



The Challenges and Impact of Technological Advancement to the Legal Profession in Nigeria given the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The development of technology has intensified and enhances all aspects of human endeavors, including the legal profession. However, the use of technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession before the occurrence of the Covid-19 has been very minimal. In this regard, given the current Covid-19 that has ravaged the global community, most nations require a total or partial lockdown and social distancing protocol, thereby affecting the productivity of most professions. However, to continue to provide professional legal services in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic has led to adopting technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession. It is concerning the above that this study employs a doctrinal and empirical non-doctrinal method in investigating how technological facilities have impacted the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria during the Covid-19. An online questionnaire survey was sent to 313 respondents (randomly selected) who live in Nigeria. Descriptive and analytical methods were used in analysing the data obtained. The study found that the occurrence of the covid-19

in Nigeria has led to the use of technological facilities, which has further impacted significantly in the operation of the legal profession. However, there are several challenges in using technological facilities. The study therefore recommends and concludes that there is a need to legally intensify and embrace the use of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession.

Keywords: Technology, legal, profession, Covid-19, Pandemic, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The use of technology is one primary product of globalization that has enhanced and introduced many changes in all spheres of human endeavors worldwide, such as the media (Egielewa and Aidonjoe, 2021), relevant professional bodies and including the legal profession in Nigeria (Aidonjoe et al, 2021). We can easily share and borrow ideas from different parts of the world and even interact closely without crossing geographical boundaries (Antonio and Estrella, 2020). This global phenomenon has brought

about a paradigm shift from a rigid system to a fluid and more flexible one that allows people across the globe to exchange innovation, converse, and enter into contractual relationships (Aidonojie *et al*, 2020) without necessarily seeing one another physically (Ikubanni and Aidonojie, 2021). The easy access to information that the world enjoys today results from the advancement of technological facilities (Halima, 2016).

It is apt to state that technology has become a significant aspect of the legal profession which promotes and enhances efficiency, effectiveness, quick access to information, and dispensation of justice (Ofure, 2021). Although, before the Covid-19 pandemic experience, technology has proven to be an alternative and faster method of practice of law, technological facilities were not effectively utilized in the operation of the legal profession. However, the non-effective use of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession before the Covid-19 pandemic is due to its peculiar challenges in Nigeria (Aidonojie and Odojor, 2020).

However, given the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, various countries, including Nigeria, devised a means to curb the spread of the virus. This ensures the continuation of the regular operation of administrative functions by enforcing social distancing in workplaces which requires operating with a minimal number of workforces. This was in a bid to avoid workplace congestions which may breed physical contact amongst people. Thus, in ensuring that the aftermath of the pandemic did not cripple the legal professional activities in Nigeria, legal personnel (public and private legal practitioners) embarked on the use of technological facilities. These technological facilities include various digital or virtual platforms such as emails, zoom, web settings, and skype, amongst others, to facilitate virtual hearings and e-filings and e-service of court processes in the operation of the legal profession.

It is concerning the above that this study tends to adopt a doctrinal and non-doctrinal examination of what extent technology has impacted the

operation of the legal profession in Nigeria, specifically during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study will also examine the legal framework concerning the use of technological facilities in the operation of the Legal Profession. The study will further spot some challenges of using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession and possible solutions to savage the challenges.

1.2 Methodology

The study examines the challenges and impact of technological advancement on the legal profession in Nigeria, given the Covid-19 pandemic. In this regard, the study employs a combined method of research which includes a doctrinal and empirical method. The researchers made use of doctrinal research method in examining several primary sources of legal authorities that recognizes the use of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession. Furthermore, scholarly literature in textbooks and journal articles was also used by the researchers to enable us to analyse and examine the development and use of technological facilities in Nigeria.

However, the empirical research method enables the researchers to gather data through online (given the Covid-19 guideline of social distance) questionnaire surveys. The researchers adopt a descriptive and analytical approach method to statistically, mathematically, and numerically analyse the data obtained via the questionnaire. The empirical method enables the researchers to examine and ascertain the impact and challenges of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria during the Covid19 pandemic. Furthermore, with the use of the empirical method, the researcher will spot the possible solution that may allow for the smooth use of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession.

2. The Legal Framework concerning the Use of Technology in the Legal Profession

There is a host of laws in Nigeria that recognizes the use of technology in administering justice in

Nigeria. These laws operate or regulate the mode of receiving and tendering of evidence in our courts, conducting court proceedings, whether civil or criminal matters. Some of these legal frameworks, though not exhaustive, include the following:

2.1 The Nigeria Constitution

Virtual proceedings simply connote the conduct of trial or hearing of a case using digital platforms such as Skype or Zoom or any other video conferencing platform recognised and approved by the court. Section 36(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, stipulates that hearing in any cause or matter before the court must be held in a public place. The question that comes readily to mind at this juncture is what constitutes a public hearing? A public place may be defined as a place or location to which all persons have access and are not a place entirely used for a private assembly or any other personal purposes. Therefore, proceedings in public entail a situation where the public is not barred. A trial is amply public if an individual may have right of entry to where it is taking place” (Nwadialo, 1998).

It has been argued that virtual platforms such as Zoom, Skype, or any other video conferencing platform used for virtual hearing are highly accessible to the public through the internet, which is available for all members of the public to use, hence, it is a constitutionally (Emudainohwo, 2021). Interestingly, this question on whether virtual hearing is constitutional or not was temporarily put to rest through the two rulings of the Supreme Court in the cases of *Attorney General of Lagos State v Attorney General of the Federation & the National Assembly* Unreported suit No. SC/CV/260/2020, ruling delivered by Justice Rhodes-Vivour JSC on 14th July, 2020 and *Attorney General of Ekiti State v Attorney General of the Federation & 2 Ors.* Unreported suit No. SC/CV/261/2020, ruling delivered by Justice Rhodes-Vivour JSC on 14th July, 2020 On issues bordering on the incorporation of a virtual court hearing in the constitution. The

Supreme Court in both cases ruled that virtual hearing is not unconstitutional.

2.2 Practice Directions

Practice directions are subsidiary rules made by heads of superior courts of records to fill gaps or any lacunas in the rules of courts. In the case of *Onwudinjo v State (2014) LPELR-20817 (C.A)* the court held that it is a constitutional power exercised by heads of various superior courts to regulate practice and procedures, whether in civil or criminal matters where same has not been covered by the extant provisions of the rules of such court or where the circumstances necessitating same are novel.

At the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, the judicial system and administration of justice were almost grounded due to the lockdown order made by the president. To ensure the continuity of judicial functions, the heads of various courts resulted in their judicial powers enabled by the grundnorm to make rules. The essence of the rules is aimed at ensuring remote hearing and recognizing the use of electronic and digital procedures to guarantee continued access to justice and speedy disposal of cases while also seeking to minimize the risk of transmission of the virus. The first court to make such practice direction was the Lagos State Judiciary. By the extant provisions of the said practice direction, electronic service and filing of a court process and trial conduct via virtual platforms such as Skype and Zoom were recognised.

However, concerning the practice direction made by the Chief Judge of Lagos State High Court, on the 4th of May, 2020, a judge at the Lagos State High Court of Justice, via a judgment delivered via Zoom, sentenced one Olalekan Hameed to death, having been found guilty of murdering his mother’s employer. The judgment delivered via zoom sparked a lot of reactions on the constitutionality or otherwise of such judgment having been delivered on a virtual platform as against “open court” or physical court venue. The parties were at different locations; while the judge was at the Ikeja High Court, the convict was at the Kirikiri Maximum Security Prisons. The counsel also

joined the court proceedings from their respective locations.

However, some of the Practice Directions of various courts incorporating the use of technological facilities include the following:

2.2.1 Court of Appeal (Fast Track) Practice Direction, 2014

In 2014 before the advent of Covid-19, the President of the Court of Appeal, according to Section 248 of the 1999 Constitution which conferred on it as the head of the Court, made practice direction to fast track appeal proceedings before the court. There are some salient provisions in the said regulation which recognizes the use of technology and digital apparatus in the administration of justice. Some of such salient provisions include:

By Paragraph 1, which is the interpretation section, the word “*signature*” was described to include name, initials, or mark whether handwritten, *printed, typed, or computer-generated.*

By Paragraph 14 subparagraphs 1, 2 & 3, documents or court processes may be served electronically through email addresses or fax numbers.

2.2.2 Supreme Court (Criminal Appeals) Practice Direction, 2013

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, just like its Court of Appeal Counterpart according to the power conferred on it by both the Supreme Court Rules as well as the constitution, made this practice direction in order to establish a specialized system of case management that will provide a trial that is fair and expeditious administration of justice in appeals arising from Kidnapping, Money laundry, Rape, Terrorism, Human Trafficking, and corruption. Below are some salient provisions of the regulations recognizing the use of technology for the administration of justice before the court:

Paragraph 3(3) provides that “to ensure speedy dispensation of justice, *electronic mail, e-mail, and other electronic means* may be employed by

the court in order to inform counsel of urgent court and case events...”

Paragraph 3(4) provides that in furtherance to Paragraph 3(3), parties are required to give the registrar of the courts their respective e-mail address and phone numbers, including their counsel’s

2.2.3 High Court of Kwara State Practice Direction No. 1 of 2020

At the advent of Covid-19 in 2020 and in a bid to ensure continued administration of Justice, various courts (Lagos State Judiciary made Lagos State Judiciary (Remote Hearing of Cases) Covid-19 Pandemic Period Practice Direction, 2020; The Federal High Court of Nigeria made the Federal High Court of Nigeria Practice Direction 2020 for the Covid-19 Period; National Industrial Court of Nigeria introduced the National Industrial Court of Nigeria Practice Direction And Guidelines For Court Sitting 2020) in Nigeria made practice direction that allows the use of technology and its apparatus such as mobile phones, internet, Zoom, and Skype platforms for expeditious discharge of judicial functions. One such court is the Kwara State High Court. The Chief of Judge, by the power conferred on it by the constitution and the rules of court, made this direction. Some salient provisions touching on the use of technological apparatus in the administration of justice include:

Paragraph 2 provides that court processes may be served or affected by *email, WhatsApp, or any other electronic processes* directed by the court. Also, it provides that counsel should furnish the court with their WhatsApp numbers and email address.

Paragraph 3 provides that new dates for cases may be communicated via text, WhatsApp, or email

2.2.4 National Industrial Court

The President of the Nigeria National Industrial Court, by the power conferred on it by Section 254F of the Constitution , the Act , and the Rules of the court also made practice direction

during the Covid-19, which no doubt by its objectives is to ensure expeditious administration of justice through a remote hearing of cases during the Covid-19 period. The Salient provisions include:

Paragraph 4 sub Paragraph 1 provides that court processes may be filed *electronically and scanned or changed to PDF format* and sent to the registry of the court via a *designated email*

Paragraph 5 sub Paragraphs 1, 24 & 5 provide for the payment of all assessed fees electronically, and as part of the filing, the court shall publish acceptable methods of sending the electronic receipt to the designated officer for verification through *e-mail, SMS, WhatsApp*, etc Paragraph 7 provides that the court shall conduct remote or virtual hearings of cases for speedy dispensation of justice.

Paragraph 8 sub Paragraphs a, b & c, the court shall ensure the usage of fast speed *internet connectivity, End-User hardware/devices, i.e., desktop, laptops, tablets, Smartphones, or a combination of all these* in the discharge of administration of justice. Finally, the President equally directed that collaborative platforms such as *Ms365*, which incorporate *Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google meetings*, etc., shall be adopted.

It is crystal clear, therefore, that in our courts today, advancement in technology has influenced or impacted the administration of justice, and practice direction is one of the legal frameworks responsible for this progressiveness that Nigeria's judicial system experiences today.

2.3 Rules of Court

This is one of the major sources of procedural laws in Nigeria. The Sections 248 and 274 of the Nigeria Constitution empowers the heads of various courts in Nigeria to make rules to regulate practice and procedures before it. In Nigeria, court rules have the same force of law like any other law validly made by the legislative arm because it receives its validity from the grundnorm (Aidonjio *et al*, 2020), and it must be obeyed. There are rules of courts in Nigeria that have already incorporated and recognized the use of technology in the speedy

dispensation or administration of Justice in proceedings before it.

2.4 National Industrial Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2017

The National Industrial Court is one of the Federal Courts in Nigeria that the National Industrial Court Act created, 2006. However, there were controversies as to the creation of the court as a Superior Court of record contrary to the Constitution, which did not recognize the court as a superior court. However, the controversies were resolved by the eventual recognition of the court as a superior court of record in the Constitution. At the same time, its jurisdiction was expanded (Obaje, 2020) to vest on its exclusive jurisdiction over any matter bordering on labour and employment. The court affirmed this position in *N.U.T. Niger State v COSST, Niger State* (2012) 10 NWLR (PT. 1307) 89AT 111, PARA. E-F, 112-113 PARA. B-E. The National Industrial Court may be regarded as a major court of all courts in Nigeria that has fully incorporated the use of technology in the administration of Justice as may be seen by both the court's rules and the practice direction made by the President of the court (Aniekwe, 2019). Some of the provisions of the Rules carefully take care of the use of technology in the conduct of cases before the court. For instance, the rules of court recognize the service of court processes and hearing notice electronically via emails, text messages, fax machines, and any other digital communication platforms.

2.5 Legislation

It is very imperative to emphasize that besides rules of courts and practice direction, there are legislations in Nigeria that recognize the use of technology in the administration of justice. The chief of these legislations is the Evidence Act, 2011, and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015. These legislations are Act of the National Assembly. While the former regulates the admissibility of evidence before courts in Nigeria, the latter borders on the speedy dispensation of justice in criminal matters being procedural law.

The Evidence Act contains some salient provisions that recognize the admissibility of computer-generated documents, documents from the internet, Videotapes, photographs, etc., and any other document produced through any electronic means (Adanagor, 2015). The Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015, on the other hand, recognizes the electronic recording of the Statement of suspects and the general use of technology in the discharge of the police statutory duties, which shall be admissible in a court of law. By and large, it is safe to say that the use of technology for the administration of justice in Nigeria is not exactly novel. However, it holds not much value until the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. The Technological Advancement and Use of Technological Facilities by Legal Personnel in Nigeria

Given the fact that we are in a digital age now, the effect and influence of information technology are simply overwhelming as its advantages are now richly felt by judges, lawyers as well as litigants in the Nigerian legal system. However, it must be noted that given the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of technology in the legal profession has effectively evolved in numerous areas. This concerning the fact that technology has helped improve access to justice and smooth operation of the legal profession significantly. For example, in Nigeria, the law applicable is often found in different sources. These include statute books for the legislature, law report for case law, and oral tradition for customary law. The means of storage for legislature and case law before the advent of the current information technology was through a hard copy in book form or typescript. The traditional approach in some jurisdictions was regularly to produce an up-to-date version in the form of one edition of the laws enforced at a particular time. It is now possible to keep both legislation and law reports not only in hardcopy form but also in digital formats, like CDs, DVDs, flash drives, and other storage media.

Furthermore, online (internet/intranet) or on a stand-alone machine, making it much easier for a judge or public members to search and obtain

the provisions of the law on previous court decisions that one desires (Wallace, 2001). With the use of the internet, it is now possible to search for valuable and credible jurisprudent from other jurisdictions without moving out of one's locality. The use of technology is now much more promising and encouraging. This is concerning the fact that document production is now digitally made, which makes it easy to copy and distribute information very faster and at a minimal cost. Also, the law is now available in an easier, more convenient, and more accessible format; this makes it easier to research and incorporate the result of the research into a new document being produced. Information technology can tremendously improve access to the law, improving the productivity of the consumers.

Given the covid-19 pandemic, justices of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and Judges of the Federal High Court and Judges in Nigeria have used zoom app for virtual proceedings and delivery of judgment (Dahiru, 2020).

Another core area of technological advancement and development in the legal profession in Nigeria is the recording of Court proceedings. Recording of court proceedings in Nigeria has always been done by longhand by the judge/magistrate. In some jurisdictions in Nigeria, the court reporter records the proceedings using a stenographic technique, i.e., shorthand, and later produces a record of the proceedings. In other jurisdictions, however, recording is by tape recorders recording voices and the record later being transcribed into a typed record. However, there have been new developments. Voice recognition technologists are being tested but are yet to be perfected. With this technology, we now have digital audio recordings of voice on the computer, allowing the judging capacity to interpret this record and listen to whatever portion he may want to listen to later. The recording would have to be transcribed into a hard copy format, of which the e-version would be available too. With this use of information technology, the pace of proceedings will be accelerated reasonably. The quality of the record is enhanced as it is found more accurate. Cases, therefore, would be

resolved faster both at trial and on appeal as a result of the easy availability of the record of the trial. With judges freed on the part of recording proceedings, they can pay more attention to the demeanor of the parties, and this will help them arrived at a fair and just judgment (Damakor *et al*, 2015).

Case management is another aspect of adjudication; technology has helped the justice system in Nigeria. Managing cases through computing has greatly helped capture, manipulate data, produce a report, and other records that one might be interested in. Computing helps to track events and cases to avail all the needed information for adjudication timeously. When equipped with information, the decision-maker can take appropriate action to move a case forward, assign and list the matter for trial or take whatever appropriate action. One can follow both the large picture in terms of the aggregate of cases and the small picture in terms of a simple case. However, it must be noted that the management of court cases through computing has been used by some courts in Nigeria before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, given the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian courts have further adopted the use of Information technological facilities in judicial administration, and it is often referred to as ‘tele-justice. Tele-justice also includes the use of technological software or application like zoom or googles meet for video conferencing between the court officials. With tele-justice, the accused can now be present in court through a video conference from the prison without the need to be present physically in the courtroom while observing all legal procedures. This, again, is an added advantage, considering the risks attached to transporting the prisoners from prison to courts. In addition, it helps to reduce costs in the form of deployment of security personnel such as policemen, security charges, and transportation. The deployment of tele-justice in the overall administration of the justice system will no doubt yield considerable savings on these fronts.

It must be noted that tele-justice also involves to wit; Storage technology and forwarding

technology. These technologies are used for transferring digital images from one location to another. A digital image is taken using a digital camera and then sent or forwarded by the computer to another location. Usually used for non-emergency situations. Valuable and disputed legal documents which could not be sent by any other means of communications without risk could be digitally imaged and then stored before being forwarded for analysis and report.

It also suffices to state that most of the documents in a case file, either from lawyers or the court, are generated from computers. This means that copies of the documents are available electronically and digitally. Even when legal documents are produced manually, and only hard copies are available, it is possible to scan and convert them into digital format. This creates an opportunity of maintaining an electronic copy of a case file and eliminates problems of loss of physical case files, which is rampant in Nigeria court, thus eliminating one of the bottle nets to the speedy delivery.

4. Challenges of using Technological Facilities in the smooth operation of Legal Profession

It is no gainsaying that technological advancement has enhanced positive changes in the practice of law in Nigeria. It has been instrumental in solving legal problems and provision quick service delivery. However, it is unfortunate that the use of technology in the legal profession is faced with many challenges and these challenges hamper the use of technology for the full benefits of the legal profession in Nigeria. Some of these challenges are enumerated as follows:

- Poor internet services
- Irregular or lack of power supply
- Inadequate ICT knowledge and formal training
- Inadequate electronic Resource
- Sophisticated nature of technological facilities which may lead to permanent loss of information

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

The following data was obtained via the use of an online questionnaire survey, and the data obtained were analysed as follows:

5.1 Sample Size and Technique

Given the techniques and sample size of the study, the researchers devised an online questionnaire sent to respondents (lawyers) residing in the various states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The respondents living in the various states in Nigeria were selected through a simple random sampling technique to respond to the questionnaire. The use of simple

random techniques was identified by Aidonjje *et al.* (2021) in their study to be more suitable in selecting respondents that reside in various states in Nigeria. Also, according to Bajpai *et al.*,(2020) they stated that a simple random sampling technique has advantages as follows: It serves as a better hassle-free technique for sampling a heterogenous population. The chance of a researcher been bias to influence the sample is absent or minimal. Given the above, respondents (lawyers) residing in the various states in Nigeria were randomly selected as the sample size.

5.2 Data Presentation/Analysis

The following data were obtained from respondents who reside in the various states via Google form given the social distancing observed in this Covid19 pandemic.

Research Question One

What State do you reside?

313 responses

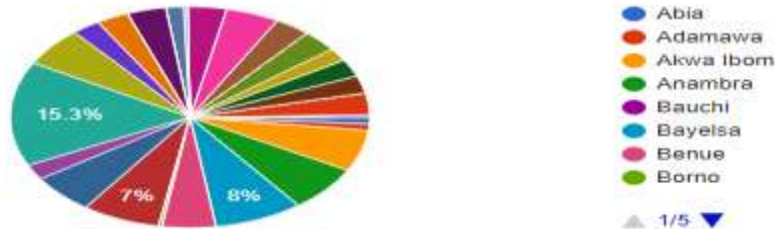


Figure 1: Respondents identifying part of the states in Nigeria they reside

S/N	States in Nigeria	Responses of Respondents	Percent
1	Abia	3	1%
2	Adamawa	3	1%
3	Akwa Ibom	19	6.1%
4	Anambra	21	6.7%
5	Bauchi	Nil	Nil
6	Bayelsa	25	8%
7	Benue	15	4.8%
8	Borno	Nil	Nil
9	Cross River	22	7%
10	Delta	18	15.8%
11	Ebonyi	7	2.2%
12	Edo	48	15.3%
13	Ekiti	18	5.8%
14	Enugu	8	2.6%
15	(FCT) Abuja	9	2.9%
16	Gombe	Nil	Nil
17	Imo	11	3.5%
18	Jigawa	Nil	Nil
19	Kaduna	5	1.6%
20	Kano	1	0.3%

21	Katsina	Nil	Nil
22	Kebbi	Nil	Nil
23	Kogi	11	3.5%
24	Kwara	15	4.8%
25	Lagos	10	3.2%
26	Nassarawa	Nil	Nil
27	Niger	Nil	Nil
28	Ogun	10	3.2%
29	Ondo	6	1.9%
30	Osun	8	2.6%
31	Oyo	8	2.6%
32	Plateau	Nil	Nil
33	Rivers	10	3.2%
34	Sokoto	Nil	Nil
35	Taraba	Nil	Nil
36	Yobe	1	0.3
37	Zamfara	Nil	Nil

Table 1: Valid respondents’ responses in identifying the various states in Nigeria they reside

Figure 1 and Table 1 above represent the respondents’ valid responses in identifying the states in Nigeria they reside.

Research Question Two

Do you agree that technology has to an extent impacted the legal profession in Nigeria, given the COVID-19 pandemic?

311 responses

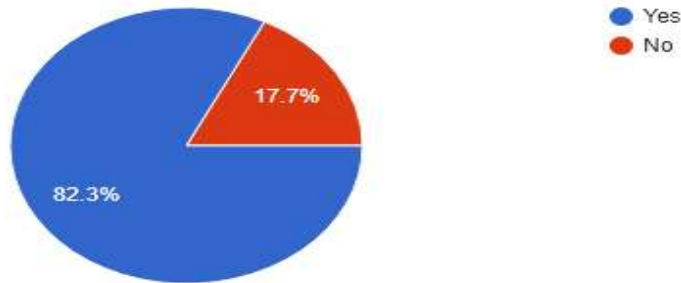


Figure 2: Responses of respondents’ identifying if technological facilities have impacted in the operation of the legal profession during Covid-19

	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	257	80.6%
Valid No	256	82.3%
Total	311	100%

Table 2: Responses of respondents’ identifying if technological facilities has impacted in operation of the legal profession during Covid-19

Figure 2 and Table 2 above represent the respondents' valid responses identifying that the technological facilities have enhanced and impacted the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Question Three

Which of the following technological facilities has been effectively utilised for the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria? You can choose more than one

313 responses

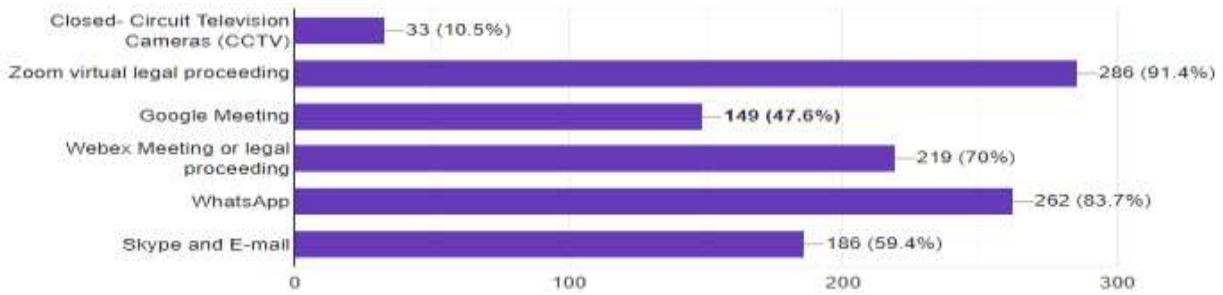


Figure 3: Cluster of responses of respondents stating the various technological facilities often used in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria

Technological Facilities	Cluster of Response	Percentage
Closed- Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV)	33	10.5%
Zoom virtual legal proceeding	286	91.4%
Google Meeting	149	47.6%
Webex Meeting or legal proceeding	219	70%
WhatsApp	262	83.7%
Skype and E-mail	186	59.4%

Table 3: Valid clusters of respondents responses stating the various technological facilities often used in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria

Figure 3 and Table 3 represent a cluster of respondents’ responses identifying the various technological facilities often used by legal personnel in the smooth operation of the legal profession during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Research Question four

Do you agree that the use of technology in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria has several challenges?

313 responses

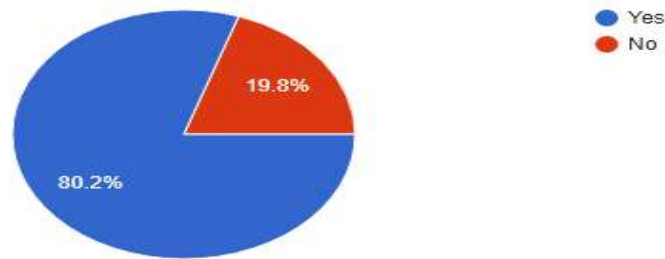


Figure 4: Respondents identifying the fact that there are challenges in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession

	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	251	80.2%
Valid No	62	19.8%
Total	313	100%

Table 4: is a Valid response of respondents identifying the fact that there are challenges in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession

Figure 4 and Table 4 represent the valid responses of respondents identifying the fact that though technological facilities have enhanced the legal profession, there are several challenges.

Research question 5

9. Which of the following serves as challenges in using technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria? You can tick more than one option

257 responses

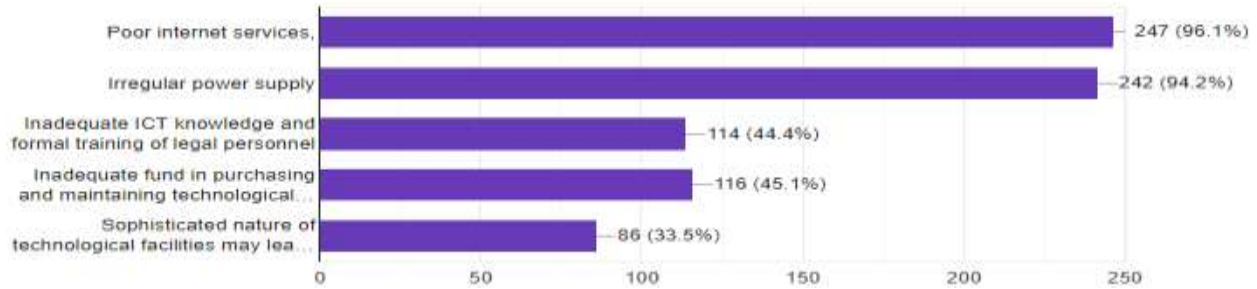


Figure 5: Respondents identifying the challenges in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession

Challenges of using Technological Facilities	Responses of respondents	Percentage
Poor internet services,	247	96.1%
Irregular power supply	242	94.2%
Inadequate ICT knowledge and formal training of legal personnel	114	44.4%
Inadequate fund in purchasing and maintaining technological facilities	116	45.1%
The sophisticated nature of technological facilities may lead to permanent loss of vital information	86	33.5%

Table 5: is a Valid response of respondents identifying the challenges in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession

Figure 5 and Table 5 represent the valid responses of respondents identifying the various challenges often encountered in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria.

Research question 6

10. Which of the following can aid in improving the use of technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria?

257 responses

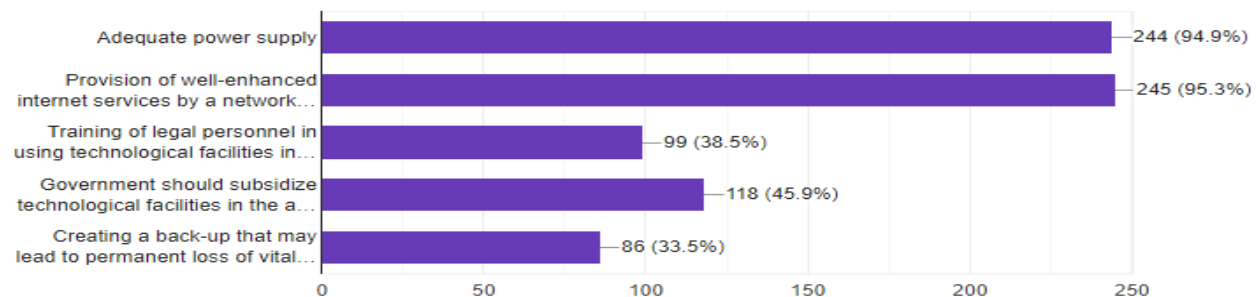


Figure 7: Respondents identification of possible remedy in resolving some of the challenges in using technological facilities

The Relevance of Educational Facilities/Resources	Cluster of Responses	Percentage
Adequate power supply	244	94.9%
Provision of well-enhanced internet services by a network provider	245	95.3%
Training of legal personnel in using technological facilities in the operation of their legal profession	99	38.5%
Government should subsidize technological facilities in the administration of justice	118	45.9%
Creating a back-up that may lead to permanent loss of vital information in using technological facilities that may lead to loss of information	86	33.5%

Table 5: Valid cluster of responses of respondents stating the possible remedy in resolving the challenges in using technological facilities

Figure 6 and Table 7 represent the respondent's responses, identifying several possible suggestions in resolving some of the challenges frequently encountered in using technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession in Nigeria.

6. Discussion of Findings

Given the presentation and analysis of data above, figure 1 and table 1 presented above reflect the fact that the respondents are selected from the various states in Nigeria. In this regard, it gives credibility and credence to the verity that the respondents residing within Nigeria are well well knowledgeable to respond to the several questions put before them in ascertaining the challenges and impact of the use of technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. However, in ascertaining the extent of the use of technological facilities has impacted the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, figure 2 and table 2 as presented above shows that a significant figure of the respondents (82.3% respondents) responded yes. In this regard, the responses of the respondents indicate that the use of technological facilities had to a great extent enhance the smooth operation of the legal profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the respondents have identified the fact that technological facilities had enhanced and significantly impacted the smooth operation of the legal profession. Question three was further aimed at ascertaining Which of the following technological facilities has been effectively utilised for the smooth operation of the legal profession during the Covid-19

pandemic in Nigeria. Given the data presented in figure 3 and table 3, 91.4% and 47.6% identified zoom virtual legal proceedings and google meetings, respectively. However, 70% and 83.7% identified Webex Meeting and WhatsApp, respectively. In this regard, it is apt to state that the respondents' identification of the various technological facilities in the smooth operation of the legal profession during the Covid-19 pandemic reflects the fact that legal personnel is gradually adapting to the international best practice. Although various Nigerian Court practice directions such as; Supreme Court (Criminal Appeals) Practice Direction, 2013; Court of Appeal (Fast Track) Practice Direction, 2014; National Industrial Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2017 and High Court of Kwara State Practice Direction No. 1 of 2020, provide for the usage of technological facility in the smooth operation of court proceedings.

However, the respondents have identified the usefulness and impact of technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession. Figure 4 and table 4 further confirm that an overwhelming number of 80.2% of respondents agreed that technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession have several challenges. Furthermore, in figure 5 and table 5, the respondents identified some of the challenges, which includes the following; 96.1% identify poor internet services, 94.2% identify the irregular power supply 44.4% identify inadequate ICT knowledge and formal training of legal personnel 45.1% stated that insufficient fund in purchasing and maintaining technological facilities is also a significant challenge

33.5% identify Sophisticated nature of technological facilities may lead to permanent loss of vital information

Given the above, Aidonojie *et al.*(2020) , in their studies had stated that the above challenges are often significant challenges that affect the effective use of technology in majorly a facet of Nigeria. However, in suggesting a possible solution to resolve the obstacles frequently encountered in using technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession. Figure 6 and table 6 further represent the respondent identifications of some possible solutions as follows;

94.9% identify the adequate power supply

95.3% stated that provision of well-enhanced internet services by a network provider could savage the challenges of using technological facilities

38.5% identify training of legal personnel in using technological facilities in the operation of their legal profession

45.9% also identify that Government should subsidize technological facilities in the administration of justice

Furthermore, 33.5% stated that creating a back-up that may lead to permanent loss of vital information in using technological facilities as a possible solution

The above findings of this study are quite similar to Aidonojie and Odojor's (2020) findings in their study. This is concerning the fact that the majority of the respondents identify the provision of constant power, active internet services, and training of an individual in the use of technology as some possible solution to the savage challenges that often occur in using technological facilities.

Concerning the data presentation and analysis, it suffices to opine that the use of technological facilities in the legal profession during the Covid-19 has enhanced the operation and practice of the legal profession. In this regard, stakeholders involved in the operation and practitioner of the legal profession should embrace technology and savage the challenges therein for a better and effective operation of the legal profession to conform with international best practices.

Conclusion/Recommendation

It is no doubt that technology has impacted and influenced positively on every area of legal practice. Technological advancements have in no small measure remodeled the face of the legal profession so much as to make legal practice easier, efficient, more effective, and highly accessible to the people. Since the advent of technology and technological facilities, distance is no longer an excusable barrier to access legal services. In the legal profession, technology has taken away the burden of flipping through a volume of books searching for judicial and statutory authorities. It has brought lawyers and clients closer to one another, hence breaking the barrier of distance through technological facilities such as Skype, Zoom, Webex Setting, WhatsApp, Email, Facebook, Twitter, amongst others.

Technology reduces the stress of legal education and practice. Often, it is more expensive to purchase quality legal books, materials, and stocking a law firm library than utilizing technological facilities such as mobile phones, amongst others. The use of technology in the legal profession has increased work efficiency, accessible research, accuracy, and quick dispensation of justice. Though the use of technology and its facilities in the legal profession have been faced with a lot of challenges, however, the significance of technology in the 21st century to the legal profession cannot be overemphasized. The challenges range from poor power supply to insufficiency of technological equipment, lack of ICT knowledge, possible loss of information due to the sophistication of technological facilities, to mention but a few.

Considering the germane importance of Information Communication Technology to the legal profession in Nigeria, there is the need to proffer lasting solutions to the challenges facing the use of technology in legal practice. The world has become a global village; rarely can anything be done without the use of technology. Hence, there is the yawning need to ensure that various stakeholders take necessary steps in the legal profession for a better and quicker service delivery that technology offers.

Giving the above, the following recommendations may help address the challenges that abound in the use of

technological facilities in the operation of the legal profession in Nigeria:
 Stable power supply
 Speedy Internet Services
 Training of personnel on the use of technological facilities
 Intensify Cyber Security

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