

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

A WORKING MODEL TOWARDS DIGITALIZING THE JUSTICE DELIVERY SYSTEM IN ZIMBABWE'S CAPITAL CITY.

BY

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A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

NOVEMBER 2024

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DEGREE: MASTER OF LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DEGREE.

YEAR DEGREE AWARDED: 2024

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Tinashe Sitole, our children, Takudzwa, Tawananyasha and Tatenda, my sisters, Lisa, Linda, and Lidia as well as my mother, Regina Magaisa for their love and sacrifice, not forgetting the love of my friends for their encouragement and support in completing my degree.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the Almighty God the provider of knowledge and wisdom for seeing me throughout my studies and for enabling me to undertake my research successfully, without His grace I would not have made it. I extend my deep appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. M Matambo for the guidance and advice provided during the study that made it possible for me to successfully complete this report. I am greatly indebted to the legal practitioners, members of the ZRP and ZPCS, litigants in Harare, for their valuable aid and cooperation in the provision of the needed information vital for this research. Special thanks go to my husband, Tinashe Sitole, our children, Takudzwa, Tawananyasha and Tatenda, my sisters, Lisa, Linda, and Lidia as well as my mother, Regina Magaisa, for their love, sacrifice and support. May God bless them abundantly. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all those who made tremendous contributions to this study, my brothers, and friends. I appreciate your encouragement and moral support. May the Almighty Lord bless you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to develop a working model for digitalizing justice delivery system in Zimbabwe. The objectives of the study were: to establish the influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency; to determine the influence of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency; to establish the influence of information communication technology on justice accessibility; to ascertain the influence of Stakeholder Engagement on public Trust in the judiciary. The study was motivated by the fact that the Zimbabwe's justice delivery system faces significant challenges, including inefficiency, delays in case processing, lack of transparency, corruption and limited access to legal services, especially in rural and underserved areas. These issues have contributed to public mistrust in the judicial system and hindered the administration of justice. The government has expressed interest in adopting digital solutions, but progress has been slow. The literature review covered the theoretical framework related to the study and the relevance of these theories to the research. The theories include the Stakeholder theory, Digital transformation Theory. The researcher used pragmatism and interpretivism philosophy because they best suit this study which is both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, 69 questionnaires were distributed to legal practitioners, members of the ZRP and ZPCS, litigants in Harare. Just 65 completed surveys were received, yielding a respectable 94.20% response rate. The researcher had interviews with selected respondents. The major findings of the study were that there is a positive and significant relationship between technology infrastructure and judicial efficiency, Electronic Processing Law has significant influence on Transparency, information communication technology has a significant influence on justice accessibility, and Stakeholder Engagement has influence on public Trust in the judiciary. The research therefore concluded that the digitalization of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system has a significant positive influence on the Zimbabwe's justice delivery system. The digitalization of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system mitigates the current challenges and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the judiciary. Digitalization initiatives such as the adoption of e-filing systems, virtual courtrooms, online dispute resolution mechanisms, and electronic case management systems help streamline judicial processes, reduce case backlogs, improve access to legal services, and enhance transparency in justice delivery. It is recommended that there must be a continuous training programme for the judicial system’s stakeholders. There must be more e-filing centres in remote areas for easy access to justice by litigants. Investing in stable internet networks is critical in ensuring that litigants willing to use the virtual court system do not face connectivity challenges. A change management programme has been put in place as an ongoing process to ensure acceptance of the new methods of doing things in the Judiciary. This study developed a working model for digitalizing the justice delivery system to improve judicial efficiency, Transparency, justice accessibility, public Trust in the judiciary in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Digitalisation, Justice delivery system, Transparency

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CRMS	Electronic Case Records Management System
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
IECMS	Integrated Electronic Case Management System
LTE	Electronic Processing Law
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
ZAAC	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission
ZIPIT	Zimswitch Instant Payment Interchange Technology
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police
ZPCS	Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

By learning from the digitization trends in a few European and African nations, this study seeks to create a practical model for digitizing Zimbabwe's justice delivery system with a proxy of Zimbabwe's capital city 'Harare' for entire country. The report looks at the difficulties and achievements these nations have had putting digital justice systems into place and suggests a model that is suited to Zimbabwe's unique situation. The study's background, problem statement, research aims, and research questions were all examined in this chapter. The chapter also examined the study's rationale, as well as its boundaries, restrictions, acronyms, and explanations of important terms.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Kuhimbisa (2024) defines digitization as the application of digital technology, inventions, and innovations in the delivery of justice that are tailored to the operations and work of the courts to improve their capacity to carry out their duties of guaranteeing access to justice quickly and effectively. Despite the fact that judicial digitalization started in the 1980s with the introduction of personal computers and word processing software, its pace was scarcely swift until recently (Maroz, Popova and Acosta, 2023). In addition to the extensive usage of general hardware and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), courts have just begun to use electronic tools and programs created specifically for their job in the last 20 years. Through implementing electronic payment and electronic service of process, certain governments have gradually made it possible to file cases electronically, which in turn makes it possible to interact with courts online (CEPEJ, 2016).

The digitization of many judicial systems has been going on for several decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused this development to pick up speed (Maroz and Acosta, 2023). Because of the crisis, governments around the world have taken an unprecedented number of steps to automate

their judiciaries. However, this acceleration of digitalization efforts also led to an increase in the gap between the capacities of industrialized and emerging economies. The electronic flow of papers and remote hearings allowed judges and court users to maintain their activities during the health crisis (Fabri, 2021). Many economies rushed to digitize their court systems to avoid irrevocable harm to the parties' interests and the accumulation of a backlog of cases (OECD, 2021). Governments around the world are taking steps to digitize justice delivery systems in an effort to reduce the delays in court case management (Addadzi-Koom & Bediako, 2019). According to Filho (2009), the drive to digitize courts derives from the general disapproval of justice delivery systems, which are thought to be slow at processing cases and issuing rulings, which causes justice to be delayed. A major contributing factor to this inefficiency is the manual processing of court records. Additionally, the courts' capacity to efficiently handle caseloads using manual procedures is hampered by the significant volume of cases at different levels of the judicial review process (Archibong & Onyeulor, 2022). Significant problems, such as prison overcrowding, high recidivism rates, heightened corruption risk, and a general decline in confidence in a country's legal system, are sometimes caused by delays in court case resolution (Hasan & Rupa, 2021).

Many contemporary judicial systems place a high priority on addressing these delays in the administration of justice (Kondylis & Stein, 2018). The digital transformation of courts is guided by the idea that "justice delayed is justice denied," which is endorsed by legal systems worldwide (Benyekhlef, Amar & Callipel, 2015). According to this notion, legal institutions should constantly work to promptly settle issues that litigants present (Katsh & Rabinovich-Einy, 2017). To improve operational efficiency, governments in different countries have started creative projects to digitize their court systems. Technology makes it easier for litigants to process their cases online under contemporary judicial frameworks, which promotes trust in the legal system while reducing bias and human mistake in case management (Nakad-Westsrate et al, 2015). The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), which promotes the integration of cutting-edge technologies to modify institutional activities, is responsible for the digital evolution of judicial systems around the world (Liao et al, 2018). According to the 4IR, technology is considered the fundamental component of management procedures in both the public and private sectors.

Platforms like the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS), which enables courts to use a variety of Internet-based, remote and virtual justice delivery options, have improved the digitization of justice delivery (Jamila, Rompegading & Hidayat, 2021). For example, the creation of virtual courtrooms and technical advancements targeted at enhancing access to court proceedings are major components of the judiciary's digital reform agenda in England. According to Donoghue (2017), Belgium has put in place an electronic judicial system (e-justice) to improve the effectiveness of the administration of justice. To increase operational efficiency, Brazil has also incorporated ICTs into its legal system (Filho, 2009). The study focuses on the IECMS, which has been adopted by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) of Zimbabwe, even though the judicial sectors in many other countries have embraced a number of digital advancements.

Rwanda is one of the countries which successfully implemented the IECMS after making large investments in ICTs in 2016 (Watson, Rukundakuvuga & Matevosyan, 2017). The Rwandan government's successful application and use of IECMS earned it the award for the best judicial service in Africa in 2016. In order to improve the nation's framework for delivering justice by automating court procedures, the Ministry of Justice created and implemented the IECMS between 2015 and 2016 (Nkusi, 2017). According to Watson et al (2017), the IECMS was created especially to address issues with the administration of justice, such as delays brought on by lost case files in courts. Automating court documentation to prevent case files from being lost or damaged and enhancing litigants' access to information are the main objectives of the IECMS (Dutton, 2021). Furthermore, the IECMS aims to remove case information duplication (Nkusi, 2017). The Ministry of Judicial, the National Public Prosecution Authority, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Rwanda Correctional Services, and the Judiciary are the five main organizations that make up Rwanda's judicial system and are integrated into the IECMS (Nkusi, 2017). With features like e-filing and case status tracking, it makes it easier for plaintiffs and the judiciary to communicate continuously (Nkusi, 2017). IECMS is available through cellphones, tablets, and computers with internet connectivity, it eliminates the need for travel and allows for the prompt, effective, and cost-effective start, processing, and adjudication of cases. Additionally, the system helps litigants avoid missing hearing dates, appeal information, summons information, and notices for timely submission of necessary documents by providing automated notifications via email, SMS, and in-

system reminders regarding significant deadlines and the status of ongoing cases (Watson et al, 2017).

Additionally, the system makes it easier to collect data and send out alerts on the timely filing of required paperwork. By offering updates on case processes, this calendar system enables judicial personnel to remain up to speed on court schedules (Dutton 2021). On February 15, 2011, the IECMS was put into use in Kenya. In Kenya and throughout Africa, this implementation represented a major chance to integrate ICT with the legal system (Murungi 2011). Using a web-based platform backed by case management software, the IECMS was created to allow courts to handle cases electronically from the filing phase to the final verdict. Furthermore, from the beginning to the end of proceedings, litigants can access online updates through Kenya's IECMS (Murungi, 2011). Improved case information security, increased case handling efficiency, streamlined court data processing and management, and a decrease in corruption within the judicial services were among the anticipated benefits of the IECMS in Kenya (Content, 2016).

Similar to the IECMS, Nigeria's e-judicial system is a web-based court system that provides litigants with remote internet access to case management data and records (Archibong & Onyeulor, 2022). With the goal of eradicating corruption and addressing the backlog of cases that have impeded Nigeria's delivery of justice, this system was developed to provide a methodical, effective, and transparent platform for case management. E-registration, e-filing, e-scheduling, e-tracking, and the online publication of judgments are important components of Nigeria's e-judiciary system. The judiciary can issue court decisions electronically without the need for in-person court sessions, which also gives litigants internet access to legal papers (Jimoh, 2020). Similar to the results shown in Rwanda, this study assesses Zimbabwe's IECMS to ascertain how well it fosters improvements in judicial operations.

The implementation of an Electronic Case Records Management System (CRMS) in Botswana has run into issues, such as a lack of computers in the courts and inadequate bandwidth (Mosweu & Kenosi, 2018). This study suggests necessary prerequisites that has to be built to enable the successful adoption of the IECMS in Zimbabwe, taking into account the highlighted problems, based on a case study analysis of Rwanda, Kenya, and Nigeria, where the IECMS has been effectively implemented.

The IECMS was adopted and put into use by Zimbabwe's Judicial Service Commission (JSC) in February 2022 as a digital project to improve the country's judicial system. The IECMS's digital court transformation aims to advance efficiency and transparency in the fight for national justice. Courts are essential to preserving peace in any society and are a pillar of national unity. Chapter 8 (Sections 162–193) of the National Constitution (Amendment number 20 of 2013) describes the foundation of Zimbabwe's several courts, designating them to settle disputes (Madhuku, 2010). The Supreme Court, High Court, Constitutional Court, Labour Court, Commercial Court of the High Court, Administrative Court, and Magistrates Court are among the Zimbabwean courts that have the power to decide cases based on their nature (Verheul, 2020). In order to make decisions on the matters that are brought before them, these courts must apply pertinent facts and legal doctrines. As a result, Zimbabwe's IECMS, which incorporates technology into court procedures, raises hopes for a more effective and efficient legal system.

The future of the IECMS is the main topic of this study because of a number of internal organizational and technological barriers, such as a lack of cutting-edge technology that could prevent its widespread deployment. On May 01, 2022, the IECMS was introduced in Zimbabwean courts with the goal of improving the efficiency and transparency of the administration of justice (Malaba, 2022a). Nevertheless, the system has not yet reached full functionality due to slow implementation. Some people are unable to participate in virtual court sessions due to persistent problems with Internet access in the nation (Harris, 2023). Additionally, the implementation of the IECMS is complicated by the digital divide, since people in Zimbabwe's remote rural areas do not have the electronic gadgets needed to access the system (Gatsi 2022). Additionally, because the IECMS mostly depends on sophisticated ICT capabilities, Zimbabwe's inadequate ICT infrastructure may make it more difficult to deploy the system successfully. According Chigora, Poshai, & Mcilo (2022), the deployment of online learning systems in Zimbabwean universities has already been negatively impacted by ICT infrastructure deficiencies and the IECMS is not exceptional.

It is anticipated that court cases and rulings will be handled quickly to avoid any obstruction of justice once the IECMS is fully functioning within Zimbabwean courts (Malaba, 2022a). The digitization of judicial processes has given litigants the expectation that their cases will be settled

quickly. Given these developments, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the IECMS's potential as a cutting-edge digital justice delivery system being implemented in Zimbabwean courts. Additionally, the research examines the ability of Zimbabwean courts to achieve the intended goals of the IECMS, considering the country's social, technological, economic, and political landscape. Given this context, the study intends to investigate a viable model for the digitalization of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system by learning from the digitalization experiences of selected European and African nations.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Zimbabwe's justice delivery system is plagued by persistent inefficiencies, including protracted delays in case resolution, substantial backlogs, insufficient access to justice for marginalized groups, and a lack of transparency in judicial processes. Although the potential advantages of digitalization have been acknowledged, Zimbabwe has yet to adopt a comprehensive digital justice strategy. In the absence of such a strategy, the nation will continue to encounter difficulties in providing timely and equitable justice to its populace. The study looked at the potential of the IECMS, pointing out a number of organizational and technological issues that could prevent it from being implemented, like a lack of cutting-edge technology. On May 01, 2022, the IECMS was introduced in Zimbabwean courts with the goal of improving the efficiency and transparency of the administration of justice (Malaba, 2022a), however, the system's implementation is still in progress. Some people are unable to participate in virtual court sessions due to persistent problems with Internet access in the nation (Harris, 2023). The implementation of the IECMS is further complicated by the digital divide, since those living in isolated rural areas might not have the electronic gadgets needed to access the system (Gatsi. 2022). Since the IECMS mostly depends on sophisticated ICT capabilities, Zimbabwe's inadequate ICT infrastructure also poses a threat to the system's successful implementation. The study attempts to address imbalances associated with information technology and judicial system.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research seeks to answer the following research objectives:

- To establish the influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency in Zimbabwe.
- To determine the influence of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency in Zimbabwe.

- To establish the influence of information communication technology on justice accessibility in Zimbabwe.
- To develop a working model towards digitalizing Zimbabwe Justice delivery system

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the effect of technological infrastructure on efficiency?
- To what extent does Electronic Processing Law improve transparency in the judiciary?
- How does information communication technology improve access to justice?
- How to develop a working model towards digitalizing Zimbabwe Justice delivery system?

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this research is to create a viable model for the digital transformation of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system, utilizing insights from various European and African nations. This study seeks to establish a framework for the modernization of Zimbabwe's judiciary, enhancing its efficiency, transparency, and accessibility, while also aiming to rebuild public confidence in the legal system.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be significant to the following stakeholders:

1.7.1 To the researcher

The researcher acquires a deeper understanding and insight into the challenges associated with the digitalization of the judicial system. This process enables the researcher to comprehend both the advantages and disadvantages of court digitalization.

1.7.2 To the university

Bindura University of Science Education also gained advantages from this study. Consequently, this indicates that BUSE will have the capacity to evaluate the results and subsequently determine whether to adopt a digitalization model and harness its benefits.

1.7.3 To the board of Knowledge

This research will significantly enhance the existing body of knowledge. Subsequent studies will be developed based on its findings. The investigation adds valuable insights into the understanding of digital justice systems within developing nations, with a particular focus on the African context.

1.7.4 To the general public

The research illustrates the potential of digitalization to enhance access to justice and rebuild trust in the judicial system.

1.7.5 To the policy makers

The study provides data-driven insights and suggestions for the creation and execution of digital justice initiatives.

1.7.6 To Judiciary and Legal Practitioners

The study offers a structure aimed at improving the effectiveness and clarity of judicial procedures.

1.8 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research is geographically focused on Harare. It was conducted over a duration of four months, specifically from September 2024 to December 2024. While digitalization encompasses various dimensions, this study concentrated on technological infrastructure, Electronic Processing Law, information communication technology, and stakeholder engagement. The dependent variable examined is Justice Delivery, which is assessed through the criteria of efficiency, transparency, accessibility to justice, and public trust.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limited access to comprehensive data on Zimbabwe’s current justice system may affect the depth analysis

1.10 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is justified by the pressing need to reform Zimbabwe's justice delivery system to enhance its efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for all citizens. Embracing digitalization presents an opportunity to modernize the justice system and address these issues. By drawing lessons from the experiences of various countries in Europe and Africa, Zimbabwe can sidestep common challenges and establish a robust and sustainable digital justice framework.

1.11 ASSUMPTIONS

i. It is presumed that the researcher will successfully collect all necessary data to complete the project. The chosen methods for data collection are deemed the most appropriate and effective for conducting the research.
ii. The government and judiciary in Zimbabwe endorse efforts to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the justice system via digitalization.
iii. The general public and court users are likely to embrace and have confidence in digital justice delivery systems once they receive sufficient information regarding the advantages, security, and dependability of these systems.

1.2 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter one examines the background of the study along with the statement of the problem. It also addresses the research objectives and questions. Additionally, this chapter outlines the justification, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter two will primarily concentrate on the literature review. This section aims to explore the perspectives of various authors regarding similar topics. The researcher will emphasize the theoretical framework, empirical studies, and pertinent literature. Historical research relevant to this study will be utilized to gather additional data and insights.

In Chapter three, the focus shifts to research methodology. The researcher identifies appropriate methods for collecting relevant information, which aids in formulating a comprehensive plan and procedures. This chapter details the targeted population and the sample size selected for the study. Chapter four presents data presentation and analysis. The findings are aligned with the research objectives, followed by an analysis of the data collected. The results are displayed using tables, graphs, and charts, facilitating reader evaluation of the outcomes.

Chapter five serves as the concluding chapter. It summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations. All research findings from Chapter four will be encapsulated, including the conclusions and recommendations. The study proposes a working model for the digitalization

of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system, informed by digital justice trends observed in Europe and Africa.

1.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The initial chapter presented the subject of investigation, which is "A working model for digitalizing Zimbabwe's justice delivery system." Additionally, this chapter examined the study's background, the research problem, objectives, and questions, as well as the limitations, delimitations, abbreviations, and definitions of key terms. The subsequent chapter will focus on the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the literature review, theoretical framework, and pertinent literature in connection with the study's objectives. The research investigates a functional model for the digitalization of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system, drawing insights from digitalization practices in various European and African nations. It analyzes the challenges and achievements encountered by these countries in the implementation of digital justice systems and suggests a model customized to the unique context of Zimbabwe. The goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system by incorporating best practices while steering clear of prevalent challenges.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section outlines the theoretical framework pertinent to the study and discusses the significance of these theories in relation to the research.

2.2.1 Stakeholder theory

In all of its manifestations, stakeholder theory is essentially concerned with how a business and its operations are perceived in relation to the varied interests of people who have an impact on or are affected by it. Scholars, media experts, and corporate executives have embraced this notion and given it several interpretations, giving it much popularity. According to Freeman et al (2006), the fundamental principles of stakeholder theory demonstrate a clear emphasis on corporate ethics and organizational management, addressing the moral and value-based factors in an organization's management. It demands that managers pinpoint the factors that bind their main stakeholders together and precisely quantify the total value they create. In order to achieve organizational goals, managers are pressed to be clear about their business practices, especially with regard to the kinds of connections they hope to build with stakeholders.

The effectiveness of any digital justice initiative is contingent upon the readiness of stakeholders to embrace new digital processes and technologies. This premise is founded on the understanding that stakeholders acknowledge the potential advantages of digitalization, including increased efficiency, enhanced transparency, and lower costs. Involving stakeholders may be the main factor influencing reactive companies, and it is crucial for encouraging both semi-proactive and proactive approaches to sustainability (Factor, 2003). Stakeholder participation can take many different forms and levels, and its meanings might vary depending on the situation (Gao and Zhang, 2001). According to Gao and Zhang (2001), there is a correlation between the number of stakeholders and the degree of engagement. They argue that a process of sharing viewpoints through genuine communication between stakeholders and the organization's management is necessary for true and significant stakeholder involvement. They emphasized that stakeholders should receive responses and the conversation has to be reciprocal rather than only consulted or listened to.

Digitalization efforts in various countries have encompassed the implementation of e-filing systems, virtual courtrooms, online dispute resolution mechanisms, and electronic case management systems. These advancements have contributed to the streamlining of judicial processes, the alleviation of case backlogs, improved access to legal services, and greater transparency in the delivery of justice. Drawing lessons from these experiences presents Zimbabwe with the opportunity to create a tailored model for the digitalization of its justice delivery system. Consequently, it is imperative for the Judiciary to engage all stakeholders to successfully operationalize the digital judicial system.

2.2.2 Digital transformation Theory

According to digital transformation theory, people' expectations about the provision of high-quality, real-time digital services by public authorities are changing as a result of the digital transformation strategies used in industries other than public administration. In order to improve service delivery, increase efficiency and effectiveness in their designs, and achieve objectives like greater transparency, interoperability, and citizen satisfaction, governments have been forced to change their operational frameworks as a result of international agreements like the "Tallinn Declaration on e-Government" (European Commission, 2017). Digital transformation in the public sector means creating new service delivery frameworks, developing new connections, and using

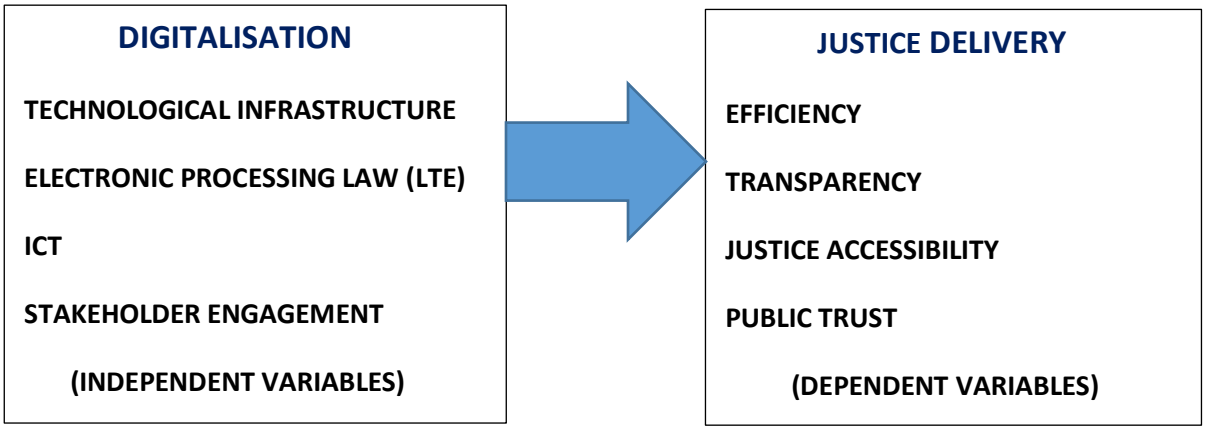
creative approaches to stakeholder engagement (European Commission, 2013). This marks a substantial shift from conventional analog procedures to a more all-encompassing revolutionary digital governance approach.

There is ongoing discussion on how e-government affects businesses and the environment around them. Enhancing services and their delivery is the main benefit of e-government, which helps to increase the efficiency of government operations (see, for example, Cordella & Tempini, 2015; Linders, Liao, & Wang, 2018; Siddiquee, 2016). According to theoretical frameworks that study the development of e-government in public organizations, administrations start to focus on issues outside of government boundaries in the later stages of implementation, taking stakeholders' interests into account (Bretschneider & Mergel, 2011). Digital transformation is sometimes called a technology revolution and is considered a paradigm change (Perez, 2010). People's expectations about the government's ability to deliver high-quality digital services are changing as a result of technological developments outside the public sector. However, in spite of these high expectations, digital transformation is largely seen as a cultural change that needs to take place inside the company, and the literature that has already been written has not gone into great length about how to handle this process of change.

Courts are using technology to improve their interactions with the public and change the culture of their organizations. In order to accomplish objectives like increased transparency, integrity, and citizen involvement, public administrations understand the need to improve service delivery and boost efficiency (Nograsek & Vintar, 2014). Along with potentially having wider effects like changing organizational structure and culture and encouraging citizen engagement and collaboration in the co-design and co-delivery of public services, the use of digital tools makes it easier for courts to change how they operate, communicate, and provide services (Bretschneider & Mergel, 2011; and Sivarajah, Irani, & Weerakkody, 2015).

2.2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's Compilation (2024)

A conceptual framework is a structure which the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied (Camp, 2001). The conceptual framework describes the relationship between the main concepts of a study. It is arranged in a logical structure to aid provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study relate to one another (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Akintoye (2015) posits that the conceptual framework is mostly used by researchers when existing theories are not applicable or sufficient in creating a firm structure for the study.

The conceptual framework presented illustrates the connections between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables identified include technological infrastructure, Electronic Processing Law, information communication technology, and Stakeholder Engagement (World Bank, 2016; LTE evaluation team, 2022; Furr et al., 2023). The dependent variable is Justice Delivery, which is assessed through metrics such as Efficiency, Transparency, Justice Accessibility, and public trust (Maroz, Popova, and Acosta, 2023). Enhancements in technological infrastructure, the Electronic Processing Law (LTE), ICT, and stakeholder engagement are likely to result in improved efficiency and transparency within the justice system, thus facilitating better access to justice and fostering greater public trust in the judiciary.

2.2.3.1 The influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency.

Efficiency pertains to the relationship between inputs and outputs, specifically regarding the resources required such as funding, judges, and technology to process and adjudicate a specified number of cases. Enhancing the number of cases handled with the same judicial resources or funding would lead to greater efficiency (Reiling 2010). Consequently, advancing the efficiency of the judicial system is a fundamental aspect of the ongoing reform initiatives. The Smart Court Opinion (2017) indicates that technology is well-positioned to assist courts in delivering judicial services more swiftly and effectively. Malaba (2022) expresses concern that digitization is perceived merely as a technological advancement for the Judiciary, rather than as a vital instrument for transforming the justice delivery system to resolve disputes promptly and cost-effectively. Delays in resolving court cases often result in issues such as overcrowded prisons, elevated recidivism rates, increased corruption risks, and a general erosion of public trust in a nation's justice system (Hasan & Rupa 2021). Addressing delays in the justice administration process is a key priority for numerous modern judicial systems (Kondylis & Stein 2018). In this context, the adage ‘justice delayed is justice denied,’ which is widely recognized by judicial systems globally, underscores the importance of court digitalization (Benyekhlef, Amar & Callipel, 2015).

Judicial efficiency plays a significant role in enhancing the business environment, attracting foreign direct investment, ensuring tax revenue collection, and fostering economic growth (Benassy-Quere et al, 2007). Consequently, nations with more effective judicial systems tend to exhibit higher overall levels of development (Dam, 2006). Beyond efficiency and productivity, technology can influence judicial performance in areas such as accountability, fairness, and equality. Efficiency is essential for resolving disputes, as a well-known legal principle asserts that justice delayed equates to justice denied. Prolonged court proceedings can lead to persistent uncertainty for litigants, deplete their financial resources, and ultimately foster distrust in the judicial system. Numerous studies have identified a link between advanced digitalization and enhanced court efficiency. For example, an assessment of ICT-related reforms in Malaysia's High Courts revealed that these initiatives streamlined the administration of justice and improved judges' productivity (Hamin, Othman and Mohamad, 2012). Research on case delays in Italy indicated

that new technologies could facilitate the acceleration of court processes (Cusatelli and Giacalone, 2014).

An analysis of panel data from various levels of the Brazilian judiciary demonstrated that investments in digitalization positively impact court productivity (Gomes, Alves and Silva, 2018). Additionally, a study addressing the backlog of cases in the Kenyan Environment and Land Court suggested that the adoption of artificial intelligence could effectively mitigate this issue (Ogonjo et al, 2021).

Some studies adopt a more measured perspective regarding the connection between digitization and efficiency. For instance, a review of ICT-related initiatives implemented in Europe revealed that these efforts frequently did not meet initial expectations due to various challenges encountered during implementation. These challenges included determining the appropriate level of complexity, ensuring user adoption, and selecting suitable infrastructure (Velicogna, 2007). Additionally, research examining the effects of technology investment on court performance indicated that while ICT investment positively impacts productivity, the effect is relatively modest (Louro, Santos and Filho, 2017). Furthermore, a study focused on tax enforcement in Brazilian courts found no significant difference in case duration between those filed traditionally and those submitted electronically (Procopiuck, 2018).

2.2.3.2 The influence of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency

Electronic Processing refers to the capability of handling cases through electronic means rather than through traditional manual methods (LTE Evaluation Team, 2022). Enacted on December 18, 2015, the Electronic Processing Law (LTE), often referred to as Law 20.086, requires that all stages of court proceedings be handled exclusively through the electronic court system. The LTE aims to provide a unified judicial information structure, improve security, lower litigation costs and increase access to the legal system by doing away with physical files. According to Mynenko and Lyulyov (2022), openness in public administration makes it easier to carry out public policy through transparent processes and systems. The likelihood of corrupt activities and dishonest officials carrying out ineffectual or illegal actions is reduced when public authorities are more open and transparent. The wellbeing of society is probably going to get better as governmental

institutions become more transparent. At the same time, scientific and technological developments in society keep advancing. The development of digital technologies offers a number of chances to improve public entities' transparency. Residents can monitor budget consumption, expedite access to public services, participate directly in the e-judiciary and monitor the voting results of lawmakers at all levels of government by utilizing contemporary means.

In academic circles, the concept of transparency in public authorities is thoroughly studied. Many scholars claim that state and local government transparency provides a framework for comprehending the informational nature of public authorities, reflecting the degree of completeness of information about the topics and goals of public administration and the implementation of relevant laws pertaining to information access (Yarema, 2018; and Bessa-Vilela et al, 2017). The understanding of transparency as the openness of political leaders and the possibility of public participation at different phases of administrative procedures is emphasized by another Vione (2020). Among others, publications by Molotok (2020), Shkolnyk and Savchenko (2018), Birskyte (2018), and Ott et al (2018) have addressed the transparency of state budgets. It is especially important to look at transparency in the context of digitization. Cahlikova and Mabillard (2019) have examined the transparency of data pertaining to governmental authorities. The function of intermediaries in the supply of open data was examined by de Silva Craverio and Albano (2017). Studies by (Ahmad et al, 2021; Agostino et al, 2021; Bernhard et al, 2018) have addressed e-government.

The impact of digitization on public administration openness has been observed by Komarova and Kovalchuk (2021); Karpenko and Osmak, (2018); Berezhna, (2019); and Tereshchuk, (2020). Nevertheless, each country has a different relationship between digitalization and public agencies' transparency. The amount of economic, scientific and technological improvement has a substantial impact on the degree of digitalization, whereas the institutional development of civil society shapes the degree of openness.

The ability of courts to be reachable by the general public is known as transparency (Mynenko and Lyulyov, 2022). Every decision made by judicial authorities must be understandable to a large public. In this regard, raising public knowledge and serving an educational function are two ways

that digitization improves governance transparency. To clarify the nature of activities done or to offer relevant regulatory documentation, resources like live-streamed meetings, video lessons, online infographics, and instructional chatbots, some of which use artificial intelligence are accessible. This feature represents the right of every person to obtain information about how local or public bodies are run. To maintain transparency in the pre-digital age, the "request-response" approach was used, which required speaking with authorities directly in order to obtain the information required. This method frequently led to a number of annoyances, such as the necessity to physically visit institutions to submit requests and follow up on responses, as well as delays in mailing questions and obtaining responses. Malaba (2022) points out that because all court operations are digitally recorded and traceable, digitalization enables courts to function with greater transparency, strengthening public confidence in the legal system.

The introduction of digitization has greatly streamlined information accessibility:

a. Using email to implement the "request-response" approach.
b. The creation of resources with publicly available data. The Open Data Portal, for example, allows users to submit available data in a variety of easy formats by enabling internet accessibility via API.
c. The cataloging and digitization of historical records. Since Ukraine's digitization process is still in its early phases and has only recently begun, data collecting, processing and distribution are being treated from an optimistic standpoint, looking ahead to future advances.

Digitizing all historical data in government archives is crucial to achieving transparency. Artificial intelligence is used in the digitization process to recognize text from scanned images. One prominent example is the reCAPTCHA project, which divided photos into tiny pieces and displayed these pieces to visitors on different websites in order to differentiate between actual users and bots. As a result, this project made it possible for millions of people to help digitize literature (Gilbertson, 2007).

2.2.3.3 The influence of information communication technology on justice accessibility

Innovations in technology must be incorporated into the administration of justice. Prior studies have shown that investments in the judicial system's technology, especially in ICT, improve

judicial administration and benefit those who use justice services, which in turn increases court productivity (Louro et al, 2017; and Gomes et al, 2018). Any system for resolving disputes must include access to justice (Malaba, 2022). This concept can be understood in a narrow context, referring to the formal ability to appear in court, or in a broader context, which includes the elimination of economic, technical, and physical barriers to access (Malaba, 2022). When individuals and businesses are deprived of access to justice, their rights are compromised, hindering their growth and development. Malaba (2022) asserts that achieving full access to justice for all is a commendable objective that transformative judiciaries aspire to attain. This principle is reflected in the national constitutions of sovereign states as well as in international law (Malaba, 2022). Various sources indicate that digitization can enhance access to justice. For instance, Malaba (2022) noted that digitization is rooted in the understanding of the judiciary's role in facilitating access to justice. Research suggests that new technologies can help litigants by making it easier to find important legal information online, allowing electronic document filing, enabling people to keep track of the status of their cases from home and enabling remote communication with lawyers (Cabral et al, 2012). Additionally, by eliminating the need to visit courts in order to obtain the most recent information, providing case updates to court users via text messages might further enhance access to justice, especially for marginalized populations (Egessa and Cherotich, 2017).

Additionally, digitization may make it unnecessary for people to physically attend court proceedings, which would lessen the need for prolonged absences from obligations to their families and jobs (Bulinski and Prescott, 2016). According to research, using online forums to settle small disputes can increase litigants' involvement (Prescott, 2017). Additionally, online dispute resolution systems provide a distinctive and readily accessible alternative for addressing conflicts in the arena of transnational e-commerce, relieving the constraints incurred by consumers and businesses in navigating intricate jurisdictional concerns (Schmitz, 2018). The digitization of court processes aligns with the broader objective of ensuring access to justice, serving as a comprehensive strategy to eliminate barriers that hinder the courts from fulfilling their judicial responsibilities (Malaba, 2022). This approach guarantees equality for all parties relying on the courts to safeguard and uphold their rights.

The COVID-19 epidemic forced researchers and politicians to reconsider the problem of court operations, especially in light of how judicial system digitization can support the ongoing administration of justice in times of crisis. According to the DECIG special data gathering program, which was carried out between 2020 and 2021, as of May 01, 2020, 81 of the 120 economies under observation had to halt judicial services because of public health safety regulations. According to research, jurisdictions that were more ready for court digitalization from the start were able to handle the lockdowns and ensuing restrictions with less difficulty (Sourdin, Li, & McNamara, 2020; and Strauss & Bradautanu, 2021). On the other hand, several economies were forced to quickly digitize their justice systems through reform.

In less than two years, 65 jurisdictions enabled distant hearings, 41 approved electronic document filing, another 41 introduced electronic notifications and 25 permitted electronic document service in order to preserve access to justice throughout the health crisis. Notably, compared to areas that were already partially recognized (17 economies introduced both features for the first time), more reforms were seen in areas that had previously received less attention from judiciaries, such as electronic notifications and remote hearings (31 economies enabled both features). The number of economies experiencing judicial service disruptions dropped to 16 by May 01, 2021, indicating that the quick development of court digitalization was a major factor in this improvement.

The judiciary in Zimbabwe has made significant strides in implementing the aforementioned principles. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inability to attend court in person created a substantial obstacle to accessing justice. This predicament was particularly concerning when juxtaposed with the essential characteristics of justice, including promptness, efficiency, and expediency. It is often stated that "justice delayed is justice denied" (Malaba, 2022). Despite the challenges of physical court sessions, the need for human interaction persisted, necessitating judicial intervention to resolve disputes. The backlog of such cases resulted in an undesirable situation where the judiciary was unable to fulfill its fundamental role in administering justice. This period was further complicated by stringent curfews and movement restrictions, which hindered physical access to the courts. This challenging scenario, combined with the Judicial Service Commission's ongoing commitment to embrace technological advancements, led to the

development of the IECMS (Malaba, 2022). The IECMS represents a significant step towards digitization.

2.2.3.4 The influence of Stakeholder Engagement on public Trust in the judiciary

Building trust in governmental institutions and combating corruption are known to need transparency (Kaufmann and Bellver, 2005; and World Bank, 2017). In order to maintain public faith in the legal system, Malaba (2022) highlighted that both individual and group members of the judiciary have a responsibility to uphold their judicial functions as a public trust and must seek to increase their independence. According to researchers, electronic efforts have the potential to greatly increase government transparency in general and in the court system in particular (Shim and Eom, 2008; and Ahmed et al, 2022). For instance, studies on the Brazilian judiciary show that digitization can increase the openness of the court system by bridging the gap between the public and judges (Filho, 2009).

According to Hamin Othman and Mohamad's (2012) review of digitalization initiatives in the Malaysian courts, specialized electronic software makes communication between lawyers and court staff more structured and transparent. Participants in a study evaluating the installation of an e-court system in an appellate court in Iraq's Kurdistan region observed that the project increased transparency by guaranteeing automatic case assignments among judges and by allowing users to track their cases, watch hearings, and access court rulings online (Ahmed et al 2020). Additionally, an Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) could improve transparency by incorporating methods to identify statistical abnormalities that expose dubious cases within the judiciary, according to an assessment of a pilot project in Pakistan (Rahman et al, 2014).The heightened transparency and awareness of judicial processes stem from increased engagement of litigants, who can electronically monitor the status of their cases through the system (Malaba, 2022).

To foster public trust, the judiciary must maintain a high level of consistency. This consistency, or uniformity, pertains to the equitable application of the law and the extent to which similar cases yield comparable substantive outcomes. Furthermore, it encompasses procedural consistency, which refers to the adherence of court personnel to established procedural norms. This concept is often described as the 'uniform application of the law' (Wang 2013). The uniform application of

law and consistency have emerged as critical components of the contemporary judicial reform agenda. By digitizing the entire judicial process and automating certain procedural tasks, smart courts offer a variety of functions that enhance both substantive and procedural uniformity (Papagianneas, 2024). The Smart Court Opinion (2017) advocates for the development of programs that can monitor and document every phase of the judicial process, facilitating both real-time and retrospective oversight. Courts are encouraged to create systems for managing evidence, which would allow for the tracking of its production, cross-examination, and authentication. Each step in this process is recorded and made accessible to senior court officials, thereby aiming to standardize the treatment of evidence.

2.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined literature on social capital from a range of experts to gain insights into the diverse perspectives on the subject. It explored writings on the digitalization of the judicial system, including theories pertaining to this transformation. The chapter aimed to assess the impact of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency, the role of Electronic Processing Law in enhancing transparency, the effect of information and communication technology on access to justice, and the influence of stakeholder engagement on public trust in the judiciary. Overall, the majority of authors agreed that the digitalization of courts positively affects performance. The subsequent chapter will address the research methodology, detailing the methods and techniques employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodology utilized in the study, encompassing the research design, philosophical framework, sampling methods, data collection techniques and instruments, data analysis procedures, and the limitations encountered during the research. The justice delivery system in Zimbabwe is confronted with considerable obstacles, such as inefficiency, prolonged case processing times, a lack of transparency, and restricted access to legal services, particularly in rural and marginalized regions. These challenges have fostered public skepticism towards the judicial system and impeded the effective administration of justice.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The research is informed by pragmatic philosophies. Pragmatic philosophies and multiple methods can be used in data collection, considering the relevance to the research questions (Creswell and Plano, 2015). The use of both qualitative and quantitative philosophy in this research is justified by the need to perfect the challenges of using one research philosophy. In order to attain noticeably more efficacious results, study is concentrated on pragmatism approach.

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The two main approaches of research strategies are quantitative and qualitative. A mixed research approach is used in this study, which combines quantitative and qualitative components. According to Creswell (2009), the quantitative research approach uses statistical criteria and diagrams to analyze numerical data in order to derive meanings. On the other hand, the qualitative approach uses conceptual frameworks to examine non-standardized data and stresses verbal data to convey meanings, which may call for additional research in the future (Saunders et al, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative insights can offer a thorough summary of more extensive studies, improving comprehension of contextual significance as well as the research's ultimate implications and results (Wertz, 2011).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design serves as the comprehensive framework for executing a study in a manner that effectively addresses the research questions and the issues at hand. Essentially, the research design functions as a blueprint that directs the researcher throughout the stages of data collection and analysis. For this study, a survey research design will be utilized as the chosen methodology. The characteristics of this study permitted the researcher to adopt the survey research design due to its cost-effectiveness and the ease of obtaining data or information. Angnus and Katona (2010) assert that survey research design is not confined to a specific field; rather, it can be applied across various disciplines. Consequently, another significant reason for selecting this research design is that it allows the researcher to choose a sample of respondents from a larger population and administer a standardized questionnaire to them (Zainal, 2007). Additionally, the use of survey research design facilitates the collection of data from both large and small populations.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The researcher used the following instrument:

3.5.1 Questionnaire

Open-ended questions were distributed to respondents via email, after which the researcher visited all the courts to collect the completed questionnaires once the respondents had finished. This approach allowed the researcher to reduce transportation expenses and provided respondents with ample time to thoughtfully complete the questionnaires. As noted by David (2017), a questionnaire is a structured document designed to elicit relevant information. This document will include questions specifically crafted for this research to ensure the collection of pertinent data.

The researcher chose to utilize questionnaires due to the numerous benefits they offer. One significant advantage, as noted by Sekeran (2000), is that questionnaires enable the collection of information that may not have been documented, thereby providing access to secondary data. As previously mentioned in this section, this method facilitates the acquisition of primary data. Additionally, employing questionnaires contributes to cost savings. It is widely recognized that time equates to money; therefore, the researcher was able to conserve time by distributing the questionnaires electronically via email. Although the researcher needed to conduct fieldwork at

one or two courts in person, the physical collection of questionnaires also resulted in reduced transportation expenses.

Furthermore, many respondents prefer anonymity, making questionnaires an ideal choice as they allow for the confidential return of responses. This aspect ultimately assisted the researcher in obtaining more accurate and honest information. The researcher posits that employing questionnaires can lead to cost savings; however, Saunders (2007) argues that administering questionnaires necessitates fieldwork, which incurs significant expenses. Additionally, a notable drawback of questionnaires is that, in contrast to interviews, they do not facilitate immediate feedback. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires does not ensure that all potential respondents will participate; some may choose not to respond at all, while others may take considerable time to reply. This presents a challenge for researchers, as delays in data collection can hinder timely completion of their studies, thereby imposing limitations on their research efforts. A Likert Scale was utilized to analyze the collected data.

3.5.2 Observation

The researcher conducted onsite visits to various courts, including, to observe certain processes as a means of data collection. This method of observation enabled the researcher to obtain unfiltered, authentic information. Additionally, the researcher listened to conversations among litigants as part of the observational approach, doing so without their awareness. The benefits of this method include the acquisition of accurate and truthful information, providing a clear and genuine understanding of the proceedings. Engaging in direct observation allowed the researcher to physically participate in the processes, fostering a deeper comprehension of the judicial procedures employed. However, this approach incurred significant costs due to the necessity of in-person visits to the courts, including transportation expenses.

3.5.3 Interview

The researcher employed interviews as an additional method for data collection. This approach provided the benefit of immediate feedback, allowing for clarification if either the interviewer or interviewee encountered misunderstandings. The researcher was also able to delve deeper into responses when necessary. Utilizing online interviews through video calls facilitated the

advantages of face-to-face interactions, enabling the researcher to observe facial expressions and correlate them with the verbal responses of the interviewee. Kethari (2004) advocates for the use of interviews and notes that they can also be conducted via telephone, which can significantly reduce transportation costs. However, the rising costs of data present a financial burden for both the interviewer and interviewee. Some participants may prefer telephone interviews to avoid using their own resources, particularly if they cannot afford the necessary data. Given the financial implications of data usage, the researcher may be limited in the number of questions posed, potentially impacting the overall research. Therefore, online interviews served as a supplementary method, with questionnaires remaining the primary tool for data collection.

3.6. SAMPLING

Participants were chosen at random from within the Judiciary, based on the criteria of relevance, convenience, and availability, ensuring they can share their personal experiences (Bryman, 2018). This approach supports the notion that participants should possess direct knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. While purposive sampling will be utilized to identify individuals who can aid in constructing a framework, the researcher concentrated specifically on those in management roles with significant experience in the judicial sector. This focus is crucial for developing a model aimed at enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and cost-effectiveness of judicial practices. Purposeful sampling was employed to selectively choose cases that offer valuable insights pertinent to the research question. The researcher remained open to the possibility of adapting the sampling strategy throughout the research process, highlighting the importance of flexibility despite initial plans.

3.7 TARGET POPULATION

A target population refers to the entire group being examined in a study (Strauss and Carbin, 2016). In this case, the researcher's target population consists of legal practitioners, litigants, police officers, and prison officers. The total number of individuals in this group is 230. The researcher selected 30% of this target population, which equates to 69 respondents. This choice of a 30% sample size is supported by Fielding (2007). Consequently, the researcher distributed 69

questionnaires to the identified respondents, as detailed in the table below. The primary objective of gathering information from legal practitioners is due to their extensive knowledge regarding judicial service delivery.

3.7.1 Sample size

Table 3.1: Sample size

COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS	**NUMBER**
Legal Practitioners	30
Litigants	15
Police Officers	14
Prison Officers	10
Total	**69**

Source: Author's computations (2024)

The target population comprises 230 respondents, which includes legal practitioners, litigants, and police officers. In accordance with Fieling (2007), the researcher determined the sample size by calculating 30% of this total. Consequently, the sample size was established at 69 respondents, as detailed in the table above.

3.8 SAMPLING METHODS

The researcher used both purposive and convenient sampling.

3.8.1 Purposive Sampling

The researcher considers the study's objectives when choosing the participants. The selection of respondents was based on their knowledge and comprehension of the judicial delivery system. Some scholars refer to purposive sampling as judgmental sampling, as noted by Kothari (2004). Consequently, the researcher intentionally omitted certain judicial personnel from the sample; for instance, judges and magistrates were excluded due to the sensitive nature of their roles and their obligations regarding confidentiality.

3.8.2 Snowball sampling

Technique of building up list or database of sample by using an initial small set of members. Members are the asked to provide data of other members who are to be included in the sample. Snowball sampling starts with the identification one or more units in desired sample followed by the use of identified units to find further units with required characteristics and finally repeat process until sample is big enough. The snowball sampling has the following advantages: Allows access to hard to access population,; Researcher can access stigmatized or marginalized groups; There may be no other way of accessing sample other than through other group members; Some individuals will not come forward voluntarily to be part of study and Having references allows participants to be more open. On the other hand, snowball sampling has the following disadvantages: Selection of participants is not random; Impossible to determine possible sampling error; No statistical inferences may be made; and Snowball sampling may not representative of the total population being studied.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Merriam (2002) points out that ethical behavior is a key component of good research. Respecting ethical norms is essential while doing research with human subjects in order to protect participants' rights. The researcher must be extremely diligent and knowledgeable to do this. Instead of going through the heads of their respective organizations, the questionnaire is given directly to the individuals in order to allow for the unfettered expression of sensitive material, especially when it comes to senior executives' remuneration.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRUTHFULNESS

This approach also serves to protect the anonymity of the respondents. Key ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. The researcher took the time to clarify the study's purpose, reassuring participants that their information would not be misused and would remain confidential. Additionally, respondents were informed that they could decline to answer any questions they found uncomfortable. Providing their names was made optional to further enhance their comfort, with the researcher emphasizing that the organization’s name was of greater significance than the individual’s identity.

The implementation of unethical practices in survey design significantly impacts the subjects of research, which are essential for effective data collection. In this regard, Saunders et al. (2009) advise researchers to maintain appropriate conduct concerning the subjects under investigation. Furthermore, ethics entails that all research materials must be approached with a sense of accountability (Saunders et al, 2009). This can be interpreted as guidance to ensure fairness throughout the research design process and during the analysis of the gathered information. When creating a questionnaire, the researcher bears the responsibility of minimizing stress on respondents to obtain reliable results. In this context, the researcher focused on asking broad questions about the service while intentionally avoiding overly personal inquiries that could induce anxiety or discomfort among participants. Saunders et al (2009) emphasize the importance of participant privacy and the safeguarding of data confidentiality in the execution of research surveys.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on elucidating the methodologies employed by the researcher to collect data pertinent to the subject of investigation. It detailed the research design, which incorporated both explanatory and descriptive approaches. Additionally, the chapter addressed the target population and the sample size utilized for data collection. According to Fielding (2007), the researcher selected 30% of the target population to determine the sample size. The primary data was predominantly gathered directly from respondents and through observation, while a limited amount of secondary data was obtained by reviewing existing files and information available on the organization's website. In conclusion, the researcher also discussed ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the study's findings and examines them in relation to the research objectives. It employs tables, diagrams, graphs, cumulative percentages, and frequency distributions to illustrate the results of both general and cross-tabulation analyses. The primary method used for data extraction was Categorical Principal Component Analysis.

4.2 GENERAL RATE OF RESPONSE

A total of 69 surveys were disseminated across various judicial bodies, including the Criminal Court, Civil Court, Labour Court, High Court, and Supreme Court. The target respondents comprised Legal Practitioners, Litigants, Police Officers, and Prison Officers. Each participant was afforded the opportunity to complete the questionnaires. The overall response rate from the distributed questionnaires, as compiled by the researcher, is illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Response Rare

Description	**Number**	**Percentage**
Filled and returned Questionnaires	65	94.20
Not returned questionnaires	4	5.80
Total	69	100

Author's computations (2024)

According to Poole (2014), a response rate of 94.20% is considered robust for validating research findings. In this instance, as indicated in the table above, the researcher observed that 94.20% of participants completed the questionnaire, while 5.80% did not submit their responses. Out of the 69 distributed questionnaires, only 65 were returned. The high response rate can be attributed to various factors, including diligent follow-up with all participants. Although the target of 69 respondents was not achieved, the researcher successfully collected 65 completed surveys by the submission deadline, resulting in a commendable response rate of 94.20%.

4.3 STATISTICS BY DEMOGRAPHICS

4.3.1 Responses according to gender

The findings indicate that the total sample of 65 respondents consisted of 20 women and 45 men. Consequently, 30.77% of the respondents were female, while 69.23% were male. From the researcher's perspective, there is a notable male predominance within the courts. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority of legal practitioners, litigants, police officers, and prison officers present in court are men.

Table 4.2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	20	30.77%
Male	45	69.23%
Total	**65**	**100%**

Source: Author's computations (2024)

4.3.2 The respondent's age

Table 4.3: Respondent's age

Age Range	Percentage
Above 55	50%
46 to 55	25%
36 to 45	4.76%
26 to 35	11.9%
Below 25	8.3%

Source: Author's computations (2024)

Table 4.3 shows age distribution. The age group of 55 and older represented the largest segment of respondents, accounting for 50% of the total. Following this group were individuals aged 46 to 55, comprising 25% of the respondents, while those aged 36 to 45 made up a mere 4.76%. Additionally, respondents under the age of 25 constituted 8.3%, and those aged 26 to 35 represented 11.9%. This distribution indicates that the respondents possessed significant experience and knowledge regarding board composition and corporate performance.

4.3.3 Level of education

Table 4.4: Educational Level

Description	Number	Percentage
High school	7	10.77
College	18	27.69
University	40	61.54

Source: Author's computations (2024)

The data indicates that 10.77% of the respondents attained their highest level of education at the high school level, with 7 individuals concluding their education at this stage. In contrast, 18 respondents, representing 27.69%, completed their education at the college level. Furthermore, 40 respondents reached the university level, resulting in 61.54% of the participants holding degrees.

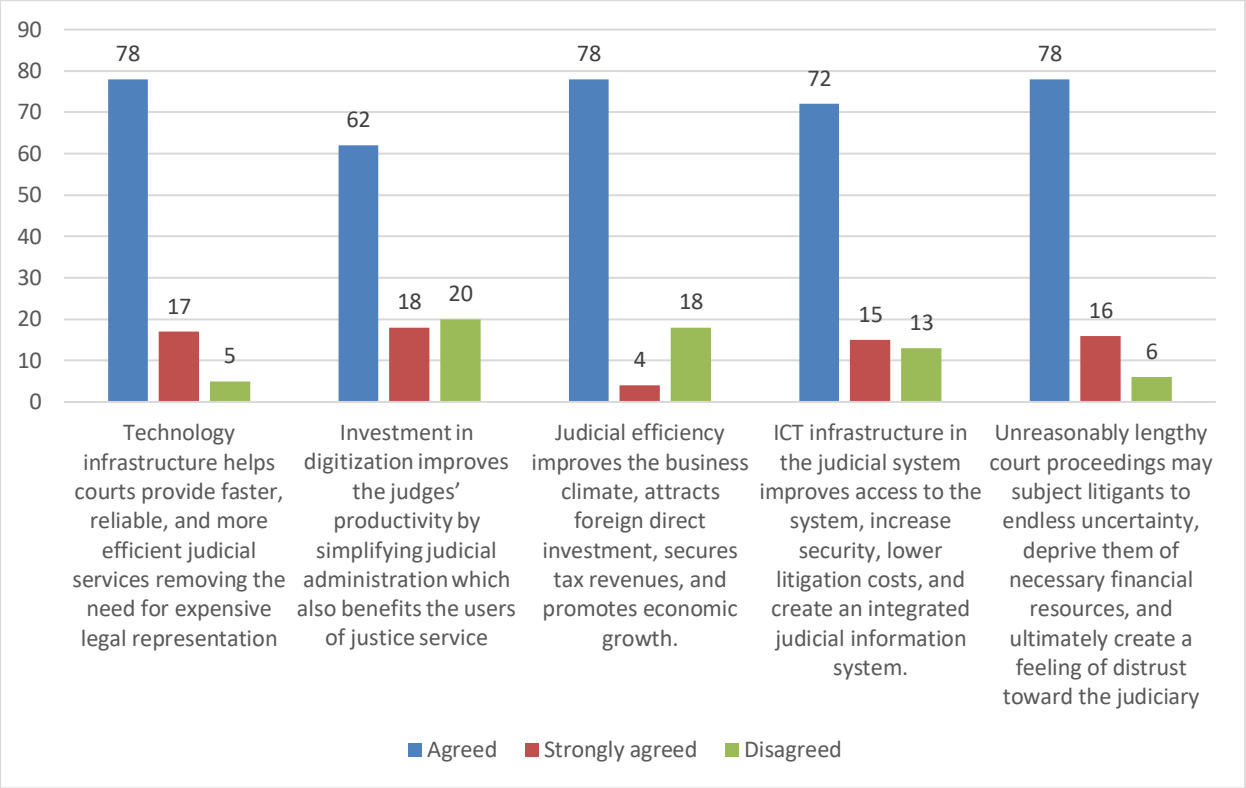
4.4 RESULTS ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The supporting findings are outlined in connection with the objectives linked to the four research aims articulated in the initial chapter of the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were utilized to analyze the data. The objectives investigated include:

- To assess the impact of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency.
- To evaluate the effect of Electronic Processing Law on transparency.
- To analyze the influence of information communication technology on access to justice.
- To investigate the role of stakeholder engagement in fostering public trust in the judiciary.

4.4.1 Influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency

Figure 4.3: Influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency



Source: Author's computations (2024)

The responses of the participants regarding technological infrastructure and judicial efficiency are illustrated in Figure 4.3 above. Among the respondents, 78% concurred that technological infrastructure enables courts to deliver faster, more reliable, and efficient judicial services, thereby reducing the necessity for costly legal representation. Additionally, 17% expressed strong agreement with the assertion that technological infrastructure facilitates quicker, more dependable, and efficient judicial services, eliminating the need for expensive legal representation. Conversely, approximately 5% disagreed with the statement regarding the benefits of technological infrastructure in enhancing judicial efficiency. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents believe that technological infrastructure positively influences judicial efficiency.

A significant 62% of respondents indicated that investment in digitization enhances judges' productivity by streamlining judicial administration, which in turn benefits users of justice services. Additionally, 18% expressed strong agreement with this assertion. Conversely, 20% of

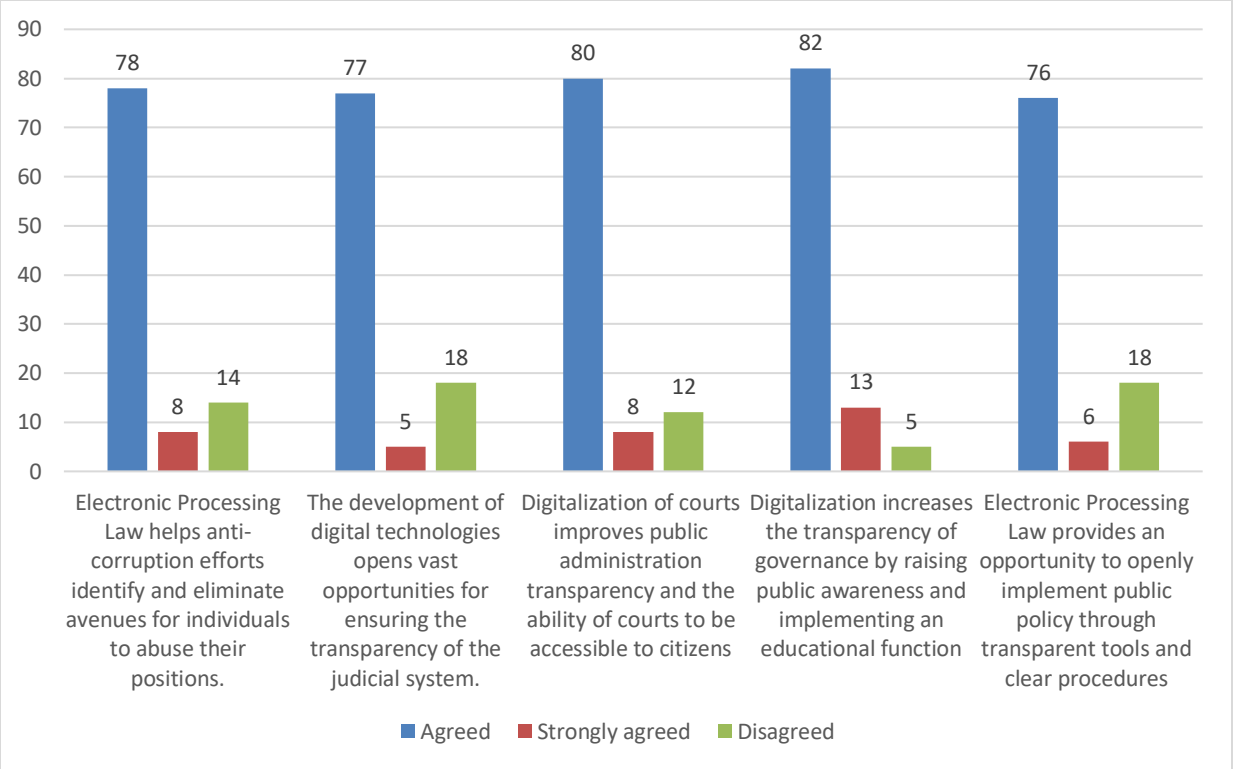
respondents disagreed with the notion that investment in digitization leads to improved productivity for judges through simplified judicial administration, ultimately benefiting justice service users. About 78% of respondents agreed that judicial efficiency has a favorable effect on the business climate, draws in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), secures tax revenues, and promotes economic progress, as shown in figure 4.3. Just 4% strongly agreed with the statement about judicial efficiency, and 18% disagreed with the assertion that judicial efficiency ensures tax revenues, improves the business climate, draws in FDI, and spurs economic growth.

About 72 percent of respondents agreed, and 15 percent strongly agreed, that the use of ICT in the court system improves access, strengthens security, lowers litigation costs, and promotes an integrated judicial information system. On the other hand, about 13% of participants did not agree with the claim that ICT infrastructure makes a good contribution in these areas. Furthermore, 78% of respondents agreed 16% strongly agreed that unduly drawn-out court proceedings can leave litigants in a state of perpetual uncertainty, drain their financial resources and eventually breed mistrust of the legal system. However, 6% of those surveyed did not agree with this view of drawn-out legal proceedings.

The majority of key informants interviewed for this research indicated that technological infrastructure significantly enhances judicial efficiency. Moreover, the interviewees asserted that such infrastructure enables courts to deliver judicial services that are faster, more reliable, and more efficient, thereby reducing the necessity for costly legal representation. Furthermore, most interviewees emphasized the pressing issue of prolonged case durations in courts, highlighting the urgent need for the digitalization of the judicial system to enhance overall efficiency.

4.4.2 Influence of electronic processing law on transparency

Figure 4.4 Influence of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency



Source: Author's computations (2024)

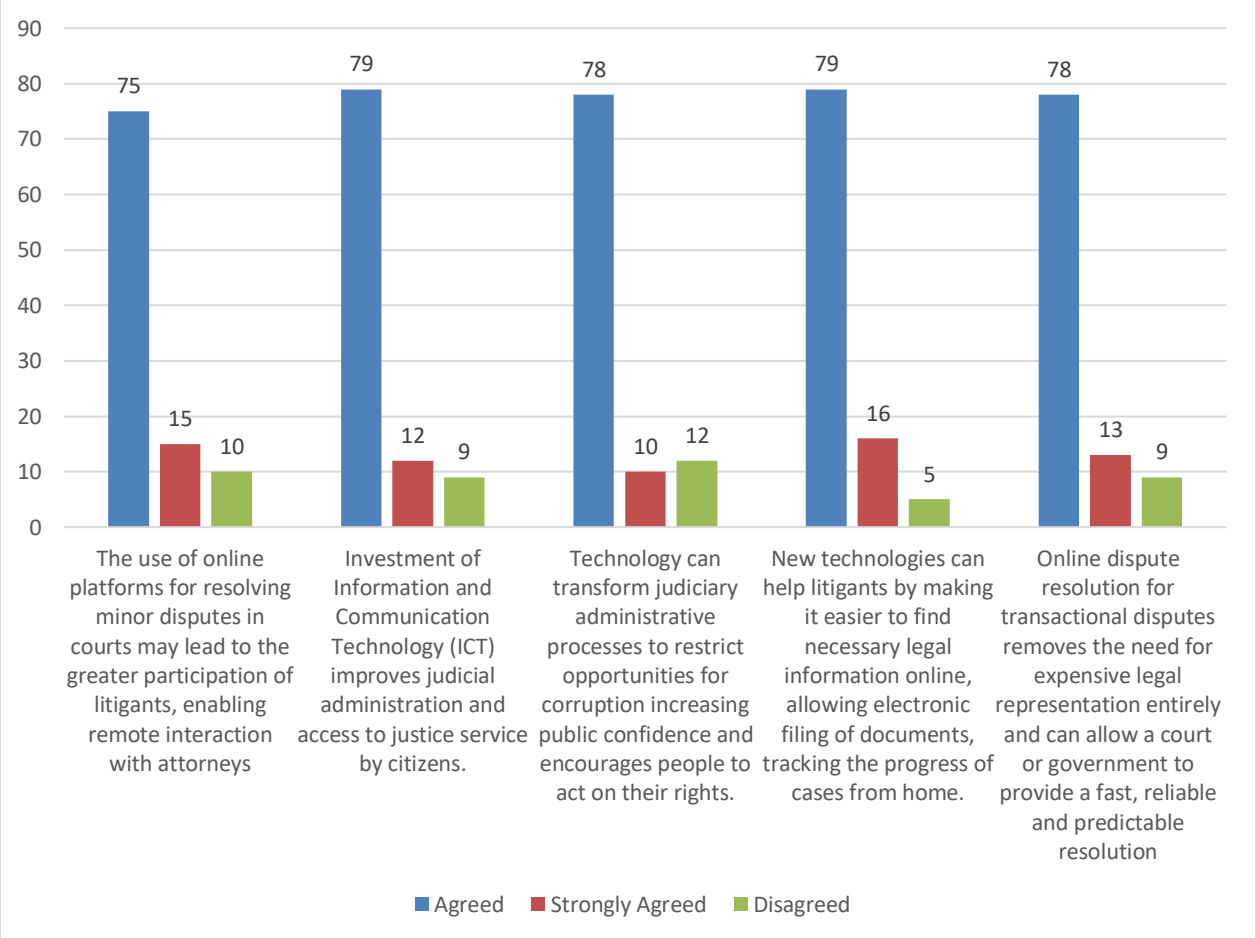
The researcher examined the impact of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency as a specific objective of this study. 78% of respondents agreed, and 8% strongly agreed, that the Electronic Processing Law helps anti-corruption efforts find and remove chances for people to abuse their positions, as shown in Figure 4.4. On the other hand, the claim that the Electronic Processing Law supports anti-corruption initiatives in this area was rejected by 14% of the respondents. Furthermore, about 77% of respondents agreed and 5% strongly agreed that there are a lot of potential to improve the judicial system's transparency thanks to developments in digital technologies. Conversely, 18% of respondents disagreed with the idea that increased transparency in the legal system is made possible by the growth of digital technologies.

The idea that the digitization of courts improves people' access to judicial services and increases the openness of public administration was agreed with by a sizable majority of respondents (80%), with 8% indicating strong agreement. On the other hand, just 12% disapproved of this claim. Additionally, by increasing public knowledge and serving as an instructional tool, 82% of respondents agreed and 13% strongly agreed that digitization promotes greater governance

openness. Only 5% disagreed with this opinion. According to the results, 76% of participants agreed and 6% strongly agreed that the Electronic Processing Law makes it easier for public policy to be implemented transparently by providing explicit tools and procedures. 18% of respondents, however, did not agree with this viewpoint. The majority of key informants in the study confirmed that the Electronic Processing Law helps to greater transparency and interviews revealed that the digitization of courts does, in fact, improve public administration accessibility and transparency for citizens.

4.4.3 Influence of information communication technology on justice accessibility

Figure 4.4: Influence of information communication technology on justice accessibility



Source: Author's computations (2024)

The researcher examined the impact of information communication technology on the accessibility of justice, which was one of the specific aims of this study. As illustrated in Figure 4.5, 75% of the participants concurred, while 15% expressed strong agreement that utilizing online platforms for

the resolution of minor disputes in courts could enhance litigant participation and facilitate remote interactions with attorneys. Conversely, 10% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that such online platforms would promote greater litigant involvement and enable remote attorney interactions. The findings indicate that 79% of the respondents agreed, and 12% strongly agreed, that investments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enhance judicial administration and improve citizens' access to justice services. The idea that ICT investments improve judicial administration and citizens' access to justice services was rejected by only 9% of participants. Additionally, the findings show that 78% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that technology may improve judicial administration procedures, which would decrease corruption opportunities, boost public confidence, and encourage people to stand up for their rights. 12%of respondents, however, disagreed with the assertion that technology may successfully change judicial administrative procedures in this way.

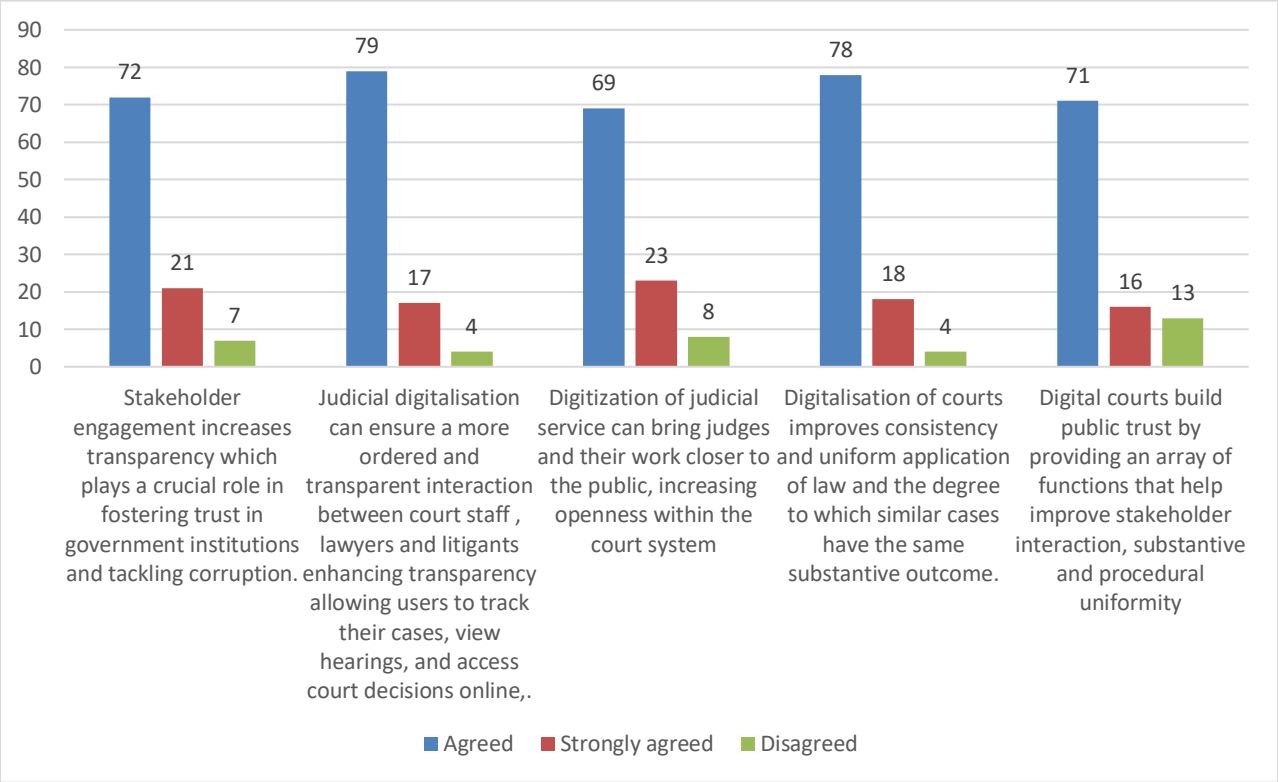
The impact of ICT on the availability of justice was also investigated by the researcher. According to the results, 79% of respondents agreed, and 16% strongly agreed, that new technologies help litigants by making it easier to find crucial legal information online, allowing electronic document submission and enabling people to keep track of the progress of their cases from the comfort of their own homes. On the other hand, the claim that these technologies help litigants in these ways was rejected by 5% of respondents. The study also found that 78% of respondents agreed and 13% strongly agreed that online dispute resolution for transactional disputes allows courts or governmental bodies to provide quick, dependable, and predictable resolutions while doing away with the need for expensive legal representation. The idea that online dispute resolution for transactional issues completely eliminates the need for costly legal representation and enables effective settlement by courts or governments was rejected by about 9% of participants.

Most of the key informants consulted for this study indicated that information communication technology enhances access to justice. Additionally, the respondents expressed the view that emerging technologies can assist litigants by facilitating the online retrieval of essential legal information, enabling electronic submission of documents, and allowing individuals to monitor the status of their cases from home. Moreover, a significant number of interviewees emphasized

that the duration of court proceedings is excessively lengthy, highlighting the necessity for the digitalization of the judicial system to improve access to justice.

4.4.3 Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on public Trust in the judiciary

Figure 4.5: Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on public Trust in the judiciary



Sources: Author's computations (2024)

The researcher examined the impact of Stakeholder Engagement on Public Trust in the judiciary. As illustrated in Figure 4.6, 72% of respondents concurred, while 21% strongly concurred that Stakeholder Engagement enhances transparency, which is vital for building trust in governmental institutions and combating corruption. Conversely, 7% of respondents disagreed with the assertion that Stakeholder Engagement contributes to increased transparency, thereby playing a significant role in fostering trust in government entities and addressing corruption. Furthermore, 79% of respondents agreed, and 17% strongly agreed that Judicial Digitalization can facilitate a more organized and transparent interaction among court personnel, attorneys, and litigants, thereby enhancing transparency and enabling users to monitor their cases, view hearings, and access court rulings online. Meanwhile, 4% disagreed with the notion that Judicial Digitalization can ensure a more structured and transparent interaction among court staff, lawyers, and litigants, enhancing

transparency and allowing users to track their cases, view hearings, and access court decisions online. Additionally, 69% of respondents agreed, and 23% strongly agreed that the digitization of judicial services can bring judges and their work closer to the public, thereby increasing transparency within the court system. However, 8% of respondents disagreed with the statement that the digitization of judicial services can bring judges and their work closer to the public, enhancing openness within the court system.

This research indicated that 78% of participants concurred, and 18% strongly concurred, that the digitalisation of courts enhances the consistency and uniform application of the law, as well as the extent to which similar cases yield comparable substantive outcomes. Conversely, around 4% of respondents expressed disagreement with the assertion that the digitalisation of courts contributes to improved consistency and uniformity in legal application and outcomes. Furthermore, approximately 71% of the respondents agreed, and 16% strongly agreed, that digital courts foster public trust by offering a variety of functions that enhance stakeholder interaction and ensure both substantive and procedural uniformity. Nonetheless, 13% of the respondents disagreed with the claim that digital courts build public trust through these functions.

The individuals interviewed expressed concerns that the digitization of judicial services could enhance the connection between judges and the public, thereby promoting greater transparency within the court system. The findings from the interviews suggest that engaging stakeholders is essential for increasing transparency, which is vital for building trust in governmental institutions and addressing corruption. The interviewees noted a significant lack of fairness and consistency, attributing this to corruption, nepotism, and the prevailing political culture. They further contended that certain judicial appointments are politically motivated, implying that appointees prioritize the interests of politicians over those of the stakeholders. This situation is believed to exacerbate corruption.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This research has highlighted the impact of digitalization on the judicial service delivery system in Zimbabwe. The study's findings affirm that the digital transformation of the judiciary significantly affects the efficiency of judicial service delivery (Poshai and Vyas-Doorgapersad,

2023; Malaba, 2022; Benyekhlef, Amar & Callipel, 2015). The results pertaining to the first objective demonstrate a notable correlation between technological infrastructure and judicial efficiency. A substantial 78% of respondents acknowledged that technological infrastructure enables courts to deliver judicial services more swiftly, reliably, and efficiently, thereby reducing the necessity for costly legal representation. Additionally, 17% strongly concurred with this assertion. This aligns with the findings of the Smart Court Opinion (2017), which indicated that technology is well-positioned to enhance the speed and efficiency of judicial services. Efficiency is paramount in the resolution of disputes, as a well-known legal principle states that justice delayed is justice denied. The study's outcomes suggest that excessively prolonged court proceedings can lead to prolonged uncertainty for litigants, deplete their financial resources, and ultimately foster distrust in the judiciary (Maroz, Popova, and Acosta, 2023).

The results of objective (2) demonstrate that the Electronic Processing Law significantly impacts transparency. This finding aligns with the conclusions of several researchers (Tereshchuk, 2020; Berezhna, 2019; Karpenko and Osmak, 2018; Komarova and Kovalchuk, 2021). The study indicates that E-justice initiatives can enhance accountability frameworks and combat corruption. Specifically, 78% of respondents agreed, and 8% strongly agreed, that the Electronic Processing Law aids anti-corruption efforts by identifying and eliminating opportunities for individuals to misuse their positions. This observation is corroborated by other scholars who have similarly noted that the Electronic Processing Law assists in recognizing and removing pathways for abuse of power (Kaufmann and Bellver, 2005; World Bank, 2017). Furthermore, the Electronic Processing Law facilitates the transparent implementation of public policy through clear procedures and open tools. The research also highlights that advancements in digital technologies present significant opportunities for enhancing the transparency of the judicial system. The findings reveal that the digitalization of courts contributes to improved public administration transparency and increases the accessibility of courts for citizens (Mynenko and Lyulyov, 2022). Consequently, digitalization enhances governance transparency by fostering public awareness and fulfilling an educational role.

The results of objective (3) demonstrate that information communication technology significantly impacts access to justice. The data reveals that 75% of respondents expressed agreement, while 15% strongly concurred that utilizing online platforms for the resolution of minor disputes in

courts could enhance litigant participation and facilitate remote interactions with attorneys. This result supports the claims made by Ahmed et al (2022) that electronic efforts can improve court transparency. Additionally, 79% of respondents agreed and 12% strongly agreed that investments in ICT improve access to justice services for citizens and improve judicial administration. Numerous researchers have concurred with this conclusion, concluding that investments in ICT improve judicial administration and people' access to justice services (Reiling, 2006; Louro et al, 2017; and Gomes et al, 2018).

The study indicates that technology can reform judicial administrative processes, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption, which in turn fosters public confidence and encourages individuals to assert their rights. Additionally, the research highlights that new technologies can assist litigants by simplifying the process of locating essential legal information online, enabling electronic document filing, and allowing case progress tracking from home. Online dispute resolution for transactional matters eliminates the necessity for costly legal representation and enables courts or government entities to deliver swift, reliable, and predictable resolutions.

The results of objective (4) demonstrate that Stakeholder Engagement significantly impacts public Trust in the judiciary. The study reveals that 72% of participants concurred, while 21% strongly concurred, that Stakeholder Engagement enhances transparency, which is essential for building trust in governmental institutions and combating corruption. This indicates that Stakeholder Engagement indeed fosters transparency, which is vital for cultivating trust (Kaufmann and Bellver 2005; World Bank 2017). The digitalization of the judiciary can facilitate a more organized and transparent interaction among court personnel, attorneys, and litigants, thereby enhancing transparency and enabling users to monitor their cases, attend hearings, and access court rulings online. The digitization of judicial services can bridge the gap between judges and the public, promoting greater openness within the court system. Furthermore, the digitalization of courts enhances the consistency and uniform application of the law, ensuring that similar cases yield comparable substantive outcomes. Digital courts foster public trust by offering various functions that improve stakeholder engagement and ensure both substantive and procedural uniformity.

The research findings elucidate the effects of digitalization on the delivery of judicial services. The study indicates that the digital transformation of the judiciary enhances the overall justice delivery system. It reveals that technological infrastructure plays a crucial role in improving judicial efficiency, while the Electronic Processing Law significantly contributes to transparency. Furthermore, information and communication technology greatly affects the accessibility of justice, and stakeholder engagement is vital for fostering public trust in the judiciary. These conclusions align with the work of other scholars (Maroz, Popova, and Acosta, 2023; World Bank, 2016; LTE evaluation team, 2022; Furr et al., 2023).

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the results of the research study. It included the methodologies and analytical tools employed, as well as the presentation and discussion of the data gathered for this investigation. The analysis utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data was illustrated through tables, pie charts, and bar graphs, while qualitative data was conveyed through paragraphs, statements, and direct quotations. The subsequent chapter will address the summary, conclusions, and implications of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MODEL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter examines the conclusions, recommendations, and the proposed model. All research conclusions were drawn from the findings presented in chapter four. The study formulates a functional model aimed at the digitalization of Zimbabwe's justice delivery system, with the objective of enhancing judicial efficiency, transparency, accessibility to justice, and public trust in the judiciary within Zimbabwe.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The research findings underscore the significance of digitizing the judiciary system in Zimbabwe to enhance judicial efficiency, transparency, accessibility to justice, and public trust in the judiciary. Based on the comprehensive discussions presented in Chapter 4, the research has drawn the following conclusions.

5.2.1 Influence of technological infrastructure on judicial efficiency in Zimbabwe

The conclusion of this research regarding objective (1) indicates a positive and significant correlation between technological infrastructure and the efficiency of the judiciary. Technological infrastructure enables courts to deliver judicial services that are faster, more reliable, and efficient, thereby reducing the necessity for costly legal representation. The implementation of ICT infrastructure within the judicial system enhances access, increases security, reduces litigation expenses, and establishes a cohesive judicial information system. By simplifying judicial administration, digitization investments increase judges' productivity, which helps individuals who use justice services. A more favorable business climate, FDI, tax revenue security, and economic growth are all facilitated by increased judicial efficiency. Prolonged court cases can drain litigants' financial resources, expose them to protracted uncertainty, and eventually increase public mistrust of the legal system.

5.2.2 Influence of electronic processing law on transparency in Zimbabwe

The conclusions related to objective (2) suggest that the Electronic Processing Law plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency. Initiatives for e-justice have the potential to strengthen accountability systems and successfully fight corruption. By spotting and removing chances for people to abuse their power, the Electronic Processing Law supports anti-corruption efforts. By using open technologies and transparent procedures, this law also makes it easier for public policy to be implemented transparently. The digitization of courts improves individuals' access to judicial services and increases the openness of public administration. Furthermore, by raising public knowledge and serving as an instructional tool, digitization promotes increased openness in governance.

5.2.3 Influence of ICT on justice accessibility in Zimbabwe

The conclusions from the research conclusion of objective (3) indicate that information communication technology significantly impacts the accessibility of justice. This conclusion aligns with the studies conducted by Reiling (2006), Louro et al (2017), and Gomes et al (2018). By enabling remote communication with legal representation, the use of online platforms for the settlement of small issues inside the court system may increase litigant participation. Online dispute resolution platforms offer a unique and accessible way to resolve disputes, increasing public confidence and encouraging people to stand up for their rights. By removing the need for expensive legal counsel, online conflict resolution in transactional situations allows courts or government agencies to provide prompt, reliable, and predictable results. Technology has the power to completely transform judicial administrative procedures, reducing the likelihood of corruption and promoting public confidence and the exercise of individual rights. Investing in ICT enhances judicial administration and improves citizens' access to justice services. Emerging technologies can assist litigants by simplifying the process of locating essential legal information online, facilitating electronic document submissions, and enabling case progress tracking from home.

5.2.4 Influence of stakeholder engagement on public trust in the judiciary in Zimbabwe

The conclusions related to objective (4) suggest that Stakeholder Engagement significantly impacts public Trust in the judiciary, as noted by Kaufmann and Bellver (2005) and the World Bank (2017). In order to combat corruption and foster confidence in governmental institutions, stakeholder involvement improves transparency. In addition to increasing transparency and allowing users to track their cases, attend hearings, and view court decisions online, the digitization of the judiciary can help court staff, lawyers, and litigants engage in a more structured and transparent manner. By bridging the divide between the public and judges, the digitization of judicial services can increase the court system's transparency. By guaranteeing that comparable cases result in equivalent substantive conclusions, the digital transformation of courts improves the uniformity and consistency of the law's application. By providing a range of features that improve stakeholder interaction and encourage both substantive and procedural uniformity, digital courts help to build public trust.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The system, although driven by digital technology, must continue to be grounded in the constitutional duty to uphold the essential judicial principles of equality before the law, fairness, competence, accessibility, impartiality, integrity, timeliness, independence in decision-making, transparency, and certainty. A program must be established as a continuous initiative to facilitate the acceptance of new operational methods. It is essential that courts and associated institutions, such as correctional facilities, are equipped with appropriate modern technologies to fully leverage the IECMS. To overcome this resistance, it is crucial to clearly articulate the benefits of the new system in order to secure their support and commitment.

To guarantee that litigants who wish to use the virtual court system do not have connectivity issues, it is imperative to invest in reliable Internet networks. Similarly, efforts should be made to guarantee that ICT facilities, including satellites, data servers, fiber optic cables, and network boosters, are completely built throughout the nation. By building this ICT infrastructure, users and litigants in remote locations can readily connect to the Internet and take advantage of the IECMS. It is recommended that there must be a continuous training programme for the judicial system’s

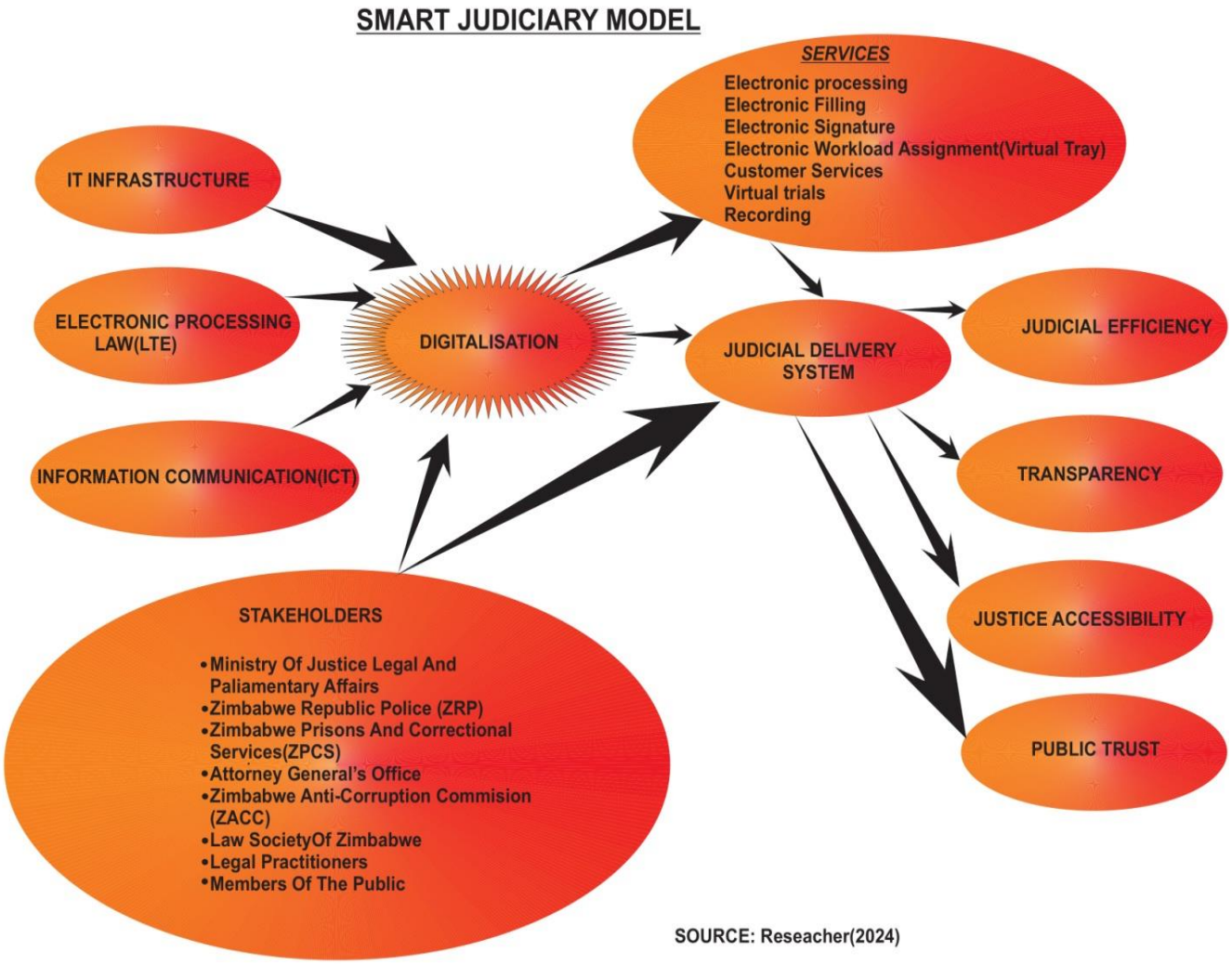
stakeholders. These stakeholders include judicial officers, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS), the Law Society of Zimbabwe, the Attorney General's Office, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), the Ministry of Justice, Legal & Parliamentary Affairs through the Legal Aid Directorate, and members of the public. There must be more e-filing centres in remote areas for easy access to justice by litigants. Courts are the essence of the promotion and protection of the rule of law. Good governance is an essential element of the rule of law. By moving away from the traditional paper-based system to a digital platform, the Judiciary must ensure that the other arms of State responsible for the development of ICT take cogent steps to improve internet penetration and connectivity in remote areas.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDY

Future research can focus on a summative evaluation of the implementation of the IECMS in Zimbabwe and abroad.

5.5 MODEL

Figure 5.1 Smart Judicial Model



The Smart Judiciary Model was created in accordance with the conceptual framework and research goals to enhance Zimbabwe's judicial or justice delivery system. The four variables, often known as crucial success criteria, form the foundation of digitalization. Technology infrastructure, Electronic Processing Law, information and communication technology, and stakeholder engagement are essential success elements for digitalization. For this digitalization model to be operationalized successfully, all parties involved must be dedicated, involved, and supportive by providing sustainable technology infrastructure, especially in rural areas. This will increase judicial efficiency, transparency, public trust, and disposition while providing access to justice by reducing further backlogs, preventing the loss or physical damage of documents in case files, improving information accessibility, and modernizing the operations of the judiciary system in the

country. The technology will, for instance, prevent case files containing evidence from being lost. As a result, the system is a crucial tool for preventing the unfairness that could arise from case file loss. Courts rely on evidence to render decisions in an efficient and equitable manner. The judicial delivery system will provide digital services such electronic processing, electronic signatures, electronic workload assignment (Virtual Tray), recording, customer service, etc. using the Smart Judiciary concept. Furthermore, as digital record-keeping makes the justice delivery system more transparent, it is anticipated that the digitalization of the legal system providing electronic services will enhance transparency and provide clear audit trails in the handling of court cases. The system is an online case manager that can monitor each step in the justice delivery process.

5.5.1 Information Technology Infrastructure

The Smart Judiciary model will be supported by SIS, an American software firm that offers a comprehensive software solution to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) of Zimbabwe. This solution aims to unify the country's courts under a single technological framework. The system connects all courts in Zimbabwe with the various stakeholders involved in court cases. The Smart Judiciary model encompasses five key features within a single platform: electronic filing of documents (e-filing), electronic payment of court fees (e-payment), a virtual court hearing platform, online tracking of court cases, and internet access to judgments.

The digital model incorporates five key design features that facilitate the efficient and prompt management of court cases. Firstly, the Smart Judiciary model supports electronic payments (e-payments) for all court fees via mobile money transfer services such as Ecocash, Zimswitch Instant Payment Interchange Technology (ZIPIT), and Visa cards. These e-payment options are both rapid and convenient, enabling litigants to settle court fees at any time without the necessity of visiting the court's account office in person. Furthermore, the system includes an e-filing platform that permits the submission of electronically signed and stamped documents, thereby allowing courts to administer justice more swiftly. This e-filing feature minimizes the time and effort required for manual file organization and decreases the likelihood of human error in managing court records, establishing digitalization as a dependable method for overseeing court documentation.

The Smart Judiciary Model provides a virtual court platform that facilitates remote hearings by simulating a physical courtroom environment in a digital space. A significant benefit of virtual courts is their ability to enable remote adjudication of cases, thereby eliminating the necessity for travel and physical presence in a courtroom. This innovation not only conserves time but also reduces the expenses associated with attending court in person. Furthermore, the system incorporates an electronic calendar (e-calendar) that enables the online scheduling and monitoring of all court-related events and tasks. This e-calendar is integrated with users' email and phone contacts, allowing for real-time notifications regarding case developments through SMS and email, thus enabling users to stay informed about their case status online. To establish a Smart Judiciary account, individuals can visit the website http://zimsmartjudiciary.org.zw, which is overseen by the Judicial Service Commission of Zimbabwe. With a Smart Judiciary account, users have the capability to file cases at any of the active registries online. The design features of the Smart Judiciary model are essential for ensuring that information is readily accessible to users and stakeholders, which is vital for promoting transparency, efficiency, and convenience in the delivery of justice.

5.5.2 Electronic Processing Law (LTE)

Electronic Processing refers to the capability of handling cases through electronic means rather than through traditional manual methods. This approach mandates that all milestones within judicial proceedings be managed solely by the electronic court system. By eliminating the use of physical files, the Electronic Processing Law (LTE) seeks to improve access to the judicial system, enhance security, reduce litigation expenses, and establish a cohesive judicial information framework. The JSC envisions that the IECMS will bolster efficiency, expedite processes, and facilitate the resolution of cases, thereby providing better access to justice. This system is expected to alleviate case backlogs, mitigate the risk of document loss and physical damage, improve information accessibility, and modernize the judiciary's operations within the country. For instance, it will help prevent the loss of case files that contain critical evidence. Consequently, this system serves as a vital tool in safeguarding against injustices that may arise from the disappearance of case files. Courts rely on evidence to render judgments effectively and equitably; therefore, the loss of files can lead to compromised disclosures and potentially erroneous

judgments. Furthermore, the Electronic Processing Law is anticipated to enhance transparency within the judicial system.

5.5.3 Information communication technology (ICT)

ICT plays a pivotal role in the success of digitalization and the Smart Judiciary model. The digital transformation of justice systems empowers courts to make informed decisions, a crucial attribute for the fair adjudication of cases. Consequently, it is expected that ICT tools will significantly diminish the potential for corruption within the judicial review process. Furthermore, ICT is projected to enhance the convenience of justice delivery, allowing remands to be conducted from the offices of the accused's legal representatives if they are on bail, or from the remand facility if bail has not been granted. This online framework enables a litigant's attorney to initiate a virtual remand hearing in coordination with the officers at the arresting police station, provided there is an Internet connection, thereby facilitating a more accessible justice delivery process. Thus, ICT is an integral component of a comprehensive strategy aimed at reforming justice delivery in the country, as it facilitates the electronic uploading of court cases into an online database for improved tracking. This system not only streamlines justice administration but also bolsters efficiency and upholds the rule of law within the judiciary.

With dependable Internet connectivity, individuals can conveniently access justice delivery systems through various devices, including mobile phones, tablets, and computers. Additionally, ICT facilitates the meticulous digital management of court records, enhancing the security of these vital documents. Court records serve as an essential repository of information for the judicial system, necessitating robust protection against potential loss or unauthorized access. In Zimbabwe, the implementation of the Smart Judiciary model is expected to foster the digital creation, management, and preservation of court records, thereby positively influencing the public perception of the judiciary. The digitalization of the justice delivery system will also promote effective and careful management of court records, which is crucial for building trust in the justice system, ensuring that the documents used for decision-making and judgments remain secure from tampering by unauthorized individuals.

The implementation of the Smart Judiciary model is expected to significantly increase the demand for personnel with ICT competencies within the judicial sector and among litigants. Innovations in the public sector, such as the IECMS, will lead to the creation of various new roles, including information technology security specialists, cybersecurity officers, network specialists, hardware specialists, helpdesk officers, electronic filing officers, virtual center officers, network engineers, and system analysts. These professionals will require robust ICT skills to ensure effective virtual interactions that underpin the success of digitalization. Additionally, litigants and their representatives must possess ICT competencies to effectively navigate the digitalized justice system. Consequently, there is a pressing need to enhance ICT training within Zimbabwe's judicial sector through the adoption of the Smart Judiciary model.

5.5.4 Stakeholder Engagement

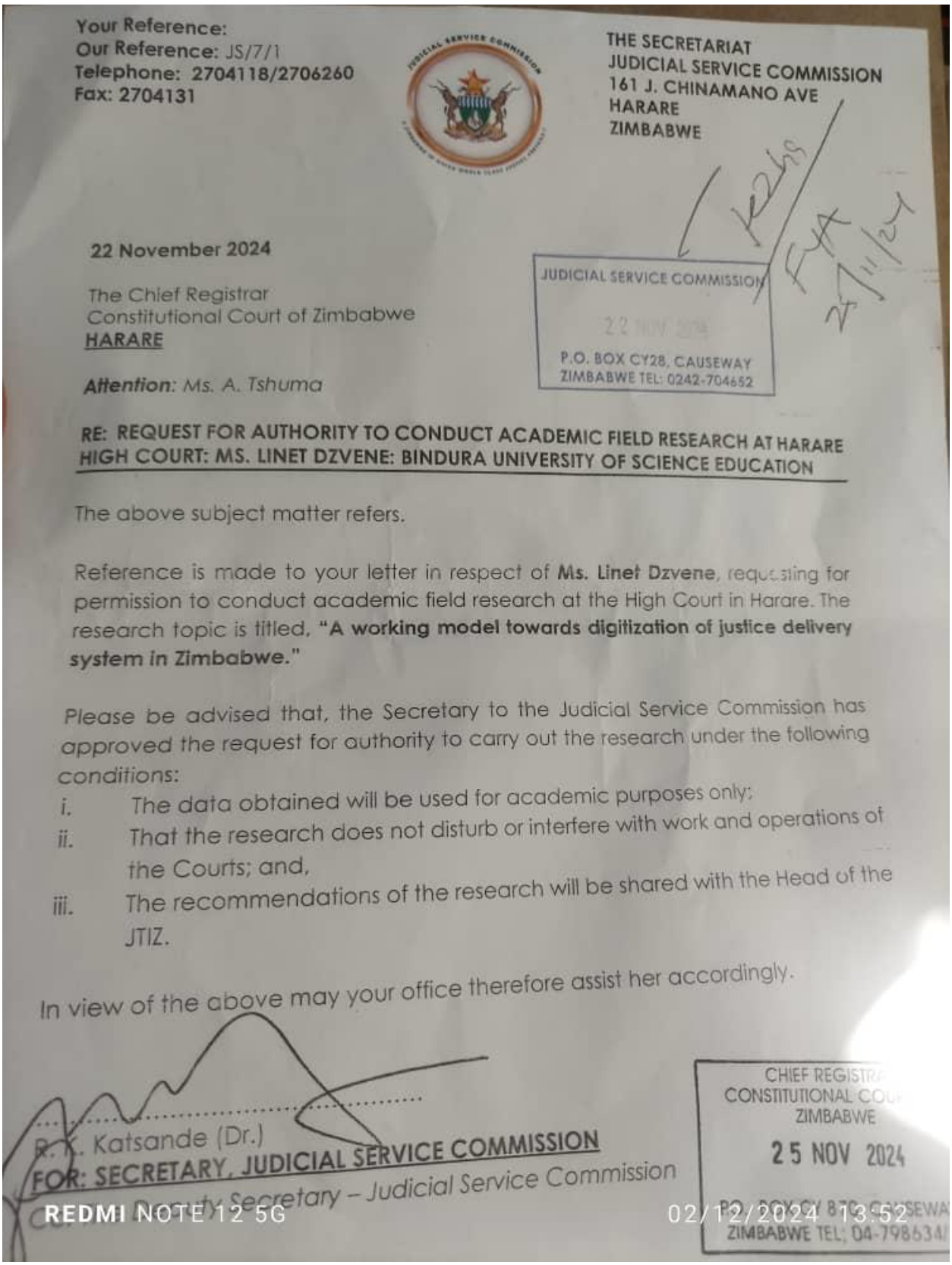
The principle that "justice delayed is justice denied" underpins the expectation that the Smart Judiciary Model will enhance the efficiency of the justice delivery system in Zimbabwe. This model aims to eliminate operational challenges such as the misplacement of case files, corruption, and transportation issues that hinder court attendance. By establishing connections between the JSC and various stakeholders in the justice system including the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, the Office of the Attorney General, Magistrates, Judges, the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, the ZRP, the ZPCS, and legal practitioners—the system seeks to foster convenience. Additionally, the digitalization initiative will facilitate the online submission of case documents, allowing litigants to file applications without the need for in-person court visits. Consequently, the Smart Judiciary Model aspires to make justice more accessible to all citizens. It is expected that this digital transformation will enhance communication between the judiciary and its stakeholders, including litigants. Once the Smart Judiciary Model is implemented, along with ongoing stakeholder engagement, involvement, and training, the justice delivery system will ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness within Zimbabwe's courts, ultimately creating a judiciary that is more accessible, responsive, and resilient, while minimizing errors and oversights.

The Smart Judiciary Model aims to improve transparency by mitigating corruption within litigation processes by eliminating direct interactions between litigants, their representatives, and judicial officials. Such physical engagements during judicial reviews frequently present

opportunities for corrupt practices, adversely affecting the administration of justice and resulting in substandard litigation outcomes. For instance, instances of bribery involving judges by defendants can erode public confidence in the justice system, thereby undermining the ability of judicial institutions to impartially resolve cases presented to them. By transitioning to a digital framework, this model seeks to diminish the likelihood of bribery, as all procedural activities will be conducted through technological means.

The training center will be tasked with organizing and implementing capacity-building training programs and workshops aimed at enhancing the ICT skills of judiciary and magistracy members. The ICT training initiatives offered by the JSC are structured to provide participants with both fundamental and advanced IT competencies necessary for effectively utilizing the smart judicial model. For instance, the e-filing training program enables litigants and their representatives to initiate court cases remotely from their respective detention facilities and offices. To meet the evolving demands of ICT training and development, the JSC is required to utilize the electronic learning management system (e-LMS), which aims to facilitate the consistent delivery of ICT training to stakeholders within the justice sector. The e-LMS is designed to offer an efficient and user-friendly interface that supports self-paced ICT training, thereby promoting the digital transformation of the nation's judicial system.

APPENDIX: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH



Your Reference:
Our Reference: JS/7/1
Telephone: 2704118/2706260
Fax: 2704131

THE SECRETARIAT
JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION
161 J. CHINAMANO AVE
HARARE
ZIMBABWE

22 November 2024

JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION
22 NOV 2024
P.O. BOX CY28, CAUSEWAY
ZIMBABWE TEL: 0242-704652

The Chief Registrar
Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe
HARARE

Attention: Ms. A. Tshuma

RE: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC FIELD RESEARCH AT HARARE HIGH COURT: MS. LINET DZVENE: BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

The above subject matter refers.

Reference is made to your letter in respect of **Ms. Linet Dzvene**, requesting for permission to conduct academic field research at the High Court in Harare. The research topic is titled, **"A working model towards digitization of justice delivery system in Zimbabwe."**

Please be advised that, the Secretary to the Judicial Service Commission has approved the request for authority to carry out the research under the following conditions:

i. The data obtained will be used for academic purposes only;
ii. That the research does not disturb or interfere with work and operations of the Courts; and,
iii. The recommendations of the research will be shared with the Head of the JTIZ.

In view of the above may your office therefore assist her accordingly.

P. K. Katsande (Dr.)
FOR: SECRETARY, JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION
Deputy Secretary – Judicial Service Commission

CHIEF REGISTRAR
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT
ZIMBABWE
25 NOV 2024
P.O. BOX CY 878, CAUSEWAY
ZIMBABWE TEL: 04-798634

REDMI NOTE 12 5G 02/12/2024 13:52

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE/GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name of Company ……

2. Position ……

3	**What is your gender?** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	
3.1	Male	
3.2	Female	

4	**What is your Age?** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	
4.1	20 – 29 years	
4.2	30 – 39 years	
4.3	40 – and above	

5	**What is your highest level of education?** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	
5.1	Secondary education (Form 4 – 6)	
5.2	Certificate	
5.3	Diploma	
5.4	Bachelor's degree	
5.5	Masters degree	
5.6	PhD	

SECTION B:

TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND JUDICIAL EFFICIENCY

6	**Influence of technology infrastructure on Judicial efficiency.** **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
6.1	Technology infrastructure helps courts provide faster, reliable, and more efficient judicial services removing the need for expensive legal representation.					
6.2	Investment in digitization improves the judges' productivity by simplifying judicial administration which also benefits the users of justice service					
6.3	Judicial efficiency improves the business climate, attracts foreign direct investment, secures tax revenues, and promotes economic growth.					
6.4	ICT infrastructure in the judicial system improves access to the system, increase security, lower litigation costs, and create an integrated judicial information system.					
6.5	Unreasonably lengthy court proceedings may subject litigants to endless uncertainty, deprive them of necessary financial resources, and ultimately create a feeling of distrust toward the judiciary.					

ELECTRONIC PROCESSING LAW AND TRANSPARENCY

7	**Influence of Electronic Processing Law on Transparency** **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
7.1	Electronic Processing Law helps anti-corruption efforts identify and eliminate avenues for individuals to abuse their positions.					
7.2	The development of digital technologies opens vast opportunities for ensuring the transparency of the judicial system.					
7.3	Digitalization of courts improves public administration transparency and the ability of courts to be accessible to citizens					
7.4	Digitalization increases the transparency of governance by raising public awareness and implementing an educational function					
7.5	Electronic Processing Law provides an opportunity to openly implement public policy through transparent tools and clear procedures					

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND JUSTICE ACCESSIBILITY

8	**Influence of Information Communication Technology on Justice Accessibility.** **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
8.1	The use of online platforms for resolving minor disputes in courts may lead to the greater participation of litigants, enabling remote interaction with attorneys.					
8.2	Investment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) improves judicial administration and access to justice service by citizens.					
8.3	Technology can transform judiciary administrative processes to restrict opportunities for corruption increasing public confidence and encourages people to act on their rights.					
8.4	New technologies can help litigants by making it easier to find necessary legal information online, allowing electronic filing of documents, tracking the progress of cases from home.					
8.5	Online dispute resolution for transactional disputes removes the need for expensive legal representation entirely and can allow a court or government to provide a fast, reliable and predictable resolution					

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC TRUST

9	**Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on Public Trust in the judiciary.** **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.** ***(Please place an X in the appropriate box, only one answer is possible.)***	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
9.1	Stakeholder engagement increases transparency which plays a crucial role in fostering trust in government institutions and tackling corruption.					
9.2	Judicial digitalisation can ensure a more ordered and transparent interaction between court staff , lawyers and litigants enhancing transparency allowing users to track their cases, view hearings, and access court decisions online,.					
9.3	Digitization of judicial service can bring judges and their work closer to the public, increasing openness within the court system					
9.4	Digitalisation of courts improves consistency and uniform application of law and the degree to which similar cases have the same substantive outcome.					
9.5	Digital courts build public trust by providing an array of functions that help improve stakeholder interaction, substantive and procedural uniformity.					

13. Do you think digitalization improves the justice or judicial delivery system?

(Please place an X in the appropriate box, Only one answer is possible.)

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

14. Support your answer.…….....

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Thank you for taking your time to complete this questionnaire!

INTERVIEW FORM

This interview is for a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Master of Leadership and Corporate Governance degree, carrying out a research on a working model towards digitalizing justice delivery system in Zimbabwe. Your views will provide valuable input into this research and your answers will be strictly for academic purposes and confidentiality will be observed at maximum. May you kindly help by answering the questions below:

1. Most of the authors argue that digitalization of judicial system increases efficiency, what is your view on that?
2. Do you think digitalisation of justice system helps improve transparency? Please explain why you think so.
3. .Digitalisation of judicial system improves access to justice. What is your opinion?
4. Do you think stakeholder engagement improves public trust? Support your view.
5. Do you think there is enough infrastructure to fully implement digitalisation?

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