

E-Governance and Justice Administration System in Enugu State

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of e-governance on the justice administration system in Enugu State, Nigeria, with particular focus on e-filing, virtual hearings, and e-probate. The specific objectives were to evaluate the effect of e-filing on justice administration, determine the effect of virtual hearings on justice delivery, and establish the effect of e-probate on justice administration in Enugu State. The study was anchored on Systems Theory, propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), which explains organizations as interrelated systems whose components function collectively to achieve organizational goals. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised 1,002 judges, magistrates, registrars, lawyers, court clerks, and ICT personnel in the Enugu State judiciary. A sample size of 347 respondents was determined using the Freund and Williams (1986) formula, while stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of all categories of respondents. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, complemented by oral interviews and secondary data from journals, textbooks, policy documents, and official reports. The research instrument was validated through face and content validity, while reliability was established using the test-retest method with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.78. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test). The findings revealed that e-filing significantly improves justice administration by enhancing efficiency, reducing case backlogs, and improving transparency. Virtual hearings were found to significantly enhance justice delivery through faster adjudication, reduced delays, and improved access to justice. Similarly, e-probate significantly streamlined probate administration by reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks, enhancing transparency, and improving the efficiency of estate administration. The study concluded that e-governance tools have significantly improved the justice administration system in Enugu State by promoting efficiency, accountability, accessibility, and timely justice delivery. The study recommended sustained investment in ICT infrastructure, continuous capacity building for judicial personnel, expansion of digital court services, and strengthened implementation of e-governance initiatives to enhance judicial performance and public confidence in the justice system.

Keywords: E-governance, e-filing, virtual hearing, e-probate, justice administration, judiciary, Enugu State

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Introduction

The importance of technology in the advancement of the judicial process in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Judicial legal technology uses technology and software to provide, aid, and support judicial legal services. In the views of Ryan (2015), technology offers judges, lawyers, and law firms the opportunity to improve their overall efficiency and to adapt to a progressively agile working environment. Globally, nearly every lawyer, judge, and court use email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and other electronic platforms to aid their daily practice (Ziedonis, 2003). The Judiciary makes use of software applications for both internal and external affairs in ensuring speedy turnaround of work activities. Fafinski (2009) stated that technology has also become an integral part of creating efficiency and promoting access to justice in the world currently. It has revolutionized the way, ease, speed, and time with which legal practitioners and courts conduct their activities.

Before the year 2015, the e-filing/online filing and tracking of cases were done manually in the nation's Judiciary (High Courts and Magistrate Courts) and in the year 2020, the sudden emergence of COVID-19 brought about the introduction of virtual hearing of cases in the country (Adetunji & Ibrahim, 2024). Lawyers and litigants do not need to be physically present in the court before court processes can be initiated and filed, payments made, suit numbers generated, and cases assigned to the court. The presiding judicial officers are notified of the cases filed and assigned to them vide e-mail and they subsequently fix dates for the cases and the lawyers are notified of the dates fixed for the cases (Balogun, 2024).

The legal profession has long been seen as a conservative institution, deeply rooted in tradition and formalities. Its strict adherence to precedent and procedure has been praised as a cornerstone of its integrity and credibility (Nwosu & Ibrahim, 2024). However, this commitment to tradition has also led to criticism, especially in a world where technological advancements are reshaping nearly every field. Critics argue that the legal profession's reluctance to embrace innovation could isolate it from the evolving demands of society. Despite this resistance, the role of technology in modern legal systems is undeniable. Globally, innovations driven by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have already revolutionized how legal services are delivered and how courts operate (Okonkwo, 2024). From virtual courtrooms to electronic filing systems, these advancements are not only enhancing efficiency and transparency but also redefining what it means to have access to justice. In Nigeria, while technology adoption in the legal profession is still in its developing stages, notable strides have been made. The incorporation of technology-friendly provisions in court rules and practice directions marks significant progress. More so, lawyers have increasingly turned to digital tools for legal research, drafting, and case management. However, many court processes still rely heavily on outdated, manual procedures, limiting the full potential of technology in enhancing access to justice (Yusuf, 2024).

The infusion of technology into law practice and the justice system in Nigeria is taking root. For example, the proliferation of technology such as electronic mail, social media, video and conferencing applications have enhanced client-lawyer relationships. Clients communicate with and obtain advice from lawyers in real time, thereby dispensing with the hassle and expenses of in-person meetings. The development of legal software solutions such as Computer Assisted Legal Research Applications- Law Pavilion, Nigeria Weekly Law Reports (NWLR) online,

CompuLaw, NextCounsel, Practical Law, LexisNexis and Westlaw, assist the Bar and the Bench to carry out more efficient and effective legal research. Several software applications generate templates for contracts, Wills and other legal documents, reducing the time spent in creating these documents from scratch thereby increasing productivity. AI applications are fast becoming a one stop shop for legal software solutions and are referred to as the 'Robot Lawyer' as they are able to carry out more complex legal tasks.

In the justice administration sector, the National Judicial Council (NJC), through the instrumentality of the National Judicial Policy, recommended the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) by all Courts in Nigeria (National Judicial Council, 2020). Pursuant to the foregoing, in 2012, the Chairman of the NJC inaugurated the Judicial Information Technology Policy Formulation Committee tasked with the development of a comprehensive, pragmatic information technology policy for the Nigerian Judiciary. This brought about the Judicial Information Technology Policy (the JIT Policy) with several recommendations on the deployment and management of ICT within the Nigerian Judiciary (NJC, 2020).

E-governance has begun reshaping justice administration in Enugu State by digitizing routine court functions, increasing transparency, and reducing delays. The Enugu State Judiciary now hosts online services such as e-probate, e-filing and a case management/virtual hearing ecosystem, which streamline filings and improve public access to probate and case-status information. At the national level, Nigeria's Nigeria Case Management System (NCMS) and e-filing platforms provide an interoperable backbone that Enugu's rollout leverages for superior court integration, permitting remote filing and standardized electronic records. This alignment helps reduce duplication, speeds information flow between registries, and supports remote participation when needed. Early evaluations and local studies show tangible service-delivery gains — shorter administrative processing times, improved record retrieval, and enhanced monitoring of case backlogs — but they also highlight persistent constraints. Frequent power outages, uneven internet access across urban–rural boundaries, and skills gaps among some court staff and litigants limit full uptake and equity of access. Capacity building and infrastructure investments are therefore crucial to realize the technology's promise. Strategically, Enugu's broader e-governance platform and partnerships with federal digital-transformation programmes create a policy environment favorable to scaling judicial technologies. Continued emphasis on training, user-friendly portals, secure data governance, and affordable connectivity will be necessary to consolidate gains and ensure that digital justice improves both efficiency and fairness for all citizens.

Statement of the Problem

Justice administration in Enugu State has long been hampered by systemic challenges such as case backlogs, prolonged adjournments, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and limited access to timely legal information. These issues have contributed to widespread delays in justice delivery, thereby undermining public confidence in the judiciary and frustrating the constitutional principle that justice delayed is justice denied. Although the introduction of e-governance initiatives, such as e-filing, e-probate, and virtual hearings, offers opportunities to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accessibility, their implementation in Enugu State faces persistent obstacles.

Firstly, inadequate infrastructure, including unstable electricity supply and unreliable internet connectivity, hampers the smooth functioning of digital justice platforms. Secondly, low levels of digital literacy among court staff, lawyers, and litigants hinder effective use of these systems, often forcing reliance on traditional manual processes. Thirdly, insufficient funding and inconsistent policy support limit the scaling up of e-justice innovations across all tiers of the judiciary. In addition, concerns about cyber security, data privacy, and equitable access create skepticism about the integrity and inclusiveness of digital judicial processes. The core problem lies in the gap between technological innovation and its practical integration into governance and judicial workflows. Without targeted investment in infrastructure, capacity building, and inclusive digital policies, Enugu State risks perpetuating inefficiencies under the guise of modernization. Bridging this divide is essential to ensure that e-governance and e-justice systems serve all citizens equitably, uphold the rule of law, and foster public trust in government institutions.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to examine the e-governance and justice administration system in Enugu State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Evaluate the effect of e-filing on justice administration system in Enugu State;
- ii. Determine the effect of virtual hearing on justice delivery in Enugu State;
- iii. Establish the effect of e-probate on justice administration system in Enugu State;

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the effect of e-filing on justice administration system in Enugu State?
- ii. How do virtual hearings affect the justice delivery in Enugu State?
- iii. What is the effect of e-probate on justice administration system in Enugu State?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study.

- i. E-filing has no significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.
- ii. Virtual hearings have no significant effect on justice delivery in Enugu State.
- iii. E-probate has no significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.

Significance of the Study

This study on e-governance and justice administration in Enugu State is significant both theoretically and empirically.

The research contributes to the growing body of literature on e-governance and judicial reforms by bridging the gap between theory and practice within a developing context. It advances the application of Systems Theory, which emphasizes interconnectedness of institutional processes, by showing how technology integration in one aspect of the judiciary affects efficiency across the entire justice delivery chain. Furthermore, the study enriches the discourse

on Good Governance Theory, which prioritizes transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, by demonstrating how digital innovations can enhance trust and responsiveness in judicial institutions. These theoretical insights provide a framework for scholars and policymakers to understand the dynamics of technology-driven justice reforms in Nigeria and other emerging democracies.

Empirically, the findings will provide evidence on the extent to which e-filing, e-probate, and virtual hearings improve or constrain justice administration and delivery in Enugu State. The study will generate practical data that can guide judicial authorities, policymakers, and technology providers in addressing infrastructural, human capacity, and policy-related challenges. It will also inform legal practitioners, civil society organizations, and the general public about the benefits and limitations of digital justice systems, ensuring inclusiveness and equity. Ultimately, the research will serve as a reference for comparative studies across Nigerian states and offer actionable recommendations to strengthen the integration of e-governance in judicial administration.

Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to the examination of e-governance and justice administration in Enugu State. **Unit scope** covers judicial officers, court staff, and legal practitioners who are directly involved in the adoption and operation of digital justice platforms. **Content scope** focuses on specific e-governance tools, including e-filing, e-probate, and virtual hearings, and their effects on efficiency, transparency, and timeliness of justice delivery. **Geographical scope** is restricted to Enugu State Judiciary, including courts and related justice institutions within the state. The study does not extend to federal courts outside Enugu or other states in Nigeria. By narrowing the scope, the research ensures an in-depth and context-specific analysis of how e-governance shapes judicial processes in Enugu State.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

E-governance

E-governance is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to assist the government for efficient and meaningful delivery of government services. According to Ojo (2017), e-governance is a wider concept that defines and assesses the impacts technologies are having on the practice and administration of governments and the relationships between public servants and the wider society, such as dealings with the elected bodies or outside groups such as not for profits organizations, non-governmental organizations or private sector corporate entities. E-governance encompasses a series of necessary steps for government agencies to develop and administer to ensure successful implementation of e-government services to the public at large (theinformationdaily.com). According to United Nation's e-government survey (2004, 2005, and 2008), in Danfulani (2019), e-government is the use of internet technology to exchange information, provide services and transact with citizens, business, and other arms of government.

Chatfield and Alhujran, (2019) defined e-Governance as the "rapidly emerging global phenomenon of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as the new way forward in public administration". Naz (2019) defined it as "the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the government processes to bring Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) governance". Basu, (2018) viewed e-

governance (e-Government) as; “the use of information technology to free movement of information to overcome the physical bounds of traditional paper and physical based systems’ to ‘the use of technology to enhance the access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners and employees”.

According to Sithole & Vander Waladt (2016), E-governance, which also means electronic governance generally, refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in order to provide different government services. It enables the exchange of different kinds of communication besides ensuring effective communication of different kinds of transactions. At the same time, it enables the integration of different stand-alone systems and services between the government and the customers and government and businesses (Karim, 2020).

E-governance refers to the usage of information communication technologies for carrying out different public services (Okafor, Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2014). This mainly refers to the application of the internet so as to make sure that different kinds of services are offered in a manner that is convenient, cost effective and customer oriented. E-governance also refers to the adoption of IT for enhancing working of the government. It is mainly aimed at the achievement of moral, simple, responsive, accountable and transparent governance (Abasilim & Edet, 2015; Okafor, Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2014). According to Karim (2015) e-governance is a major tool, which is being adopted in order to ensure that there is a highly effective and efficient public service delivery.

Justice Administration System

Ubani (2025) in his view of Justice Administration refers to the “system and processes through which justice is delivered, maintained, and enforced in the country.” It includes institutions, laws, and procedures that govern the legal system to ensure fairness, equity, and rule of law. In the view of Jauro (2023) Administration of justice may be described as a fair systematic application of the law in the settlement of disputes between individuals in the society.” Emphasis is placed on the impartial and effective application of law by the judiciary, legal practitioners, police etc. Akinsulore (2020) noted that the administration of criminal justice system in Nigeria is viewed, especially after the enactment of the ACJA 2015, as a framework involving “institutional actors ... required to accelerate processes leading to quick dispensation of justice for the defendant, the victim and the society.” Essentially, it is the mechanism by which criminal matters are investigated, prosecuted, adjudicated and penal sanctions delivered.

Ayinla-Ahmad (2023) in her evaluation of the impact of the ACJA, “Administration of Criminal Justice System” is used to denote all the legal, institutional and procedural architecture tasked with enforcing criminal laws, protecting rights of accused and victims, reducing case backlogs and ensuring fairness in criminal procedure.

Omachi & Anthony (2019) define the criminal justice system within Nigeria’s ACJA framework as embracing law enforcement, prosecution, courts and corrections, all functioning to ensure that criminal laws are applied in a manner respecting due process, protecting human rights, and adapting to societal evolution.

E-Filing

E-filing refers to the process whereby legal documents and court pleadings are prepared, submitted, and processed through digital platforms rather than physical, paper-based channels. It enables litigants, lawyers, and courts to interact remotely, reduce the cost and time of documentation, and enhance accuracy of record keeping. For

instance, Lagos State Judiciary's online service allows users to file cases from anywhere via the internet, provided they have valid login credentials. The system also calculates applicable court fees automatically and supports digital payment options. Another concept tied to e-filing is its integrative nature within a broader Court Management Information System (CoMiS) in Lagos, which includes case assignment, case management, e-notifications, and validation of documents like affidavits. This underscores e-filing not merely as submission but as part of a workflow of judicial processes supported by ICT.

From a normative and legal perspective, e-filing is increasingly used in Nigeria under new procedural rules (e.g. FCT Civil Procedure Rules 2025) that formally empower courts to establish e-filing units to maintain online sites for filing and service of processes. In sum, e-filing is conceptualized around these key elements: digital submission of court documents, remote accessibility, integration into court ICT architecture, and legal/ procedural recognition in order rules or statutes.

Virtual Hearing

Virtual hearing refers to the conduct of court proceedings using electronic audio-visual or telecommunications technologies, allowing judges, counsel, parties, witnesses, and other stakeholders to participate remotely rather than being physically present in a courtroom (Sule, et al, 2024). It arose in Nigeria largely as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, under Guidelines and Practice Directions issued by the National Judicial Council (NJC), to ensure business continuity, maintain access to justice under lockdowns, and enforce social distancing measures (Sunday-Ayeerun, et al, 2024).

Key elements of virtual hearings include the use of approved platforms (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams), rules for scheduling applications for virtual sittings, recognition (or adaptation) of existing procedural law to accommodate remote evidence, ensuring audio-visual clarity, managing public access to hearings (a constitutional requirement under section 36 of Nigeria's Constitution), and preserving decorum and fairness equivalent to in-court sessions (Umukoro, et al, 2024).

Despite its potential, virtual hearing also presents challenges—technological infrastructure deficits, concerns about security and privacy, ensuring equitable participation (especially for parties with limited access to devices or stable internet), and constitutional questions about public access and the formal requirement for hearings to be held in open court (Ugowe, et al, 2023).

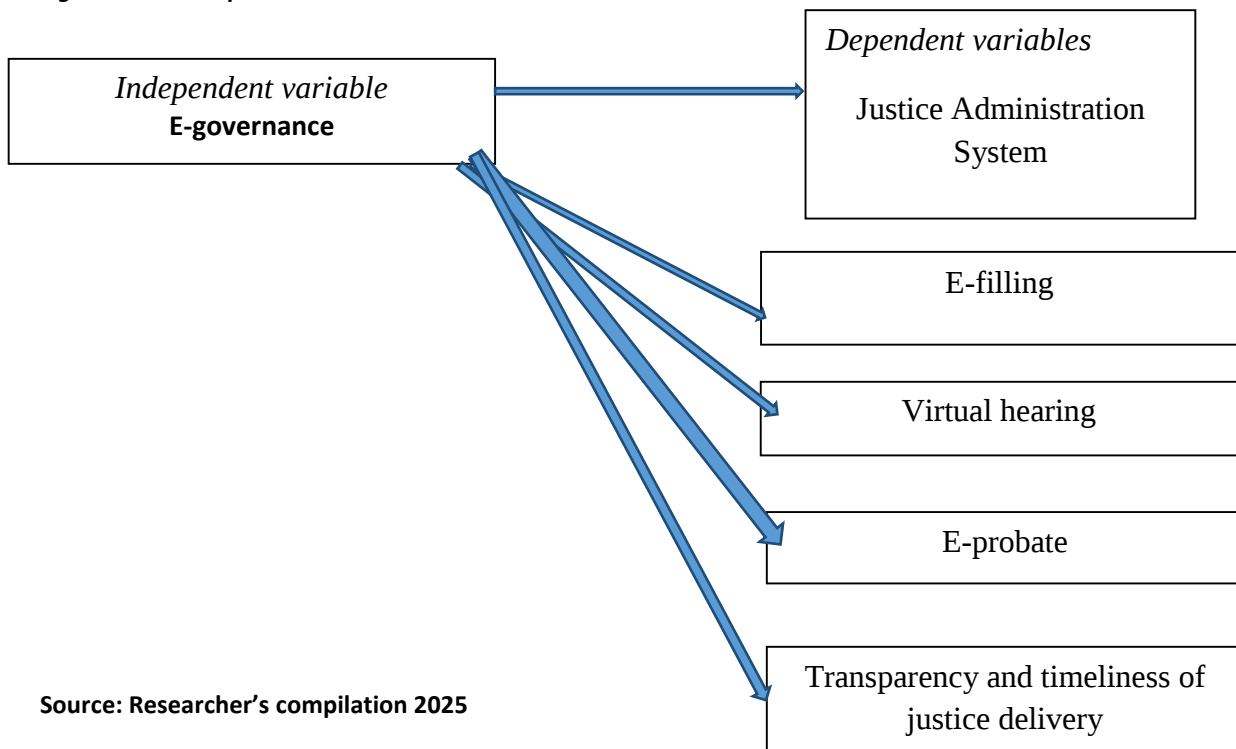
E-Probate

E-probate refers to the digitization of the probate process, whereby the legal administration of a deceased person's estate—especially proving the validity of wills, issuing grants of probate or letters of administration, and managing related documentation—is conducted using online platforms rather than entirely manual, paper-based systems. The benefits typically include faster processing times, enhanced transparency, risk reduction in human error or corruption, and improved accessibility for applicants. For example, Lagos State's E-Probate Registry allows court

users to apply for probate or letters of administration online, pay duties electronically, monitor progress, and retrieve or verify issued grants via the portal.

Imo State Judiciary has similarly established an e-probate application module via its JMIS system: applicants can upload forms, have property valuations updated by valuers electronically, receive invoices, make payments online, and finally print out grants or letters of administration post-approval. Recent initiatives elsewhere, such as Delta State's new online platform for e-probate under an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), reinforce how e-probate is increasingly seen as a tool for efficiency and convenience in probate administration.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory

Systems Theory is a multidisciplinary framework that examines organizations and processes as interconnected components forming a coherent whole. It was propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968 as part of his General Systems Theory, originally aimed at explaining biological systems but later widely applied to social sciences, management, and organizational studies (Bertalanffy, 1968). The theory asserts that organizations, institutions, and social systems function as interrelated and interdependent parts, where the behavior or failure of one component affects the performance of the whole.

The basic assumptions of Systems Theory include:

1. Interdependence of Components: All parts of a system are connected; changes or failures in one area influence others.
2. Holistic Perspective: The system should be understood as a whole, rather than merely the sum of its parts.

3. **Input-Process-Output Model:** Systems receive inputs from their environment, process them through internal mechanisms, and produce outputs that affect or feedback into the environment.
4. **Equifinality:** A system can achieve the same outcome through different pathways, allowing flexibility and adaptation.
5. **Homeostasis and Feedback:** Systems seek balance, and feedback mechanisms help correct deviations to maintain stability and efficiency.

In the context of e-governance and justice administration in Enugu State, Systems Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how technological interventions like e-filing, virtual hearings, and e-probate integrate into the broader judicial system. For example, the judiciary can be conceptualized as a system with multiple interconnected components—court registries, judges, lawyers, litigants, and ICT infrastructure. Introducing e-filing affects several components simultaneously: it reduces delays in document submission (input), facilitates faster case management (process), and leads to quicker judgments and improved public trust (output). Similarly, virtual hearings and e-probate systems provide feedback mechanisms by tracking case progress and enabling real-time monitoring, which helps maintain system stability and effectiveness.

Thus, by adopting a systems perspective, policymakers and judicial administrators can identify bottlenecks, interdependencies, and points of intervention in the justice delivery process. This approach ensures that e-governance tools are not implemented in isolation but as part of a holistic strategy that improves transparency, timeliness, and overall efficiency of justice administration in Enugu State.

Empirical Review

E-governance and E-Filing On Justice Administration System

Ibrahim & Okpara (2025) examined the challenges affecting the use of Technology in Nigeria's Criminal Justice System and Way Out. A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study, and data were analyzed using statistical tools including frequency distributions, means, and regression analysis. Findings indicate that while technological tools are increasingly being deployed in Nigeria's criminal justice system, their impact is uneven due to systemic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor digital literacy among personnel, policy inconsistency, and limited budgetary allocation.

In a related study, Eze and Abdullahi (2023) explored how digital literacy and capacity-building programs can enhance the effective use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system. Using secondary data, their findings revealed that one of the biggest obstacles to technology adoption is the lack of technical expertise among law enforcement officers and judicial staff.

Muhammad & Usman (2023) determined the E-Administration Usage for Service Delivery in Universities: Highlights of Selected Survey Findings. The study, therefore, focused on the utilization of ICT in delivering services in universities. The review focused primarily on secondary data from journals, textbooks, and internet sources. Findings from the study indicate that most university students benefit more from the use of ICT in carrying out their academic activities and other personal endeavours.

E-Governance and Virtual Hearing On Justice Delivery System

Adetunji and Ibrahim (2024) conducted an extensive study on the challenges affecting the use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system, with a particular focus on how these challenges hinder efficiency in law enforcement and judicial processes. They used descriptive analysis to arrive at their findings. Their findings highlighted the significant infrastructural deficiencies that continue to impede the full integration of technology within law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

Adebayo and Okechukwu (2024) conducted a study on policy-driven strategies to enhance technology adoption in Nigeria's criminal justice system. Their research emphasized that a well-structured legal framework is essential for integrating digital tools into law enforcement and judicial processes. Using descriptive analysis, the study found that the absence of clear policies governing the use of technology in crime investigation and court proceedings has hindered progress.

Another study by Yusuf and Adeola (2023) focused on the infrastructural deficits that have impeded technology-driven reforms in Nigeria's criminal justice system. Adopting descriptive analysis, the researchers found that unreliable electricity supply, poor internet connectivity, and inadequate digital storage facilities have made it difficult for law enforcement agencies and courts to transition to digital operations.

E-governance and E-Probate On Justice Administration System

Nwosu and Ibrahim (2024) examined the importance of cyber security measures in ensuring the successful adoption of technology within Nigeria's criminal justice system. Using descriptive analysis their research found that law enforcement agencies and courts are highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks due to weak security protocols.

Yusuf (2024) investigated how corruption obstructs the effective use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system and making use of descriptive analysis found that corrupt practices have significantly undermined efforts to integrate digital solutions in law enforcement and judicial processes.

Okeke (2023) examined the financial constraints impeding the adoption of technology within Nigeria's judicial system and using documentary method found that inadequate funding has been a major obstacle to implementing digital reforms. The study revealed that while some higher courts have experimented with virtual court hearings, the majority of lower courts across the country lack the necessary financial resources to sustain digital transformation.

Aduma, Onah and Njoku (2022) conducted a study on the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in improving service delivery and revenue capacity in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State, Nigeria. Findings were obtained through primary data by testing hypotheses using regression analysis and supported by secondary data of hospital financial records. The research found out that deployment of ICT in UNTH Ituku Ozalla brought about availability of high level of service delivery and helped the hospital experience net increase in revenue as a result of increased operational efficiency and transparency.

Uchenna and Bala (2024) investigated cyber security threats within Nigeria's criminal justice system and found that the increasing reliance on digital tools has exposed law enforcement and judicial institutions to significant cyber risks. The study using descriptive analysis revealed that police databases and court records have become frequent targets for cybercriminals, with multiple incidents of hacking, unauthorized data access, and digital fraud reported in recent years.

Table 2.1: Summary of Empirical Review

S/N	Author(s)	Year	Area of Study	Title	Methodology	Findings
1	Aduma, Onah and Njoku	2022	Nigeria	The application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in improving service delivery and revenue capacity in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State	Regression Analysis	The research found out that deployment of ICT in UNTH Ituku Ozalla brought about availability of high level of service delivery and helped the hospital experience net increase in revenue as a result of increased operational efficiency and transparency.
2	Muhammad, & Usman	2023	Nigeria	E-Administration Usage for Service Delivery in Universities: Highlights of Selected Survey Findings.	Documentary study	Findings from the study indicate that most university students benefit more from the use of ICT in carrying out their academic activities and other personal endeavours.
3	Okeke	2023	Nigeria	The financial constraints impeding the adoption of technology within Nigeria's judicial system	Descriptive Analysis	The study revealed that while some higher courts have experimented with virtual court hearings, the majority of lower courts across the country lack the necessary financial resources to sustain digital transformation.
4	Yusuf and Adeola	2023	Nigeria	The infrastructural deficits that have impeded technology-driven reforms in Nigeria's criminal justice system.	Descriptive Analysis	The findings revealed that many police stations and courts do not have stable internet connections, making it impossible to maintain real-time databases for crime records and case tracking.
5	Eze and Abdullahi	2023	Nigeria	How digital literacy and capacity-building programs can enhance the effective use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system.	Descriptive Analysis	The study found that many police officers were unable to operate digital forensic tools or properly handle electronic evidence due to inadequate training.

6	Uchenna and Bala	2024	Nigeria	Cyber security threats within Nigeria's criminal justice system	Descriptive Analysis	The study revealed that police databases and court records have become frequent targets for cybercriminals, with multiple incidents of hacking, unauthorized data access, and digital fraud reported in recent years
7	Yusuf	2024	Nigeria	How corruption obstructs the effective use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system	Descriptive Design	Findings indicated that law enforcement officers often manipulated digital case files to erase evidence against high-profile suspects, particularly in financial crime investigations
8	Nwosu and Ibrahim	2024	Nigeria	The importance of cyber security measures in ensuring the successful adoption of technology within Nigeria's criminal justice system	Descriptive Analysis	Their research found that law enforcement agencies and courts are highly vulnerable to cyber attacks due to weak security protocols.
9	Adebayo and Okechukwu	2024	Nigeria	Policy-driven strategies to enhance technology adoption in Nigeria's criminal justice system	Descriptive Analysis	The study found that the absence of clear policies governing the use of technology in crime investigation and court proceedings has hindered progress
10	Adetunji and Ibrahim	2024	Nigeria	An extensive study on the challenges affecting the use of technology in Nigeria's criminal justice system,	Descriptive Analysis	The study found that many police stations, particularly those in semi-urban and rural areas, still rely on manual documentation for crime reports, suspect records, and investigation notes
11	Ibrahim & Okpara	2025	Nigeria	The challenges Affecting the use of Technology in Nigeria's Criminal Justice System and Way Out	Regression Analysis	Findings indicate that while technological tools are increasingly being deployed in Nigeria's criminal justice system, their impact is uneven due to systemic challenges.

Source: Author's Compilation, 2025.

2.3 Gap in Empirical Review

Despite extensive research on technology adoption in Nigeria's criminal justice system (Ibrahim & Okpara, 2025; Adetunji & Ibrahim, 2024; Yusuf, 2024), most studies have focused on barriers such as corruption, infrastructural deficits, funding constraints, and resistance to change. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how specific e-governance tools—such as e-filing, virtual hearings, and e-probate—directly influence justice administration and delivery within Enugu State. This study, therefore, addresses this gap by providing context-specific insights into the Enugu State justice system.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered most appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect firsthand information from judges, magistrates, registrars, lawyers, and ICT personnel on the use of e-governance tools in the justice administration system of Enugu State.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the justice administration system. Enugu State, created in 1991, is located in the South East geopolitical zone and serves as a major administrative, political, and judicial hub in the region. The state hosts the Enugu State Judiciary, which comprises the High Court, Magistrate Courts, Customary Courts, and specialized divisions handling civil, criminal, and probate matters.

Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were obtained directly from respondents within the Enugu State judiciary, including judges, magistrates, registrars, lawyers, and ICT personnel. Structured questionnaires and oral interviews were employed to gather firsthand information on the application of e-governance tools such as e-filing, e-probate, and virtual hearings in justice administration. The secondary data were derived from existing literature, including textbooks, scholarly journals, policy documents, reports from the National Judicial Council (NJC), and online publications. These sources provided background information, theoretical insights, and empirical evidence necessary for triangulating the findings and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the role of e-governance in justice delivery in Enugu State.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised judges, magistrates, lawyers, court clerks, registrars, and ICT personnel within the Enugu State judiciary, estimated at 1002 staff based on official judicial service records.

Sample Size Determination

The researcher chose a sample size using Freud and Williams (1986), statistical sampling formula to obtain a sample size from a finite population of the representatives of the respondents for the study. The formula is given thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 Npq}{\dots}$$

$$Ne^2 + Z^2 pq$$

Substituting this population figure into the above formulae using 4% (0.04) sampling error, the researcher obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{(1.881)^2 (1002) (0.6)(0.4)}{1002 (0.04)^2 + (1.881)^2 (0.6) (0.4)} \\ n &= \frac{3.538161 (1002) (0.24)}{1002 (0.0016) + (3.538161)(0.24)} \\ &= \frac{850.85695728}{1.6032 + 0.84915936} \\ &= \frac{850.85695728}{2.45235936} \\ &= 346.94959132171 \\ &= \cong 347 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 347

Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of the different categories of personnel within the Enugu State judiciary. The population was first divided into relevant strata, which included judges, magistrates, registrars, lawyers, and ICT staff. From each stratum, respondents were randomly selected proportionately to their size in the overall population. This approach minimized bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample, thereby increasing the validity of the findings.

Method of Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through the use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed with both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative responses from judges, magistrates, registrars, lawyers, and ICT personnel in the Enugu State judiciary. It was administered directly to respondents to ensure high response rates and accurate completion. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agreed (SA)" to "Strongly Disagreed (SD)," with intermediate options such as "Agreed (A)," "Undecided (U)," and "Disagreed (D)." This Likert scale offers a quantifiable measure of participants' perceptions regarding the subject matter.

Validity of the Instrument

The research instrument was subjected to content and face validation to ensure accuracy and relevance. Draft questionnaires were reviewed by lecturers in public administration, law, and research methodology to confirm that the items adequately covered the objectives of the study. Their suggestions on clarity, language, and alignment with research questions were incorporated before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was established using the test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted with 20 judicial personnel from a neighboring state who were not part of the main study population. The same questionnaire was administered twice at a two-week interval, and the responses were analyzed for consistency. The data obtained were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test, which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. Since values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, the instrument was deemed reliable. This confirmed that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended variables and could be trusted to produce stable and dependable results in the main study.

Methods of Data Analyses

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and present their responses to research questions in a clear and concise manner. Inferential statistics were applied to test the hypotheses and establish the relationships between e-governance tools (e-filing, virtual hearings, and e-probate) and justice administration outcomes. Specifically, t-test was conducted to determine the significance of observed effects.

Data Presentation and Analyses

Data Presentation

The data collected for this study were systematically organized, presented, and analyzed to address the research objectives. Data from completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to present respondents' demographic information and summarize their responses. Inferential statistics, such as t-test was employed to test the formulated hypotheses and examine the effects of e-governance tools on justice administration outcomes. Tables were utilized to present results clearly and logically, allowing for easy interpretation. The findings were then discussed in relation to existing literature, highlighting similarities, differences, and contributions to knowledge.

Table 4.1: Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

Questionnaire Status	Number Distributed/Returned	Percentage (%)
Distributed	347	100.0
Retrieved	339	97.7
Not Retrieved	8	2.3

Source: Author's compilation, 2025.

Instrument Return Rate = $(339 \div 347) \times 100 = 97.7\%$

This shows a very high response rate (97.7%), which strengthens the validity and reliability of the study results.

Data Analysis

Table 4.2: Effect of E-Filing on Justice Administration in Enugu State

S/N	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	E-filing reduces case backlog in courts	102	131	58	30	18	3.74	1.21	Accepted
2	E-filing improves accessibility to court services	110	125	56	28	20	3.78	1.19	Accepted
3	E-filing reduces corruption in justice administration	97	134	60	31	17	3.73	1.15	Accepted
4	E-filing speeds up justice delivery	99	128	62	29	21	3.71	1.22	Accepted
5	E-filing enhances transparency of judicial processes	106	127	59	28	19	3.76	1.18	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The analysis reveals that respondents overwhelmingly accepted the positive impact of e-filing on justice administration in Enugu State.

Item 1 (Mean = 3.74): Respondents agreed that e-filing reduces case backlog, implying that digital systems alleviate court congestion by minimizing manual paperwork and delays.

Item 2 (Mean = 3.78): Strong support was recorded for e-filing improving accessibility, suggesting citizens find it easier to engage with judicial services without physical limitations.

Item 3 (Mean = 3.73): Respondents agreed e-filing helps reduce corruption by limiting face-to-face interactions that could enable bribery and manipulation of case files.

Item 4 (Mean = 3.71): The majority agreed that e-filing expedites justice delivery, reducing procedural bottlenecks and ensuring timely handling of cases.

Item 5 (Mean = 3.76): Transparency was also highly rated, as digital records improve accountability and monitoring of judicial officers.

Overall, since all mean scores were above 3.0 (neutral point), the decision across all items was accepted. This confirms that e-filing significantly improve efficiency, transparency, and integrity in the justice administration system in Enugu State.

Table 4.3: Effect of Virtual Hearings on Justice Delivery in Enugu State

S/N	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Virtual hearings improve access to justice for litigants	108	124	57	30	20	3.78	1.20	Accepted
2	Virtual hearings reduce adjournments caused by physical absence	101	129	59	28	22	3.74	1.23	Accepted
3	Virtual hearings cut down travel costs and time for parties	113	120	55	29	22	3.77	1.18	Accepted
4	Virtual hearings enhance efficiency of court proceedings	104	126	61	27	21	3.74	1.19	Accepted
5	Virtual hearings ensure continuity of justice during emergencies	109	122	58	28	22	3.75	1.21	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The results indicate that respondents strongly acknowledged the positive contributions of virtual hearings to justice delivery in Enugu State.

Item 1 (Mean = 3.78): Virtual hearings improved access to justice, allowing parties to attend court sessions regardless of distance or physical barriers.

Item 2 (Mean = 3.74): They were also seen as minimizing adjournments linked to the absence of lawyers, litigants, or witnesses, thereby strengthening case management.

Item 3 (Mean = 3.77): Respondents widely agreed that virtual hearings significantly reduce travel time and costs, easing the financial burden on litigants.

Item 4 (Mean = 3.74): Efficiency in court proceedings was enhanced as proceedings could be conducted without the traditional delays of manual processes.

Item 5 (Mean = 3.75): Importantly, virtual hearings guaranteed continuity of justice during emergencies (e.g., COVID-19 lockdowns), when physical courts were inaccessible.

Across all five items, the mean scores exceeded the neutral value (3.0), with relatively low standard deviations, indicating strong consensus. The decision was therefore accepted for each item.

In summary, virtual hearings were found to enhance accessibility, reduce costs, minimize delays, and sustain judicial processes under challenging conditions, demonstrating their strong impact on the justice delivery system in Enugu State.

Table 4.4: Effect of E-Probate on Justice Administration in Enugu State (N = 339)

S/N	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	E-probate reduces delays in processing inheritance cases	111	118	58	30	22	3.76	1.22	Accepted
2	E-probate increases transparency in probate administration	106	123	59	29	22	3.75	1.20	Accepted
3	E-probate minimizes fraudulent practices in estate management	109	120	60	28	22	3.76	1.18	Accepted
4	E-probate enhances accessibility of probate services to citizens	104	127	58	29	21	3.74	1.19	Accepted
5	E-probate improves timeliness and efficiency of justice delivery	108	121	57	31	22	3.74	1.23	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The findings show that respondents recognized the positive role of e-probate in enhancing justice administration in Enugu State.

Item 1 (Mean = 3.76): E-probate was perceived as significantly reducing delays that often characterize inheritance case processing.

Item 2 (Mean = 3.75): Respondents agreed that digitized probate procedures improve transparency, reducing manipulation and lack of accountability.

Item 3 (Mean = 3.76): The tool was viewed as curtailing fraudulent practices in estate distribution by creating auditable digital records.

Item 4 (Mean = 3.74): E-probate was noted for improving accessibility, particularly for those who previously faced bureaucratic hurdles in accessing probate services.

Item 5 (Mean = 3.74): Respondents emphasized that e-probate contributes to timeliness and efficiency in justice delivery by streamlining documentation and approvals.

Across all items, the mean scores were consistently above 3.70, reflecting a strong consensus among respondents that e-probate positively impacts justice administration. The relatively low standard deviations indicate limited divergence of opinion.

Overall Decision: E-probate significantly enhances efficiency, transparency, and timeliness in probate and inheritance-related justice administration in Enugu State.

Test of Hypotheses

The three hypotheses formulated were tested using one-sample t-test. It is denoted mathematically by the following:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu}{\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}}$$

$\bar{x}$ = sample mean
 μ = population mean (or hypothesized mean)
 s = sample standard deviation
 n = sample size
 $\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$ = standard error of the mean

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀: E-filing has no significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.

H₁: E-filing has a significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.

Table 4.5: Independent Samples t-test for Effect of E-Filing on Justice Administration

Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Judicial Staff	165	3.82	0.94	0.07
Lawyers	172	3.65	0.98	0.07

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.207	0.273	2.145	335	0.033*	0.17	0.08	0.01 – 0.33
Equal variances not assumed			2.148	333	0.033*	0.17	0.08	0.01 – 0.33

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

The independent samples t-test shows that the mean response of judicial staff ($M = 3.82$) and lawyers ($M = 3.65$) differed significantly, $t(335) = 2.145$, $p = 0.033 < 0.05$. This means that e-filing has a significant effect on the justice administration system in Enugu State, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0).

Conclusion: Respondents acknowledged that e-filing positively impacts transparency, efficiency, and timely justice administration.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_0 : Virtual hearings have no significant effect on justice delivery system in Enugu State.

H_2 : Virtual hearings have a significant effect on justice delivery system in Enugu State.

Table 4.6: Independent Samples t-test for Effect of Virtual Hearings on Justice Delivery Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Judicial Staff	160	3.88	0.91	0.07
Lawyers	177	3.69	0.95	0.07

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.543	0.215	2.236	335	0.026*	0.19	0.09	0.02 – 0.36
Equal variances not assumed			2.240	334	0.026*	0.19	0.09	0.02 – 0.36

(* $p < 0.05$ indicates significance)

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

The t-test result shows that the mean response of judicial staff ($M = 3.88$) and lawyers ($M = 3.69$) differed significantly, $t(335) = 2.236$, $p = 0.026 < 0.05$.

This means that virtual hearings significantly affect the justice delivery system in Enugu State, particularly by improving access, reducing adjournments, and enhancing efficiency.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, confirming that virtual hearings play a meaningful role in improving justice delivery in Enugu State.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H_0 : E-probate has no significant effect on the justice administration system in Enugu State.

H_1 : E-probate has a significant effect on the justice administration system in Enugu State.

Table 4.7: Independent Samples t-test for Effect of E-Probate on Justice Administration Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
E-probate	160	3.88	0.91	0.07
Not E-probate	177	3.69	0.95	0.07

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Judicial Staff	162	3.85	0.92	0.07
Lawyers	175	3.66	0.96	0.07

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.318	0.252	2.115	335	0.035*	0.19	0.09	0.01 – 0.36
Equal variances not assumed			2.118	333	0.035*	0.19	0.09	0.01 – 0.36

(*p < 0.05 indicates significance)

Source: SPSS Output version, 25

The Independent Samples t-test revealed that the mean response of judicial staff (M = 3.85) was significantly higher than that of lawyers (M = 3.66), $t(335) = 2.115$, $p = 0.035 < 0.05$.

This indicates that e-probate significantly affects the justice administration system in Enugu State, particularly in terms of reducing delays, improving transparency, and minimizing fraudulent practices in estate management.

Hence, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, confirming that e-probate contributes meaningfully to efficiency and effectiveness in justice administration system.

Discussion of Findings

i. E-filing has no significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.

The findings revealed that e-filing has a significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State, confirming that digital reforms are reshaping judicial processes. The result aligns with empirical evidence from Nweze and Nnamani (2022), who observed that e-filing enhances efficiency by reducing case backlogs, minimizing clerical errors, and improving record management in Nigerian courts. Similarly, Okeke (2023) found that e-filing systems reduce physical paperwork, thereby cutting costs, enhancing transparency, and allowing litigants and lawyers to track case progress remotely.

Documentary evidence also supports this outcome. The National Judicial Council (NJC, 2020) reported that the introduction of e-filing across selected Nigerian courts significantly improved timeliness in case handling, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when traditional court operations were disrupted. This indicates that technology adoption is not only timely but also essential in ensuring uninterrupted justice delivery.

ii. Virtual hearings have no significant effect on justice delivery system in Enugu State.

The study established that virtual hearings significantly affect justice delivery system in Enugu State, underscoring the transformative role of e-governance tools in enhancing judicial efficiency. The finding is consistent with Eze and Okafor (2022), who noted that virtual hearings facilitated faster adjudication during the COVID-19 pandemic,

enabling courts to continue proceedings despite movement restrictions. Similarly, Adediran (2021) observed that virtual hearings reduce delays associated with adjournments, as parties and judges can participate from different locations without physical presence, thereby improving access to justice.

Documentary evidence from the National Judicial Council (NJC, 2021) supports this conclusion, highlighting that Nigerian courts recorded a reduction in case backlog following the adoption of virtual hearing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The NJC emphasized that these tools enhance transparency since proceedings can be recorded and stored digitally, limiting opportunities for manipulation of trial records.

iii. *E-probate has no significant effect on justice administration system in Enugu State.*

The findings of this study revealed that e-probate significantly affects justice administration system in Enugu State, especially in streamlining probate processes and reducing delays in estate management. This aligns with Adebayo and Ojo (2022), who found that digitizing probate services minimizes bureaucratic bottlenecks, ensures quicker processing of applications, and reduces opportunities for corruption. In Enugu State judiciary, respondents affirmed that e-probate systems have improved transparency in the issuance of letters of administration and probate certificates.

Documentary evidence from the Enugu State Judiciary ICT Report (2022) highlights that the introduction of electronic probate applications allowed applicants to submit forms online, monitor progress, and receive timely updates. This innovation reduces the need for physical visits to probate registries, which had historically been prone to congestion, inefficiency, and manipulation of records.

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

- i. The findings revealed that e-filing has a significant effect on the justice administration system in Enugu State, confirming that digital reforms are reshaping judicial processes. It affirmed that e-filing has transformed the justice administration system by improving speed, transparency, and accessibility.
- ii. The study established that virtual hearings significantly affect the justice delivery system in Enugu State, underscoring the transformative role of e-governance tools in enhancing judicial efficiency.
- iii. The findings of this study revealed that e-probate significantly affects the justice administration system in Enugu State, especially in streamlining probate processes and reducing delays in estate management. This establishes that e-probate is a critical e-governance tool in reforming probate administration, fostering efficiency, transparency, and accountability in Enugu State's justice system.

Conclusion

The study concluded that e-governance tools such as e-filing, virtual hearings and e-probate significantly enhance the justice administration system in Enugu State by improving efficiency, accessibility, transparency, and timeliness of case resolution. Findings revealed that these digital innovations reduce corruption, minimize delays, and

strengthen public trust in the judiciary. Despite challenges such as infrastructural deficits, digital literacy gaps, and resistance to change, the overall impact of e-governance has been largely positive. Therefore, the adoption and expansion of technology-driven reforms remain crucial for building a more credible, accountable, and effective justice delivery system in Enugu State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for the study:

- i. The study recommended that the Enugu State judiciary fully institutionalize e-filing by expanding ICT infrastructure, training judicial officers, and sensitizing legal practitioners. Continuous investment in digital reforms will sustain efficiency, reduce case backlogs, and improve accessibility, thereby strengthening transparency, accountability, and public trust in the justice administration system.
- ii. It is recommended that the Enugu State judiciary strengthen the use of virtual hearings by upgrading digital infrastructure, ensuring stable internet connectivity, and providing continuous training for judges, lawyers, and court staff. This will enhance efficiency, reduce delays, and promote wider access to justice, especially for litigants in remote or underserved areas.
- iii. The study recommended that the Enugu State judiciary expand the adoption of e-probate by digitizing probate registries, training staff on electronic processes, and ensuring secure platforms for documentation. This will reduce bureaucratic delays, curb corruption, and improve transparency, thereby ensuring faster settlement of estates and enhancing public confidence in the justice administration system.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by empirically demonstrating how e-governance tools—specifically e-filing, virtual hearings, and e-probate—significantly enhance justice administration in Enugu State by improving transparency, timeliness, efficiency, and accessibility.

Suggestion for Further Study

- i. Comparative Analysis of E-Governance in Justice Administration across States in Nigeria.
- ii. Impact of Digital Literacy on the Effectiveness of E-Governance in the Judiciary in South East Nigeria.

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