

The Role of the Principle of the Rule of Law and Access to Justice in Electronic Administrative Proceedings

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Abstract

The principle of the rule of law and the principle of access to justice, as fundamental pillars of governance under law, have consistently occupied a central position in legal systems. In the contemporary era, with the emergence and expansion of information and communication technologies, the concept of access to justice has evolved toward “electronic justice” (e-justice) and has acquired even greater significance in specialized proceedings, such as electronic administrative proceedings. Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, the present study addresses the question: What is the role of the principle of the rule of law and access to justice in electronic administrative proceedings? The central function of these principles in electronic administrative proceedings is to ensure that technology serves as an instrument for the more effective administration of justice in accordance with the law. For electronic administrative proceedings to succeed, regulatory authorities must ensure that the rule of law is upheld through guarantees of cybersecurity, algorithmic transparency, and the full protection of procedural and defense rights in the digital environment. Access to justice must also be guaranteed by providing alternative mechanisms for individuals who lack digital access and by designing simple, inclusive, and user-friendly interfaces. Ultimately, electronic proceedings can be considered successful only when they preserve the speed and efficiency afforded by modern technologies while providing the same level of fairness and legal safeguards expected in traditional proceedings. At the same time, the electronic transformation of administrative proceedings and the intelligent automation of procedural processes face legal, operational, technological, and security-related challenges. By removing barriers to digitalization, challenges associated with facilitating users’ access to adjudicative services, ensuring technological security, and improving technical expertise concerning digital infrastructure can be addressed. In advancing judicial justice, this process can reduce undue delays in proceedings, accelerate judicial adjudication, and lower the costs incurred by applicants and other users of administrative adjudicatory bodies.

Keywords: principle of access to justice, administrative proceedings, electronic justice, intelligent process automation, administrative systems

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1. Introduction

One of the fundamental principles of the administrative adjudication system is the principle of access to electronic justice. Pursuant to this principle, easy, affordable, and prompt access to justice must be ensured. The principle of judicial efficiency is among the principles that, in light of human rights principles, may be understood under the right of access to digital technology as one of the foundations of prompt access to justice. Clearly, within the structure of administrative quasi-judicial bodies and their adjudicatory processes, legislative and executive challenges exist with respect to the application of information and communication technologies; accordingly, the objectives underlying these principles will gradually be realized through the digitalization of services. In the realization of justice, one of the most important issues in adjudication concerns the processing of cases and the acceleration of proceedings. Today, most countries employ various methods and instruments to expedite adjudicatory processes, one of which is the use of intelligent and electronic tools. Accordingly, within the adjudicatory system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, electronic instruments have been implemented both to advance the objectives of the country's administrative system and to protect citizens' rights in adjudicatory matters through intelligent and efficient mechanisms. This study therefore examines the effects of the secure use of such instruments and their expanded application as an important requirement of administrative adjudication. Moreover, humankind has recognized the concept of justice since the beginning of civilization and has continuously sought to establish it. Through the intelligent automation of processes, difficulties in the operation of the legal adjudicatory system may be overcome, while electronic adjudication, as a modern process, can contribute to resolving such difficulties, advancing the fundamental objectives of law, and securing justice within the framework of the law in the shortest possible time. Electronic adjudication has yielded significant benefits by reducing temporal and geographical constraints and lowering the costs of systems for resolving administrative disputes. Access to electronic justice is therefore a necessity for a modern administrative adjudication system. Through careful planning and appropriate investment, the benefits of this principle can be realized and justice can be made accessible to all individuals. Access to electronic justice in administrative adjudication means utilizing information technology to facilitate public access to judicial services.

2. Foundations of the Research

2.1. *Concept of the Principle of Access to Justice*

In a world in which information technology continuously opens new frontiers, legal systems are likewise compelled to adapt to these transformations. Historically, the "principle of access to justice," as a cornerstone of a just society, has emphasized the availability of legal avenues through which all citizens may vindicate their rights. However, in confronting the complexities of relations between citizens and government, particularly in the field of administrative adjudication, and with the emergence of digital instruments, this principle has acquired a broader scope. "Access to electronic justice in administrative adjudication" refers to the use of technology to facilitate, accelerate, and enhance the transparency of dispute-resolution processes between individuals and public institutions. This approach can not only remove traditional financial, geographical, and bureaucratic barriers but also has the potential to establish a more accountable, efficient, and ultimately more just administrative justice system. This study examines the dimensions and characteristics of this emerging concept in order to demonstrate how technology can serve as a bridge toward justice that is accessible to all. By seeking to enhance the "principle of access to justice" through digitalization, this approach accelerates and facilitates the registration and pursuit of claims, reduces the financial and temporal costs imposed on the parties, and increases the transparency and accountability of the administrative-judicial system. Among its most important advantages are the elimination of geographical barriers and the expansion of access. Nevertheless, the full realization of this principle requires overcoming challenges such as ensuring access for persons lacking digital literacy, protecting data security, guaranteeing the legal validity of electronic documents, and strengthening technological infrastructure. Overall, access to electronic justice constitutes an essential step toward establishing an efficient, inclusive administrative adjudication system responsive to the requirements of the contemporary era. The existence of rules and standards whose observance in adjudication and the judicial system contributes to the realization of justice is among the most important characteristics of a fair judicial system.

2.2. *Concept of Electronic Adjudication*

Electronic adjudication consists of two components: adjudication, on the one hand, and its electronic or virtual dimension, on the other. The concept of adjudication, whether criminal or civil, concerns the procedural dimension of legal science. Adjudication encompasses matters such as the examination of cases, notification of hearing dates, presentation of evidence, inquiries, electronic exchange of written submissions, and filing of petitions. The virtualization of adjudicatory proceedings means that each of these procedural activities is conducted through technological tools and facilities, such as internet-based platforms and similar mechanisms. In practice, paper case files that were previously drafted, registered, and archived in a physical and tangible form are now stored and recorded as electronic files through computer systems, occupying less physical space and potentially providing greater security. Some scholars, employing the term “information,” have stated that virtual adjudication refers to the electronic transmission of information existing within the court environment. Such information may include evidence, court orders and determinations (decisions, interlocutory orders, or judgments), jury decisions, admissions by the defendant, witness statements, and other relevant information (Shahbazinia & Abdollahi, 2017). The emergence of the concept of virtual adjudication is readily understandable in light of contemporary information-management initiatives, because the management and exchange of “information” within virtual adjudication and the judicial justice system are thereby facilitated. In some contexts, however, the concept of electronic adjudication is presented in a broader sense. For example, the establishment of virtual legal libraries that publish scholarly articles and even summaries of judicial decisions and that, particularly in common-law systems based on precedent, facilitate the rapid adjudicatory work of lawyers and judges in individual cases may also be considered related to electronic adjudication. It is preferable, however, to regard such facilities as mechanisms that enhance and develop electronic adjudication rather than as constituent elements of the concept itself. Examples of such websites and virtual libraries include Westlaw and HeinOnline (Mehrafshan, 2011).

3. **The Rule of Law and Access to Justice in Electronic Administrative Proceedings in the Jurisprudence of the Administrative Justice Court**

For the purpose of guaranteeing the rule of law within the country's administrative system, the Administrative Justice Court, as the authority responsible for hearing grievances and complaints lodged by individuals against the decisions and actions of governmental bodies, performs an important function. Electronic adjudication within the Administrative Justice Court is gradually expanding with the objective of increasing the speed, efficiency, and transparency of case processing. This transformation, however, raises important questions concerning observance of the principle of the rule of law in electronic procedures. The use of electronic systems in the Administrative Justice Court must conform to existing laws and regulations. Any modification of adjudicatory practices and procedures resulting from digitalization must have a legal basis and must be communicated transparently. The Administrative Justice Court must ensure that all individuals, irrespective of geographical location, financial capacity, or technical knowledge, have access to electronic adjudicatory facilities. This includes providing the necessary training, establishing public access centers, and offering technical support services. The Court must also adopt the necessary measures to safeguard individual privacy and the security of personal information within electronic systems. Such measures include the use of appropriate security technologies, staff training, and compliance with applicable privacy laws. The case-review process before the Administrative Justice Court must be transparent and accessible to the parties. This includes providing complete information concerning procedural stages, enabling access to case documents and records, and offering adequate explanations for decisions adopted. The Administrative Justice Court must assume responsibility for decisions based on electronic information and data. This entails establishing appropriate mechanisms for identifying and correcting potential errors and ensuring accountability for damage resulting from erroneous decisions. The Court's role in interpreting laws relating to electronic adjudication is also significant in defining the scope and limits of this process. Its decisions concerning the validity of electronic documents, electronic signatures, identity authentication, and other related matters can serve as guidance for other judicial and administrative authorities. In view of these considerations, the Administrative Justice Court appears to be seeking to adapt to digital transformation, although substantial challenges remain in ensuring observance of the principle of the rule of law in electronic procedures. Within the legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the rule of law refers to the governance of Islamic legal rules as embodied in statutory law. More specifically, within the Iranian legal system, legal rules generally occupy a superior position to legal principles within the hierarchy of legal

norms (Tabatabaei Motameni, 2008). Accordingly, where an applicable legal rule exists, judges of the Administrative Justice Court will issue the required decision on the basis of that rule; where the statutory law lacks explicitness, they may rely upon a specific legal principle or reasoning grounded in that principle and proceed to formulate and issue their judgment.

3.1. Principle of Legality in Electronic Administrative Proceedings: Compliance with Legal Standards and the Requirement that Decisions Be Supported by Legal Authority and Duly Reasoned

The principle of legality in electronic administrative proceedings means that every adjudicatory process, whether traditional or electronic, must be fully grounded in law. In relation to electronic adjudication before the Administrative Justice Court, this means that all stages—from electronic filing of the petition, authentication of the parties, exchange of written submissions, and service of notifications to the issuance of the judgment—must be conducted within the framework of existing laws, including the Law on the Organization and Procedure of the Administrative Justice Court, the Electronic Commerce Law, and other relevant legislation. Even where a new system is introduced, it must possess a legal basis. Rules governing electronic adjudication must be transparent and publicly accessible so that all individuals know which legal provisions govern the process. Electronic adjudication must not result in the violation of fundamental principles of legislation or adjudication; for example, it must neither restrict access to justice nor disregard defense rights. Every judgment or order issued by the Court must be based upon the evidence and materials submitted in the case, which may now also exist in electronic form. Such materials include written submissions, attachments, expert opinions, and similar documents. As regards the requirement of reasoned decision-making, merely stating the outcome is insufficient. The judge or adjudicatory panel must clearly explain the legal and rational grounds supporting its conclusion. Such reasoning must be logical, comprehensible, and grounded in applicable legal standards. In electronic adjudication, this reasoning must take into account the available electronic documents and information as well as rules specific to electronic proceedings, including the validity of electronic signatures and the evidentiary value of electronic data. When the Administrative Justice Court conducts its proceedings electronically, it must ensure that both the procedures and the resulting decisions remain within the framework of the “rule of law.” In other words, all measures must be legally grounded; procedures must be fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory; decision-making and operational processes must be transparent; and responsible officials must remain accountable for their decisions. As the principal authority for administrative grievances, the Administrative Justice Court has taken important steps toward developing electronic adjudication through the use of modern technologies. Nevertheless, this transformation requires particular attention to the “principle of legality” and to “compliance with legal standards and the requirement that decisions be supported by legal authority and duly reasoned.” These two principles constitute fundamental components of the rule of law in every legal system and ensure that governmental power is exercised within the framework of law and that citizens’ rights and freedoms are respected (Tabatabaei Motameni, 2008).

3.2. The Principle of the Rule of Law in Legal Reasoning and Reliance on Authorities in Electronic Administrative Proceedings

The Persian term for reasoning (*estidlāl*), derived from the root meaning “reason” or “proof,” linguistically signifies seeking a reason and presenting an argument. In logic, reasoning refers to discovering unknown propositions through known propositions. For example, logicians may state that “the world is subject to change” and that “everything subject to change is originated,” and from these known propositions derive the previously unknown proposition that “the world is originated.” Reasoning also refers to setting out reasons for a person's assertions, arguing persuasively or participating in discussion and dialogue, and any cognitive process preceded by prior knowledge and information that leads to the emergence of new ideas and epistemic findings (Fazli Maqsoudi, 2006). In civil matters, pursuant to Article 194 of the Code of Civil Procedure of the Public and Revolutionary Courts, enacted in 2000, evidence refers to that which the parties invoke in order to prove or defend a claim. Nevertheless, evidence is not used exclusively to prove or defend claims, because the exercise of rights in social relations may require the presentation and proof of evidence even where such relations have not been brought before judicial authorities in the form of litigation. In some cases, evidence is itself a prerequisite for the exercise of a right (Katouzian, 2010). Reasoning may also be defined as “substantiating a proposition for the purpose of proving it or its contrary and constitutes an inference drawn by the court from the facts of the matter under consideration and from the evidence presented by the parties.” In countries such as the United States and England, where legal thought concerning adjudication is strongly centered on judicial

precedent, legal reasoning is a mental process through which judges reach conclusions for resolving disputes. In countries such as France and Germany, where legal thought is more strongly centered on legislation, legal reasoning is a cognitive process through which the rationality and consistency of legal theories are established and justified (Kazemi, 2011). Electronic administrative adjudication, despite all its potential advantages in increasing efficiency and access to justice, also presents significant challenges to the realization of the principle of the rule of law, particularly in the fields of reasoning and reliance on legal authorities. The findings of this analysis indicate that safeguarding the rule of law in this emerging environment requires careful attention to the validity and authenticity of electronic documents, accuracy in the interpretation of and reasoning based on digital data, and guarantees of the parties' defense rights. As a leading institution, the Administrative Justice Court can take effective steps toward the full conformity of electronic administrative adjudication with fundamental rule-of-law principles by adopting measures such as continuously developing and updating laws and procedures governing electronic evidence; ensuring that rules governing the admissibility and validation of electronic documents comply with Islamic and statutory legal standards; establishing secure mechanisms for preserving the integrity and authenticity of data and preventing their manipulation; providing continuous education concerning the identification, evaluation, and use of electronic evidence in legal reasoning; ensuring equal access to information and equal opportunities to challenge and examine electronic evidence; promoting transparency in reasoning processes; and requiring judges to provide clear and substantiated explanations concerning their reliance upon electronic evidence and the conclusions derived from it. Ultimately, the success of electronic administrative adjudication depends on transforming technology into an instrument for strengthening justice, transparency, and legality while preventing any diminution of the fundamental values and principles of the judicial system. This requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that takes into account both theoretical considerations and practical challenges (Shahbazinia & Abdollahi, 2017).

3.3. *The Nature of the Requirement for Reasoned Judgments in Electronic Administrative Proceedings*

As previously noted, the principle of the rule of law constitutes the backbone of fair and accountable legal systems. In administrative adjudication, this principle finds a particular manifestation in the requirement that "judgments be reasoned." The reasoned character of a judgment is not merely a procedural formality; rather, it has a fundamental nature that ensures observance of the law, procedural justice, and the rights of the parties. With the introduction of modern technologies and the development of electronic administrative adjudication, this concept has encountered new challenges. These range from the complex nature of electronic evidence and the need to ensure its authenticity to the requirement of expeditious proceedings, all of which affect judicial reasoning and reliance on legal authorities. Focusing on the Administrative Justice Court, this section examines the nature of the requirement for reasoned judgments in light of the principle of the rule of law within this emerging environment. Its purpose is to explain precisely the legal and technical requirements of this concept, identify practical barriers and challenges, and present approaches for ensuring the issuance of reasoned judgments consistent with applicable legal standards in the digital era, so that transparency and justice remain at the heart of administrative adjudication. For judicial decisions to embody genuine reasoning, the judge must fully observe the rule of law as an element of the reasoning process and must comply with logical rules. To distinguish right from wrong, the judge must understand the relevant terminology and its implications so that the judgment remains free from ambiguity and vagueness. Reasoning based on logic is a necessary condition for constructing rational arguments, while logic serves to teach the proper method of thinking and thereby establishes the foundation for sound reasoning and proper judgment (Sadrolhefazi, 2013).

Reasoning consists of three elements: the minor premise, the major premise, and the conclusion. The minor premise consists of "the specific facts of a dispute together with the particular circumstances of a legal issue." These facts are not simply given; rather, they must be understood and described, which itself requires interpretation and evaluation, because legally relevant facts in a dispute are not merely a collection of information but are primarily facts that have been selected and classified according to legal categories. Legal rules are regarded as the "major premise," which is applied in light of the particular factual circumstances, while the conclusion consists of applying the rule to a specific dispute or legal issue. The resulting determination is a responsibility-imposing decision that directly affects persons in specific situations (Kazemi, 2011). The manner in which the minor and major premises are integrated, logical concepts are identified, and the premises necessary for deriving a conclusion are constructed contributes to the clarity and persuasive capacity of judicial expression. Because premises facilitate

acceptance of a conclusion, where they are clear and demonstrable, sound reason ordinarily leads to acceptance of the result; conversely, where the premises are unclear, no reliable conclusion can be reached. Likewise, a reasoned and authoritative judgment is considered valid only so long as knowledgeable and rational observers are able to accept the conclusions derived from its premises. Resolution of the parties' dispute is not the sole objective of a judgment; the public at large is also an audience of judicial decision-making. Accordingly, the conclusion must provide a transparent explanation of why it was reached, the proposition around which it is structured, and the basis upon which it rests, and must consequently be founded upon legal and rational reasons. This analysis demonstrates that the principle of the rule of law, through its emphasis on reasoned judgments, plays a vital role in ensuring the validity and legitimacy of administrative adjudication. In electronic administrative adjudication, this principle has not only retained its position but has acquired still greater importance and complexity in view of the novel character of digital evidence and procedures. A judgment supported by relevant authorities and properly reasoned—based on careful analysis of facts, reliance upon valid evidence, whether electronic or non-electronic, and observance of applicable laws and regulations—ensures transparency, reviewability, and confidence among the parties that the proceedings have been fair. Nevertheless, challenges such as interpreting and assessing the reliability of electronic evidence, verifying data authenticity, and balancing procedural speed against the depth of legal reasoning impede the full realization of this principle in electronic environments. These challenges highlight the need to revise judicial practices and tools and enhance the technical and legal knowledge of judges and experts. Ultimately, for electronic administrative adjudication to safeguard the rule of law effectively, mechanisms must be developed to protect the reasoned character of judgments against technical complexity and the evolving nature of electronic evidence. This requires the development of intelligent support tools, standardization of procedures and documentation, and continuous training of those involved in the judicial system so as to ensure that transparency, procedural justice, and accountability remain priorities and that judgments are not merely outputs generated by automated systems, but products of rigorous and well-supported legal reasoning (Fazli Maqsoudi, 2006).

3.3.1. Characteristics of a Reasoned Judgment under the Principle of the Rule of Law and Access to Justice in Electronic Administrative Proceedings

A judgment must be founded upon valid evidence and documentation presented in the case. In electronic adjudication, such evidence may include digital documents, emails, system logs, digital signatures, and other forms of electronic data. In the contemporary era, information and communication technologies have increasingly penetrated administrative and judicial processes, transforming electronic administrative adjudication into a practical reality. Within this context, the "principle of the rule of law," as a fundamental principle, continues to perform a central role in ensuring justice and efficiency. In an electronic environment, however, realization of this principle requires particular attention to the "reasoned nature of judgments." A reasoned judgment is not merely a formal procedural requirement; rather, it constitutes a principal safeguard ensuring the conformity of administrative decisions with the law, transparency of adjudicatory processes, and effective defense of citizens' rights. The principal characteristics of a reasoned judgment in electronic administrative adjudication include reliance on valid evidence, including electronic evidence; transparent and logical legal reasoning; transparency in the reasoning process; accessibility and the capacity of the parties to understand and challenge the decision; and technical and judicial impartiality in the evaluation of evidence. These characteristics acquire particular importance in light of the challenges associated with electronic adjudication, including data authenticity, information security, and technical complexity. Accordingly, with particular emphasis on the Administrative Justice Court, this study examines these characteristics and the manner in which they may be realized in judicial practice, with the aim of clarifying relevant legal and technical requirements and providing practical approaches for ensuring the issuance of reasoned judgments consistent with the principle of the rule of law.

3.3.2. Necessity of Aligning the Principle of the Rule of Law and Access to Justice with the Requirement of Reasoned Judgments in Electronic Administrative Proceedings

Electronic administrative adjudication has acquired a significant position as an efficient means of facilitating access to justice and accelerating adjudicatory procedures. Nevertheless, the full realization of the objectives of this modern system requires strict conformity with fundamental legal principles, particularly the "principle of the rule of law." Within this framework, the

“reasoned nature of judgments” performs a critical role. A reasoned judgment is not only a legal obligation but also a practical necessity for guaranteeing transparency, accountability, and procedural justice in electronic administrative adjudication.

The importance and necessity of reasoned judgments are such that where judicial decisions, particularly those of administrative authorities, lack transparency or adequate reasoning, or where weak and contradictory arguments are presented regarding the subject matter of the dispute and the applicable legal provisions, those decisions will lack adequate justification and remain vulnerable to challenge. The principle that judicial judgments must be supported by legal authority and duly reasoned, in accordance with the rule of law, has been emphasized by the legislature through various statutory provisions and has consequently become an indispensable requirement. In this respect, it may be stated that “the foundation of every judgment rests upon reasoning and careful analysis of the subject matter. A reasoned judgment, in addition to being supported by strong evidence and documentation, must embody the reasoning of the judge who issued it. Such reasoning may respond to the parties’ arguments through analysis of the claimant’s allegations, expert opinions, and the matters stated in the petition, or it may be expressed for the purpose of explaining and justifying the operative content of the judgment” (Najabatkhah, 2016).

The rule of law is one of the fundamental principles applicable to every adjudicatory process. The extent to which courts reason from and rely upon law represents a manifestation of justice and rights-based adjudication, thereby creating and safeguarding an appropriate judicial environment and contributing to the realization of fair proceedings. It also constitutes a powerful safeguard against judicial arbitrariness and helps prevent its emergence and proliferation. In fact, judicial decisions cannot properly be issued without adherence to legal requirements; this is possible only where judgments are reasoned, supported by legal authority, and judges are required consistently to comply with the rules and principles governing judicial institutions. Disregard for legal standards and departure from prescribed criteria are incompatible with the judicial function of distinguishing legal right from wrong. The statement of reasons in judgments, as a requirement for reasoned judicial decision-making in furtherance of judicial justice, reassures the parties as to the correctness of the proceedings and the judgment rendered and, ultimately, validates the judge’s reasoning. It also satisfies the parties’ legitimate interest in understanding why a decision has been reached and constitutes a strong guarantee for public freedoms and legal rights. Such a practice strengthens judicial decisions and jurisprudence while contributing to citizens’ social security and justice within the judicial system.

3.4. *The Principle of the Rule of Law and Access to Justice in Relation to the Method of Reasoning Judicial Decisions and Its Effect on Electronic Administrative Proceedings*

Where the parties to a dispute, or any other person, can clearly ascertain from the court’s judgment the legal grounds for the losing party’s liability, and where the evidence contained in the case requires the court to issue a decision on the basis of an act or legal event invoked by the claimant, the claimant may nevertheless be unsuccessful for one of two reasons: either the claimant fails to establish the alleged act or event through legally admissible evidence and established methods of proof, or, even where that act or event is established, it does not, under any valid legal provision, create the legal entitlement sought by the claimant. In either situation, the formulation of the court’s judgment must rest upon legal reasoning and evidentiary grounds (Fazaeli, 2018). Accordingly, judicial reasoning must operate within a defined framework, and the judge must be familiar with the use of legal sources and methods of legal reasoning. The judge’s ability to examine and evaluate the parties’ evidence and establish a relationship between the subject matter of the proceedings and the laws governing it provides the basis for issuing a judicial decision grounded in logical reasoning. Just as reasoning is inseparable from the issuance of judicial decisions, the manner in which such reasoning is constructed is equally important. Reasoning must therefore be correct and logical in order for the judgment to be acceptable to its audience. Matters concerning evidence that must be addressed in order for a judicial decision to be adequately reasoned include, first, justification for accepting and relying upon any evidence or investigative procedure and, second, justification for rejecting or declining to rely upon such evidence. From a formal perspective, a judgment issued by a court must, in addition to its introductory section, contain two distinct components:

(a) the reasons justifying the judge’s view; and (b) the operative part of the judgment, or the conclusion in its strict sense.

The judge must identify the reasons supporting the adopted position and establish the relevant factual and legal grounds by relying upon general principles of law, rules governing proof of judgments and claims, including external evidence, statutory provisions, and the spirit of the law, and must thereafter issue the judgment in the form of its operative part. Such a judgment terminates the dispute and constitutes the culmination of the judge’s reasoning.

In judicial decisions, the introductory section is generally followed by the reasoning and then the conclusion. For example, in an action brought by a claimant against a defendant, the judgment may state that, considering that [...], the action is inadmissible and, pursuant to Articles [...], an order dismissing the claim or declaring it inadmissible is issued. In some decisions of judges of the Administrative Justice Court, however, the introductory section first presents a summary of the case, while the conclusion of the reasoning is stated at the very beginning of the judgment and is subsequently justified. In one judgment, for example, the judge ordered the stabilization or formal recognition of a specified amount of commercial floor area in a registered property located in Tehran. Following the complainant's application and lawful service upon the municipality, the respondent municipality failed to submit a written defense, and ultimately a judgment was issued and served ordering the municipality to recognize the commercial use of the constructed premises on the relevant registered property. In another judgment, however, because the matter concerned an approved development and public project adopted by the Islamic City Council, and the complainant sought annulment of a decision by the municipality's administrative and financial deputy, the complaint was dismissed as unfounded on the basis that the property was situated on the eastern side of the public laundry facility and in view of the stated implementation requirements, urgency, and necessity of the project. Where the proper sequence of reasoning and inference is not observed in judicial decisions, the method of drafting the judgment is defective. Substantively, therefore, a judge must observe three stages in formulating a reasoned judgment for the resolution of a dispute: first, establishing the facts; second, applying the relevant legal rule to those facts; and third, deriving the conclusion. These three stages collectively occupy the judge's reasoning process, and their coherent and consistent observance reflects the value of judicial decisions. Otherwise, the resulting decision lacks adequate judicial value. Where the parties present evidence establishing the facts of the dispute clearly, or where those facts are independently established by the judge, the factual truth may be discovered; nevertheless, the ultimate issuance of a judgment consistent with those established facts remains particularly important for the administration of judicial justice. Accordingly, all matters giving rise to the conditions for application of a legal rule must be clearly articulated (Fazaeli, 2018).

The Constitution and other laws emphasize the requirement that judicial decisions be reasoned; indeed, reasoned judgments are necessary for preserving the authority of judicial institutions and maintaining legal order. Where a judge issues a decision solely on the basis of reasons personally accepted by that judge while avoiding the duty to provide legal reasoning, social disorder may result. Conversely, even where a judgment is adverse to one of the parties, if it is supported by adequate reasoning, the losing party is less likely to resist compliance with it, thereby contributing to social stability and order in social relations. Accordingly, in every adjudicatory proceeding, counsel's reasoning in defense of the client's rights seeks to persuade the judge to vindicate those rights within the legal order, while the judge's reasoning, correspondingly, seeks to satisfy the judge's own judicial conscience, the reviewing court, and both parties to the dispute. Reasoning is the principal characteristic of a strong judgment and a criterion for assessing the strength or weakness of judicial decisions. Some legal scholars maintain that what resolves a dispute is not the judge's personal belief but the judgment through which the legal right is determined. Accordingly, where a judgment is adequately reasoned, supervisory authorities and both parties can recognize that the decision was reached impartially and logically, thereby promoting justification, persuasion, and acceptance of the judgment among the parties and other relevant audiences (Abolhamd, 2007).

4. Conclusion

A successful electronic administrative adjudication system is one in which technology serves law and justice. If technical infrastructure overshadows fundamental legal principles—for example, if procedural speed prevails over defense rights or digital access becomes exclusive—this innovation will not only fail to achieve its principal objective but may also undermine the legitimacy of the adjudicatory system. Maintaining an appropriate balance between digital efficiency and traditional legal safeguards is therefore the principal key to success in this field. Examining the concept of access and its constituent elements is the first step toward explaining access to justice. In its general sense, access means attaining or selecting the intended objective. From the legislature's perspective, this objective may sometimes be reflected in substantive-procedural mechanisms and in the design of legislation relating to access, or it may refer to the selection of methods of legal drafting from the perspective of users, who can be divided into two distinct groups: specialized and general users. Actors such as judges, lawyers, and experts constitute specialized users, while members of the public are regarded as general users. In advancing access to

justice, after conceptual clarification and identification of its manifestations, the relevant principles must be selected and observed through the enactment of appropriate laws and the expansion of their practical application. Methods of access to justice must then be examined. In the contemporary digital era, electronic methods constitute one of the most important mechanisms for achieving justice in adjudicatory proceedings. Within the procedural dimension of legal science, electronic adjudication, as a compound concept, consists of two components: first, adjudication, and second, its electronic or virtual dimension. In practice, the electronic transmission of information maintained by courts in connection with case files constitutes the core meaning of electronic adjudication. It may therefore be concluded that electronic adjudication should employ electronic methods and mechanisms to accelerate proceedings and prevent delays characteristic of traditional adjudication. Although it must be acknowledged that electronic courts may not initially be fully developed and may contain shortcomings at the beginning of their operation, the use of electronic instruments in administrative adjudication to prevent unnecessary expenditure of time, energy, and other resources and to facilitate the prompt vindication of rights—one of the requirements of fair adjudication—constitutes an essential procedural necessity. In view of technical considerations, however, comprehensive and mandatory resort to fully electronic adjudication is neither always feasible nor necessarily justified. Despite all the stated necessities, such forms of adjudication may require continuous updating and further development for at least another decade before optimal conditions are achieved. The manner in which intelligent process automation and the digitalization of administrative adjudicatory matters facilitate access to the principle of electronic justice within Iran's administrative system is therefore of substantial importance. In an era in which information and communication technology (ICT) performs a central role in development and process facilitation, judicial and administrative systems are likewise compelled to keep pace with these transformations.

Nevertheless, significant difficulties remain within the country's judicial geography, including the absence of adequate technical infrastructure, insufficient internet bandwidth, users' lack of or limited familiarity with electronic adjudication services, the absence of comprehensive and coherent legislation governing electronic adjudication, and the need to ensure and mandate secure environments for information and for the authentication of persons in electronic proceedings. Other important challenges concerning fundamental principles of judicial decision-making include preventing inappropriate intervention by static or non-dynamic intelligent systems, preserving the rights of litigants while retaining appropriate traditional mechanisms, ensuring network security and protection of privacy, and maintaining a proper balance between computerized processing time and human capacities. Accordingly, despite these challenges, the complete elimination of the traditional adjudicatory system is neither feasible nor necessarily desirable. Rather, an electronic administrative adjudication system can enhance the efficiency of administrative proceedings through their optimization and can operate as an alternative or complementary mechanism to traditional adjudication. A substantial majority within the legal community, particularly jurists, maintain that, in view of the absence of comprehensive and adequate infrastructure for adjudication in Iran and the existence of other major challenges, the Iranian legal system has not yet fully adapted to contemporary technological conditions. Nevertheless, because the digitalization of adjudicatory matters facilitates interactions, it can increase the speed and quality of proceedings, improve judicial supervision, and enhance evaluative capacities through the production of comparative, analytical, periodic, and benchmarking reports. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that the intelligent automation of administrative proceedings is not merely a technological choice but a strategic requirement for improving administrative integrity and strengthening public confidence in the judicial system. Its central conclusion is that movement toward an intelligent administrative system founded upon electronic justice constitutes a necessary step toward safeguarding citizens' rights and realizing inclusive justice in contemporary society.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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