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The Impact of Digital Systems on Legal Practice in Government Institutions: A Case Study in A Relevant Department Within a Ministry in Iraq

تأثير الأنظمة الرقمية على الممارسة القانونية في المؤسسات الحكومية: دراسة حالة في قسم ذي صلة بوزارة في العراق

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Abstract:

This study revealed the effects of the use of digital systems on the practice of the legal work in the Legal Department of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice. It used descriptive-analytical method and case study approach. The data were gathered through a questionnaire given to ninety employees (legal, administrative, managerial and technical) with interview of certain officials. System quality, information accessibility, system integration, information security, technical support, and legal-practice performance were measured by the questionnaire. Analysis of data was performed using SPSS with the techniques of frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. Results showed that digital-system use ($M = 3.41$) and legal-practice performance ($M = 3.62$) was rated high. Information accessibility was rated as top priority and system integration was rated as lowest priority. The computerization of legal documents had led to enhanced efficiency, accuracy, transparency, decision making and management. The results of the regression analysis indicated that 50.8% of the variance of legal-practice performance was accounted for by the use of digital systems. However, system integration was restricted, paper-based processes were implemented, the training was inadequate, and administrative approvals were not given in time, which lowered the impact of going digital. The study proposes to build an integrated document-management system with legal nature, to develop the use of electronic archiving, to reinforce cybersecurity and to offer ongoing training and technical assistance for the employees.

Keywords: Digital systems, Digital transformation, Legal practice, electronic document management, Government institutions, Ministry of Justice, Iraq.

المخلص:

كشفت هذه الدراسة عن آثار استخدام الأنظمة الرقمية في ممارسة العمل القانوني في الدائرة القانونية بوزارة العدل العراقية. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي ومنهج دراسة الحالة، وجمعت البيانات من خلال استبانة وزعت على (90) موظفاً من العاملين في المجالات القانونية والإدارية والإشرافية والفنية، إلى جانب إجراء مقابلات مع عدد من المسؤولين. وقاست الاستبانة جودة النظام، وإمكانية الوصول إلى المعلومات، وتكامل الأنظمة، وأمن المعلومات، والدعم الفني، وأداء الممارسة القانونية. وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج (SPSS)، من خلال التكرارات والنسب المئوية والمتوسطات الحسابية والانحرافات المعيارية ومعامل ارتباط بيرسون وتحليل الانحدار. وأظهرت النتائج أن مستوى استخدام الأنظمة الرقمية ($M = 3.41$) ومستوى أداء الممارسة القانونية ($M = 3.62$) جاءا بدرجة مرتفعة. كما حظيت إمكانية الوصول إلى المعلومات بأعلى مستوى من الأولوية، في حين جاء تكامل الأنظمة في أدنى مستوى من الأولوية. وأسهمت رقمنة الوثائق القانونية في تعزيز الكفاءة والدقة والشفافية وتحسين عملية اتخاذ القرار والإدارة. وأشارت نتائج تحليل الانحدار إلى أن استخدام الأنظمة الرقمية يفسر ما نسبته (50.8%) من التباين في أداء الممارسة القانونية. ومع ذلك، ظل تكامل الأنظمة محدوداً، واستمرت الإجراءات الورقية، وكان التدريب غير كافٍ، كما لم تُمنح الموافقات الإدارية في الوقت المناسب، مما حدّ من أثر التحول الرقمي. وتوصي الدراسة ببناء نظام متكامل لإدارة الوثائق ذات الطبيعة القانونية، وتطوير استخدام الأرشفة الإلكترونية، وتعزيز الأمن السيبراني، وتوفير التدريب المستمر والدعم الفني للموظفين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأنظمة الرقمية، التحول الرقمي، الممارسة القانونية، إدارة الوثائق الإلكترونية، المؤسسات الحكومية، وزارة العدل، العراق.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has come in stark need of the modern government administration. To enhance public institutions' performance, more and more people rely on electronic communication, electronic archives, unified databases, workflow-management systems and electronic signatures. It is not just about digitizing paper records, but also about redesigning processes, enhancing coordination, and leveraging technology to provide more efficient and transparent services (UN DESA, 2024, p. 1). Integration of government systems, availability of quality infrastructure, well-defined regulations, employee competencies and institutional support are essential for successful digital transformation. Digital government, according to the OECD (2020, p. 39), has several key attributes: digital-by-design procedures; data-driven administration, integration, and user focused services. 7–8). In the same regard, Maturity of government in embracing digital innovation also relies on core information systems, digital service, involvement of institutions, and enabling technological and organizational conditions (World Bank, 2022, p. 11).

Digital systems are especially critical in government legal offices, where these offices oversee the drafting of legislation, case files, confidential records, official correspondence, legal opinions and contracts. Numerous government documents contain institutional memory, and these documents may provide proof of official decisions and legal transactions; thus, it is important to ensure the accuracy, authenticity, accessibility, and security of these documents (Hussein, 2021, pp. 185–186). In Iraq, digital transformation can play its part in decreasing administrative time, access to knowledge and transparency. However, challenges persist in terms of infrastructure, legal regulations, financial resources, Internet access, and organizational culture (Saadi, 2024, pp. 479–480). Many legal processes may, therefore, still be dependent on paper records, manual approvals and separate databases.

Hence, the focus of this study is on considering the effect of digital systems on practice in Legal Department of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice. Its attention is on their impact on efficiency, accuracy, transparency, legal decision making and document management, as well as the technical, administrative and human challenges that hamper the effective use of these tools..

• 1.1 Research Problem

While government functions in Iraq have been increasingly converting to electronic communications, archives, databases and workflow systems, government legal departments may rely on mixed paper/electronic processes. But it can turn out that these technologies don't deliver the anticipated benefits in legal work due to fragmented systems, limited integration, information-security concerns, and other delayed administrative approvals.

Within the Iraqi Ministry of Justice (IMJ), Legal Department, there is a lack of empirical data as to how much digital-system is being used or to what measurable degree it is used in legal-practice performance. The problem of the study is thus how to know if, and how much, do digital systems create efficiencies, accuracy, transparency, support the law's decision making process, support the document management process and when and how are technical, administrative and human challenges that limit the use of such systems present?.

1.2 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. what are the levels of Digital-systems utilization on the areas of System Quality, Information Accessibility, System Integration, Information Security and Technical Support and Training in the Legal Department?
2. How is the legal-practice performance with regard to efficiency, accuracy/quality, transparency, legal decision-making and document management?
3. Is the use of digital systems in legal-practice statistically significant and positive in the Legal Department?
4. What are the obstacles in the application of digital systems that prevent or hinder effective use in the practice of law in terms of technical, administrative and human issues?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Analyze the use of digital-systems in the Legal Department in regard to system quality, accessibility, systems integration, technical support and systems training, and security within the department.
2. Assess legal-practice performance in terms of efficiency/accuracy, transparency, legal decision-making, and document management.
3. Analyze the overall legal practice's statistical effect of using the digital system.
4. Characterize the main technical, administrative and human problems that impact on the effective use of digital systems.
5. Formulate concrete recommendations and ideas for enhancing digital integration, employee competence, information security and electronic legal work procedures.

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the research problem and questions, the study tests the following hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level:

H1 – Main Hypothesis: Digital-system use has a statistically significant positive impact on overall legal-practice performance in the Legal Department at the Iraqi Ministry of Justice.

H1a: Digital-system use is significantly and positively related to the efficiency of legal procedures.

H1b: Digital-system use is significantly and positively related to the accuracy and quality of legal work.

H1c: Digital-system use is significantly and positively related to transparency in legal procedures.

H1d: Digital-system use is significantly and positively related to legal decision-making.

2. Theoretical Framework

• 2.1 Digital Systems in Government Institutions

Digital systems refer to the technology, database, networks, processes and personnel that can be used to generate, process, store, transfer, and secure government information. Digital transformation is more than the introduction of computers; it is transforming organisational roles, procedures, the skills of its staff and its culture (Mergel et al., 2019, p. 1, 9–10; Vial, 2019, pp. 118–121).

There are three measures to assess the effectiveness of a digital system: system quality, information quality, and service quality. The quality of a system includes criterion like reliability, usability, availability and response time. The issue of information quality relates to accuracy, completeness, relevance and timeliness and service quality to technical assistance and user support (DeLone & McLean, 2003, pp. 23–25).

Another factor that impacts the effectiveness of the system is employee acceptance. They are more likely to use digital systems when they feel that the systems will enhance their performance, are easy to use, and are supported by necessary training and technical resources (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 447).

2.2 Legal Practice in Government Institutions

Government legal work comprises legal advice, contract analysis, bill drafting, case follow-up, compliance monitoring and legal record management. The quality hinges on the capacity of the legal workforce to get accurate and timely information in a reasonable amount of time.

By keeping track of how the legal documents are created, altered, signed, or passed on, electronic records can enhance the information retrieval process and administrative accountability. But records that are poorly managed can become inaccessible, incomplete and technologically obsolete, and can undermine institutional accountability (Meijer, 2001, pp. 259–264).

Digital legal practice also creates questions as to the evidentiary value, authenticity of documents, use of electronic signatures and electronic contracts. Therefore, there are needed some legal and technical security measures to ensure the ownership and identity of the parties and to prevent electronic documents being manipulated (Saleh 2008, pp. 175–178). The important electronic-records management policies that are also needed are clear retention policies, metadata, security controls, and long-term preservation procedures (Külcü, 2009, pp. 999–1002).

• 2.3 Digital Systems and Legal Performance

Digital systems can enhance many areas of legal operations—all while minimizing paper shuffling, speeding up approvals, automating notifies, and simplifying legal information access. However, digitizing existing paper processes can result in the same type of administrative processes. In this regard, the transition to digital should be followed by a reassessment and redesign of legal processes (Cordella & Tempini, 2015, pp. 279–281).

Integrated systems can also help cut down on repetitive data entry, lost attachments, and outdated documents to guarantee accuracy. The status of a legal transaction, the employee(s) involved, and the number of approvals made can be enhanced with electronic tracking and audits. This must also be balanced, however, with the confidentiality of government legal records.

The features for electronic document-management systems should include secure access, document classification, search capability, transfer, backup, reports and ease of retrieval. It is also important to provide regular training, technical support, and coordination between different departments for effective implementation (Hussein et al., 2024, pp. 242–244, 282–284).

In the justice sector, the use of technology can facilitate case management, e-filing, coordination between institutions and access to information about the law (UNDP, 2022, p. 9–10). But justice institutions must implement changes to their processes, coordinate regulatory and security measures, and educate their personnel on the pro forma for a full digitalization of the services (Bosio & Upegui Caro, 2024, pp. 9–10).

Thus, independent variable of this study is digital-system use in this study, which includes System Quality, System Accessibility, System Integration, Security, and Technical Support. The legal-practice performance is dependent variable which is measured by efficiency, accuracy, transparency, legal decision-making and document management.

• 3. Previous Studies

• 3.1 Arab Studies

Al-Aaraji and Al-Samman identified positive and direct correlation between the readiness of electronic-government and the institutions performance of Nineveh Governorate Office. Their results highlighted that technological, organizational and human readiness is crucial (Al-Aaraji & Al-Samman, 2021, p. 9).

Saadi (2024, pp. 24-26), based on infrastructure, legal regulation, financing, and organizational culture, identified the major challenges facing the process of digital transformation in Iraq. 479–480). Hussein emphasized the significance of Digital Records as institutional memory and proof of government actions (Hussein, 2021, pp. 185–186).

The findings of a study on e-archiving at Egyptian civil courts indicated that digital archiving would save time and efforts and needed to be supported with employee training, technical support, security, and coordination among the institutions (Hussein et al., 2024, pp. 282–284).

According to Khenouf and Boulksibat, digital transformation had a positive impact on administrative performance in an Algerian university hospital (2024, pp. 150–151). Likewise, Jafo & Al-Harbi (2025, p. 477) indicated that the Saudi Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has faced the effects of the digital transformation on employees' performance.

• 3.2 International Studies

According to DeLone and McLean, system, information and service qualities are key contributors to information-system success (Delone & McLean, 2003, pp. 23–25). Venkatesh et al. showed that there are four factors that are needed to confirm the adoption of the system: expected performance, ease of use, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 447).

According to Külücü, the needs of electronic-records management in the government institutions of Turkey were legally, administration and technically integrated standards (Külücü, 2009, pp. 999–1003). Lupo and Bailey were able to conclude that design and implementation affect e-justice systems' usability and institutional outcomes (Lupo & Bailey, 2014, pp.). 354–355).

Recent research into justice technologies has indicated that they offer potential benefits in terms of efficiency, case management and transparency. However, for these benefits to be realized, it is essential to process reengineering, training for personnel, system integration, and establishing adequate legal and security measures (Bosio & Upegui Caro, 2024, pp. 3–5).

• 3.3 Research Gap

Conventional Iraqi literature has focused on the institutional or strategic analysis of digital government and the international literature on e-justice has primarily focused on court and electronic litigation. There is very little research on the in situ legal departments of Iraqi ministries.

This research aims at bridging this gap by studying the combined effect of system quality, accessibility, integration, security and technical support on efficiency, accuracy, transparency, legal decision making and document management in the Legal Department of the Ministry of Justice of Iraq.

- **4. Practical Section**

- **4.1 Field Study Procedures**

The method of the study was descriptive-analytical and the approach used was case study. It was held in the Legal Department of Iraqi Ministry of Justice in July 2026. The study population comprised of 126 persons consisting of legal, administrative, managerial and technical employees.

A proportional stratified sampling was taken. Questionnaires were sent to a total of 96 and 90 of these were completed, resulting in a return rate of 93.8%. Additionally, eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with four Legal Officers, two Department Managers and two Technical-support staffs.

The questionnaire was divided into the following four parts:

Demographic / professional characteristics.

Digital-system use.

Legal-practice performance.

Issues that impact the use of digital systems.

This used a modified 5-point Likert Scale in which strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5. Means were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.80 very low, 1.81–2.60 low, 2.61–3.40 moderate, 3.41–4.20 high, and 4.21–5.00 very high.

- **Validity and Reliability**

Seven academic experts in public administration, legal fields, Information systems and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire. Items that resulted in less than 80% Expert Agreement were revised.

A pilot study of 20 employees not included in the sample was done. The item-total correlation was between 0.48 and 0.81 and it was statistically significant. The Cronbach's alpha scores were:

Digital-system use: 0.918.

Legal-practice performance: 0.931.

Digital challenges: 0.889.

Overall questionnaire: 0.944.

These values are reliable, and exhibit a high level of reliability. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 27 using Mean, SD, frequencies, percentages, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression.

- **4. Results**

- **4.1 Characteristics of the Study Sample**

As seen in Table 1, legal researchers and officers were the highest professional group. The vast majority of respondents were qualified with a bachelor's or postgraduate degree and there was a sample of employees with varying levels of experience.

Table 1. Demographic and Professional Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	58	64.40%
	Female	32	35.60%
Age	Under 30 years	18	20.00%
	30–39 years	31	34.40%
	40–49 years	26	28.90%
	50 years and above	15	16.70%
Qualification	Bachelor's degree	51	56.70%
	Higher diploma	10	11.10%
	Master's degree	22	24.40%
	Doctorate	7	7.80%
Position	Legal researcher/officer	38	42.20%
	Administrative employee	21	23.30%
	Manager/unit head	12	13.30%
	Technical-support employee	9	10.00%
	Document-support employee	10	11.10%
Experience	Less than 5 years	19	21.10%
	5–less than 10 years	25	27.80%
	10–less than 15 years	24	26.70%
	15 years and above	22	24.40%
Total		90	100%

• 4.2 Level of Digital-System Use

The overall mean score was 3.41 which is high but on the threshold of digital-system use. The highest score was for information accessibility and the lowest score was for integration. This indicates that

staffs have the ability to gain access to information digitally, yet the systems are still not sufficiently inter-functional.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Digital-System Use

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level	Rank
Information accessibility	3.61	0.63	High	1
System quality	3.54	0.67	High	2
Information security	3.46	0.68	High	3
Technical support and training	3.24	0.76	Moderate	4
System integration	3.18	0.71	Moderate	5
Overall digital-system use	3.41	0.58	High	—

• 4.3 Legal-Practice Performance

The highest mean was for efficiency, which showed that digital systems stood to save time in recovering documents and doing the paperwork and following the legal transactions. Transparency achieved the lowest mean, but still fell within the high range.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Legal-Practice Performance

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level	Rank
Efficiency of legal procedures	3.73	0.61	High	1
Accuracy and quality	3.68	0.6	High	2
Document management	3.64	0.66	High	3
Legal decision-making	3.55	0.64	High	4
Transparency	3.49	0.65	High	5
Overall legal performance	3.62	0.55	High	—

• 4.4 Testing the Main Hypothesis

The main hypothesis stated that digital systems have a statistically significant positive impact on legal practice.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Digital Systems on Legal Practice

Predictor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	B	Standardized Beta	t-value	F-value	Significance
Digital-system use	0.713	0.508	0.502	0.699	0.713	9.53	90.91	0.001>

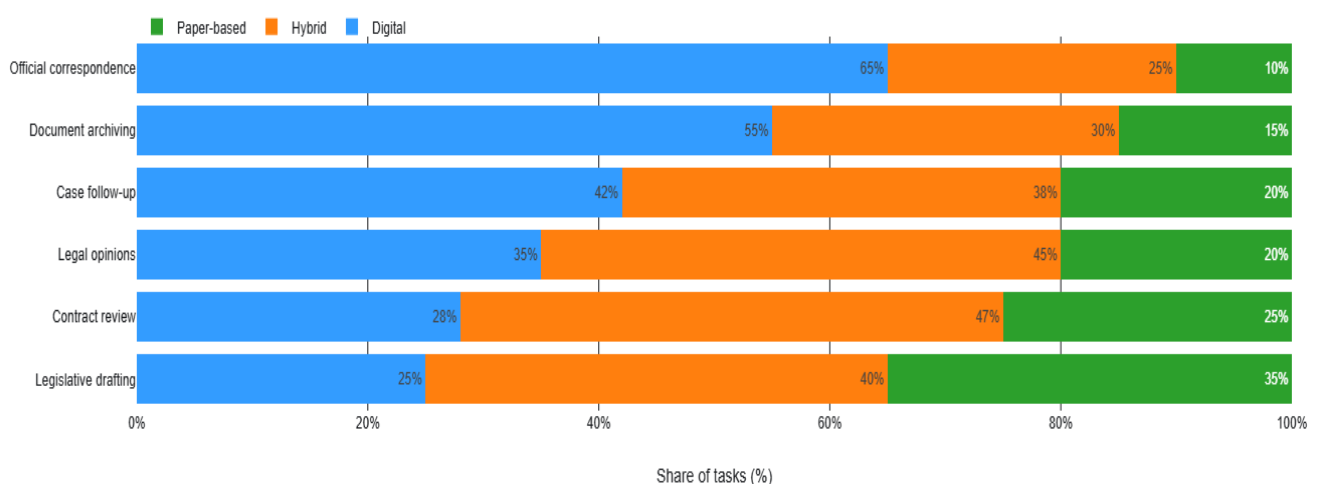
A regression model was statistically significant ($F=90.91$, $p<0.001$). 50.8% of the variance in legal-practice performance was accounted for by digital-system use. The association was a 0.699-unit increase legal performance with 1-unit increase in digital-system use. Hence, the main hypothesis was accepted. Pearson correlations also revealed that digital-system use was significantly and positively correlated with efficiency ($r=0.681$), accuracy ($r=0.643$), transparency ($r=0.598$), decision-making ($r=0.626$) and document management ($r=0.659$) ($p<0.001$ for all relationships).

• 4.5 Complementary Operational Findings

The analysis of an operational sample of legal files revealed that the percentage of those files that were fully digital was the highest in official correspondence and document archiving. Hybrid and paper-based contract review and drafting processes were still underway extensively.

In January, 410 electronic transactions were conducted; in June 2026, this was also 603, an increase of about 47%. The main problem cited was that of interdepartmental approval followed by document verification.

The overall digital-maturity score was 3.12 from 5 points, which was a moderate score. Infrastructure and Digital systems scored the highest and Digital governance and system integration scored the lowest.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of Legal Tasks by Processing Method

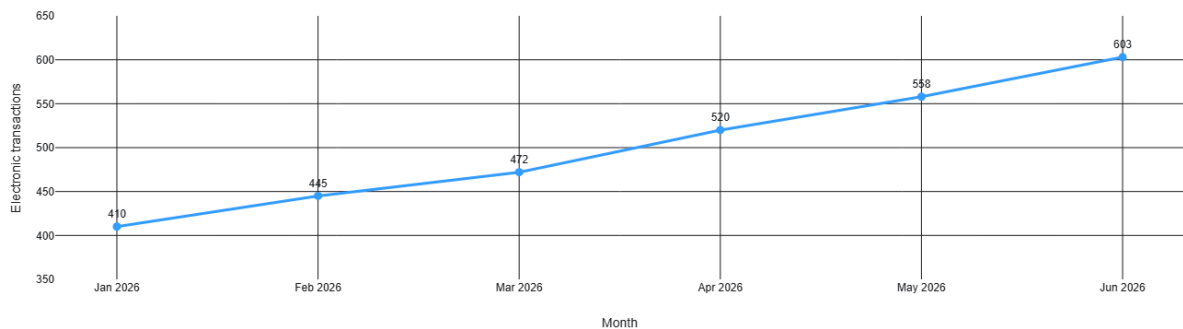


Figure 2. Monthly Trend of Electronic Legal Transactions

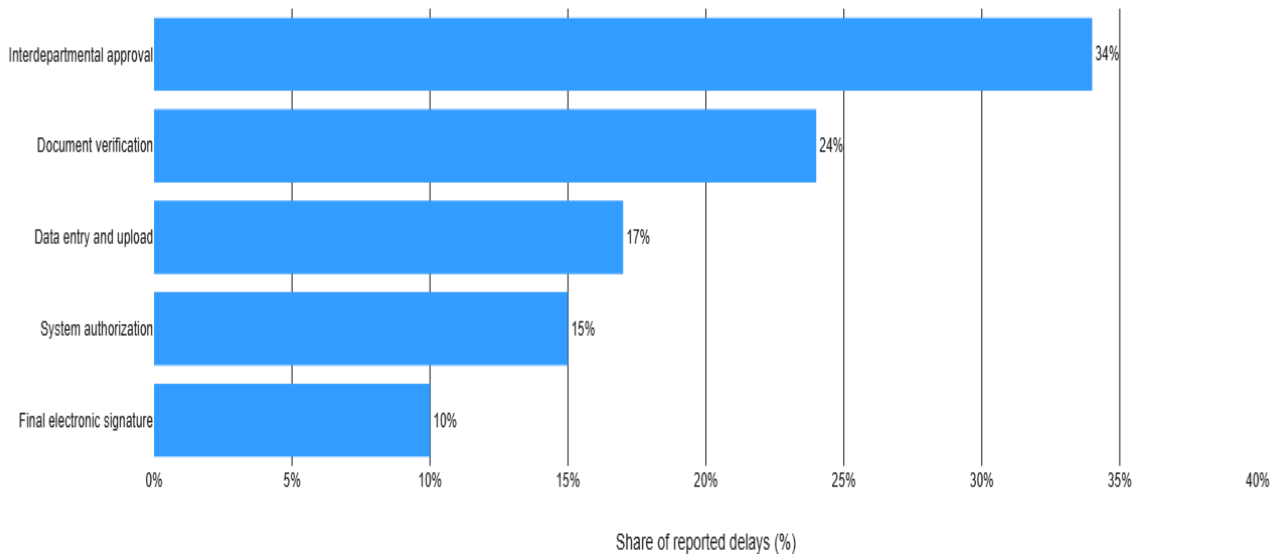


Figure 3. Main Stages of Delay in the Digital Legal Workflow

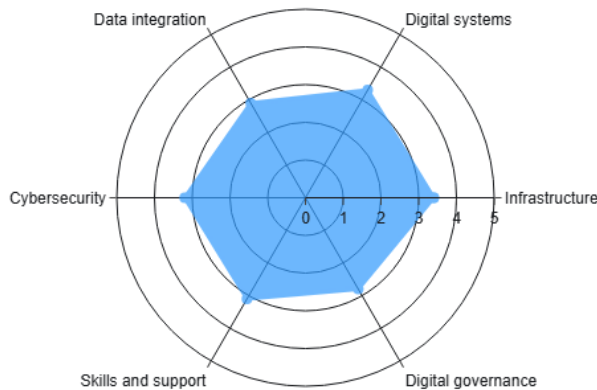


Figure 4. Digital Maturity Level of the Legal Department

• 5 Discussion of Results

Overall, the findings show that the Legal Department has successfully digitized to a reasonably high degree, especially in terms of information accessibility, correspondence, and document retrieval. However, there is still reliance on hybrid procedures because of moderate levels of system integration and technical support.

This is because digital system brings a lot of benefits to the legal process performance, consistent with the findings of Al-Aaraji and Al-Samman (2021, p. 9) and Jafo and Al-Harbi (2025, p. 477). The improvement in efficiency and document management also agrees with Hussein et al. (2024, pp. These were highlighted in the book by 282–284, the importance of electronic archiving, employee training and technical support.

Digital transformation benefits are constrained by use of paper approvals. This affirms the fact that technology needs to be accompanied by workflow redesign and organizational reform and not just mimic the paper process (Cordella & Tempini, 2015, pp. 39–42). 279–281).

• 6. Conclusions

It was concluded that, overall, the Legal Department had a high usage of digital systems, yet the extent of system integration usage was still moderate. Digital systems played an excellent role on enhancing the productivity and accuracy of work, documentation, transparency and legal decision making. The statistical findings also revealed that use of the digital systems accounted for 50.8% of the variance in legal-practice performance. Nevertheless, parallel paper and electronic procedures were still used, limiting the potential of digital transformation. Top obstacles cited were approval delays, system integration issues, or employee training, and frequent technical outages. The department's overall score was in the moderate range, reflecting the need for development of the institutions and technologies.

• 7. Recommendations

From the study's results, it is recommended that the Ministry have an integrated legal document-management system and have a link via the electronic medium between the Legal Department and other departments of the Ministry and relevant government institutions. Gradual substitution of the parallel paper procedures should be made with approved electronic workflows and gradually increase the electronic archiving and adopt rules for classification of documents, which are unified in the department. Putting in place electronic signatures, secure electronic-approval procedures, regular practical training for legal and administrative staff and the creation of a dedicated technical-support unit for legal systems must also be done. In addition, improvements are needed to access controls, backup, audit trails, and cybersecurity procedures. The promulgation of clear rules and regulations and periodic assessment of system performance and employee satisfaction should be carried out in relation to electronic legal transactions.

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