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Artificial intelligence and judicial decision-making in India: A critical doctrinal and empirical analysis

Dr. Honey G Thakkar
Department of Law, Gokul Global University, Siddhpur, Gujarat, India

Abstract
The growing incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into court systems has sparked both optimism and anxiety in legal circles around the world. In India, AI technologies are increasingly being used in auxiliary court duties such as case administration, legal research, transcribing, and judgment translation as part of several e-Courts programs. While these tools promise to increase efficiency and reduce case backlogs, their prospective use in substantive court decision-making raises fundamental concerns about justice, openness, accountability, and the preservation of human judicial discretion.
This study uses a mixed-method approach to provide a critical review of AI's position in the Indian judiciary, combining theoretical legal analysis with empirical assessment. Constitutional principles, legislative frameworks, policy papers, and Indian case law are scrutinized alongside institutional reports and technology deployment methods. The study looks into how AI tools are currently employed, if they influence judicial reasoning, and what they mean for the future of adjudication. The findings show that AI in India is mostly used as an assistive mechanism rather than an independent decision-maker. It's most noticeable contributions are in administrative efficiency, information management, and the availability of legal resources. This study indicates that, while AI has the potential to improve court administration, its application in adjudicatory domains should be addressed with caution. Strong legislative safeguards, human monitoring, algorithmic accountability, and institutional capacity building are required to guarantee that technology innovation promotes rather than threatens constitutional ideals and public trust in the justice system.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence in judiciary, judicial decision-making, algorithmic bias, legal technology, e-courts India, AI ethics in law

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly altering institutions and professional practices all around the world. AI is no longer a future notion in judicial systems; it is now an active component of court operations. Across jurisdictions, courts are experimenting with machine learning algorithms, natural language processing technologies, and data analytics platforms to improve justice delivery efficiency, uniformity, and accessibility. In India, this approach has gained traction with the implementation of AI-enabled technologies in auxiliary court operations such as case management systems, automated judgment translation, transcription services, and AI-assisted legal research platforms (IndiaAI, 2025; eCourts Phase III data). These applications offer to reduce the time and administrative effort associated in processing massive volumes of legal information, thereby helping to address chronic difficulties such as case backlogs. These applications offer to reduce the time and administrative effort associated with processing large amounts of legal information, thereby addressing long-standing issues like as case backlogs and resource limits.

Despite these developments, the idea of integrating AI to substantive court decision-making is still highly contested. At the heart of this dispute are profoundly held legal and philosophical values, including the concepts of justice, transparency, accountability, and the importance of human judgment in interpreting the law. While AI systems excel at pattern recognition, predictive modeling, and text analysis, their performance is necessarily limited by the quality and representativeness of the data on which they are trained. This increases the risk of algorithmic bias, which is the repetition and amplification of existing socioeconomic inequities in automated outputs. Furthermore, the opaque nature of many advanced AI models—often referred to as "black boxes"—undermines the transparency required for the validity of judicial reasoning and public trust in judicial results.

In India, these global issues connect with constitutional pledges to equal treatment under the law, fundamental rights, and judicial independence. The Indian judiciary functions within a system that prioritizes reasoned decisions, contextual law interpretation, and procedural fairness. This normative setting poses crucial problems concerning the appropriate function of artificial intelligence. This study provides a critical review of these problems by combining doctrinal legal analysis with empirical methodologies and evidence from Indian court practices. While past research has focused on either theoretical critiques of AI or restricted technical appraisals of specific technologies, this study seeks to bridge both aspects. It investigates not just how AI is being employed in Indian courts, but also how judicial actors perceive these technologies, what risks and opportunities emerge from real-world deployment, and what these changes mean for the future of adjudication.

The analysis assumes that AI is now used mostly as an assistive technology, supplementing human capacities rather than replacing judicial discretion. However, the findings highlight substantial institutional and ethical issues that must be addressed before more substantive integration into adjudicatory functions is judged feasible. By setting the Indian experience within broader global debates on AI and justice, this paper contributes to an emergent corpus of literature that aims to balance innovation and accountability in justice administration.

1. Research Problem and Objectives

While AI has clearly enhanced administrative efficiency in courts, its prospective role in substantive judicial decision-making is unknown and contentious. The key research question addressed in this paper is whether the rising use of AI in judicial procedures has an impact on judicial reasoning, fairness, and accountability, either directly or indirectly.

The study's Objectives are

1. To investigate the existing applications of AI in the Indian court.
2. To determine if AI tools influence judicial reasoning or outcomes.
3. To identify the legal, ethical, and constitutional challenges that arise from AI integration.
4. To evaluate institutional readiness for deeper AI usage.
5. To recommend protections and policies for appropriate use.

2. Scope and Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the Indian judiciary while setting its findings within broader worldwide discussions about AI in courts. It looks at AI applications for legal research, case management, translation, and data processing, but excludes private legal tech platforms and non-judicial conflict resolution solutions unless they are directly applicable.

The value of this study stems from its timely contribution to a growing and underexplored area of legal scholarship in India. As courts increasingly use digital tools, it is critical to understand how AI affects constitutional values, judicial independence, and procedural fairness. This study provides a balanced approach for examining both the promise and risks of AI in the justice system, with recommendations for politicians, judicial institutions, and legal experts.

Material and Methods

This study uses a mixed-method research strategy that combines doctrinal and empirical methodologies. The doctrinal method was utilized to examine constitutional concepts, statutory laws, policy papers, and relevant Indian case law relating to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings. Secondary materials, such as law commission papers, Supreme Court e-Committee reports, government publications, and scholarly articles, were also consulted to gain a better understanding of the regulatory and ethical framework controlling court technology.

The empirical component included a qualitative evaluation of AI technologies currently used in the Indian judiciary, including SUPACE (Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court Efficiency), SUVAS (Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software), and other e-Courts efforts. Interviews, reports, and publicly available judicial data were analysed to better understand practical implementation, user experience, and institutional obstacles.

AI Adoption in India's Judiciary

The Indian judiciary has increasingly adopted digital transformation as part of a larger judicial reform effort to improve efficiency, transparency, and access to justice. Within this digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has arisen as a supplementary technology aimed to aid court administration rather than replace it. AI adoption in India is cautious and phased, with a focus on workflow enhancement, information accessibility, and linguistic inclusion.

The e-Courts Mission Mode Project

The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, which was created as part of the National e-Governance Plan, serves as the framework for AI integration in Indian courts. This effort aims to improve court infrastructure by digitizing case records, allowing for electronic filing, creating virtual courts, and upgrading case tracking systems. Phase III of the project focuses more on intelligent data management and advanced technological tools, establishing the ecosystem required for AI-based applications.

The e-Courts project, which created centralized databases and standardized digital records, has enabled AI systems to better evaluate legal papers, organize case material, and aid judicial personnel. While not a standalone AI tool, this project serves as the technological foundation for future AI implementation.

SUPACE (AI-powered legal research assistance)

The Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court Efficiency (SUPACE) is one of the judiciary's first AI-powered initiatives. SUPACE, designed as a research support tool, assists judges in identifying important case law, extracting key legal principles, and quickly navigating enormous amounts of legal data.

Importantly, SUPACE does not provide binding recommendations or forecast case outcomes. Instead, it serves as a filtering and organizational tool, helping judges to obtain precedents more quickly. SUPACE, according to judicial authorities, is simply helpful, with final interpretation and reasoning remaining exclusively human tasks. This demonstrates the judiciary's goal to use AI as an augmentation tool rather than an adjudicative authority.

SUVAS (AI-Based Translation of Judgments)

India's language variety offers a significant obstacle to legal accessibility. The Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS) addresses this issue by utilizing AI-powered natural language processing to translate judicial papers into regional languages. This program encourages inclusivity by making court decisions more understandable to litigants, lawyers, and the general public who may not be fluent in English.

SUVAS improves transparency and democratizes access to legal information, but it also calls into question translation quality and contextual sensitivity. To limit hazards, human verification is still required to ensure that legal meaning is not corrupted during automated processing.

Application of artificial intelligence in case management and transcription

Artificial intelligence is also being utilized to improve case management and transcription services. Intelligent systems help to classify and categorize case files, schedule hearings, and keep track of procedural timetables. Automated transcription techniques help to translate courtroom hearings into written documents, saving time and decreasing clerical work.

These applications help to dramatically reduce administrative delays and improve record accuracy. They do not, however, evaluate evidence, interpret legislation, or determine judicial outcomes; they only work at the procedural level.

Case studies

Case Study 1: SUPACE for Legal Research

SUPACE enables judges to swiftly retrieve relevant precedents. While it increases efficiency, it has no impact on judicial thinking.

Case Study 2: SUVAS for Multilingual Access

SUVAS interprets decisions into regional languages, improving accessibility. Human verification guarantees legal accuracy.

Case Study 3: AI for E-Court Case Management

AI assists in sorting, scheduling, and tracking cases, decreasing clerical workload while leaving decision-making to judges.

Case Study 4: AI-based Transcription

Automated transcribing saves time and minimizes errors in court records, but it still requires human verification.

Empirical and case analysis findings show that AI can be an efficient support tool

AI improves procedural efficiency by accelerating research, document organization, transcribing, and translation, thereby lowering the administrative burden on judges and personnel.

1. **No Direct Replacement for Judicial Discretion** Judges continue to have complete authority over legal interpretation, evidence evaluation, and decision making. AI outputs are only used as reference materials.

2. **Improvements in Research and Administration** AI improves case tracking, legal research, and information accessibility across several languages, resulting in more efficient judicial procedures.

3. **Issues: Bias, Opacity, and Lack of Regulation** Risks remain surrounding algorithmic bias, non-transparent operations, and the lack of adequate legal or ethical frameworks to control AI use in courts.

Result

According to the study, the Indian judiciary now uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) for assistive and administrative activities rather than adjudicatory decision-making. Artificial intelligence-powered solutions are largely utilized for legal research assistance, case data management, document translation, and transcribing services. These technologies help to enhance efficiency in court workflows and minimize the time required to complete procedural activities.

According to the findings, artificial intelligence systems have not replaced judicial thinking or discretion. Judges continue to interpret the law, assess evidence, and issue reasoned decisions. AI outputs serve simply as supporting references and do not have binding authority in judicial decisions.

Empirical observations demonstrate significant benefits in legal research efficiency, case management, and judicial information accessibility, particularly when using translation systems that account for linguistic variety. However, the findings raise key concerns, such as potential algorithmic bias, a lack of transparency in AI operations, disparities in technology infrastructure between courts, and the absence of a comprehensive legal framework governing AI use in the judiciary.

Discussion

The outcomes of this study show a cautious and constrained approach to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the Indian judiciary. Unlike some global experiments investigating algorithmic decision-making, India's judicial system now restricts AI to administrative and auxiliary functions. This demonstrates institutional acknowledgment that adjudication is a constitutional responsibility based on human judgment, ethical reasoning, and contextual interpretation.

The analysis highlights the contradiction between technology efficiency and constitutional safeguards. AI tools undeniably improve speed, organization, and information retrieval, allowing courts to manage massive caseloads and procedural delays. However, judicial decision-making entails sophisticated fact interpretation, credibility assessment, and the balancing of opposing rights, all of which go beyond data processing. Overreliance on AI, particularly in predictive or evaluative contexts, may reduce complicated human disagreements to statistical patterns, weakening the individualized aspect of justice.

Another major worry is algorithmic bias. AI systems are taught using past legal data, which may reveal current social, economic, or institutional inequities. If such biases are built in AI technologies, they may have a subtle influence on research results, precedent prioritization, and risk assessments. In a constitutional democracy that values equality before the law, even indirect bias in judicial support systems raises major legitimacy difficulties. The opacity of AI systems complicates their application in courts. Judicial processes should be transparent and reasoned, allowing parties to understand how decisions are made. However, many AI models operate as "black boxes," making it difficult for even engineers to completely explain how outputs are generated. This lack of explain ability violates the norms of natural justice.

At the same time, the conversation must recognize AI's positive institutional impact. By automating routine administrative procedures, AI enables judges to devote more time to substantive legal analysis. Translation tools encourage language inclusion, whereas research aids improve the depth of legal analysis. When employed within well-defined parameters and under human supervision, artificial intelligence can strengthen rather than undermine the justice system.

The Indian experience thus advocates a prudent augmentation model rather than automation. AI is viewed as a tool to supplement human judges, not as a replacement for them. This method is consistent with constitutional ideals, protects judicial independence, and minimizes the potential of technological overreach. However, as AI capabilities advance, the lack of a comprehensive legislative framework remains a significant gap. Without established norms for transparency, accountability, data governance, and ethical monitoring, the future expansion of AI in the judiciary may pose serious legal and constitutional issues.

In sum, the discussion highlights that the central question is not whether AI should be used in courts, but how it should be governed. A balanced framework that combines technological innovation with strong legal safeguards is

essential to ensure that AI enhances access to justice while maintaining the human core of judicial decision-making.

Conclusion

In the Indian judiciary, artificial intelligence is now used to support and improve efficiency, supporting judges with research, case management, transcribing, and translation without replacing human discretion. The empirical and case-based study show that artificial intelligence enhances administrative efficiency and legal information accessibility while maintaining judicial decision-making integrity. However, issues like as algorithmic bias, a lack of transparency, and weak regulatory frameworks underline the importance of rigorous control. Future use of AI in the judiciary must strike a balance between technological innovation, constitutional safeguards, human oversight, and ethical governance to ensure that AI enhances, rather than undermines, justice delivery.

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