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**ISSN: 2583-8881**

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## **Optimising Justice: Evaluating the Impact of Court Management Systems on Judicial Delay and Case Backlogs in India**

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### **Abstract**

*The Indian justice delivery system faces ongoing problems with judicial delay, which creates case backlogs despite constitutional guarantees that require courts to deliver justice without delay. The rising number of pending cases throughout the court system has created critical problems that affect both judicial access and institutional performance, and public trust in the legal system. The research paper investigates how court management systems function to reduce judicial delays through their management operations and actual use of digital case management and court monitoring technologies. The research paper employs a doctrinal and analytical framework that uses secondary sources and empirical research to demonstrate that technological innovations have increased administrative transparency and coordination but failed to achieve lasting decreases in case backlogs. The study shows that judicial efficiency will be improved only through the development of combined reforms, which need better human resource management, better procedural practices, and better mechanisms to hold institutions accountable.*

**Keywords-** *Judicial delay, Case Backlog, Court Management Systems, Judicial Efficiency, India*

### **1. Introduction**

#### *1.1 Judicial Pendency and the Crisis of Timely Justice in India*

The current state of judicial backlogs in India has become a major crisis that undermines the constitutional commitment to deliver justice without unnecessary delays. Indian Courts currently face an unprecedented backlog situation since 5.1 crore cases remain unresolved across all judicial levels, which include District Courts, High Courts, and the Supreme Court.<sup>1</sup> The judicial system now suffers from permanent operational delays, which have transformed into a major fundamental issue that affects all aspects of court operations throughout the justice

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<sup>1</sup> The Geostrata, When Justice Waits: The Crisis of Delay in India's Courts *available at:* <https://www.thegeostrata.com/post/when-justice-waits-the-crisis-of-delay-in-india-s-courts> (last visited on 29 January 2026)

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system. The courts face difficulties in handling current litigation because of their existing case backlog, which has grown beyond their operational capabilities to process legal disputes.

The majority of pending cases remain in subordinate and district courts because these courts function as the main access points to justice throughout the country. The trial stage delay causes extended litigation periods, which result in more appeals while higher courts become overloaded with cases, thus creating operational problems that affect the entire judicial system. The extended case pendency period decreases public trust in the judicial system, which needs to protect the law while it harms economically disadvantaged and socially vulnerable litigants. The rule of law establishes that delayed justice results in denied justice because lengthy processes make legal solutions weaker, while they decrease public confidence in the justice system.

The ongoing problem of high pendency, which persists through different reform attempts, indicates that the issue involves more than just administrative problems because it includes fundamental institutional issues. The combination of better legal knowledge and better access to justice has increased case inflow, but the judicial system lacks sufficient resources to handle cases, which has made it impossible for the system to eliminate its backlog. The understanding of judicial pendency requires recognition that it represents a governance problem that needs permanent solutions through fundamental institutional changes and new operational methods. The research paper aims to assess how court management systems operate in India to reduce judicial delays and case backlogs through their effect on administrative capacity, procedural operations and institutional responsibility.

### *1.2 Procedural Bottlenecks and Long-Pending Cases in Higher Courts*

Courts encounter their most significant judicial delay problems when they operate at their highest judicial level. The apex court experiences its most pressing backlog problem because cases accumulate during the admission process. In the Supreme Court admission process, 65% of existing cases remain pending, which shows that operational delays exist instead of case complexity.<sup>2</sup> The situation creates extended periods of uncertainty because it interrupts the process of reaching final decisions while it increases total case backlogs, which exist despite sufficient judicial resources.

High Courts experience their most pressing judicial delay problems through their retention of exceptionally ancient cases. The Calcutta High Court contains almost all cases that have been open for more than five decades.<sup>3</sup> The presence of cases that have been unresolved for multiple decades demonstrates the faults within the judicial system, which need more than minor changes to achieve improvement. These patterns demonstrate that courts need complete management systems that will establish procedural rules while holding institutions accountable and distributing judicial resources effectively.

The current research explores judicial delays and case backlogs in India by studying court management systems used in the country. The study assesses current administrative procedures and court procedures together with technology improvements to evaluate their success in

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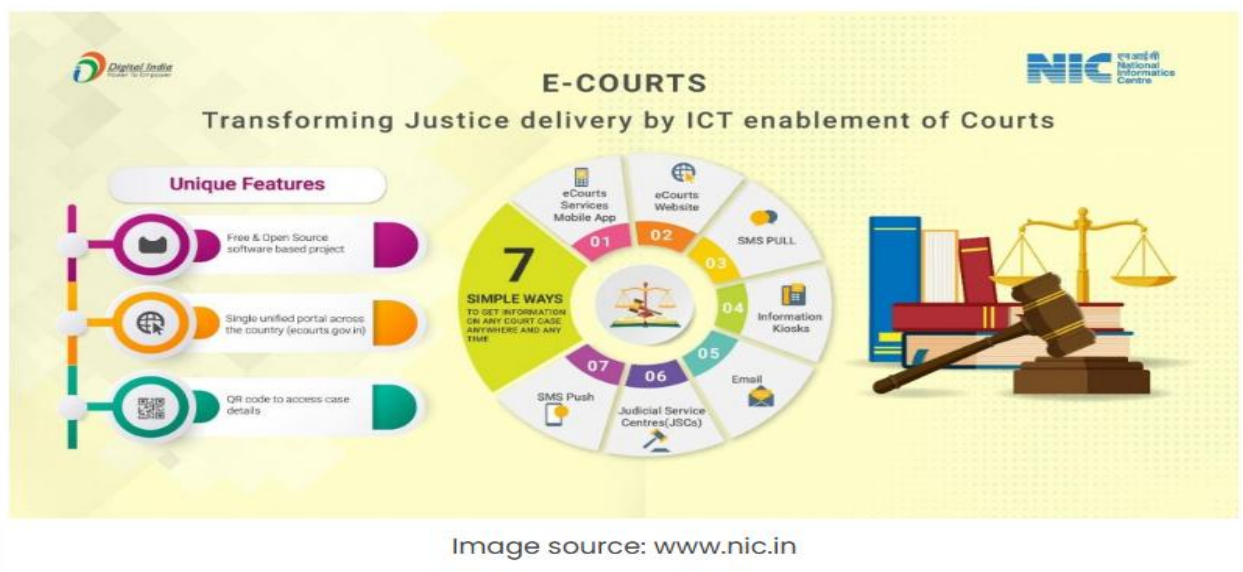
<sup>2</sup> Supreme Court Observer, more than 65% Pending Supreme Court Cases Stuck at Admission Stage *available at:* <https://www.scobserver.in/journal/more-than-65-percent-pending-supreme-court-cases-stuck-at-admission-stage/> (last visited on 29 January 2026)

<sup>3</sup> Economic Times, Calcutta High Court Tops Backlog with Majority of Long-Pending Cases *available at:* <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/calcutta-high-court-tops-backlog-with-94-of-cases-pending-over-50-years-union-law-ministry/articleshow/123235670.cms> (last visited on 29 January 2026)

solving case backlogs while identifying the fundamental barriers that prevent better courtroom productivity.

## 2. Institutional Framework of Court Management in India

Traditionally, the administration of the courts in India has been through a judge-based model in which a judge would perform both a judicial and an administrative role. Whereas this model had preserved the independence of the judiciary, it was frequently ill-equipped in specialised management skills to manage increased case workload and complicated administrative requirements. Reform initiatives in institutions have focused more on the necessity to have a well-organised court administration that is backed by quality information. One such breakthrough has been the creation of the National Judicial Data Grid, where court-related information on cases is consolidated across the nation so that one can monitor pendency, case age, and trends of case disposal in real-time, which is essential as it improves accountability and helps in informed policy decisions.<sup>4</sup> The Department of Justice has facilitated these changes by incorporating data-driven court management within the larger judicial modernisation efforts.<sup>5</sup> These are meant to enhance the administrative coordination, intensifying monitoring regimes, and assisting courts in better handling workloads. Although there are such institutional improvements, there is a disparity in implementation. Although this has seen more administrative support being provided to higher courts, various subordinate courts still experience constraints due to poor staffing, irregular training and lack of infrastructure. Consequently, the prospects of reforms in institutional court management have not been fully achieved.



## 3. Technology-Driven Court Management Reforms

Technology has been the key element in court management reformation in India. Digital programs are meant to simplify the procedures used by the administration system, increase

<sup>4</sup> Supreme Court of India, National Judicial Data Grid, *available at*: <https://njdg.ecourts.gov.in/> (last visited on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Justice, Government of India, National Judicial Data Grid *available at*: <https://doj.gov.in/the-national-judicial-data-grid-njdg/> (last visited on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026)

transparency and overall access to judicial information. These efforts include digital case management systems that have taken a very central part in changing the administration of courts. Use of online case records, electronic filing systems and digital cause lists has minimised the usage of paper-based processes and enhanced efficiencies of the procedures. The reforms have also helped in greater attention to proceedings of cases and making the application of data-driven interventions to eliminate delays, as the digital presence has also resulted in the ability of litigants to access the status of the cases remotely and lessen procedural obscurantism.<sup>6</sup> The centralisation of judicial information has enhanced the coordination of courts and administrative units, especially on compliance and reporting effects.

There are, however, limitations to technological reforms. The lack of digital infrastructure variation between regions, the insufficient technical capacity of court staff, and the lack of digital literacy of litigants are limiting factors in the success of such measures. Further, technology cannot solely fix delays created due to vacancies on the judiciary bench, abuse of process, and institutional laxity.

#### 4. Empirical Evidence on Judicial Backlogs

Empirical studies facilitate important perspectives of judicial delay on a structural level in India. The scholarly reviews highlight the fact that not only is the volume of cases leading to backlogs, but so is the inefficiency in case handling and management.

Empirical research based on the pendency rate per district indicates a wide range of variation in pendency rates depending on the socio-economic status, the level of judicial personnel and administrative capacity.<sup>7</sup>

Studies that have focused on the lower judiciary have established the most dominant causes of a backlog, such as insufficient pre-trial screening, too many adjournments, and a lack of use of alternative dispute resolution processes.<sup>8</sup> These organisational areas of inefficiency imply that procedural practices can only be addressed, and administrative reforms can be implemented.

#### 5. Digital Delivery and Procedural Efficiency

According to the studies conducted to study the digital delivery mechanisms, technology could significantly improve the efficiency of the procedure when it is meaningfully combined with efficient case management practices.<sup>9</sup> When physical access to the courtrooms was limited, the fact that courts continued to operate became possible due to the implementation of the virtual hearing regime, the implementation of e-filing systems, and the use of digital record-keeping. Such inventions have shortened the time taken in administration, eased accessibility to litigants, and made the information exchange between the courts and parties quicker.

There is also increased transparency, whereby the digital platform allows tracking of the status of cases and judicial processes in real-time. This access will reduce reliance on intermediaries and will lead to increased procedural predictability. In addition, electronic procedures have

<sup>6</sup> Vision IAS, Judicial Pendency, *available at*: <https://visionias.in/current-affairs/monthly-magazine/2025-10-04/polity-and-governance/judicial-pendency> (last visited on 6th January 2026)

<sup>7</sup> Varsha Aithala, Rathan Sudheer, Nandana Sengupta, "Justice Delayed: A District-Wise Empirical Study on Indian Judiciary" 12(1) *Journal of Indian Law and Society* 108 (2021)

<sup>8</sup> Amit Pandey, Dr. Deependra Nath Pathak, "The Backlog of Cases in the Lower Judiciary in India: Causes, Consequences and Remedies" *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice* June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Jasmine Gill, "Judicial Delay and Digital Delivery: The Role of E-Courts in Addressing India's Case Backlogs" 7(2) *International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation* 201 (2025)

made normal judicial procedures smoother, and the courts have been in a better position to spend more time on substantive adjudication and less on administrative work.

However, the success of online delivery is still determined by discipline within the institution. Technology cannot work as an independent solution, but is most effective as a supporting solution. With no strict procedural schedules, judicial oversight, and systematic monitoring of cases, digital reforms face the risk of being a stereotype, instead of a groundbreaking change. Delays due to vacant offices of the judges, abuse of the procedure, or poor management of the case cannot be resolved independently through technological systems. Thus, digital delivery should be supported by strong managerial practice to bring long-term changes in judicial efficiency.

## 6. Litigation Culture and Procedural Practices

Judicial delay within the Indian legal system is determined by litigation culture. The occurrence of Adjournments is another significant factor of undue or delayed proceedings: adjournments are often granted without the strictness of need and at the behest of objective delay tactics on the side of litigants, thereby limiting the efficiency of the judicial procedure. Constant recesses disturb schedules on cases and erode judicial authority over cases.<sup>10</sup>

This is further worsened by the lack of strong case management. There is a lack of regularity in procedural schedules by courts and no active attempt to adhere to them, thus leading to piecemeal litigation and time-consuming resolution times. Despite a lack of timely detection of the problem and a careful focus on the milestones of the procedures, cases are granted to develop chaotically.

Besides, the few applications of alternative dispute resolution systems contribute further to pressure on the courts. Notwithstanding statutory recognition, mediation/arbitration remain underutilized, particularly within lower courts. Enhancement of court-annexed ADR systems and a culture of early resolution of disputes can help greatly to reduce the number of cases flowing into the court system and supplement formal adjudication.

## 7. Economic and Structural Implications of Judicial Delay

The economic implications of judicial delay are quite high. The continued use of dispute-based settlement allows the enforcement of the contract to be weakened, raising investment in different sectors and calculating the costs of transactions. This has been shown by the economic analyses that indicate that effective judicial systems do go hand in hand with economic growth and confidence in the market.<sup>11</sup> Some High Courts are still registering very high numbers of decades-old cases still awaiting trial, representing the deficiency of gradual reforms.<sup>12</sup>

The justice deficit is also made worse by the backlogs in tribunals. Although they are supposed to deliver a quicker resolution, most of the tribunals have a pendency status of comparable

<sup>10</sup> Kaushal Shakya, Kuljeet Singh, "Causes of Litigation Pending in India" 9(7) *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 839 (2021)

<sup>11</sup> Nileena Banerjee, "Justice Delayed, Prosperity Denied: An In-Depth Economic Analysis of Judicial Backlogs in India" 6 *GNLU Journal of Law and Economics* 67 (2023)

<sup>12</sup> Economic Times, Calcutta High Court Tops Backlog with 94 of Cases Pending Over 50 Years, Union Law Ministry available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/calcutta-high-court-tops-backlog-with-94-of-cases-pending-over-50-years-union-law-ministry/articleshow/123235670.cms> (last visited on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2026)

magnitude to their counterparts in regular courts, which causes institutional architecture and management capacity concerns.<sup>13</sup>

## 8. Recommendations for Optimising Court Management Systems

The reforms must be long-term in nature and comprehensive in the court management system by involving more than just an isolated long-term technological solution in India. An institutionalised strategy in the case management style should be realised on every tier of the judiciary. These involve scheduling of cases on a mandatory basis, prompt detection of problems and the tight control of adjournments in order to avoid unwarranted delays. Good management of case flow would allow the courts to prioritise issues that have long queues and, at the same time, expedite new cases. The administrative decision-making should be centrally focused on the judicial performance data. Data analytics have the potential to help judicial administrators understand how to reduce bottlenecks, make judicial resources more efficient, and track the overall patterns of disposal, but exclude considerations of judicial independence. The informed policy formulation and focused reform initiatives can also be supported through the transparent use of the performance indicators.

Going through the human resource limitations is also important. Prompt appointment of judicial vacancies and enhancing staff capacity in courts, and ongoing training of staff on the administration of courts and digital systems are the way towards making the institution resilient. There is a need to prioritise the development of infrastructure, especially in subordinate courts, to have the same management reforms applied across regions. In addition, the use of alternative dispute resolution should be enhanced to ensure that there is a minimisation of cases entering into the formal court system. Annexed mediation and arbitration in courts can also contribute greatly towards efficient dispute resolution, leaving the courts to tackle complex and contested issues.

## 9. Conclusion

Delays in the process of justice and backlog of cases in India are also symptoms of structural and administrative challenges that have roots in the justice delivery system. Although court management systems and technology-led reforms have enhanced transparency, accessibility, and availability of data, they have not, on their own, been able to lead to sustained pendency reduction. The delays themselves support the idea that reform strategies are too narrow in their choice towards digitisation, without a discussion of the inefficiency in the procedures and lack of resources.

To achieve sustainable efficiency in her courts, a coordinated restructuring should be implemented to ensure that the processes are disciplined, human resources are trained, infrastructure is upgraded, and the culture of litigation is changed. Court management system optimisation ought to be, therefore, not only an administrative requirement, but a constitutional requirement as well. These are the systems that need to be strengthened to gain access to justice promptly, strengthen the faith of the populace in the judicial system, and maintain the rule of law in India.

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<sup>13</sup> The Times of India, Speedy Justice Tribunals Have Five Lakh Pending Cases, *available at*: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/speedy-justice-tribunals-have-5l-pending-cases/articleshow/125897758.cms> (last visited on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2026)