

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEGAL STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES [IJLSSS]

ISSN: 2584-1513 (Online)

Volume 3 | Issue 6 [2025] | Page 337 – 340

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, LAW, AND SOCIETY: RETHINKING JUSTICE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming legal systems across the world by influencing judicial decision-making, legal research, case management, and access to justice. While AI promises efficiency, consistency, and cost reduction, it simultaneously raises serious legal and social concerns regarding bias, accountability, transparency, and human rights. This paper examines the intersection of artificial intelligence, law, and society, focusing on the opportunities and challenges posed by AI-driven justice systems. It argues that without adequate legal regulation and ethical safeguards, the integration of AI into justice delivery may undermine the foundational principles of fairness and social justice.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Law and Society, Justice System, Technology and Law, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

The justice system has historically been grounded in human reasoning, discretion, and moral judgment. Judges and legal professionals apply not only legal rules but also social context, empathy, and ethical understanding while delivering justice. However, the emergence of artificial intelligence has begun to reshape legal institutions across the world. AI-based technologies are now being integrated into legal research, court administration, predictive analysis, and even judicial decision-making. This transformation marks a significant shift toward technology-assisted justice. While such developments promise efficiency and consistency, they also raise serious concerns about fairness, accountability, and the social legitimacy of legal decisions in the digital age.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks that traditionally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and pattern recognition. In the justice system, AI is increasingly used for document review, legal research, case management, predictive policing, and risk assessment in bail and sentencing decisions. These tools aim to reduce judicial backlog and improve administrative efficiency. However, most AI systems rely on historical data, which often reflects existing social inequalities. As a result, AI-driven decisions may unintentionally reproduce or reinforce bias within the justice system.

LEGAL CHALLENGES IN AI-DRIVEN JUSTICE

The integration of artificial intelligence into justice delivery raises several legal challenges. One of the primary concerns is accountability. When judicial decisions are influenced by algorithmic recommendations, determining responsibility for errors becomes complex. Unlike human judges, AI systems lack legal personality and cannot be held accountable. Another major issue is transparency. Many AI systems function as “black boxes,” making it difficult to understand how decisions are reached. This lack of explainability undermines the principles of natural justice, particularly the right to a fair hearing and reasoned judgment.

CASE REFERENCE

Mata v Avianca Inc (US District Court, Southern District of New York, 22 June 2023).

The judicial concern surrounding uncritical reliance on artificial intelligence in legal processes was recently highlighted in *Mata v Avianca Inc* (2023), where a United States federal court imposed sanctions on lawyers for submitting legal briefs containing fictitious case citations generated by an AI tool. The court emphasized that while technology may assist legal research, the responsibility for accuracy and accountability ultimately rests with human actors. This case illustrates how opaque and unverified AI outputs can undermine procedural fairness, judicial credibility, and the integrity of the justice system if not subject to strict human oversight.

SOCIAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a social perspective, the use of AI in the justice system raises important ethical concerns. Justice is not only about outcomes but also about public perception and trust. If individuals believe that decisions affecting their rights are made by opaque algorithms rather than human judgment,

confidence in the legal system may decline. Furthermore, algorithmic bias can disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable communities, reinforcing social exclusion. Ethical concerns related to privacy, data protection, and surveillance further complicate the relationship between AI, law, and society.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Artificial intelligence has the potential to improve access to justice by providing affordable legal assistance, faster dispute resolution, and improved legal awareness. AI-powered legal platforms can help bridge the gap between citizens and legal institutions. However, unequal access to technology and digital literacy poses significant challenges. Individuals from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds may not benefit equally from AI-driven justice mechanisms. Without inclusive policies, technological advancement may widen existing inequalities rather than promote social justice.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

The rapid development of AI technologies has outpaced existing legal frameworks. Most legal systems lack comprehensive regulations governing the use of artificial intelligence in judicial processes. There is an urgent need for clear legal and ethical standards to regulate AI in justice delivery. Such frameworks should ensure transparency, accountability, data protection, and human oversight. Regulatory mechanisms must balance innovation with constitutional values, human rights, and democratic principles to prevent misuse of AI technologies.

CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the justice system by introducing new possibilities for efficiency and accessibility. However, its unregulated integration poses serious legal and social risks. The future of justice in the digital age depends on how effectively societies balance technological innovation with ethical responsibility and legal safeguards. AI should function as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human judgment. A human-centered, legally regulated approach is essential to ensure that artificial intelligence strengthens rather than undermines justice, equality, and the rule of law.

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