petitioners-in-Person, making the filing process easier, reducing paperwork, and minimizing administrative burdens.
- B. **High Courts and District Courts:** Many High Courts and District Courts have now adopted the e-filing system for both civil and criminal cases. Through the e-filing portal, users can submit complaints, written statements, replies, and other case-related applications.
- C. This system helps save time, reduce physical paperwork, and improve access to justice.⁸

CHALLENGES OF ELECTRONIC LITIGATION⁹

While electronic litigation offers many benefits, it also comes with certain challenges in the Indian context. Even though video conferencing has helped make court processes more accessible, many people still struggle with a lack of proper internet connectivity. It is often assumed that all courts in India are equipped with good digital infrastructure and that everyone involved is comfortable using technology but this is not always the case. Some of the main challenges are discussed below.

- a. **Digital Divide:** People from marginalized communities often face difficulties in joining virtual court proceedings because they don't have proper internet access or the necessary devices. This makes it hard for them to take part effectively in online hearings.
- b. **Technological Infrastructure:** For e-courts to work smoothly there's a need to improve the existing technology. This includes upgrading hardware and software, training judges, lawyers, and court staff to use digital tools, and ensuring stable and reliable internet connections.
- c. **Data Security and Privacy:** E-courts involve the exchange of sensitive legal and personal information. It's very important to protect this data and keep the details of people involved in cases confidential.
- d. **Legal Framework and Regulations:** The current laws related to e-courts need to be updated to handle the new challenges of virtual hearings. Clear rules are needed for things like accepting electronic evidence and verifying digital documents.
- e. **Resistance to Change:** Many judges, lawyers, and litigants are hesitant to switch to e-courts because they are used to traditional courtroom practices. To make e-courts work effectively, it's important to help people become more comfortable and confident with the new system.
- f. **Capacity Building:** It is important to train and support judges, lawyers, and court staff in using the e-court system. Improving their digital and technical skills through workshops, training sessions, and seminars will help them adapt more easily to the new system.
- g. **Connectivity and Power Outages:** In some parts of India, people still face problems with stable electricity and internet connections. These issues need to be addressed to ensure uninterrupted access to e-courts for everyone.
- h. **Public Awareness and Trust:** To make e-courts successful, the public must understand how they work and how they benefit users. Building trust and clearing doubts through awareness campaigns can encourage more people to use the e-court system confidently.
- i. **Access and Inclusivity:** People who lack stable internet connections or digital devices are often left out of the e-court system. In contrast, traditional courts are more inclusive, allowing anyone—regardless of their background—to physically attend and participate in court proceedings.
- j. **Human Interaction:** Traditional courts allow face-to-face interaction between judges, lawyers, and litigants, which helps in building understanding and trust. This kind of personal connection is often missing in virtual hearings, especially in sensitive or emotional cases.
- k. **Evidence Presentation:** In physical courts, presenting documents, objects, or witness testimonies is usually straightforward. However, in e-courts, presenting digital evidence can be more complex, and questions often arise regarding its authenticity and legal acceptance.

⁸ Supra 2

⁹ Vats, P., & Khan, N. (2024). *Analysis of electronic litigation in India*. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(6), 1096–1103. Granthaalayah Publications. <https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/article>

l. Judicial Discretion: In in-person hearings, judges can observe a person's body language, emotions, and behavior, which can help in understanding the case better. Such non-verbal cues are harder to notice during virtual proceedings, making it more challenging for judges to assess the situation fully.

m. Public Accountability: Traditional courts promote transparency by allowing the public to observe proceedings. This openness ensures public accountability, which can be harder to achieve in online courtrooms where public access may be limited or restricted.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The survey, which is conducted by circulating online questionnaires, results are organized as follows: in the first section, the demographic profile of the respondents is presented. The second section presents the perception of the respondents towards e-filing in the Pune district court.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sr.no.	Variables and Categories	N = 30	%
1	Age		
	26-35	7	23.3%
	36-45	14	46.7%
	46-55	9	30%
	56 and above	0	-
2	Gender		
	Male	23	76.7
	Female	7	23.3
3	No. of years practicing as an Advocate (Experience) :		
	0-5	11	36.7
	6-10	3	10
	11-15	2	6.7
	16-20	3	10
	More than 20 years	11	36.7
4	Type of Cases Handled		
	Civil	15	50%
	Criminal	6	20%
	Family Law	4	13.3%
	Commercial	4	13.3%
	Other	1	3.3%

Interpretation: From the above-mentioned data, it can be observed that 76.7% of respondents are Male, and 23.3 % of the respondents are female out of the total collected responses. The majority, 46.7 % of the respondents, are between 36 to 45 years, while 30% of the respondents are between 46 to 55years, and 23.3 % of the respondents are between 26 to 35 age group. .

Table 1 also shows the No. of years practicing as an Advocate (Experience) of respondents the majority (36.7 %) of respondents have experience in 0 to 5 years and more than 20 years of practice, while 10% of respondents have experience in 6 to 10 years and 16 to 20 years of practice. It is also reported that a small percentage of respondents (6.7 %) in 11 to 15 years.

Table 1 also shows the types of cases handled by advocates in the Pune district court, which shows that Civil cases constitute the majority at 50%, followed by criminal matters at 20%, with family law and other categories each comprising 13.3%, and commercial cases at a minimal 3.3%.

This distribution shows that civil cases are the most common, highlighting the need for a strong and efficient e-filing system that meets the specific requirements of civil procedures. Although criminal and family law cases are fewer, they still require a safe and easy-to-use e-filing platform due to their urgent and sensitive nature. The low number of commercial cases suggests an opportunity to improve digital use in that area. Overall, the findings support the need for a well-designed e-filing system that can handle different types of cases, with special focus on civil matters.

Table 2: Perception of the respondents towards E-filing in Pune District Courts

Sr. No	Question				
1	How did you first learn about the E-Filing system?	Official Court Notification- 40 %	Bar Association- 16.7 %	Colleagues- 40 %	Self-exploration 16.7 %
2	Have you received any formal training on E-Filing?	Yes, from the court administration 6.7 %	Yes, from the Bar Association 23.3 %	No formal training received 70 %	-
3	Do you think the training provided on E-Filing is sufficient?	Yes 30 %	No 70 %	-	-
4	How frequently do you use the E-Filing system?	Regularly 40 %	Occasionally 36.7 %	Rarely (only when necessary) 23.3%	-
5	Has E-Filing improved your efficiency as an advocate?	Yes 33.3%	No 33.3%	Not Sure 33.3 %	-
6	Has E-Filing reduced paperwork and manual errors in case filing?	Yes, significantly 23.3 %	Yes, but only slightly 26.7 %	No, it has created new difficulties 50 %	
7	Has the e-filing system helped reduce delays in document submission?	Yes, it has reduced delays 30 %	No, delays still occur 36.7 %	It has increased delays 33.3 %	
8	Do you find the Maharashtra e-filing portal	Yes, very user-friendly	Moderately user-friendly	Not user-friendly, difficult to use	

	efficient and user-friendly?	33.3 %	50 %	16.7 %	
9	Have you faced challenges in uploading documents due to file format, size restrictions, or technical errors?	Frequently 50 %	Occasionally 43.3 %	Never 6.7%	-
10	What is your preferred method of filing matter in court?	Physical mode of case filing 70 %	Through e-filing portal 30 %	-	-
11	Has e-filing improved transparency in case processing and document submission?	Yes significantly 30 %	Somewhat 43.3 %	No change 16.7 %	Transparency has decreased 10 %
12	Has the digital filing system improved the accuracy of case records and documentation?	Yes, significantly 33.3 %	Somehow 16.7 %	No errors still exists 10 %	Error have increased 40 %
13	What is the biggest technical issue you face with the e-filing system?	Slow or unresponsive website 40 %	Difficulty in document uploads 23.3 %	Lack of technical support 33.3 %	Internet connectivity issues 3.3 %
14	Do you think e-filing has made the justice delivery system more efficient?	Yes, very efficient 23.3 %	Somewhat efficient 40 %	It has made the system more complicated 36.7 %	-
15	Do you think mandatory training on the implementation of e-filing technology in courts should be provided to all court staff and judges to ensure the successful adoption of the	Yes, mandatory training is essential. 93.3 %	No, training should be optional 6.7 %	Can't Say -	Maybe -

	e-filing system in the judicial system?"				
16	Would you recommend any changes to improve the e-filing system in Maharashtra?	Better training programs for advocates 36.7 %	Improved portal design and functionality 6.7 %	More help desks for troubleshooting 16.7 %	Allow hybrid filing (both online and offline) 40 %
17	Do you believe the e-filing system is a step towards modernization, or do you prefer the traditional physical filing system?	A necessary step towards modernization 53.3 %	Somewhat helpful, but needs improvement 33.3 %	No major benefit compared to traditional filing -	Prefer physical filing over e-filing 13.3 %

The survey indicates that 40% of respondents became aware of the e-filing system through official court notifications, and colleagues, while only 16.7% learned about it via bar associations and self-exploration. Notably, just 6.7% reported receiving any formal training, with 70% confirming the absence of structured training programs.

About the frequency of use, 40% reported regular use of the e-filing system, while 36.7% use it occasionally, and the remainder use it only when necessary. A notable 70% of users still prefer the physical mode of filing over e-filing, indicating persistent reliance on traditional methods.

The data reflects an equal distribution of opinions among advocates on the impact of e-Filing: 33.3% find it efficient, 33.3% do not, and 33.3% are uncertain.

The data reveals that while 23.3% of respondents believe e-Filing has significantly reduced paperwork and manual errors, and 26.7% acknowledge only slight improvement, a majority 50 %, feel it has introduced new difficulties.

The data indicates that user experience with the Maharashtra e-Filing portal is mixed. While 33.3% of respondents find it very user-friendly, a larger portion 50% consider it only moderately user-friendly. Notably, 16.7% find the portal difficult to use.

Moreover, 50 % of respondents reported challenges in uploading documents due to file format restrictions, size limitations, or technical errors.

Regarding the filing method, 70 % of respondents preferred the physical mode of case filing, and only 30 % preferred filing through e- e-filing portal. Regarding transparency, only 30% believed the system significantly improved transparency in case processing and submission, while 43.3% saw somewhat it had changed. About 10 % even felt that transparency had decreased.

Regarding the most significant technical issue with the e-filing system, 40% of respondents cited slow or unresponsive websites, while 23.3% pointed to difficulties in uploading documents. Furthermore, 33.3% reported internet connectivity issues, and 3.3% highlighted a lack of technical support.

Responses regarding the e-Filing system made the justice delivery mechanism more efficient, 23.3 % agreed, while 40% found it only somewhat efficient. Only 36.7 % believed it has made the system more complicated.

A substantial **93.3%** of respondents advocated for the implementation of mandatory training for all users. Regarding suggestions for system improvement, **36.7%** recommended enhanced training for

advocates, **16.7%** suggested establishing additional help desks for troubleshooting, and **40%** emphasized the need for hybrid filing options. **53.3%** of respondents considered e-filing a necessary step toward modernization, while **33.3%** felt it still requires significant improvement. **13.3%** preferred the traditional physical filing system.

The findings suggest that the e-filing system is viewed as a positive move towards digitalization; however, its effectiveness is limited due to a lack of training, technical difficulties, and user reluctance. Thus, improved training and system support are necessary for its successful implementation.

CONCLUSION:

Digital transformation in the legal system of India has drastically changed the overall workings of the judicial system. E-filing has been introduced in Indian courts to facilitate the digital submission of legal documents, replacing the traditional paper-based system. The objective of this system is to advance paperless documentation, thereby making the process of filing documents more efficient, time-saving, and economical. This research aimed to assess the impact of the e-Filing system in the Pune District Court as part of the broader digital transformation of justice in India. The study found that while the initiative aligns with national goals of digitization and judicial reform, practical challenges hinder its full effectiveness. The empirical analysis revealed that awareness of the system exists among legal professionals; however, a significant gap remains in terms of training, technical infrastructure, and user support. It was observed that a large proportion of users still prefer physical filing due to ease of use and familiarity, indicating resistance to change.

However, data analysis and interpretation indicate that the successful implementation of the e-Filing system is obstructed by challenges such as inadequate formal training, technical limitations, and a persistent preference for traditional physical filing among users. Despite these hurdles, the overall findings emphasize the need for continuous institutional efforts to strengthen the digital skills of all stakeholders, ensuring that access to justice through technology remains smooth, efficient, and fair.

Therefore, to promote wider adoption and effective use of the e-Filing system, it is recommended that regular awareness campaigns be conducted to educate legal professionals and litigants about its benefits. Furthermore, targeted training programs, simplified digital interfaces, and stronger technical infrastructure are essential to overcome resistance and ensure smoother transitions from traditional to electronic filing. **Institutional collaboration at both the national and district levels will play a vital role in building long-term digital capacity within the judiciary and in realizing the broader goals of accessible, efficient, and technology-driven justice delivery.**