
MAPPING LEGALTECH ADOPTION IN INDIAN PRACTICE: REALITIES FROM THE GROUND

Manvi Sharda, BA LLB, O.P. Jindal Global University

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the real-world adoption of LegalTech among Indian legal practitioners, with particular reference to those in small practices and the district court. It is also noteworthy that the findings reveal that even after significant investment and policy support, including the e-Courts Project and growth in LegalTech startups, the proliferation of such instruments remains superficial. As of March 21, 2025, there were 4,55,10,088 pending cases in District and Subordinate Courts, compared to 62,50,334 in High Courts and 81,598 in the Supreme Court, meaning approximately 87% of all pending cases reside at the district level¹. The survey results have shown that most lawyers are still dependent on traditional research platforms like Manupatra and SCC Online, with minimal use of more advanced and workflow-enhancing technologies.

The primary barriers highlighted are digital literacy, lack of affordability, resistance to change, lack of knowledge, and a perception that LegalTech tools serve only elite or corporate use cases. This study reveals that although procedural pain points are evident, they are not matched by meaningful tech integration. The findings suggest that unless the behavioral and systemic elements, especially those of small practitioners, are dealt with, the application of LegalTech in India is prone to multiplying the existing inequities in access to justice and efficiency, instead of solving them.

Keywords: LegalTech, India, Lawyers, Digital Divide, e-Courts, Technology in law, Legal Innovation, AI in law, Small Practices, District Courts.

¹ Gov't of India, Ministry of Law & Justice, Department of Justice, *Unstarred Question No. 3139: Backlog of Cases in Courts*, Rajya Sabha (Mar. 27, 2025), AU3139_9xU8WQ.pdf.

Introduction

The global legal market has undergone major changes, often characterized as a ‘LegalTech Boom’ and are fuelled by massive venture capital investments, extensive usage of advanced technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI). The global trend is exemplified with AI-powered platforms like Harvey, Clio, and Jhana in India, helping in efficient legal research, analysing documents in a smart way, client relationship management, and much more. This technological change presents a great opportunity to facilitate research, enhance the quality and compliance of legal documents, and develop litigation strategies based on data.

India has taken a very active part in this narrative of a digital revolution in the legal field in the country. Government initiatives, notably the e-Courts Project Phase III, have been instrumental in modernizing judicial functions through digital innovation. This project integrated AI for more efficient case management, administrative efficiency, AI-assisted filing, and user assistance via chatbots with an allocation of ₹53.57 crore for the AI and Blockchain sectors in High Courts². At the same time, there has been considerable growth in the number of Indian LegalTech startups, which are the driving force behind this ecosystem, as they are continuously developing innovative products and services to support the legal sector with venture capital backing. A revolutionary company like Manupatra has led the race since 2000, employing AI and LM technology to offer a comprehensive database of legal research.

Despite this seemingly vibrant and top-down-driven LegalTech landscape, a crucial question still exists. Are the ‘everyday lawyers’, those working in district courts, small practices, and non-corporate sectors, actually adopting and benefiting from those tools? If so, what tools do they use daily? If not, why not? This question aims to set the record straight by reflecting the current realities of a LegalTech boom among the overwhelming majority of legal practitioners.

Literature Review

In India, the LegalTech sector is largely driven by the government and private enterprises. Nevertheless, technology has not been able to overcome all the barriers faced by the legal

² Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Law and Justice, *Digital Transformation of Justice: Integrating AI in India's Judiciary and Law Enforcement*, Press Release No. 2106239 (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2106239>.

profession in the country³. Reports from academia and the market separately echo the same set of obstacles, which include resistance, high costs, and data security issues, as major hindrances to the adoption of LegalTech in India. A critical issue is the prevailing tech literacy gap among legal professionals and the absence of official integration of AI in legal education⁴. It requires systemic attention. Privacy and security issues continue to be prominent, with around half of the users of AI tools expressing concerns about protecting client data and complying with confidentiality obligations⁵.

The critical need of a bottom-up, practitioner-driven research gets strong backing from the empirical, on-ground study gaps in India. The majority of the existing literature usually concentrates on the general availability of legal information or top-tier policy talks, instead of deeply investigating the same problems faced by practitioners⁶. Stories from Reddit are much in line with that⁷. There is a clear disconnect, as the discussion highlights low adoption rates among lawyers, a fragmented market, and a sense among small practitioners that they are being overlooked or deemed irrelevant. This indicates a possible “trickle-down” misconception in LegalTech adoption, where the supposed boom is mainly in the upper echelon of the legal profession, who are dealing with different economic and infrastructural situations. Estimates place India’s number of registered advocates around 2 million, making it one of the largest legal professions in the world⁸. Success in LegalTech in India thus cannot exclusively be by high-profile initiatives or corporate adoption, but the real measure of its impact must be by the depth of its reach into the vast, undeserved segment of individual practitioners and small firms. In addition, the strong supply side of LegalTech solutions, as seen by many startups and big government investments, points to a ‘supply-side’ bias in LegalTech development.

³ Taxmann, *LegalTech in India – Role of Technology and Legal Education*, Taxmann Blog (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.taxmann.com/post/blog/legaltech-in-india/>.

⁴ *AI in Legal Education: Industry Experts Highlight Need for AI Literacy in Law Schools*, *The Hindu* (Oct. 10, 2023), <https://www.thehindu.com/education/colleges/ai-in-legal-education-industry-experts-highlight-need-for-ai-literacy-in-law-schools/article69800218.ece>.

⁵ Cimphony, *Legal Tech in Legal Education: Global Perspectives 2024*, Cimphony (2024), <https://www.cimphony.ai/insights/legal-tech-in-legal-education-global-perspectives-2024>.

⁶ National Law University Delhi, *Access to Legal Information and Research in the Digital Age* (2015), <https://www.nludelhi.ac.in/download/publication/2015/Access%20to%20Legal%20Informationa%20and%20Research%20in%20Digital%20Age.pdf>.

⁷ *Why Doesn't India Have a Strong Legal Tech Startup?*, r/StartUpIndia (n.d.), https://www.reddit.com/r/StartUpIndia/comments/1itz96c/why_doesnt_india_have_a_strong_legal_tech_startup/.

⁸ Vishal Gupta, *Only 20 Lakhs Advocates Are Registered in India*, LatestLaws.com (Aug. 13, 2023), <https://www.latestlaws.com/latest-news/breaking-only-20-lakhs-advocates-are-registered-in-india-law-ministry-203917/latestlaws.com>

First of all, if those tools are made for corporate due diligence, complex contracts, or high-volume legal outsourcing, then most likely they will not be able to solve the fundamental, everyday problems that the district court lawyer has. Such problems are: managing physical files, going through court adjournments, and communicating with the clients in their vernacular languages. This confirms that present market supplies possibly do not correspond to the upside of the majority's needs, which further implicates that a large part of LegalTech innovation in India may not serve small firms and independent lawyers.

This paper, therefore, seeks to address a critical gap in the existing research: the gap between the LegalTech conversation at the top and the experiences of the practitioners on the ground. While prior work had either focused on elite firms or on the theoretical potential of AI and automation, this study centres on the people who constitute the majority in the Indian legal system, the ones in district courts, small firms, and solo practices. By mapping actual user behaviour, expectations, and obstacles, the research aims to ground LegalTech discussions in empirically validated, bottom-up perspectives that can guide more inclusive innovation strategies.

Methodology

This paper employs a mixed-method approach. Both primary and secondary sources are used to map the state of LegalTech adoption in India.

Primary Research

To directly find out the practical realities of LegalTech use in India, a survey was carried out, addressed to lawyers, advocates, and legal professionals practicing in different courts and jurisdictions. The survey consisted of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, which were intended to collect qualitative and quantitative information on: current use of legal technology, specified tools adopted, perceived bottlenecks and challenges, levels of contentment with the existing solutions, and opportunities for future technological solutions in legal workflows.

Sampling Strategy- The survey was distributed via email and LinkedIn using a random sampling method that aimed to ensure representativeness. The selection was not limited to any particular region or specialization. Participation was voluntary, but the neutrality of the data

was preserved as no inclusion or exclusion criteria were applied.

Response Rate- A total of 53 complete responses was collected over a fixed time. The sample size is modest, but the responses reflect a meaningful cross-section of the legal field, ranging from early career practitioners to highly experienced lawyers practicing at the district, High Court, and Supreme Court levels.

Caveat- The data is not statistically representative of the entire Indian legal profession. However, it serves as a valuable exploratory dataset, capturing practitioner sentiment, behavioural trends, and tool usage patterns from the ground up.

Secondary Research

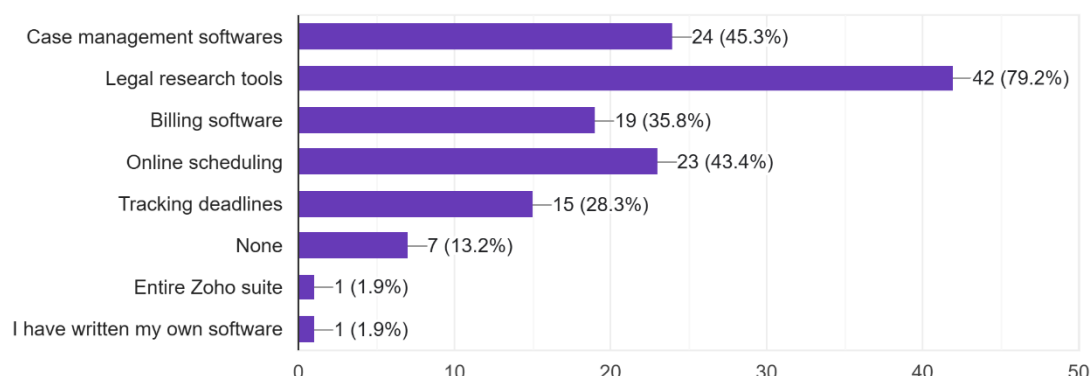
To give context to the initial data, secondary data from research was used. In combination, the primary and secondary data enable a comprehensive analysis of the current status of Indian LegalTech, one that goes beyond product promotion or policy optimism to examine how practitioners themselves are experiencing this evolution.

Findings of the Survey

The data from the survey strongly indicates that LegalTech is deeply ingrained in India. 79% of respondents claim to use tools for legal research. However, a closer look reveals that this usage is both limited and superficial. The majority of lawyers stick to one or two rather old players - SCC Online and Manupatra. This pattern clearly shows that users are loyal to the platform they are familiar with, not to the one that best serves their needs. Although the use of LegalTech seems to be widespread, most of the users are still concentrated in the areas of well-established legal research platforms. While they provide some value, they are mainly digital repositories and not integrated, intelligent workflow assistants yet.

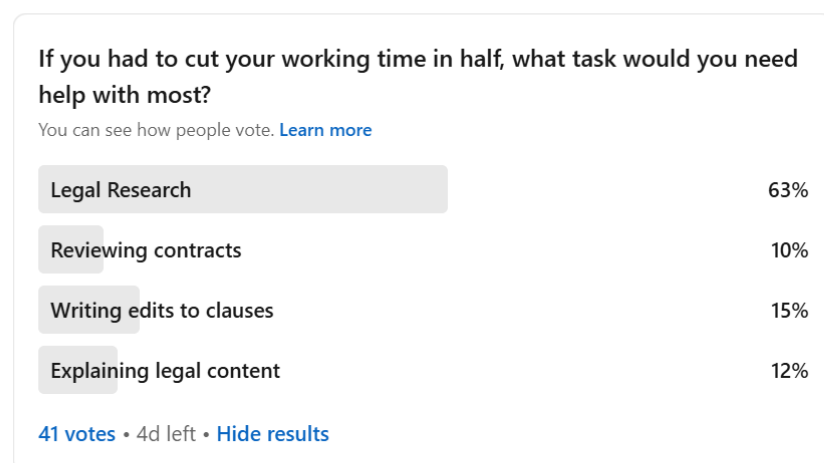
Which technologies do you currently use in your legal practice?

53 responses

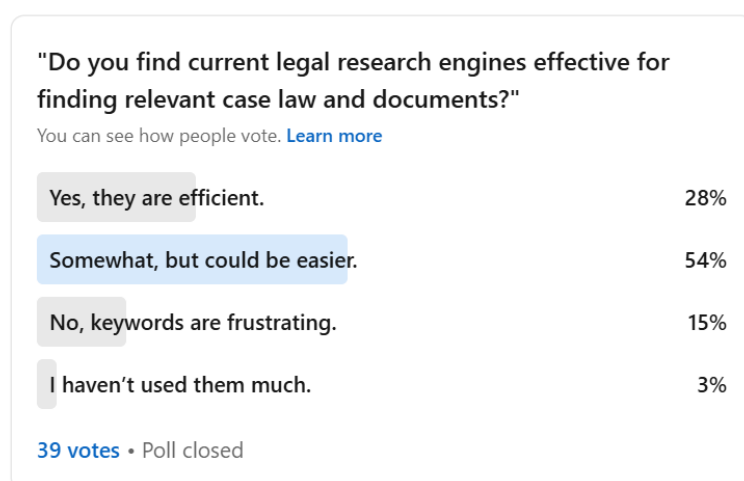


It is interesting to note, the data indicates that those individuals who considered themselves satisfied with the current LegalTech solutions were the ones who were using Manupatra and SCC Online. The point here is significant.

The satisfied lawyers represent a broad range of experience, from new entrants to highly experienced professionals. Many practice in major legal centres like Delhi and NCR (Delhi High Court, District Courts, and Supreme Court). The satisfaction may not necessarily be about the best performance or innovation, but rather the case of a very low level of expectations. To a lot of Indians, especially those who are solo practitioners, having a case law database that is searchable is the biggest stride that they have achieved from the traditional dusty digests. This results in a false sense of sufficiency, where legacy tools are seen as good just because they are better than manual systems. In fact, a LinkedIn poll I conducted asking “If you had to cut your working time in half, what task would you need help with most?” and got 41 randomised responses, with 63% voting for legal research. This is in line with the earlier statements that even in a wider sample, legal research is still the most laborious and time-consuming task, despite the high level of claimed adoption of technology.



Another LinkedIn poll gives us a bit of an idea about the same question: when people were asked, “Do you find current legal research engines effective for finding relevant case law and documents?”, 54% answered “Somewhat, but could be easier”, while 28% found them effective. Meanwhile, 15% of the people found keyword searches frustrating, an opinion mirrored in the survey.



It only creates a false sense of sufficiency, where the legacy tools are seen as sufficient because they simply outperform manual systems. This clearly accounts for why newer and better alternatives (most of which provide AI search summarization or analytics) have not yet been able to infiltrate this space. The problem isn't the lack of tools; it is the lack of perceived needs.

True LegalTech integration implies not only the use of digital tools but also a cultural change in the way legal work is done, moving from paper-based and manual processes to technology-enabled and semi-automated workflows. The survey clearly shows a huge gap between surface engagement and systemic integration. Only a few lawyers declare that they use tech tools for

drafting, scheduling, document management, billing, or client communication. The functions that consume a major portion of lawyers' time, particularly managing clients, timelines, and documentation, are still handled manually or via ad hoc methods (assistants, spreadsheets, reminders). This is a clear lack of tech permeation throughout the whole spectrum of legal risks. As several respondents wrote, *"managing meetings, court dates, to-do lists," "Scheduling tasks & meetings and Deadline management,"* and *"Client management,"* these are exactly the friction points that LegalTech has yet to streamline for everyday practitioners. One even pointed to *"Tracking updates and test coordination"* as a critical operational gap.

Another significant finding from the research is that the majority of lawyers are referring to procedural burdens like *"waiting time in court, adjournments and non-adjudication by courts, regular lists which are never taken up"*, that they encounter in their work. For instance, as of May 2025, Gautam Budh Nagar district court alone had approximately 410,000 pending cases, including 380,000 criminal matters. In about 25% of these, the cases remained unresolved due to the unavailability of counsel, a stark example of structural dysfunction⁹. The National Economic Forum has similarly argued that India's judicial pendency is driven not just by case volume but also by procedural inefficiencies — and that reform technologies are central to reducing such structural bottlenecks¹⁰. These include unmet client expectations, non-payments, delays in courts, and issues in tracking the cases. These, precisely, are the problems that can be solved by technology through automation, smart reminders, and communication in a structured manner, with the data, however, revealing that there is limited use of such technologies. This implies that Indian LegalTech continues to be perceived by the users as "back-office support" (research) rather than "front-line operations" (client, court, or workflow management). The adoption of these tools will still be a work in progress and have a low impact unless the newly introduced technology starts to deal with how lawyers practice.

Survey responses point out several structural blind spots that seem to obstruct LegalTech adoption on a larger scale. Talking about awareness, it is clearly visible that lawyers are considerably biased in their choice of the primary legal research that they trust most. While

⁹ Jaideep Deogharia, *4 Lakh Cases Pending in Noida District Court, 25% Due to Lack of Lawyers*, *The Times of India* (May 9, 2025), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/noida/4-lakh-cases-pending-in-noida-district-court-25-due-to-lack-of-lawyers/articleshow/121007391.cms>.

¹⁰ Yash Kapur, *Addressing Case Pendency in India's Judiciary via Reform & Tech*, National Economic Forum (Sept. 30, 2024), https://nationaleconomicforum.org/nef_articles/addressing-case-pendency-in-indias-judiciary-via-reform-tech/.nationaleconomicforum.org

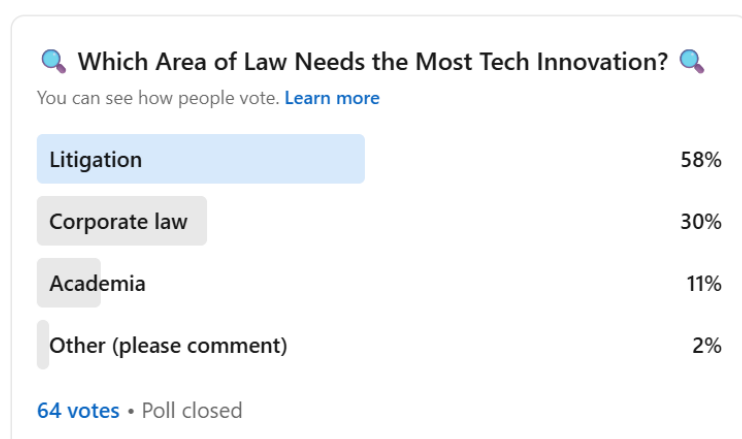
respondents go on to mention that the need for features that are advanced, like AI-powered research, translation software for vernacular legal documents, or a single platform that integrates all these functions, arises, they mostly talk about them as needs that are currently non-existent, thus indicating the lack of awareness of such niche or more sophisticated solutions that may still be present in the market. As one respondent said, *“I don't find any particular tool for legal research that is the essential part of a lawyer's life.”* This stark admission reveals critical blind spots in tool awareness.

At the same time, access is still a big problem. The survey points out the difficulties concerning digital literacy, with some lawyers openly stating that they are not good with technology. Even more importantly, the fact that special software is necessary to convert the local language legal terminology into English, especially for court documents such as FIRs and chargesheets, is just one aspect of a deeper language barrier that not only practically restricts accessibility but also the efficiency of the current English-centric tools among a huge part of practitioners. Lastly, the issue of affordability is prominently featured as a constraint, but it is sometimes implied rather than directly stated. Many lawyers in India operate in low-margin ecosystems, where paying for premium tools may not be financially feasible and justifiable unless Return on Investment is immediate. The survey respondents have not explicitly mentioned cost barriers; however, the lack of paid advanced tools in their responses is quite apparent.

Another possible factor for the limited adoption of LegalTech seems to be the influence of non-technical barriers on the adoption. Although the sample is mixed in terms of experience levels, it appears that many older practitioners still rely on juniors or assistants to go through the process of finding the right tools. A generational divide persists within the legal profession. Younger lawyers are generally more open to adopting technology, but often lack the authority to drive change in the firms. Meanwhile, a pervasive issue of trust hinders wider adoption of LegalTech. Many legal professionals remain reluctant to delegate cognitively demanding tasks, such as drafting or client interaction, to machines. This skepticism is not merely about functionality; it reflects a deeper cultural resistance. Even with advanced AI tools available, lawyers are not significantly distanced from technology by capability alone but by a reluctance to allow machines to make or even suggest substantive legal decisions. This pattern of resistance has been consistently observed in comparative studies on LegalTech adoption across jurisdictions.

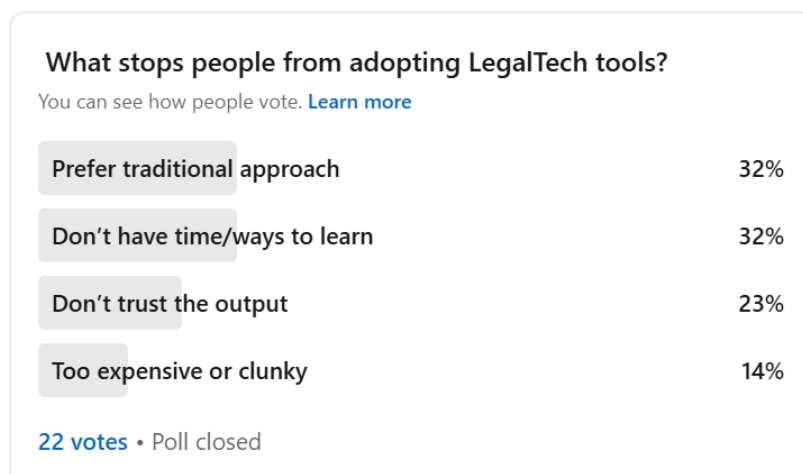
Lawyers need to be really up to date all the time. Changes in case law, notice of regulations, and amendments are of great importance. The survey confirms that most lawyers rely on passive or manual update systems like reading judgments, attending seminars, consulting colleagues, and legal news sites. Another respondent noted, *“No centralized update system, need to check multiple sources. Too many updates across courts, ministries, and regulatory bodies, it’s scattered.”*. This captures the disjointed nature of current update workflows and the cognitive overload it imposes on practitioners. One response even read *“Paid to junior lawyer”*, suggesting that the responsibility of staying updated is often outsourced to subordinates rather than streamlined through technological means. It is not just inefficient, but it also exposes a systemic risk that can particularly affect litigation and compliance. As one respondent put it, *“Lack of meaningful articles which connect with the actual issue”*, pointing to a gap not just in delivery but in contextualization and applicability of legal updates. The change is right there: legal intelligence platforms that carry out push functions, which are customized for the local laws and jurisdictions, could bring about a huge shift in the update workflows. Yet, their uptake is almost non-existent.

A LinkedIn poll that asked, “Which area of Law needs the most Tech innovation?” revealed the priorities. Litigation was the most popular with 58%, then Corporate Law (30%), and Academia (11%). This result is consistent with the survey procedural issues that are discussed in the survey. It follows that litigators appear to be those who encounter the most problems during daily practice. Corporate lawyers also pointed signalled a need for better compliance and document review systems. This signifies that they have an unmet appetite for smart contact tools or risk mapping platforms. Overall, the vote distribution parallels real workflow pressure points more than abstract aspirations, indicating LegalTech priorities are driven by daily friction, not just innovation trends.



Underlying much of this inertia is a deeper set of assumptions about how law should be practiced. The resistance of LegalTech isn't solely due to tool constraints. It is more essentially connected to the mindset and the friction in the process of onboarding. For most lawyers, professionals who rely on traditional methods of working, legal matters are, by nature, human, nuanced, and deeply rooted in traditions. Technology's arrival, just like the evidence of it being used, is interpreted by those people not only as a change in workflow but also as a cultural shift. This is the main reason why even relatively the most straightforward tools that are able to automate tasks such as reminders, draft templates, or compliance tracking, are still not fully exploited. Lawyers are not going against technology because it is effective. Lawyers are going against technology because they think the time and effort they would need to learn, change, and trust the new system are higher than the gains they perceive. Looking at it this way, LegalTech adoption is more about designing behaviours rather than about product design. The difference doesn't lie in the availability of product design, but rather in what lawyers believe they are prepared and willing to adopt.

This assumption was supported by another small LinkedIn poll I conducted that asked: "What stops people from adopting LegalTech tools?". While it got only 22 votes, the results were very telling. 32% said they preferred traditional approaches, another 32% cited lack of time or ways to learn, and 23% said they don't trust the output. 14% mentioned cost or clunkiness as a reason. Although this is not statistically representative of the entire population, it is an example that supports the working assumption that the biggest barriers to entry are not the price or the depth of features, but rather the mindset and onboarding. The indication from this study requires further investigation if it is to be generalised, but it matches what the broader surveys point to: the problem may not be the tools themselves but the readiness to engage with them.



Conclusion

This research observed a striking disconnect between India's celebrated LegalTech boom and the lived experiences of everyday practitioners. What struck most was how lawyers expressed satisfaction with basic tools, not because they were excellent, but because anything digital felt like progress from dusty law books. While lawyers readily identified their daily frustrations, they seemed almost resigned to handling these manually, as if technology was meant only for research, not real practice. The conversations revealed a deeper truth: that most LegalTech development has happened in boardrooms and policy meetings, far removed from the actual courtrooms where India's legal system truly functions. Unless technology starts addressing the mundane, everyday struggles of district court lawyers rather than the sophisticated needs of corporate firms, this digital divide will only deepen.

The question that remains is: will LegalTech evolve into inclusive, grassroots tools that truly alleviate judicial bottlenecks, or remain a cosmetic veneer over the real challenges of access, language, and affordability in India's legal system?