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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

The Role of Integrated Electronic Case Management System and Advancing Judicial Reform In Zimbabwe. A case study of Harare High Court

By

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ABSTRACT

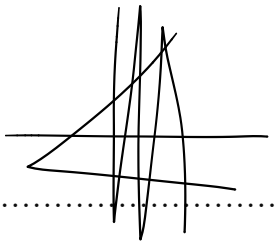
This study examined the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in advancing judicial reform in Zimbabwe, focusing on the Harare High Court, with the aim of evaluating users' perceptions, assessing the effectiveness of system features in promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice, identifying implementation challenges, and proposing practical improvement strategies. Adopting an interpretivism research philosophy and a qualitative case study design, the study collected data through open-ended questionnaires and key informant interviews from a purposive sample of 30 stakeholders, including judges, registrars, lawyers, litigants, prison officers and ICT officers, with thematic analysis applied to identify patterns within the data. The key findings revealed that users held a positive perception of the IECMS, recognising it as a valuable tool for enhancing administrative efficiency, coordination, transparency and accountability, with features such as real-time case tracking, digital recordkeeping, audit trails, automated workflow management and electronic payments effectively reducing corruption risks and improving case management; however, significant challenges were identified, including infrastructural limitations such as unreliable internet connectivity and inadequate hardware, digital illiteracy among users, the digital divide affecting marginalised communities, and limited public awareness of the system. The study concluded that while the IECMS contributed positively to judicial reform, its full potential was constrained by technological, capacity and awareness challenges, with the digital divide limiting universal access to justice by creating barriers for individuals lacking internet access or digital skills. The study recommended strengthening ICT infrastructure, enhancing continuous training for all users, promoting public awareness campaigns through radio and community outreach, establishing user support services, ensuring the system is inclusive of all populations including people with disabilities and rural communities, and implementing regular system assessment and feedback mechanisms to guide continuous improvement.

DECLARATION FORM

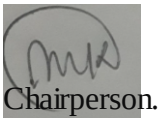
I, Purity Taguma Mangwiro (B221528B) do hereby declare that this project is my own authentic work and that it has not been copied or plagiarised from any other source without acknowledgement.



Student..... Date: 14 /08/24



Supervisor …… Date 24/07/26



Chairperson.....…… Date……..

DEDICATION

To my family for their unwavering support, patience and encouragement throughout my academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Bindura University of Science Education, particularly the faculty of Social Science and Humanities and the Department of Peace and Governance.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECMS - Electronic Case Management Systems

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IECMS - Integrated Electronic Case Management System

IT - Information Technology

JSC - Judicial Service Commission

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

SADC - Southern African Development Community

TAM - Technology Acceptance Model

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the global context, governments around the world are using technology to change how they work and serve the people, this is known as e-governance. Digital transformation has become an essential part of judicial reform helping courts move away from slow paper-based processes to faster automated systems. In the judicial sector this has led to the introduction of Electronic Case Management Systems (ECMS) which digitize court processes such as filing, scheduling, case tracking and record management. These systems are intended to reduce paperwork, minimize corruption and enhance public access to justice and ensure timely delivery of judgments. As stated by the United Nations E Government Survey (2022) the global growth of e-governance reflects the belief that technology can enhance accountability and citizen participation. It can also reduce inefficiencies and corruption.

Regionally, multiple African judicial systems faced unique challenges. Some of the challenges include corruption, case backlogs, delays and manual paperwork (Baines, 2020). In response countries such as Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa introduced electronic filing, virtual hearings and digital case tracking tools. Watson & Muserere (2023) confirm that these reforms respond to long standing problems such as case backlogs, corruption risks, lack of record security and limited public access to court information. As a result, e-governance is increasingly seen as a key strategy for strengthening rule of law and access to justice on the continent.

In Zimbabwe the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) adopted the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in February 2022. This is an online court system made to manage the lifecycle of court cases from the initial filing to the finale appeal (Malaba 2022a). The introduction of IECMS was to eradicate challenges such as lack of transparency due to corruption, cases where hard to track, no clear records because some cases where lost or stolen and cases piling up due to manual (Malaba 2022a). To advance e governance and fix all these problems the JSC decided to introduce the IECMS. The expectation is that when the IECMS becomes fully operational in Zimbabwean courts the processing of court cases and disposal of judgment be done expeditiously to avoid suppression of justice (Malaba 2022a).

Locally, in Harare High Court the introduction of the IECMS at high court plays an important role in resolving conflicts and upholding human rights. Historically as stated by Mangoma (2020) the utilization of technology in legal processes has the potential to address challenges related to case backlog, delays and manual paperwork. The introduction of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) has the potential to address these challenges by providing a centralized digital platform for case management, document storage and communication among stakeholders (Mangoma, 2020). Examining the role and impact of IECMS in the High Court of Harare, this study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of the system in improving the efficiency of justice in criminal and civil related case.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Examine how the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) is helping to advance judicial reform in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the introduction of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) as part of Zimbabwe's judicial reform the Harare High Court continues to experience challenges such as lack of expertise, resource constraints, lack of technological infrastructure, poor internet connectivity and electricity outrages. It is not fully known whether the IECMS has resolved long-standing problems of paperwork, file misplacement, corruption risks and limited public access. These challenges slow down e-governance and the judicial reforms in which they take longer than physical ones and limit access to justice. Another problem is the IECMS requires access to internet and digital literacy. Some citizens in marginalized communities and some public sector employees in Zimbabwe have ICT skill gaps as argued by (Mutsagondo & Khumalo 2023). While the JSC conducted ICT training for its personnel in 2021, in preparation for the IECMS adoption (Manomano, 2021) some members of the public such as people living with disabilities have not been included in the training although there are key stakeholders in the operations of the IECMS (Dune-Matutu, 2022).

1.4 Research Objectives

- To evaluate users' perception of the IECMS in advancing e governance and judicial reforms.
- To assess the effectiveness of IECMS features in promoting accountability and justice.
- To identify the challenges that are being faced in implementing IECMS
- To suggest practical ways in improving the effectiveness of IECMS

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the IECMS users in advancing e-governance and judicial reforms at high court?
2. How effective are the features of IECMS in promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice, particularly to marginalized or disadvantaged citizens?
3. What are the major challenges faced in implementing and using IECMS at the Harare High Court?
4. What measures can be adopted to improve IECMS?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

- It is assumed that the introduction of IECMS was intended to improve judicial efficiency and transparency
- It is assumed that the study findings from Harare high court will offer valuable insights to other courts in Zimbabwe
- It is assumed that court staff have received adequate training to use the IECMS online platform.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The following people benefited from the study

a) Judicial Service Commission (JSC)

The study was intended to be beneficial to the courts in Zimbabwe. This is because it supports the role of the IECMS in advancing e governance in Zimbabwe. The study can improve

case management, transparency and efficiency and remove all the challenges being faced now with the JSC. It helps JSC evaluate the effectiveness of IECMS in advancing judicial reforms. It also informs future policy as this study will highlight challenges and the challenges will need to be addressed. This study will provide foundation for better policy reforms and strategies.

b) Ministry of Justice

The findings were expected to highlight inefficiencies providing ministry of justice with insights on how to reduce inefficiency and technological illiteracy. This was anticipated to contribute to the government providing accessible and efficiency public services. The ministry could use this study to justify the role of IECMS in advancing e governance and judicial reforms.

c) To individuals seeking justice

The study was designed to benefit individuals seeking justice at high court by educating them on the advantages and roles played by the IECMS in accountability, transparency, efficiency and case tracking. It aimed to educate individuals on increased access to justice which includes virtual hearing, e filing and case tracking which can be done in the comfort of their homes.

d) Lawyers

The research allowed the legal practitioners to acquire a practical understanding of the role of the IECMS in advancing e governance and judicial reforms at Harare High Court. The study was meant to improve practice management for legal practitioners by adding knowledge on the implementation of an integrated electronic system and helped them understand the new digital workflow. This study was intended to enhance professional skills and help the lawyers understand the role of IECMS.

e) Academic Community

The study was considered beneficial to researchers who want to use data in the future. It provides insight into the role of IECMS in advancing e governance and judicial reforms. It identified project success and also explored challenges faced in advancing e governance and judicial reforms. It also contributed to e governance research and insight into the adaptation of technology in the JSC. The study will provide a foundation for further study on electronic case management system in Zimbabwe.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on High Court of Zimbabwe and excluded other courts such as Magistrate, Civil and Commercial, Labor and Supreme Courts and concentrate on the city of Harare. The research focused on IECMS and its features, deliberately excluding the old paper-based system. The study excluded the division of the high court which is the commercial court. The timeframe for investigation was limited to the period following the IECMS launch in February 2022, and the analysis concentrated on e governance and judicial functions of the IECMS such as e-filing-payments to mention a few. Data collection targeted the perception of stakeholders directly involved with Harare High Court including judges, court personnel, lawyers and litigants.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to Harare High Court. This meant that the findings might not be fully applicable to other courts in Zimbabwe. Focusing only on the Harare High Court may not have fully represented the challenges in other judicial contexts in Zimbabwe especially in rural areas with less developed infrastructure. The study relied on qualitative data. In that regard,

interviews with stakeholders could have been prone to self-report biases. This is when a participant might have provided answers, they believe the researcher wants to hear. Additionally, gaining access to high-ranking judicial officers was a challenge due to schedule and sensitive issues. It may not capture the day-to-day experiences and practical challenges faced by judicial officers and litigants.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS): Jamila, Rompegading & Hidayat (2021) define it as a digital platform used by courts to deliver justice through Internet-based, remote and virtual options.

E-governance: Pani & Misra (2009) defines it as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate and expand activities at various levels of government and the public sector, with the goal of achieving good governance.

Judicial reform: Lloyd Law College (2022) defines it as the process of changing or improving the legal system, including court processes, legislation and administration.

Transparency: The openness and accessibility of information and decision making, allowing stakeholders to hold institutions accountable. (Bovens, 2007)

1.11 Dissertation Outline

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter focuses on the introduction and the background of the study. It looks at the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.

This chapter looks at the theoretical framework and the literature review that guides the study. This chapter contains the literature and texts that are related to the implementation of electronic systems to the judicial services in Zimbabwe. In this chapter the researcher gave an insight into what has been studied and said by other researchers relating to issues.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter focuses on research philosophy, research designs, data collection methods, sampling techniques and other data presentation methods that will be used to conduct the study.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

The focus of this chapter is on data analysis and data presentation of the findings during the research.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and Recommendations and Areas for further research

The final chapter comprises the summary conclusions and recommendations of the whole study

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature on the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in advancing judicial reform, with a focus on the Harare High Court. It examined scholarly and institutional studies on e-governance, digital transformation and electronic case management. Theoretically, the study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This model explained how perceived usefulness and ease of use influences technology adoption. The review is based on the research objectives. It examined the perceptions of users, system efficacy in facilitating accountability, transparency and access to justice. The review also elaborated about challenges in implementation and strategies to improve the system and major research gaps that have been filled by the work.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework for this study was the technology acceptance model (TAM). The TAM has been used in a variety of studies to determine the theoretical basis for the acceptance of various systems that have been developed for integration into different areas of governance, e-governance in particular (Shareef et al., 2019). The technology acceptance model stipulated that there were two main factors that influence individuals to accept and utilize a new technology: the perceived usefulness of that technology and the perceived ease of use of that

technology (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2016). Both factors have been determined to be influential in studies of various e-governance systems (Alalwan et al., 2017). For example, within the High Court in Zimbabwe, as with other judiciaries that have implemented the IECMS, individuals within the court were surveyed to determine their general perceptions of the system and its impact on the court; according to judges, lawyers and court officials, the system was generally seen as beneficial to the court and the individuals that use it (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Additionally, another main tenet of the technology acceptance model was that those systems will be accepted by those within the organization if they are deemed to have high levels of ease of use. However, various challenges to ease of use within the court were recognized by the court itself, particularly among those that are less digitally literate than others within the organization (Oliveira, Thomas & Espadanal, 2018). Furthermore, the technology acceptance model also suggested that individuals' acceptance of a system will directly impact the effectiveness of that system to achieve the goals of the organization; the acceptance of the IECMS by individuals within the High Court is, therefore, directly related to the achievement of goals such as the improvement of the accountability, transparency and access to justice within the court (Rana et al., 2017). Thus, the technology acceptance model becomes a useful framework for understanding the High Court, its acceptance of the IECMS and its goals of creating a more effective court.

2.3 Perceptions of The IECMS in Advancing E-Governance and Judicial Reforms

Overall, the judiciary and e-governance systems have been rapidly transforming around the world in the past few decades. More specifically, according to the United Nations E-Government Survey for 2022, over 70% of countries across the world have established at least some form of an electronic case management system for their judiciaries (Susskind, 2019).

Additionally, these systems have helped to create a shift in the perception of judiciaries and their ability to effectively provide justice for those within the countries that implement these systems (Susskind, 2019). For example, countries like Estonia and Singapore have fully implemented these reforms. They have seen a significant reduction in the length of cases within these judiciaries, as well as a general increase in the overall satisfaction of the citizens with the judiciaries within their countries (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2021). In addition to these developments in the developed world, the introduction of these systems into African nations has become a focus of some governments within the region. According to the African Development Bank, approximately 60% of African countries have implemented some form of a digital justice reform within their courts. While they are not yet at the same levels of development as countries in the developed world, these effects have been experienced within nations like Kenya and Rwanda (African Development Bank, 2022; UNDP, 2021). Furthermore, these reforms have been applied to the development of audit trails within the judiciaries, which improves the accountability of those judiciaries (Transparency International, 2023). More specifically about the Southern African region of Africa, a few of the region's countries have begun to implement these reforms. According to the Southern African Development Commission (SADC), countries like South Africa, Namibia and Botswana have implemented electronic case management systems within their High Courts. For example, South Africa has seen the development of its e-justice system leading to improvements in the efficiency of its High Court (Mutula & Mostert, 2019).

Additionally, these reforms have contributed to the development of the region's rule of law and the ability of citizens to effectively access justice within their own countries (World Justice Project, 2023). Finally, Zimbabwe has also begun to implement these reforms through the establishment of its own IECMS in its High Court. According to the Judicial Service Commission

of Zimbabwe, the establishment of the IECMS within its High Court was a significant step towards the modernization of the court (Manomano, 2021). Furthermore, a survey of those that use the High Court indicates that they generally find the system to be beneficial (Mutsagondo & Khumalo, 2023). However, various challenges to the full implementation of the system have been reported; for instance, people with disabilities have not been fully included in the training of High Court officials to utilize the IECMS system (Dune-Matutu, 2022). Thus, while the majority of the literature regarding the perceptions of the IECMS within Zimbabwe indicated that those that use the court generally find it to be beneficial, there are some challenges to the system that contribute to the country's inability to fully harness the potential of the technology.

2.4 Effectiveness of IECMS Features in Promoting Accountability, Transparency and Access to Justice

The use of technology and electronic case management systems within judiciaries around the world has been associated with a variety of benefits to those judiciaries. According to the United Nations E-Government Survey for 2024, over 75% of the world's justice systems have been implemented into high-income countries. Furthermore, these cases have been correlated with improvements to the accountability and transparency of those courts (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2024). Additionally, according to the Council of Europe's Centre for eGovernment (CEPEJ), the European countries that have implemented these technology systems into their judiciaries have experienced a 30% reduction in the length of cases that must be processed within those courts (CEPEJ, 2023). Furthermore, according to the OECD, the use of these digital case management systems in the judiciaries has increased the accountability of the courts; rather than allowing the judges within the court to act without accountability or audit trails,

digital systems ensure that all actions of those judges are recorded (OECD, 2022). Finally, the most developed countries in the world, including countries like Estonia and Singapore, report that their IECMS cases are fully digitalized; as a result, there is an improvement to the access to justice of the citizens within these countries, as individuals are able to participate in their cases from any location with access to the information technology system (World Bank, 2021).

There has been a global impact. According to Susskind (2020), the shift towards the implementation of IECMS within judiciaries around the world has significantly increased the access of individuals to their cases, as many individuals who may otherwise have been prevented from attending the court due to distance or other factors are able to participate in their cases from the comfort of their own homes. Furthermore, automation of the case allocation system within the courts has helped to prevent any biases of the courts against any groups of individuals or citizens, ensuring that all individuals are treated equally within the judiciaries (Velicogna, 2019). Additionally, the same reports of improvements to accountability, transparency, access to justice and efficiency in judiciaries have been reported in African countries that have implemented these systems. According to the African Development Bank, approximately 55% of African countries have implemented an electronic case management system into their judiciaries (African Development Bank, 2023).

Furthermore, according to reports from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, countries like Kenya and Rwanda have implemented the system into their High Courts to improve the transparency of their courts; their electronic filing system has led to the reduction in the length of their backlogs of cases and it has prevented any potential corrupt actions by the judges within those courts (UNDP, 2022). Furthermore, organizations like Transparency

International report that these audit trails within African countries' judiciaries have been beneficial in increasing the accountability of those courts (Transparency International, 2023). Furthermore, countries within the Southern African region have begun to implement these reforms into their judiciaries, as well. According to the Southern African Development Commission, countries like South Africa and Botswana have implemented these systems into their High Courts (SADC, 2022). According to reports published by authors like Mutula (2018), the implementation of these High Courts and the automation of their cases has increased the accountability within their High Courts. Additionally, citizens in the region have been able to gain access to their cases, allowing for the improvement of the access to justice of the region's citizens (World Justice Project, 2023).

Some challenges have also been noted. Within the Zimbabwe High Court, individuals report that the implementation of the IECMS system was established with the intention of increasing the transparency of the court and improving access to justice for the country's citizens (Manomano, 2021). According to reports of the judiciary, the implementation of the case management system led to an increase in the efficiency of the court; however, other reports from those individuals within the High Court, such as Mutsagondo and Khumalo (2023), indicate that the case management system is still struggling to reach its full potential within the High Court; issues with the internet and the digital literacy of those that use the High Court contribute to the country's inability to maximize the potential of the system.

Additionally, authors like Dune-Matutu (2022) report that individuals from marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities, are struggling to gain access to the information technology and software applications within the High Court. Thus, while there are reports that the features of the system are effective at promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice within the

High Court, there are also literature surveys that reveal that various challenges to those goals exist within the jurisdiction.

2.5 Challenges Faced in the Implementation and Utilization of IECMS

Despite the successes in the introduction of IECMS into different judiciaries around the world, various challenges to their implementation and utilization are faced within those courts. For instance, according to the United Nations E-Government Survey for 2024, though over 70% of countries have established some form of an electronic case management system within their judiciaries, there are still challenges related to the infrastructures of those countries and their cybersecurity against digital crimes (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2024). Additionally, other challenges to the implementation of these systems within judiciaries include the resistance to change that is seen by many individuals and staff members within those courts (OECD, 2023). Furthermore, another digital challenge for judiciaries around the world is that some of these systems have failed to provide the intended functions within their courts; according to reports by the World Bank, 40% of digital initiatives have been introduced within developing regions around the world to judiciaries but have been unable to provide any full functionality within their courts (World Bank, 2022).

In developed countries, despite the high level of implementation of these systems, there are still some challenges related to the systems; for instance, according to reports by the Council of Europe's Centre for Government (CEPEJ), 20% of users within European judiciaries that utilize these electronic case management systems are also encountering challenges related to the system and the ability of those individuals to access their desired features within the IECMS (CEPEJ,

2023). Additionally, according to Susskind (2020), many individuals within the judiciary system, despite their digital literacy in general, are resistant to the change that is required for the implementation of these technologies.

Furthermore, related to information technology itself, many judiciaries still face challenges related to the interoperability between different databases within those courts and the new electronic case management systems, which prevents full integration of those technologies into their courts (Velicogna, 2019). In addition to these challenges related to information technology, various challenges exist in the African countries that have implemented these systems. For instance, according to the African Development Bank, only 55% of African countries have implemented these systems into their judiciaries and their implementation into those judiciaries is often limited to the capabilities that their infrastructures have within their countries (African Development Bank, 2023).

Furthermore, the main challenges within Africa are related to the internet and digital connectivity of their judiciaries, the funding needed to implement these changes into their courts and a lack of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure within their countries (UNDP, 2022). For instance, according to reports from the organization Transparency International, a significant portion of individuals within African countries are not digitally literate, which creates challenges for the full implementation of the IECMS into those countrysides (Transparency International, 2023). Within the region of Southern Africa, various challenges to the full implementation and utilization of IECMS are also visible. According to the Southern African Development Commission, there are disparities within their member countries in relation

to their funding of these initiatives and their development of information and communication technology (ICT) systems within their countries (SADC, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Mutula (2018), despite the implementation of the IECMS into the High Courts in countries like South Africa, there are still some challenges related to the system. For instance, different High Courts have access to the system at different rates and various members within the High Court are not provided with the same level of access and resources as other judges within other High Courts. Furthermore, according to the World Justice Project, despite the improvements in access to justice that has happened in urban areas within these countries, rural areas of these countries are still encountering challenges related to implementation and access to IECMS within their High Courts (World Justice Project, 2023).

Within Zimbabwe's High Court, various challenges have emerged for the implementation and utilization of the IECMS. According to Manomano (2021), one of the main challenges related to the implementation of the system has been the lack of ICT infrastructure within the High Court, as well as the lack of technical skills of the staff members that work within the High Court to take advantage of the features of the IECMS. Furthermore, according to reports from individuals like Mutsagondo and Khumalo (2023), individuals within the High Court also struggle with a lack of digital literacy by those that enter the court and those that work within it; additionally, various individuals of marginalized groups are not provided with the same level of training to utilize the system as other individuals within the High Court. Furthermore, according to Dune-Matutu (2022), the High Court has also not provided the same level of training to individuals with disabilities to utilize the IECMS. Thus, within the Zimbabwe High Court, while there are benefits to the implementation of the IECMS, various challenges to its implementation and use exist.

2.6 Strategies for Improving the Effectiveness of IECMS in Judiciary

Various strategies for improving the effectiveness of IECMS around the world have been utilized to meet the challenges to implementation and utilization of those systems. For instance, according to the reports of the United Nations E-Government Survey of 2024, countries that have provided training to their judiciaries to utilize IECMS and that have also improved the infrastructure within their courts to support the use of IECMS have seen up to a 60% improvement in the efficiency of those courts (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2024). Furthermore, according to the reports of the OECD, strategies that have been implemented into these High Courts include the implementation of strategies that focus on the users of those IECMS systems, the provision of feedback to those judiciaries regarding their effectiveness and the improvements to the interoperability of their databases and the technology that is implemented into those High Courts (OECD, 2023).

Furthermore, the World Bank has proposed the implementation of changes to the judiciaries around the world related to the automation of their processes, the improvement of their governance frameworks and the provision of funding to implement such changes within their High Courts (World Bank, 2022). Within developed countries, strategies that are often implemented include the automation of cases, the implementation of artificial intelligence systems within their judiciaries to help determine the outcome of cases and the implementation of digital governance systems for those High Courts (CEPEJ, 2023). According to reports by the Council of Europe, the implementation of these systems into Europe's High Courts has led to a 35% improvement in the efficiency of those High Courts (CEPEJ, 2023).

Additionally, according Susskind (2020), the training of the individuals within the judiciaries who will utilize the IECMS system is a strategy that can ensure the continued use of the technology and the judiciaries that have implemented it. Furthermore, authors like Velicogna (2019) have reported that the implementation of systems that provide real-time analytics for the judiciaries helps to improve the accountability within the courts. Additionally, in African and Southern African High Courts, various strategies have also been implemented to address some of the reported challenges. For instance, according to the reports from the African Development Bank, the High Courts in Africa are implementing strategies related to the improvement in the connectivity of their High Courts to the internet, as well as training of individuals within the High Courts to improve their digital literacy and their ability to utilize the IECMS that has been implemented in their High Courts (African Development Bank, 2023). Furthermore, according to the organization United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, various High Courts in African countries are also focusing on the training of their staff related to utilizing the various features of their implemented IECMS system (UNDP, 2022). Furthermore, according to the report of the organization Transparency International, their training efforts within African High Courts are aimed at increasing the digital literacy of the staff within those High Courts (Transparency International, 2023).

Within Zimbabwe's High Court, as well, various strategies are being applied to improve the effectiveness of IECMS. According to Manomano (2021), providing training to staff within the High Court of Zimbabwe will lead to the improvement of IECMS within the High Court. Furthermore, according to authors like Mutsagondo and Khumalo (2023), improving the digital literacy of both those that enter the High Court and those that work within it will provide an improvement to the use of the IECMS by the High Court. Furthermore, according to reports by

authors like Dune-Matutu (2022), the training of individuals in the High Court that have disabilities to utilize the IECMS will help improve the effectiveness of that High Court and its use of IECMS. Thus, various strategies for improving the IECMS in different High Courts around the world have been applied, though there are still some challenges related to the success of implementing those strategies.

Across Africa, a variety of strategies have been deployed to increase the effectiveness of IECMS. The African Development Bank (2023) notes that the increase in investments in judicial ICT infrastructure across the African continent has increased by 45% over the past decade. Furthermore, the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDP, 2022) reports that various capacity-building programs for judicial officers and court officials have led to increases in the utilization of the IECMS in countries like Kenya and Rwanda. Finally, Transparency International (2023) recommends increasing the use of digital accountability measures within the judiciary to reduce opportunities for corrupt practices.

Southern Africa has also developed various strategies to increase the effectiveness of the IECMS. For instance, the Southern African Development Community (SADC, 2022) reports that various countries in the region have implemented the upgrade of their court systems and the improvement to their ICT infrastructure. For example, South Africa has implemented its IECMS in over 70% of its courts. Additionally, authors like Mutula (2018) note that the implementation of training for judicial officials and staff has increased the adoption of IECMS in various countries in the region. Furthermore, the World Justice Project (2023) recommends the development of ICT infrastructure in regions of the region that do not currently have such infrastructure in place.

Within Zimbabwe, various strategies have been deployed to increase the effectiveness of the IECMS. Zimbabwe's Judicial Service Commission has implemented the upgrade of ICT infrastructure within the courts, the implementation of training programs for staff and various policy reforms. According to Manomano (2021), the implementation of training programs for Zimbabwean judiciary staff was one of the strategies that was used to reduce the reliance on paper-based court systems. Furthermore, authors like Mutsagondo and Khumalo (2023) note that the continued provision of digital literacy training is required to enhance the engagement with the IECMS of both court staff and the public. Finally, additional strategies to increase the effectiveness of IECMS have included the development of digital strategies that ensure that all individuals, even those with disabilities, are provided with equitable access to the system (Dune-Matutu, 2022).

2.7 Research Gap

Despite the growing literature on the various aspects of IECMS, there is a lack of literature regarding the operation of such systems in countries like Zimbabwe. Heeks (2018) notes that the majority of existing literature focuses upon the technology component of IECMS and does not consider the experiences of those who interact with such systems. Furthermore, there is no current literature that examines the experiences of the various stakeholders within the Zimbabwean judiciary, including the Harare High Court, with the implementation of the IECMS. Finally, there is no studies that examine the impact of the challenges facing the Zimbabwean judiciary on the effectiveness of its IECMS.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the available literature on the topic of IECMS within the Harare High Court. The majority of the existing literature on the topic employed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to analyze the concept of IECMS. Furthermore, the literature also reviewed the various strategies that have been implemented to improve the effectiveness of such systems within Africa, the Southern Africa region and within the nation of Zimbabwe. The literature revealed that though IECMS has contributed to the efficiency of the judiciary, there are various challenges to its effectiveness. Finally, though there is literature that addresses the topic of IECMS in Zimbabwe, there is a lack of studies that investigate the experiences of the stakeholders within the Harare High Court with such systems.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology that was utilized in developing the Integrated Electronic Case Management in promoting judicial reforms in Zimbabwe especially in Harare High Court. It provides a description of the research philosophy, research methodology, population and sampling, data presentation, ethical consideration, validity and reliability and limitations of the study to develop a holistic understating of the Harare high court of Zimbabwe's.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is created and how research should be conducted. The study adopted interpretivism as the research philosophy .Interpretivism is based on the understanding that reality is not fixed or objective but is shaped by peoples experience, beliefs, experience and social interactions .According to Sunders et al. (2019) interpretivism focuses on understanding the meaning that individuals attach to their actions and environments .In the context of IECMS at the Harare High Court , interpretivism was an appropriate research philosophy as it is not just a technical change but also a human experience .Therefore it was important to explore how these stakeholders understand and make sense of the IECMS and its contribution to judicial reforms.

Interpretivism justified the research topic as it seeks to explore how judges, court officials, IT personnel, registrar, prison officers and legal practitioners experience the implementation of the Integrated Electronic Case Management at Harare High Court. Using interviews and open-ended questionnaires enabled the researcher to gather rich detailed insights into participants lived experiences. The interpretivist approach aimed to uncover the diverse challenges and perspectives faced by these individuals within the specific context of Harare High Court. Thus, interpretivism provides a suitable philosophical foundation for examining the human dimension of judicial reform within the Zimbabwe judiciary.

3.3 Research Methodology

Methodology refers to the overall strategy that guides the research process and explains how data is collected, analyzed and interpreted. It provides a structured approach to answering research questions in systematic and credible manner (O`Leary, 2017). This study adopted qualitative methodology to examine the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in advancing judicial reforms in Zimbabwe with particularly focusing on Harare High Court. A qualitative methodology was chosen because the study seeks to understand both the lived experience, perception and interpretations of stakeholders regarding with IECMS. O`Leary (2017) states that qualitative research is particularly useful when the goal is to explore how people make sense of their experiences and social environment. The chosen methodology was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of both the technical and human dimensions of the IECMS within the Judiciary. Through prioritizing rich, descriptive data over numerical measures, the qualitative methodology allowed the study to explore the underlying how and why behind the challenges and success associated with IECMS implementation.

3.4 Research design

Research design refers to the overall plan that guides how a study is carried out. It explains how the researcher indents to answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. In this study, case study research was employed. Case study is an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin ,2018). In this study the Harare High Court was selected as the focal point for examining how Integrated Electronic Case Management System contributes to judicial reforms in Zimbabwe. The choice of a case study design was to allow the researcher to explore the implementation and impact of the IECMS in depth. A case study design allowed the researcher to collect rich and contextualized data through interviews and open-ended questions. The Harare High Court was selected as the case study through which the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System in advancing judicial reforms in Zimbabwe was examined. Concentrating on one court, the study generated detailed and context specific insights into how the system operates, challenges hindered, successes achieved and lessons learned from the IECMS in advancing judicial reforms.

3.5 Population and sample

3.5.1 Population

The population comprised of various stakeholders. According to Creswell (2018), population was defined as the entire group of people who shared certain traits on which research results were based. It was a larger population to which the results of the study were supposed to be generalized. The population in this study was the stakeholders who had direct contact with the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) within the Harare High Court. This involved the judges, registrars, legal practitioners, prison officers and the ICT staff in the court

system. Saunders et al. (2019) note that a population that has firsthand experience of the phenomenon being examined increases the relevance and validity of the results and Etikan and Bala (2017) confirm that such populations are informed and reliable in terms of their data in qualitative studies. The participants were thus suitable since they were directly related or affected by IECMS in their day-to-day professional operations and as such they provided their experiences vital in determining the role of the system in enhancing judicial reforms.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The sample comprised of 30 respondents. According to Miami (2018), sample size is the term that defines the number of individuals among the target population who will participate in the study. The sample size used in this study comprised 30 respondents who were sampled among the judges, registrars, ICT staff, prison officers and legal practitioners of the Harare High Court that were in direct contact with the IECMS. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that the small sample sizes usually employed in qualitative studies allow researchers to gain depth of understanding, as opposed to statistical generalization, whereas Etikan and Bala (2017) maintain that the small sample size is reasonable in case researchers target information-rich participants. The size of 30 was thus deemed sufficient to represent various institutional views on the impact of IECMS on transparency, efficiency and case management at the Harare High Court.

3.6 Sampling Methods

Non-probability sampling was used in the study. According to Taherdoost (2017), sampling is the process of choosing representative units of a specified population with the aim of getting information that represents the properties of the entire population. According to Etikan & Bala (2017), sampling method is selected based on the research design, the characteristics of the

population and project needs to guarantee that appropriate and valid data is gathered. The sampling method in this study was a non-probability sampling method with purposive sampling being specifically applied in selecting the participants.

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

The sampling method that was used in this study is purposive sampling. This method was suitable in selecting information-rich participants who have a first-hand experience of the phenomenon being studied. Palinkas et al. (2019) state that purposive sampling is based on the deliberate choice of people with the relevant knowledge, whereas Campbell et al. (2020) add that it is one of the most common sampling types in qualitative research to gain profound and meaningful data. The participants in this research were purposely chosen at the Harare High Court and they comprised of the judges, registrars, ICT personnel, lawyers, litigants and the prison officers who had direct contacts with the IECMS. Such key informants as witnessed by Guest, Namey & Mitchell (2020) offer reliable and experience-based statistics required in qualitative analysis. The data gathered was centered on experiences, perceptions and the knowledge of IECMS among the participants whereby in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires were employed to examine the effectiveness of the system, areas of challenges in implementation and possibilities of enhancing provision of e-justice in the Harare High Court.

3.7 Data collection methods

Data collection methods were the methods that were employed to collect information on the subjects to answer the research objectives. Creswell (2018) argues that the choice of the right data collection methods is a crucial factor in guaranteeing the accuracy and reliability of the research results. Two data collection techniques were employed in this research, which are open-

ended and key informant interviews. These were the right approaches to gather specific and pertinent information on experiences and perceptions of the participants of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in the High Court of Harare.

3.7.1 Open Ended Questionnaires

The qualitative data collection technique that was used was open-ended questionnaires where the respondents were required to answer a series of open-ended questions in a written form. This approach also enabled the participants to share their experiences, perceptions and knowledge using their own words, unlike structured questionnaires that involve closed-ended queries and rating scales. Creswell (2018) argues that open-ended questionnaires can be helpful in qualitative studies because they produce detailed and rich data. They have been applied to court personnel, lawyers and prison officials at the Harare High Court who dealt with the IECMS in this research. The questionnaires were directed on the experiences of the participants with the system, the problems they encountered, their opinions of how well the system has helped in case management and how it has helped in reforms in the judicial system so that the respondents could give a detailed and authentic answer.

3.7.2 Key informant Interviews

One of the qualitative data collection methods was the key informant interviews where the researcher interviewed first hand people who had experience and specialized knowledge on the research topic. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest that the approach is suitable when one wants to receive highly detailed and context-specific data by using knowledgeable participants, whereas Guest et al. (2020) note that key informants can shed light on the most important issues which are usually unattainable with the help of other data sources. Key informant interviews were carried

out in this research on judges, registrars, prison officers and ICT staff at the Harare High Court who were in direct contact with the IECMS. These participants were regarded as key informants since they are directly involved in the implementation and functioning of the system, thus the study was able to obtain in-depth, credible and experience-based data on the effectiveness, difficulties and contribution of the system towards promoting judicial reforms.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity is a crucial aspect of the study. Validity refers to the extent to which research instruments measure what they are intended to measure and accurately capture the subject under investigation (Creswell, 2018). In this study, validity focused on ensuring that the open-ended questionnaires and structured interviews guides collect accurate and relevant information on the role of IECMS in advancing judicial reforms at the Harare High Court. The researcher engaged participants who had direct, practical experience with the system, thereby enhancing the authenticity of the data collected. Reliability refers to the consistency of research instruments in producing similar results when used under the same conditions Mohajan, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016). Additionally, open ended questionnaires allowed for probing and clarification of responses, ensuring a deeper and more accurate understanding of participants' views. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was employed by combining interview data with open ended questionnaires. This enabled the researcher to cross verify findings and strengthen their trustworthiness.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data presentation and analysis involve organizing, interpreting and summarizing the collected data to draw meaningful conclusions and answers. Creswell & Poth (2018) argues that data presentation means organizing and displaying findings in a clear way, often using stories, tables, pictures and direct quotes so that reader can hear the real voices of participants in the story. Thematic analysis was adopted as the primary method for analyzing data as the primary data obtained from 30 participants. Braun & Clarke (2019) argues that thematic analysis allows the researcher to identify patterns, themes and categories within the data providing in depth understanding of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System at the Harare High Court. Thematic analysis was ideal for research because it allowed the study to explore and interpret rich, detailed information. It aligned with the aim of understanding how IECMS is helping to improve judicial reforms. This approach made it possible to capture the real experience and perspectives of those directly involved with IECMS.

Thematic analysis also has practical strengths it includes it offers a structures and systematic way of handling qualitative data by carefully coding, categorizing and identifying themes. Secondly it is flexible and can be applied to different types of qualitative information including interviews and open-ended questionnaires. This meaning the researcher can examine IECMS from different angles giving a complete picture of its role in supporting judicial reforms at the Harare High Court. Findings were presented using thematic descriptions supported by direct quotations from participants to illustrate key themes.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical issues were paramount in that all the rights, dignity and privacy of the participants were safeguarded during the research process. Given that the study entailed the participation of court officials and employees at the Harare High Court, a lot of care was exercised in ensuring confidentiality and protection of sensitive information associated with the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS). According to Saunders et al. (2019), ethical research presupposes protection of the identity of participants and appropriate management of data. The study was voluntary and all the participants were briefed on the objective of the study, their role and the intended use of data. Data were collected through informed consent and the participants were free to withdraw at any point, without any adverse effects. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that in qualitative research, informed consent is one of the requirements in order to guarantee the autonomy and transparency of participants. In order to preserve confidentiality, names and personal information of the participants were not given in the analysis and final report. Any data collected as a result of court records and other documents of IECMS were strictly confidential and were only used academic purposes. The research also adhered to institutional and legal provisions by obtaining requisite approvals of the Harare High Court prior to undertaking the research.

3.11 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was done to determine the clarity, relevance and effectiveness of the research instruments prior to the actual data collection. It consisted of the open-ended questionnaires and interview guides to a limited number of participants who were acquainted with the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) but not part of the primary study sample at the

Harare High Court. Bryman (2016) says that pilot testing is crucial in qualitative research because it aids in uncovering ambiguities, wording issues and other methodological flaws in data collection instruments.

The pilot study helped the researcher assess how well the questions were able to capture information about the study objectives, specifically on how users perceived the system, whether it was effective and the challenges involved in its implementation. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), pilot testing enhances the quality of research instruments, as it helps establish that the questions will be understood and interpreted in the same manner by the participants. The first pilot resulted in the adjustments made based on the feedback received to enhance clarity, structure and alignment to the research goals.

Additionally, Taherdoost (2016) underlines that pilot testing promotes the validity and reliability because researchers can optimize the instruments prior to the actual data collection. The pilot process of this research played the role of enhancing the general quality of the research tools, which was to make sure the tools produce accurate, relevant and reliable data on the role of IECMS in promoting judicial reforms in the Harare high court.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology that w guided the study on the role of Integrated Electronic Case Management (IECMS) in advancing judicial reforms at the Harare High Court. It has explained the research design, research methodology which is qualitative, study population, sampling and pilot testing. It detailed the purposive selection of 30 knowledgeable participants, the use of key informant interviews and open-ended questionnaires analysis for data collection and

the application of thematic analysis to generate meaningful insights. The chapter also emphasized pilot testing and strict adherence to ethical principles to ensure credibility and integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter lists and discusses the data gathered on the stakeholders about the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in enhancing judicial reforms at the Harare High Court. It explores how users perceive IECMS to advance e-governance, assesses the usefulness of its features in improving accountability, transparency and access to justice, finds out the challenges in implementation and suggests ways in which these challenges can be overcome.

4.2 Demographic Characters of Respondents

4.2.1 Response Rate

Table 4.1 Response Rate

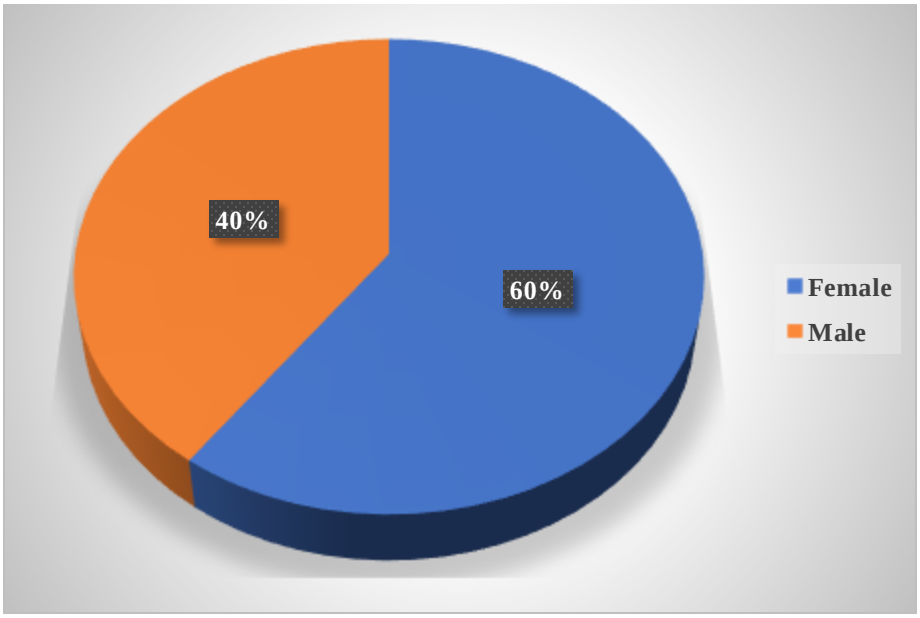
	Expected	**Responded**	**Response Rate**
Registrar	5	5	100%
Lawyer	5	5	100%
Judge	5	5	100%
Litigant	5	5	100%
Prison Officer	5	5	100%

ICT Officer	5	5	100%
Total	30	30	100%

The study achieved a 100% response rate, with all 30 targeted participants' registrars, judges, lawyers, litigants, prison officers and ICT officers completing the questionnaires and interviews.

4.2.2 Gender of Participants

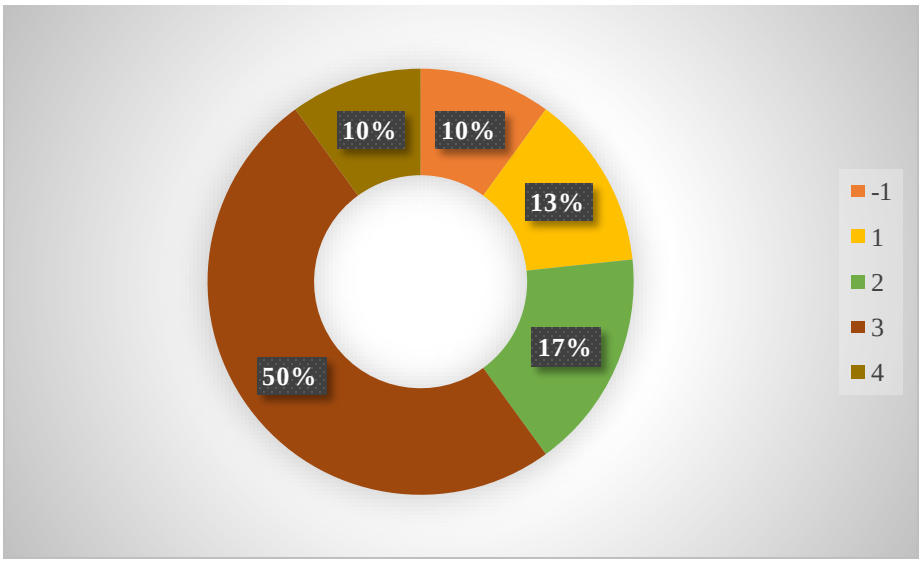
Figure 4.1 Gender of Participants



As for the gender of the individuals who responded to this survey, the gender distribution was somewhat even, with 60% of the respondents being female and the remaining 40% being male. Thus, a variety of individuals and perspectives were represented within this study.

4.2.3 Years of Experience with IECMS

Figure 4.2: Years of Experience with IECMS



The experience level of the individuals who responded to the questionnaire with the IECMS indicates that the majority of the individuals are quite familiar with the system. Fifty percent of the individuals have three years of experience with the IECMS, 10% have four years of experience, 17% have two years of experience with the system, 13% have one year of experience and 10% have less than a year of experience with the IECMS.

4.3 Users' Perceptions of IECMS

This section aims to investigate the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the IECMS and how it has contributed to the e-governance and judicial reforms that have occurred within the Harare High Court.

4.3.1 Awareness and Understanding of IECMS

This subtheme aims to investigate the awareness and understanding of the stakeholders regarding the IECMS.

The registrar stated,

> '*IECMS is the main platform for the filing and management of all cases that are filed within the court. All court documents are stored within the system. This has significantly changed the way in which the court manages its documents as all of the files are stored in one location. Previously, there were issues with missing documents and court paperwork*.'

The lawyer observed,

> *'It is clear that IECMS is designed to reduce paperwork and make case management more transparent. As a legal practitioner no longer carry heavy bundle of documents to court because everything is uploaded.*'

The ICT officer mentioned,

> *'I perceive the system as an instrument that helps to combine all judicial procedures and unite various offices of courts in real time.'*

The results indicate that the stakeholders in various court positions have a distinct and uniform perception of IECMS as a tool of operation and coordination that promotes efficiency, transparency and integration of judicial procedures. This implies that the system has been internalized successfully into the day-to-day court activities and users are enjoying both its

administrative and governance worth. Heeks (2018) believes that such understanding is a key to a successful digital transformation since it will guarantee meaningful use, rather than a simple compliance. According to UNDP (2020), the technical competence of institutional users enhances the effectiveness of the system by boosting coordination and minimizing operational inefficiencies. On the same note, OECD (2021) contends that where the stakeholders have a good grasp of digital systems, it improves the overall performance in the institutions and facilitates the achievement of sustainable results in e-governance.

4.3.2 Perceived Court Processes Efficiency

This sub theme will aim at investigating the perception of stakeholders on whether IECMS enhances efficiency in court cases management especially in case scheduling, handling of documents and access to information.

The judge stated,

> *'With IECMS, scheduling cases is much faster and easier to track case progress. The system automatically generates my daily schedule and notifies me of any changes.'*

The prison officer answered,

> *'The system has saved us time in filing and retrieving documents. What used to take half a day now take less than ten minutes for example to get court orders for prisoner's release or remand. Before we could send an officer to the court with paper document and sometimes, they would wait for hours or even told to come*

back the next day. Now we can access the system from our office at the prison without going to court.'

The litigant noted,

'I am able to do it online and see my case status without having to visit the court on a daily basis. This saves me transport money and the stress of taking a day off work.'

The results indicate that IECMS has a great effect on court efficiency, making it easier to plan, less administrative and more litigants have access to real-time case information. This is indicative of a wider move to digitalize the judicial process in which the administration process becomes computerized and information exchange becomes faster among stakeholders. Mangoma (2020) states that such systems enhance operational efficiency, in that they minimize manual operations and enable personnel to concentrate on more advanced operations. According to OECD (2020), e-case management systems lead to an increase in institutional productivity through better coordination of workflow and decrease in delays. In the same way, according to CEPEJ (2022), digital court systems enhance access to justice due to the reduction of unnecessary physical visits to courts and enhancing transparency in tracking the cases.

4.3.3 Perceived Transparency and Accountability

This sub theme aims to look into the perceptions of the stakeholders on whether IECMS promotes transparency and accountability in the judicial procedures especially in terms of traceability of action and the mechanisms of oversight.

The lawyer remarked,

'The audit trail within the IECMS that every action is recorded, which discourages tampering or favoritism. No one can secretly alter a court record without leaving a digital footprint.'

The registrar stated,

'It is easier to hold staff accountable since actions are visible in the system. I can run a report that shows me who interacted with any case any time. Before IECMS, if a file goes missing or a case not allocated properly, it was difficult to determine who was responsible because there was no clear record of who handled the file and when.'

The judge added,

'We are able to track the movement of cases and minimize chances of corruption.'

The results indicate that IECMS enhances transparency and accountability by establishing a fully traceable system of actions, which facilitates monitoring, minimizes chances of manipulation and strengthens the institutional control. This speaks to the fact that the digital audit functionality is increasing trust in the judicial processes by reducing the informal discretion and increasing accountability among employees. Transparency International (2021) claims that audit trails play a major role in minimizing the risk of corruption by making sure that all actions in the system are documented and verifiable. According to Watson and Muserere (2023), electronic case management systems also tend to increase institutional integrity through the increased visibility and accountability of the actions of users. Likewise, Heeks (2018) also notes that the success of those systems hinges on their regular use and compliance with the developed practices in digital

processes, which, in turn, confirms the need to be disciplined when rolling such systems out in order to ensure transparency objectives.

4.3.4 User-Friendliness and Accessibility

This sub theme aims to explore the perceptions of stakeholders towards the IECMS in relation to its ease of use and accessibility.

The ICT officer replied

> *'The IECMS was properly organized but required more training for employees who were yet to become adept with its more advanced features. He also mentioned that most of his older staff members took longer to learn these features.'*

The litigant noted

> *'The e-filing system of the court was very convenient to use but remarked that not every citizen in the country has access to the internet or the devices that are required to access these e-filing portals. Many citizens in several countries do not even own smartphones.'*

The lawyer responded

> '*The website was easy to use for legal professionals but somewhat daunting for individuals who were just starting to navigate the system.'*

The results of this study indicate that the IECMS was found to be user-friendly and well organized by court staff, however, some members within these positions have digital literacy skills gaps that

prevent them from effectively utilizing the features of the website. The findings indicate that while the design of the IECMS application may be efficient, external factors have the potential to impact the successful access to the system by all stakeholders. Heeks (2018) argues that it is important to implement capacity building efforts for all stakeholders so that they can operate the IECMS with a full-scale experience with the digital system beyond their fundamental functions. Furthermore, according to the UNDP (2020) report on digital inclusion, access to ICT infrastructure is one of the determinants of the successful implementation of e-governance services. Equally, the OECD (2021) report indicates that digital systems should balance the technical features of the system with accessibility and user support to ensure that all citizens can participate in the delivery of judicial services and have equal access to these e-government platforms.

4.3.5 Satisfaction and Acceptance by the Stakeholders.

This sub theme aims to analyze the general level of satisfaction of stakeholders with IECMS and their levels of acceptance of it as a court operation.

The prison officer said,

> *'Most staff appreciate the system because it simplifies tasks and reduce manual work. Now most of us cannot imagine going back to the old paper-based system'*

The judge stated,

> *'Although there was resistance initially, it has been accepted because of the realization of the benefits.'*

The lawyer added,

'I am contented with how the system is able to follow the cases and to make everything up to date. Now I receive notifications whenever there is any activity in my cases and I can see exactly where each case stands at any time day or night.'

The results reveal that all stakeholders are not dissatisfied with IECMS and become more accepting of it as a necessary component of court activities because it can minimize the burden on the administration, better track cases and make the updates more timely. This suggests a process of resistance turning to acceptance as users are getting their hands on the practical benefits of using the digital systems in their day-to-day work, which is a sign of better institutional adoption of digital systems. Mckinsey and Company (2021) suggest that digital transformation initiatives are more easily embraced when they have evident operational efficiency benefits.

4.4 Effectiveness of IECMS Features

This section seeks to investigate how the features of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) contribute to promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice at the Harare High Court.

4.4.1 Case Tracking and real time case progress updates.

This subtheme aims to explore the role of IECMS in facilitating timely updates of cases, minimizing delays and ensuring accountability in judicial proceedings.

One of the litigants stated,

'Using IECMS, I will be able to keep track of all the phases of a case in an electronic manner and ensuring no delays will pass unnoticed in the comfort of my home.'

The registrar responded,

> *'The system enables us to monitor the case assignment and real time progression, which holds the staff responsible to do what they do. Everytime a case is assigned to a particular judge or clerk the system records the date and time of assignment.'*

The prison officer remarked,

> *'I am able to access the case of my inmate online and this saves time of going back and forth to the court with inmates that are not at the court role and this saves us the government fuel. So, I can always track the case and see progress.'*

The results indicate that IECMS enhances case tracking, monitoring and accountability to a great extent by providing real time access to case progress at all levels of stakeholders such as judges, registrars and lawyers. This enhances accountability, minimizes ambiguity and efficiency in the running of the courts since delays and bottlenecks are easily detected and resolved. Mangoma (2020) also observes that electronic case management systems enhance efficiency in the workflow by allowing constant monitoring of judicial processes. According to OECD (2021), real-time tracking increases institutional accountability by turning the movement of cases to be transparent and tractable. Likewise, CEPEJ (2022) claims that digital case systems are conducive to access to justice and transparency by decreasing the unwarranted delays and enhancing the flow of information between courts and users.

4.4.2 Digital Recordkeeping and Audit Trails.

The aim of this subtheme is to explore how digital records and audit trails provided by IECMS enhance accountability, integrity and transparency in the work of the courts.

The ICT officer replied,

> *'All operations within the system are recorded hence we can always know who left updates and at what time. We can always go back and see who made and exactly when those changes, they made and exactly when those changes happened'*

Litigant replied,

> *'Every action in the system is logged, so I can always see updates and this reduces bribes like paying money so that I can see my record fast like in the old system.'*

The lawyer remarked,

> *'Having the understanding that all actions will be documented will also give me a lot of confidence in the fairness and transparency of the process. The audit provides assurance because I know that no one can secretly manipulate the record without being caught.'*

The results have shown that IECMS enhances institutional integrity by making sure that every judicial procedure is digitally documented, traceable and verifiable, minimizing the risk of manipulation, records loss and procedural mistakes. This builds confidence in the judicial processes by the staff and external users since the system brings a clear atmosphere where accountability is integrated in daily activities. Transparency International (2021) points out that digital audit trails can be used to minimize corruption because every activity carried out in the system can be traced. Watson and Muserere (2023) believe that electronic systems of recordkeeping limit human discretion and reduce the number of errors during the case management process. On the same note, OECD (2021) posits that digital audit systems can be effective only

when appropriately used, monitored and with staff training constantly to maintain transparency and accountability results.

4.4.3 Case Allocation and Workflow Management.

This subtheme aims to analyze how the features of IECMS in terms of case allocation and workflow can facilitate the principles of fairness, efficiency and transparency in the functioning of the court.

The registrar said,

> *'Assignments of cases are done in a systematic manner which minimizes biasness and gives a balanced work load amongst judges and my assistant registrars. In the manual system there was always a risk that certain judges would be favored. This created resentment and opened door for corruption. But IECMS eliminated bias.'*

The judge responded,

> *'Workflow automation can help minimize human error when scheduling and avoid favoritism when handling cases.'*

The prison officer said to me,

> *'In the old system, we used to deal with lost warrants or delay in knowing with judge was handling a specific inmate which meant prisoners sometimes missed court dates or stayed in remands longer than necessary because the paper didn't move as fast as the person.'*

The results indicate that IECMS enhances fairness, efficiency and transparency in the judicial activities by automating the process of assigning cases and standardizing the workflow processes throughout the court system. This minimizes human involvement in case distribution, minimizes mistakes in scheduling and guarantees that all cases take a uniform course of procedure. Jamila, Rompegading and Hidayat (2021) state that automated allocation systems increase procedural fairness by eliminating subjectivity in allocating cases. According to Heeks (2018), automation of workflows minimizes human error and enhances consistency in the procedure of administration. Likewise, OECD (2021) claims that organized digital processes enhance predictability, equity and accountability in judicial practices, which enhance trust in the legal frameworks.

4.4.4 Electronic Payment

This subtheme aims to explore how the electronic payment features of IECMS contribute to promoting accountability, transparency and accountability to reduce cash handling, minimizing corruption risks and making court fees convenient for users.

ICT officer said,

> *'The e-payment feature of IECMS has been a real game changer for court fees are how court fees are collected. The payment is recorded instantly in the system and the receipt is generated automatically. This reduces cash flowing into the wrong hands reducing corruption and bribes.'*

The judge replied,

> *'E payment has greatly improved accountability when it comes to court revenue.'*

The registrar remarked,

> *'The e payment feature has enhanced transparency, every single payment made through the system is logged with date, time, amount and the name of the person who paid. This can be reviewed any time. In the past, when payments were made in cash receipts could be falsified. Now, the machine is automated and there is no human handling of cash at the point of payment.'*

The results have shown that IECMS electronic payment features play a vital role in enhancing transparency, accountability and access to justice by digitalizing financial transactions, reducing cash handling and making court fee payments more convenient for all users including litigants, lawyers and institutional stakeholders such as prison service. As noted by World Bank (2022) e payments improves revenue collection and public trust by ensuring all transactions are recorded and traceable.

4.5 Challenges

This section seeks to investigate the key challenges experienced by stakeholders in implementing and using the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) at the Harare High Court.

4.5.1 Infrastructural Limitations

This subtheme seeks to investigate the impact of technological constraints on the effective use of IECMS within the court.

The registrar said that,

> *'We get case delay update from the judges as a result of their unstable internet connections which impacts on our ability to effectively use such a system as we experience slow and unstable internet connections within the court.'*

The litigant said,

> *'I experienced lack of computers within the court when I went to ask for help with e-filling. The cubic in internet hub all of them were occupied meaning no computers to use. People had to queue up to access a computer to fill the e-form and when it was my turn to use the computer the IECMS was running so slowly.'*

The ICT officer said,

> *'Due to technical breakdowns in the ICT department, judicial case updates experience delays for hours. The server that hosts the IECMS are not as powerful as they should be considering the number of cases that are pendency in the Harare High Court.'*

The findings from this subtheme show that the effectiveness of IECMS is constrained by technological infrastructural challenges such as electricity supply, internet connectivity and the availability of computers to perform judicial tasks. According to Heeks (2018), the successful implementation and use of an e-government system rely on adequate and reliable infrastructure. Similarly, the African Development Bank (2019) indicated that lack of equipment within the courts is a challenge that hinders the effective implementation of IECMS. Finally, Mangoma (2020) pointed out that the lack of digital and technological literacy within the judicial courts will limit the effectiveness and sustainability of IECMS.

4.5.2 Digital Illiteracy

This subtheme seeks to investigate the impact of digital illiteracy on the effective use of IECMS in the courts.

The prison officer said,

> *'Some of my colleagues in the prison service in the prison service are not comfortable navigating the more advanced features of the system and that slows down our work. They know how to log in but when they need something to generate a report or find a document that is not in the main folder, they get stuck and have to call for help.'*

The litigant stated,

> *'I will be honest; I struggle to use the system on my own because my computer skills are very basic. The buttons and menu and the mouse are just too much for me. I didn't even know how to switch on the computer at first.'*

The ICT officer said,

> *'Additional training is needed for both staff and users if we want everyone to benefit fully from the system. Litigants especially are the ones who need a lot of training because on a normal day you can't sit down due pressure from litigants who don't know how to use the computer.'*

The findings show that limited digital literacy among both court staff and litigants negatively affects the efficiency, accessibility and overall effectiveness of IECMS, as users struggle to fully utilise its features. According to Heeks (2018), user capability is a critical

determinant of successful e-governance implementation, while UNDP (2020) notes that digital inclusion is essential for ensuring equitable access to online public services. Jamila, Rompegading and Hidayat (2021) further emphasize that continuous training and capacity-building are necessary to strengthen user competence and improve system adoption in judicial environments.

4.5.3 Digital Divide

This subtheme seeks to investigate how the digital divide which is the gap between those who have access to digital technology, skills and the internet affect the effectiveness and equitable of IECMS in judicial operations.

The litigant said,

> *'The system assumes that everyone has a smart phone and knows how to use it, but that is not true for many people in Zimbabwe. The court needs to understand that not everyone lives in areas with fast internet and has data money for virtual reality.'*

The registrar responded,

> *'Digital divide is one of our biggest barriers because we have users at all levels of digital literacy from tech judges to rural litigants who have never touched a computer before.'*

The prison officer said,

> *'At the prison, we see that many prisoners' family cannot use the e payment system because they don't have smart phones and no network coverage. Even though the system is available they cannot use it because the infrastructure and skills are not there.'*

The findings reveal that digital divide significant constraints the equitable implementation and utilization of IECMS at the Harare High Court. Disparities in access to smartphone, reliable network, affordable data and digital literacy creates uneven experience with marginalized groups facing barriers to accessing electronic judicial service. According Heeks to (2018), e governance systems in developing countries often exacerbate existing inequalities when designed without considering citizens diverse capabilities.

4.5.4 Limited Public Awareness

This subtheme seeks to examine how low levels of public awareness and knowledge affect the utilisation of IECMS and access to judicial services.

The litigant said,

> *'I only recently learned about online case tracking and before that, I visited the court weekly for trying to know my case progress. For a month I wasted time and money travelling to the court without knowledge that I can check my case status from home on phone.'*

The registrar responded,

> *'We still face challenges of people who still come to court carrying their files and people who don't know that filling is known down at the e filling room. They are also people who still request their physical records when we are now paperless.'*

The lawyer said,

> *'Public sensitization is needed to ensure wider utilization of IECMS features.'*

The findings reveal that low public awareness significantly limits the utilisation of IECMS, thereby reducing its potential to enhance efficiency, accessibility and timely justice delivery. According to UNDP (2020), public sensitisation is essential for ensuring effective adoption of e-governance systems, while Jamila, Rompegading and Hidayat (2021) emphasize that user engagement beyond institutional staff is critical for full system utilisation. OECD (2021) further argues that sustained education and awareness campaigns are necessary to promote broader adoption and improve access to digital public services.

4.6 Strategies

Within this section, the investigator will investigate the strategies that are recommended to improve the implementation, utilization and impact of the IECMS.

4.6.1 Continuous Training and Capacity Building

Within this subtheme, the investigator will seek to determine the need for continuous training and the building of the capacity of those that are to utilize the IECMS.

Judge said,

> *'Litigants need to be trained on how to e-file and track their cases. Most citizens are not computer literate.'*

Registrar said,

> *'To enhance the system, regular training for staff is needed maybe every few weeks or months.'*

ICT officer said,

> *'Litigants need to be trained on the system. A training workshop for court staff would be already in place. A guidance booklet with pictures could help both staff and litigants understand how to use the system efficiently*.'

Findings from this subtheme reveal the need for continuous training and the building of the capacity of the users of the system in order to enhance the utilization of the IECMS. According to Heeks (2018), the use of training to enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants involved is vital for the success of any system implemented. Furthermore, according to the United Nations Department of Development Programme (2020), the success of any e-governance initiative depends on the knowledge and skills of the stakeholders involved in the project. Hence, without the training of the individuals that will use the IECMS, it will be difficult for the court to gain the benefits that the implementation of this system could provide.

4.6.2 Infrastructure Enhancement

This subtheme aims to investigate the strategies related to enhancing the infrastructure of the court and the IECMS.

ICT officer said,

> *'Stable internet and an adequate supply of modern computers in the courts are vital for the effective operation of the IECMS.'*

Registrar said,

'Additional modern computers and servers are needed in all the sections of the court.'

Litigant said,

'Enhancing the internet hub in the court by upgrading the capacity of the internet and buying additional computers will help a lot in the court.'

Prison officer said,

'Network connectivity for virtual reality for prisoners.'

Findings from this subtheme reveal the strategies related to enhancing the infrastructure of the High Court in Harare as it directly impacts the effective operation of the IECMS. According to the African Development Bank (2019), the infrastructure of any organization determines the success or failure in implementing a project. Furthermore, Mangoma (2020) explains how the provision of adequate computing devices is crucial in the effective operation of an e-governance system. Finally, the OECD Development Centre (2021) explains how enhancing the ICT infrastructure can significantly enhance the efficiency in which any service is delivered by that government entity.

4.6.3 Public Awareness and Sensitization

This subtheme seeks to investigate the strategies related to increasing the awareness of the public regarding the existence and benefits of the IECMS.

Prison officer said,

'Social media and public community outreach activities can be used to improve the adoption of the IECMS.'

Registrar said,

'Public awareness campaigns through radio, social media and public community outreaches can be used to increase the adoption of the IECMS by the public.'

Litigant said,

'Radio campaigns using the local language can reach the rural citizens. Posters can be placed in various public places including courts and clinics to increase awareness of the system.'

Judge said,

'*The court must go out and educate the public on the benefits and operation of the IECMS to increase the public's adoption of the system.'*

Findings from this subtheme reveal the strategies related to increasing the public awareness of the implementation of the IECMS because without the awareness of the public, the benefits that the system can provide to the citizens will not be seen. According to the United Nations Department of Development Programme (2020), creating awareness and engaging the public in any government project is pivotal to the success of the project. Furthermore, Jamila, Rompegading and Hidayat (2021) state that using various channels to advertise a project will increase the number of the public that can benefit from that project. The OECD Development Centre (2021) also stated

that creating awareness of the benefits of any government project will significantly enhance the likelihood that the public will utilize the project to its full potential.

4.6.4 Consistent System Assessment and Feedback Systems.

Within this sub theme, the investigator will study the relevance of assessing the system and creating feedback systems for the users of the IECMS in order to enhance the system itself.

The ICT officer remarked,

> *'Regular system performance reviews can identify problems early. We need to know what is working and what is not.'*

The prison officer answered,

> *'Feedback channels for staff and litigants should be created. A suggestion box or online form would work well.'*

The registrar said,

> *'User feedback helps customize the system to local needs. When people feel heard, they accept the system more.'*

The results indicate that periodic assessment and feedback systems are the key to keeping IECMS responsive, efficient and user-oriented, as well as compliant with the user needs and changing judicial demands. Mangoma (2020) states that continuous monitoring is important to improve system performance and evidence-based improvements, whereas Heeks (2018) states that participatory approaches contribute to better system ownership and performance. OECD (2021)

also observes that involving user feedback in the design of the system is a way of ensuring that digital governance systems are contextually relevant and long-term sustainable.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the perception of the IECMS by the stakeholders in the Harare High Court was identified, analyzed and discussed and its contribution to increasing efficiency, transparency, accountability and access of justice was identified. Results indicate that the features users appreciate to enhance operational management and minimize human error are case tracking, audit trails, workflow management and reporting, whereas limitations to full use have been identified as limited infrastructure, digital literacy, resistance to change and low awareness of the population. The stakeholders suggested ongoing training and improvement of infrastructure, sensitization of the population and frequent assessment of the system to maximize the IECMS effectiveness.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study, major key conclusions made from the findings, recommendations for policy and practice and suggestions for further research. The study explored the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in advancing judicial reform in Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on the Harare High Court. The chapter synthesizes insights from the literature review, research methodology and empirical data to provide a thorough picture of how IECMS contributes to efficiency, transparency, accountability and access to justice inside the judiciary.

5.2 Summary

Chapter 1 provided an introduction on the role of an Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in driving judicial reform in Zimbabwe. The chapter highlighted the increasing use of electronic governance by governments worldwide to increase accountability, reduce inefficiencies and provide better services to citizens. African legal systems have been grappling with persistent issues such as corruption, backlogs of cases and reliance on repetitive processes in the form of outdated paperwork. The chapter highlighted the importance of using technology to improve the rule of law. Following that, the chapter centered on Zimbabwe's demonstration of how the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) implemented the IECMS in 2022 to simplify case management and address issues such as incomplete files and limited transparency. Its aim was to

investigate how the IECMS is progressing judicial reform at the Harare High Court.' The research objectives were to evaluate the experiences of users, assess the effectiveness of system features, identify implementation issues and provide practical advice. The chapter provided a summary of the study's assumptions, significance, delimitations and limitations, as well as defined key terms to establish broader concepts for the research.

Chapter 2 delved into the pertinent literature and theoretical frameworks related to the implementation of electronic case management systems in the legal profession. At the beginning of the chapter, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was introduced as a theoretical framework for understanding how perceived utility and ease of use affect user adoption. This theory serves as the foundation for further investigation. The chapter analyzed the user's perspective across different global regions, highlighting that while digital systems are generally considered to be effective in reducing procedural delays and increasing transparency, they often encounter obstacles due to inadequate infrastructure. The literature review examined the challenges faced in implementing IECMS, particularly in developing nations, which include the digital divide, inadequate internet connectivity and organizational resistance. The paper explored methods for enhancing the efficiency of systems, including comprehensive change management, ongoing training for both users and staff and inclusive design that incorporates marginalized groups. By highlighting the literature gap, the chapter concluded by noting that there is little research on how IECMS affects users at Harare High Court.

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research design and methodology employed in this study the role of Integrated Electronic Case Management System in advancing e governance in Zimbabwe. The study drew on the interpretivism research philosophy, which acknowledges that

reality is socially constructed through human experiences and interactions. This was a qualitative research question and it caught stakeholders lived experiences and perspectives. The institution utilized a case study design to facilitate specialized investigation within the specific context. In the research study population, the participants were identified as being among the key stakeholders interacting with the system: judges, registrars and legal practitioners; prison officers; and IT officers. 30 individuals with direct experience of the system were chosen through purposeful sampling. Both open ended questionnaires and key informant interviews were utilized to gather data, enabling participants to provide detailed answers. Through the use of thematic analysis, the data was analyzed to identify patterns and key themes. The study utilized methodological triangulation, merged multiple data sources and piloted research instruments to enhance the credibility of the findings. The chapter outlined methods to verify and validate the accuracy of the outcomes, including triangulation and detailed documentation of research procedures. In particular, this chapter discussed the ethical questions guiding such study as getting consent for informed and confidential information while protecting the identities of those who took part in it.

Chapter 4 delineated the findings of this study and delved into their respective experiences and different opinions on the implementation of IECMS at Harare High Court. The chapter concluded by stating that the system is widely considered to be a revolutionary tool that has significantly improved administrative efficiency, document security and increased transparency in legal proceedings. The use of electronic filing, real-time case tracking, digital record management, automated audit trails, work flow management and electronic payment systems was identified as a key factor in reducing corruption and increasing accountability. The research discovered that the most significant issues are low connectivity, insufficient computers, low digital literacy, resistance

to change and a lack of communication between communities. Scenarios proposed practical reforms, such as regular training, infrastructure updates and feedback mechanisms, to tackle issues.

5.3. Conclusions.

1. To evaluate users' perception of the IECMS in advancing e governance and judicial reforms.

The research focused on assessing IECMS usage and the benefits of its implementation, with findings indicating that stakeholders at the Harare High Court have an adequate comprehension of the system and regard it as a valuable tool for improving e governance and judicial reform. In the eyes of the participants, IECMS is an effective tool for enhancing coordination and decreasing manual process usage. The study found that users are more likely to identify the system with better efficiency, better service delivery and greater institutional transparency. While some individuals objected to adoption, views have gradually shifted towards acceptance as stakeholders have witnessed the system's practical benefits. The results show that the positive user feedback and increasing acceptance of IECMS play a major role in making it possible for digital transformation and also for judicial modernization.

2. To access the effectiveness of IECMS features in promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice.

The research demonstrated that IECMS features, including real-time case tracking, digital record keeping, audit tracking (one way), work flow automation and electronic payment, are effective in promoting accountability through transparency and assess to justice. According to the

study, these characteristics increase the visibility of case progress, reducing the risk of fraud and ensuring traceability of judicial processes. Additionally, real-time case tracking allows judges, lawyers and litigants to track cases accurately, which reduces delays and helps identify bottlenecks. The research found that the digital revolution has virtually eradicated the need for physical files being lost or mishandled. In addition, remote case information distribution has lowered the need for physical courtroom visits, making it easier and more convenient to legal practitioners. Despite this, the study found that the digital divide fundamentally undermines the effectiveness of these studies in promoting universal justice. The system's effectiveness is limited by its ability to increase justice for the digitally connected, which creates new barriers for individuals who lack access to the internet or digital literacy.

3. To identify the challenges faced in the implementation and utilization of IECMS.

The findings narrowly target the third goal by identifying various obstacles that hinder the smooth implementation of the IECMS.' The analysis found that the most significant bottlenecks are technical and infrastructural deficiencies, predominantly unreliable internet connectivity, frequent system failures and adequate hardware, which can offset the system's theoretical efficiency gains. Despite initial training, the study found that court personnel and the general public have significant gaps in digital literacy, which hinders effective use of the system. Organizational obstacles were also a significant concern, as some staff members preferred paper-based processes due to their unwillingness to change old practices. IECMS services are not widely known, which limits participation. Lack of funding for IT support, software licenses and hardware upgrades is a significant issue that puts IECMS at the Harare High Court in jeopardy.

4. To propose practical strategies for improving the effectiveness of IECMS in Zimbabwe judiciary.

Providing practical solutions can improve IECMS' effectiveness and sustainability. Key proposals include regular training to train court staff and improve digital literacy of litigants. Research indicated that it is crucial to prioritize investing in secure internet infrastructure and a backup power system for uninterrupted system availability. To address the digital divide and ensure access to inclusive justice, the study highlighted the importance of equipping public access points with trained personnel to aid marginalized litigants. The use of public awareness campaigns on radio, social media and community outreach was deemed essential in increasing system adoption. Furthermore, the study recommended that regular evaluation and user feedback mechanisms be established to guide continuous improvement. These measures collectively offer a pragmatic roadmap to further enhance the role of IECMS in advancing judicial reform in Zimbabwe.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research study, the following recommendations are recommended to enhance the effectiveness of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) in the Zimbabwean judiciary:

- **Strengthen the ICT Infrastructure**: The Judicial Service Commission (JSC) should continue to invest in the ICT infrastructure within the judiciary. Ensuring that each court has improved internet access will eliminate the problems caused by the system downtime. Providing each court with sufficient computers, servers and hardware will cater to the increasing demands of the system. The installation of electricity backup installations will resolve the power outages that exist within most of the courts. Strengthening the ICT infrastructure will lead to continual access to IECMS functions and enhance the efficiency of judicial procedures.

- **Enhance the Continuous Training of Users**: The training of all IECMS users should be continued. All users from judges to litigants should attend regular training sessions to gain the confidence and competency to use the system correctly. Providing training in practical sessions will allow users to become more adept at using the system. Special training should be given to individuals who do not have the digital literacy to effectively use the system. Strengthening the training of the users will allow for the effective use and sustainability of IECMS.
- **Promote Public Awareness of IECMS**: The judiciary should execute many public awareness campaigns to improve the understanding and use of the IECMS. The campaigns can use various platforms to reach the public. The awareness campaigns should focus on the various services that the IECMS provides to the public. Court based sensitization activities will allow the judiciary to become more comfortable with the system. Providing various resources in the public's preferred languages will increase the accessibility of the information to as many individuals as possible. Promoting awareness of the IECMS will lead to an increased use of the system and an improved access to justice for citizens.
- **Establish User Support Services**: Help desks can be established within the courts to aid users who have difficulties using the IECMS. Other support services such as online chat or email support can be established for increased accessibility to help. Feedback forms can be established within the system to receive feedback from users regarding the system and allow them to propose changes. These feedback forms should be continually reviewed and used to make improvements to the system. Staffing the help desks with staff who are trained to respond to consumer inquiries will enhance the improvement of the service provided to users.

- **Ensure that the System is Inclusive of All Populations**: The IECMS has the potential to be developed in such a way as to ensure that all populations of Zimbabwe can use it. The system can be designed to be accessible to people of all impairments, all rural communities and all populations that have limited access to technology. Providing training to disadvantaged populations will ensure they have access to justice using this system. The judiciary can work to increase the awareness of the system within rural communities. Forming relationships with organizations in these communities will increase the accessibility of the system to those who would otherwise have limited access. Ensuring that the system is inclusive will allow all citizens to access the justice system equally.

5.5 Areas for future research

Future research should examine the implementation and effectiveness of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) across other levels of Zimbabwe's judiciary, such as Magistrates' Courts and the Supreme Court, to enable comparative analysis of system performance, user experiences and institutional readiness across different court tiers. There is also a need for quantitative studies that quantify the real impact of IECMS on key performance measures such as case disposal rates, backlog reduction, processing time and user satisfaction, thereby combining qualitative findings with stronger empirical data.

Lastly, further research should focus on digital inclusion and access to justice by examining the experiences of marginalized groups, including rural communities, low-income users and persons with disabilities, in order to determine whether IECMS promotes equitable access or perpetuates existing inequalities within the justice system

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APPENDICES

APPENDICE 1 : Interview Guide for Participants

My name is Purity Mangwiro. I am an undergraduate student studying for a Bachelor of Honors of Science Degree in Peace and Governance at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE). I am conducting research on the role of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System

(IECMS) in advancing judicial reform at the Harare High Court. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. All your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will remain completely anonymous. The information gathered will be used only for academic purposes.

APPENDICE 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE 1

Professionals (Judges, Lawyers, ICT Personnel, Court Administrators)

Target Participants:

Judges / Magistrates

Legal practitioners (lawyers)

Court clerks / administrators

ICT officers / system administrator

Estimated Duration: 45–60 minutes

Interview Type: Key Informat Interview

To evaluate users' perceptions of IECMS in advancing e-governance and judicial reforms

1. What has been your experience with the use of IECMS at the Harare High Court?.....

.....

2. In your view, how has IECMS changed the way court cases are managed?.....
.....

3. What benefits have you experienced from using IECMS?.....
.....

4. In your opinion, how useful and easy to use is IECMS?.....
.....

To assess the effectiveness of IECMS in promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice

1. In what ways has IECMS improved accountability in the management of court cases?.....
.....

2. How has IECMS improved transparency in court procedures?.....
.....

3. How does IECMS assist in tracking court cases and reducing the loss of court files?.....
....

4. In your view, how has IECMS affected access to justice for litigants?.....

.....

To identify challenges that limit the effectiveness of IECMS

1. What major challenges have you experienced when using IECMS?.....

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2. How does poor internet connectivity affect the use of IECMS?.....

.....

3. How do system breakdowns and inadequate equipment affect your work?.....

.....

4. What other challenges affect the effective implementation of IECMS?.....

.....

To identify strategies for improving the effectiveness of IECMS

1. What improvements would you suggest for IECMS?

.....

2. How can training and technical support for users be improved?

.....

3. What can be done to improve internet connectivity and infrastructure?

.....

4. What measures can be introduced to make IECMS more effective?

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APPENDICE 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE 2

Service Users (Clients / Litigants / Community Members)

Target Participants:

Individuals who have filed or defended civil cases

Community members who accessed court services

Self-represented litigants

Estimated Duration: 30–45 minutes

Interview Type: Open ended questionionares

To evaluate users' perceptions of IECMS in advancing e-governance and judicial reforms

1. What has been your experience with using IECMS in your daily duties?

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2. How has IECMS affected the management of court cases and records?.....

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3. What benefits has IECMS brought to your work?.....

.....

4. What are your views on the usefulness and ease of using IECMS?

.....

To assess the effectiveness of IECMS in promoting accountability, transparency and access to justice

1. How does IECMS improve the tracking of court cases?

.....

2. In what ways has IECMS improved accountability in court administration?.....

.....

3. How has IECMS improved transparency in the management of court cases?

.....

4. How does IECMS contribute to access to justice?

.....

To identify challenges that limit the effectiveness of IECMS

1. What challenges do you face when using IECMS?

.....

2. How does poor internet connectivity affect your work?.....

.....

3. How do system breakdowns and lack of adequate equipment affect the use of IECMS?.....

.....

4. How does lack of training or digital skills affect the use of IECMS?

.....

To identify strategies for improving the effectiveness of IECMS

1. What improvements would you suggest for IECMS?

.....

2. How can user training be improved?

.....

3. What can be done to improve technical support and infrastructure?

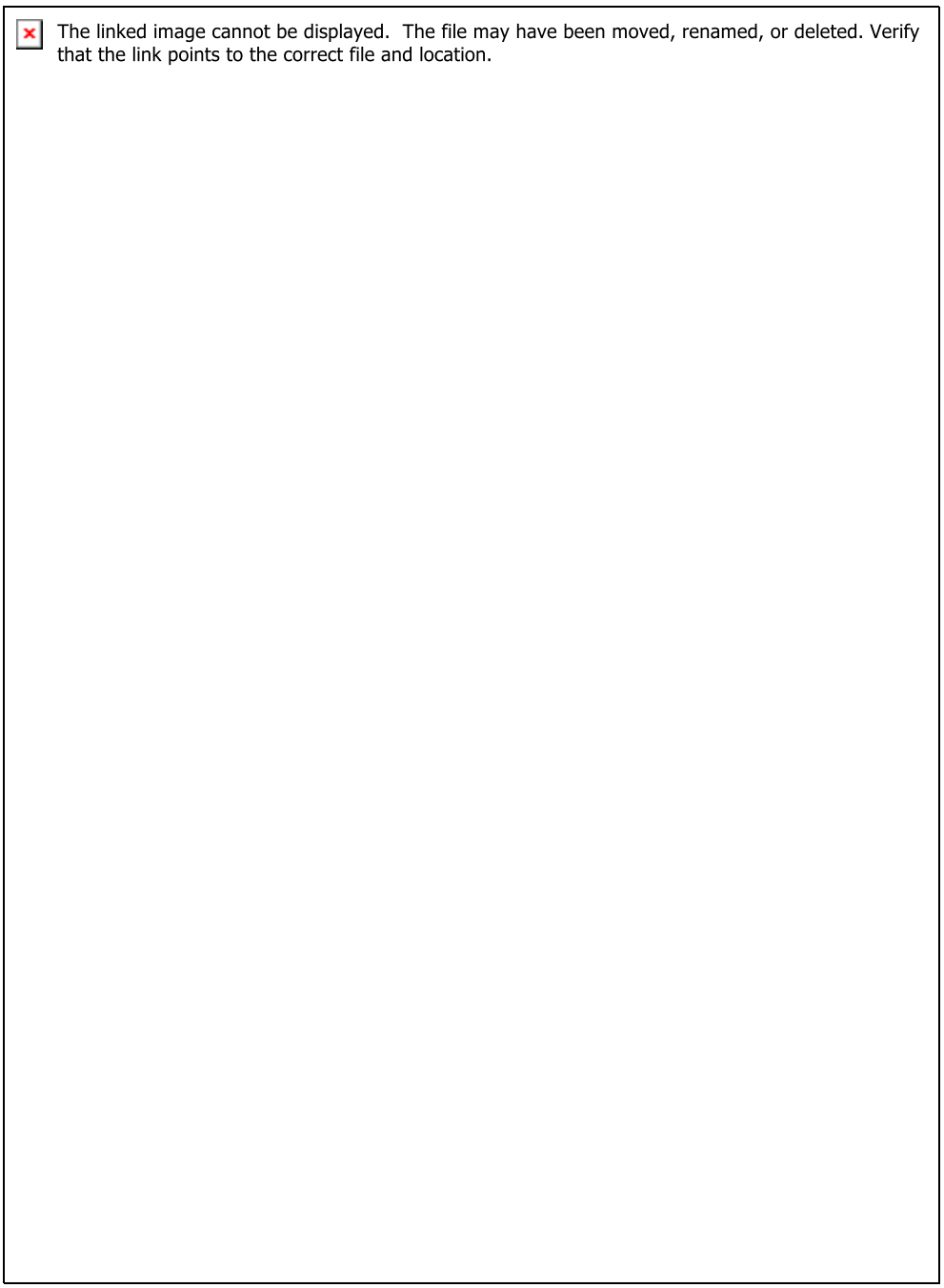
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4. How can the court improve the effectiveness of IECMS?

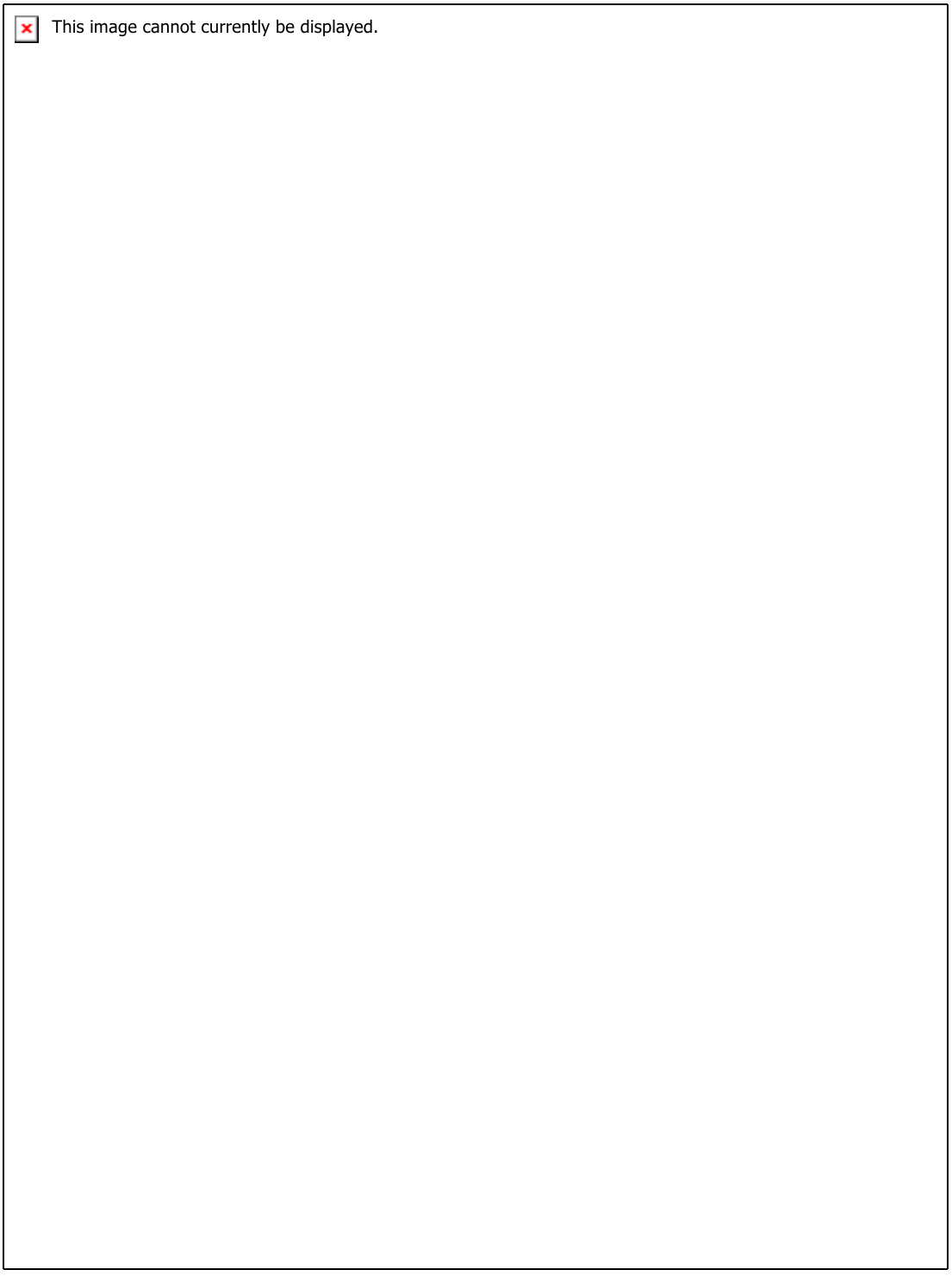
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countability in case management?

APPENDICE 4: APPROVAL SEEKING LETTER



APPENDICE 5: LETTER OF RESEARCH APPROVAL


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