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## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research (IJLAR), a distinguished platform dedicated to the dissemination of comprehensive legal scholarship and academic research. Our mission is to foster an environment where legal professionals, academics, and students can collaborate and contribute to the evolving discourse in the field of law. We strive to publish high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that provide insightful analysis, innovative perspectives, and practical solutions to contemporary legal challenges. The IJAR is committed to advancing legal knowledge and practice by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

## **Preface**

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in legal scholarship. This volume presents a curated selection of articles that reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of legal studies today. Our contributors, ranging from esteemed legal scholars to emerging academics, bring forward a rich tapestry of insights that address critical legal issues and offer novel contributions to the field. We are grateful to our editorial board, reviewers, and authors for their dedication and hard work, which have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and will inspire further inquiry and debate within the legal community.

## **Description**

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is an academic journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles on a wide range of legal topics. Each issue is designed to provide a platform for legal scholars, practitioners, and students to share their research findings, theoretical explorations, and practical insights. Our journal covers various branches of law, including but not limited to constitutional law, international law, criminal law, commercial law, human rights, and environmental law. We are dedicated to ensuring that the articles published in our journal adhere to the highest standards of academic rigor and contribute meaningfully to the understanding and development of legal theories and practices.

# **DIGITAL PRISONS AND REHABILITATION IN INDIA: A REVIEW OF TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED CORRECTIONAL INTERVENTIONS**

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## **Introduction**

The rehabilitative ideal is placed in a paradigmatic place in the penal philosophy of India based on its constitutional obligation to human dignity, reformatory justice, and the humane treatment of the imprisoned individuals. The judicial interpretation and policy expression has always stated that incarceration is not the goal of punishment but an institutional tool that is aimed at behaviour modification and ultimate social rejoining. Numerous times, the Supreme Court has emphasized that the lack of liberty does not imply the loss of humanity and correctional facilities should be places of reform and not only of containment. But this powerful normative base has not been put into practiced prison in an even way. The long-term overcrowding, in-built resource shortages and deep-rooted custodial cultures have continued to limit successful achievement of the rehabilitative objectives in Indian prisons.<sup>1</sup>

This enduring disparity between constitutional desire and institutional fact has been met by periodic reform, most recently in taking on board digital technologies in the management of prisons. In the last 20 years, a number of states have added electronic inmate databases, digital record keeping systems, web-based interfaces to service delivery, and technology mediated mechanisms of communication and accessing healthcare. These measures are often explained by

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Police Research and Development. *Model Prison Manual 2016*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs; 2016.

the terms of efficiency, transparency, and coordination especially when dealing with the magnitude and complexity of the prisoners in India. Nevertheless, digital digitisation should not be framed as merely an administrative solution because it carries more profound legal and penological implications.

Technology is not like the classical way of reformation of administration whereby it only enhances processes but changes the way of governance. The structure of discretion is reorganized through digital systems, the mediation of rights and services is introduced, and the balance between the incarcerated person and the state is redefined. Technological mediation gains an extra value in custodial settings, where autonomy has already been highly restricted. Classification, communication, healthcare, and parole decisions are ever more flowing through electronic systems, casting doubt about their efficiency and bringing into question the nature of fairness, accountability, and dignity.

Although the pace at which prisons are being digitised in India has been very high, the effects of this on rehabilitation have not been explored in legal and criminological literature. Those already discussed are more concerned with administrative modernisation or security improvement, with rehabilitative outcomes being somewhat implicit. This omission is especially uncomfortable considering the fact that rehabilitation is firmly held and constitutionally as a fundamental goal of punishment and not a discretionary gain.

This gap is the focus of the current paper, which seeks to conduct a systematic review of technology-based correctional interventions in India where the main analytical focus will be on rehabilitation. Instead of repositioning digitisation as a neutral or unavoidable administrative modernization, the paper questions the reorganization of access to rehabilitative services via digital systems, the restructuring of institutional power relations, and the mediation of the interactions between prisoners and healthcare, education, legal assistance, and family networks through digital systems. By so doing, the paper contextualises the process of digitising prisons within the overall discussions of constitutional governance, rights in custodial facilities and the changing framework of punishment in modern India.

## **2. History: Indian Prison Administration and Rehabilitative Responsibilities.**

The prison management in India is under a federal system whereby states are the main responsibility with constitutional mandates and regulatory tools. The Model Prison Manual defines rehabilitation as one of the key aims of imprisonment, clearly understanding it as the means of education and vocational training, health care, and maintenance of social ties, which are the inseparable parts of the correctional government.<sup>2</sup>

The judicial interventions are important in the constitutionalisation of prison reform in India. The courts have continually accepted that prisoners are still subjects of basic rights, but their rights are constrained only in so far as the limitations are inherent parts of imprisonment.<sup>3</sup> This jurisprudence has revolutionised the legal status of prisoners into the role of rights-bearing individuals, with a right to human treatment, procedural fairness and dignity. In this context, rehabilitation becomes not only a policy option but even a binding constitutional value being closely intertwined with the right to live and individual freedom.

Nonetheless, Indian prisons present a more limited institutional environment due to the empirical realities they represent. Prison records always reveal overcrowds, inadequate facilities, and extreme lack of trained personnel especially in healthcare, mental health, and education sectors, which have long since diminished the quality of rehabilitative programming that is more of a peak than of regular practice.<sup>4</sup>

It is in this background of continued institutional tension that digital technologies have been brought in as remedial measures. Digitisation has been positioned as a way of simplifying administration, improving coordination among departments and reducing human resource constraints. The electronic databases say they will be accurate, traceable; virtual interfaces claim to work across the service delivery gaps; data-driven systems are said to rationalise classification

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Supreme Court of India. *Sunil Batra v Delhi Administration*. AIR 1978 SC 1675.

<sup>4</sup> National Crime Records Bureau. *Prison Statistics India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs; various years

and decision-making processes. These developments seem to be necessary and inevitable in terms of administration.

However the impacts of digitisation on law and penology are far greater than those on efficiency by managers. Digital systems are not neutral vectors, but they incorporate specific values, priorities, and assumptions regarding governance. They dictate access to services by whom, on what terms and to what degree of discretion or control. The mediation of welfare by technology has become a pressing issue in custodial settings where vulnerability is structurally produced and places serious concerns on exclusion, consent, surveillance, and accountability.

Besides, rehabilitation is social and personal and based on the principles of trust, discretion, and prolonged human contact. The growing dependence of digital infrastructures puts such relational dimensions at risk of being favouring standardisation and control. The comprehension of the digital prisons involves, thus, the necessity of going beyond the administrative narration and evaluating how technology transforms the rehabilitative processes, changes the ratio between care and control, and frees the boundaries of the rights of prisoners in the new model of the modern correctional governance.

### 3.1 Review Design

The present study uses the systematic review approach with a qualitative thematic synthesis, guided by PRISMA framework, which developed into the medical and health sciences research, but whose overall focus on transparency, replicability, and systematic reporting, points to the growing relevance of PRISMA to interdisciplinary legal and criminological research.<sup>5</sup> In disciplines like prison studies, where the boundary between doctrinal analysis, policy documentation and empirical research is blurred, systematic methods provide a way of bringing together the wide array of bodies of knowledge without losing the finesse of the analytical context. The choice to use a qualitative systematic review (as opposed to a meta-analytic design) is caused by the characteristics of the literature that is available as well as the research goals of the research.

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<sup>5</sup> Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA). *PLoS Med.* 2009;6(7):e1000097.

The academic material on the subject of digital prisons in India is methodologically diverse, with doctrinal legal analysis, policy reports, descriptive empirical studies, and conceptual discussion represented. These are not the materials that produce homogeneous outcome variables that can be aggregated statistically. A narrative thematic synthesis thus offers a methodologically suitable practice, which allows the cautious combination of legal norms, institutional practices, and empirical observations into a logical analytical framework.

Significantly, this review does not consider legal texts and policy documents as an addition to empirical evidence. They are, instead, analysed as constitutive sources that define the governance of digital prisons. This methodology is consistent with the traditional practices in legal study where systematic synthesis can frequently entail assessing the interplay of doctrinally relevant principles, institutional form, and practical implications and not the quantification of causal impacts.

### **3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy**

The search in literature was done in six major databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, HeinOnline, JSTOR, PubMed, and Google Scholar. The reason behind the choice of these platforms is the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, including legal studies, criminology, and general public policy, as well as research in prison health. Sources Database searches were complemented by specific searching of the official repositories where the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Crime Records Bureau, and the Bureau of Police Research and Development keep the most important policy documents and statistical reports regarding the Indian prisons.

Search strings were a combination of terms, which refer to prisons, digital technologies, and rehabilitation with a specific geographic scope on India. The keywords were the variations of the terms prison, jail, and correctional institution, as well as the terms like digital, technology-enabled, ICT, telemedicine, and e-governance, and rehabilitative terms, i.e., rehabilitation, reformatory, and reintegration. The searches were not restricted according to the discipline of publication, but they were restricted to the English-language sources to ensure consistency of analysis.

The search was between the year 2005 and the current time. This time limit indicates the time frame when massive digitisation projects started to affect the way of organising prisons in India as it can be said that the review will encompass not only the early talk about the concept but also the recent changes in the institutions.

### **3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.**

In order to make it relevant and analytical, the review used clear-cut inclusion and exclusion criteria in the screening phase. Materials to be included were peer-reviewed journal articles, official government publications, model regulatory instruments, and binding judicial decisions dealing with the technology or digitalisation in Indian prisons and exhibiting explicit or implicit interest in rehabilitation. Rehabilitation was also defined broadly as access to healthcare, education, socialization, skill training, and reintegration of the ex prisoners.

The exclusion criteria were applied when the materials considered their interest was limited to security surveillance, custodial discipline or technological enforcement mechanisms, and not to have a significant relationship with rehabilitative outcomes. Online commentaries that were non-verifiable, opinion pieces, media coverage, and unpublished abstracts of conferences were also eliminated to ensure academic rigor and reliability of sources.

### **3.4 Quality Appraisal and Screening Process.**

The screening was done in two phases. During the initial phase, titles and abstracts were analyzed to determine relevance in terms of the themes and jurisdictional scope. At this point, sources that were not involved with Indian prisons or not rehabilitative were eliminated. The second stage was carried out to identify substantive congruency to the research questions, where full-text screening was conducted.

The novelty of the sources included was refined to quality appraisal. Academic articles that were peer-reviewed were considered using the criteria of methodological clarity, the depth of analysis, and the level of interaction with the current scholarship. Authority, institutional provenance and normative relevance were evaluated in legal materials and policy documents. No scoring tool has

been used because the quantitative indicators used are not similar in other studies. As an alternative, the appraisal procedure focused on honesty and caution in the interpretation of results. The qualitative nature of the evidence base precluded statistical meta-analysis because of the lack of statistical diversity of the evidence base. Rather, thematic synthesis of findings was used, so that similar practices, tensions and normative issues could be found across sources whilst maintaining a sense of context-specificity.

#### **4.1 Results: Thematic Synthesis**

The systematic review generated the body of literature that, being institutionally discontinuous, still displays the thematic patterns that can be identified. Digitisation, according to its appearance across sources, is not a reform in and of itself, but rather a mediating infrastructure that alters the way in which rehabilitative goals are realised. The results are then thematically synthesized into six domains that relate and each have implications on rehabilitation.

#### **4.2 Rehabilitative Services Digital Access.**

Among the most frequently discovered impacts of digitisation of prisons is the access to rehabilitative services. Digitised record systems and electronic inmate databases have improved communication between prison administrations and other agencies outside the prison that provide healthcare services, legal services, and welfare services. Digital consolidation of records has also led to less administrative waste through documentation of records, which is attributed to manual documentation in various contexts, hence, enhancing efficiency in procedures.<sup>6</sup>

Rehabilitative wise, this kind of efficiency gains is important in the sense that it influences the timeliness and continuity of services. Delay of access is usually denied access in custodial settings especially in case of undertrial detainees and those sentenced to short terms. The fact that digitisation seems to alleviate some of these barriers can be explained in terms of standardised flows of information and less dependency on discretion on a case-by-case basis. Simultaneously, the literature does not present much empirical data that can directly correlate digital access

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<sup>6</sup> Jain A. Beyond walls: the e-prison revolution in the Indian criminal justice system. *Indian Journal of Law and Public Policy*.

mechanisms with better rehabilitative outcomes. Although administration facilitation is needed, it does not necessarily lead to substantive reform.

Furthermore, access to digital equipment is not evenly spread among institutions and types of prisoners. The limitations of infrastructure, uneven technological literacy of the staff, and various prioritisation of prisoners according to their status or classification determine the beneficiaries of digitised systems.

### **4.3 Mediation of Communication and Family Contact through technology.**

Digital communication technology has seen an upsurge in its use to allow contact between prisoners and family members to supplement or replace physical regimes of visitation altogether. The literature reviewed identically identifies the preservation of family relationships as one of the major elements of emotional stability in prison and a key issue of re-integration in the post-release phase.<sup>7</sup> Technology-based communication therefore has an inherent rehabilitative value in geographically isolated prisons or in areas where the physical visitation is logistically limited.

But, the topic of digital communication in prisons is hardly presented as a rehabilitative right. Rather, it is regularly controlled as a right to be checked, restricted, and withheld on a whim. Although they increase the chances of contacts, monitored electronic interfaces at the same time form institutional surveillance of intimate relationships. This two-fold role of technology: facilitation, and observation, demonstrates the ambiguous nature of technology in custody.

It is postulated in the literature that the benefits of digital communication in the context of the introduction of such communication without obvious rehabilitative aims and protective measures can be conditional and unequal. Indigent inmates and marginalized groups may be disenfranchised by access controls, cost, and infrastructural inequalities, and this watering down of the reintegrative promise of recurring family contact. By this meaning of rehabilitation, it is not only

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<sup>7</sup> Kaur P, Mahajan E. Communication patterns and technologies for prisoners in jails in India. *Journal of Correctional Studies*.

the availability of the technology which makes the rehabilitation dependable, but the normative framework on which the use is based.

#### **4.4 Telemedicine and Mental Healthcare.**

Telemedicine projects can be seen as one of the most welfare-oriented uses of technology in the Indian prisons. Prolonged inadequacy of medical practitioners especially psychiatrists and clinical psychologists has compromised the delivery of proper healthcare services to the incarcerated. Institutional response to these vulnerabilities has been developed through tele-health, which is officially acknowledged in provision of physical and mental healthcare services.<sup>8</sup>

In rehabilitative perspective, mental healthcare access takes a special significance. Institutional misconduct and recidivism after release go hand in hand with psychological distress, untreated mental illness, and substance dependence. Telemedicine can therefore have a potential not just as a cost-effective mechanism of service delivery but also as a rehabilitative platform with the potential of stabilising the mental and emotional wellbeing of prisoners.

Meanwhile, digitisation of healthcare brings in complicated ethical issues. The intermediation of clinical experiences with the help of digital infrastructure that is managed by the prison authorities makes established norms of confidentiality and informed consent difficult. The literature raises the issue of privacy of medical information, voluntariness of involvement in tele-consultations, and the suitability of digital platforms in treating trauma-intensive mental health requirements. The rehabilitative value of telemedicine is not denied by these concerns but highlights the importance of the strictly controlled implementation.

#### **4.5 Digital Literacy and Skill Development.**

The programs of digital literacy and skill building in prisons are often defended in the context of employability and lower recidivism. The triggering of exposure to rudimentary computer literacy, web-based navigation and digitised processes is positioned as a way of preparing inmates to fit

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs. *Guidelines on provision of telemedicine facilities for prison inmates*. Government of India.

into more digitised labour markets.<sup>9</sup>In the rehabilitative paradigm, such programs fit into larger objectives of economic self-sufficiency and social integration.

The limitations of both access and outcome assessment are however, very impressive in the reviewed literature. Online training programs tend to be limited to a few institutions and types of prisoners, often excluding those under trial and those with shorter sentences. Infrastructural constraints, security issues and lack of staff limited further programme access.

More to the point, limited evidence exists that digital skills that have been obtained in the prison lead to further employment after release. Devoid of being incorporated within larger reintegration models, e.g. certification recognition, employer collaboration and after-release provisions, digital literacy may be treated as merely reputational as opposed to transformational intervention. Rehabilitation in this respect cannot be limited to exposure to skills only, it must be sustained and connected to the institutions outside the prison gate.

#### **4.6 Data Governance, Risk Classification and Surveillance.**

The digitisation has greatly increased the size of the data production and use in Indian prisons. The centralised databases help in classifying risks, profiling of inmates and making administrative decisions regarding transfer, parole and remission. Administratively, such systems are offering consistency and traceability.<sup>10</sup>

In a rehabilitative sense, however, data-driven governance is very alarming. Data intensive or algorithm based classification systems are also susceptible to bias in case the underlying data is based on historical iniquities or prejudiced ratings. Such systems are opaque, which restricts the possibility of prisoners questioning unfavorable decisions, which weakens procedural fairness and accountability.

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<sup>9</sup>Nilotpal. Contemporary digital era and prison administration in India. *NSOU Open Journal*. 2026;1(1).

<sup>10</sup> Chandra U, et al. Correctional reforms and technological interventions in Indian prisons. *Indian Journal of Criminology*.

The literature warns that digitisation based on surveillance is a threat to the rehabilitation being re-framed as obedience to behaviour instead of engagement to change. In the context of technology being mainly an instrument of surveillance, the rehabilitative relationships between prisoners and institutional actors based on trust can be undermined. The absence of transparency and accountability in data centric rigid forms of governance ill serves rehabilitation that relies on an understanding of the circumstances and an individual capacity to change.

#### **4.7 Post-Release Reintegration and Services Continuity.**

Possibility of digital systems aiding the post release reintegration comes out as a recurring but not yet developed theme in the literature. In theory, digitised records and electronic documentation can help to enable continuity of healthcare, skill certification and access to welfare post-release.<sup>11</sup> Continuity is essential to maintenance of rehabilitative benefits accrued in incarceration.

In reality, however, cooperation between prison administrations and community-based agencies has been low. The digital records are usually institutionally isolated and there is little interoperability between offices that handle employment, healthcare and social welfare. Consequently, the community-based and custodial shift is still not cohesive, and it is against the rehabilitation long-term success.

According to the literature, digitisation is not likely to fulfil its rehabilitative potential without a manual implementation of digital prison systems into larger social service ecosystems. Technology is not enough to fill institutional discontinuities, it has to be part of an integrated reintegration strategy.

### **5. Discussion**

The thematic synthesis highlights the fact that the digital prisons in India do not offer a clear image of either progress or stagnation. Rather, they demonstrate a structurally ambivalent rehabilitative topology whereby technological proliferation is a source of both opportunity and limitation to the achievement of correctional goals. On the one hand, digital technologies widen the capacity of

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<sup>11</sup> National Crime Records Bureau. *Prison Statistics India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs; various years.

institutions in the environment, where overcrowding and lack of resources are characteristic. On the other, they are also susceptible to institutionalising administrative rationalities that factors rehabilitation out as a secondary issue as opposed to a major one.

The common theme in the literature reviewed is the focus of administrative efficiency above the rehabilitative intentionality. Digital systems are usually brought in to solve logistical issues - record management, coordination, staffing issues - without clear explanation of how the tools will be used to achieve reformative objectives. Rehabilitation then comes in as a by-product, contingent on the operationalisation of technology as opposed to a purposeful design principle that informs digitisation in itself.

This disparity is indicative of a larger governance conflict in Indian prison. Rehabilitation is naturally personal, discretionary and relational. It relies on trust, situational discretion and long-term interaction between prisoners and the institutions. Digital governance, in its turn, gives preference to standardisation, traceability, and control. Through these logics opposing each other, technology is threatening to redefine the rehabilitation process into a process of compliance that aims at tracking behaviours instead of transforming the individual.

Digitisation also, as the literature indicates, tends to increase inequalities that exist in prisons. The distributive effect of digital reforms is influenced by both the existence of different access to infrastructure and differences in institutional capacity between states and the exclusion of untrial populations. Technology can reproduce disparities in less visibly different ways as compared to neutralising it. The rehabilitation in digital conditions, therefore, becomes unevenly shared, which questions the issues of equity and fairness in the governance of corrections.

Meanwhile, an analytical reduction would be to rule out digital interventions as being out of alignment with reformative justice. The results show that technology has a real rehabilitative potential in case of the normative clarity and institutional responsibility. The examples of telemedicine projects, online communication platforms, and training programmes on skills development demonstrate the way in which technology can broaden access to services that are

usually limited by structural constraints. The issue is not the availability of technology but the lack of a rehabilitative model that would determine how to apply it.

This discussion thus leads to one main conclusion that is, digital prisons need not necessarily improve or deter rehabilitation. Their influence depends on the governance decisions. Devoid of clear rehabilitative aims, rights-based protections, and supervisory measures, digitisation stands to strengthen custodial authority in the name of modernisation. In these precautions though, technology can be used as an aid and not a replacement of reformatory justice.

## 6. Legal and Ethical Analysis

The jurisprudence of Indian constitutional law holds that the right to dignity, privacy, and humane treatment are not eliminated by incarceration except to the degree that the denial of liberty is lawful and inherent in the taking of rights.<sup>12</sup> This was the normative reference point of jurisprudence of prison reforms where incarceration was seen to deny prisoners their fundamental rights. Any increase of digital technologies in prisons should be assessed in these constitutional contexts, then. Online surveillance and Big Data governance are the two concepts that establish new levels of control over the lives of prisoners. The informational power of the state is increased through electronic monitoring, centralised data storage and risk classification systems, which are frequently accompanied by a lack of transparency or accountability systems. Although these systems can help to improve administrative control, they also increase the possibility of intrusive surveillance beyond fair penological purposes.

The issue of privacy obtains a certain urgency in custodial settings, where the consent is structurally limited. The use, storage, and collection of personal data, including medical information, brings up the concerns of informational self-determination. Telemedicine programs, such as, can enhance access to healthcare and, at the same time, put sensitive information under institutional pressure. The ethical issue is to make certain that welfare services access is not left conditional to the relinquishing of privacy that is more than what is constitutionally agreeable.

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<sup>12</sup> Supreme Court of India. *Sunil Batra v Delhi Administration*. AIR 1978 SC 1675.

Moreover, the use of data in decision-making, in such aspects as classification, parole, and transfer, involves the considerations of due process and fairness. In areas of operation subjected to algorithmic or digitised systems that affect the freedom of interest, the power of prisoners to comprehend, challenge, or request a look at such rulings becomes vital. The reviewed literature points to the lack of transparency in most of these systems, which casts doubt on the loss of procedural protection in technologically mediated governance.

The international comparative normative standards of digital rehabilitation place emphasis on proportionality, purpose limitation and consent in aiding the application of technology in the custodial contexts.<sup>13</sup> The frameworks do not usurp the Indian constitutional standards, but rather they provide useful caution guidance. They emphasize the fact that digitisation that focuses on rehabilitation needs to be clearly separated into surveillance-focused control, and it should be based on human rights values.

Ethically, the main threat is the normalisation of surveillance via the provision of welfare. With technologies mediating access to healthcare, communication or education and also monitoring behaviour, the distinction between care and control is obscured. When it is impossible to separate the participation of the rehabilitation process and observe everything around, the ethics of rehabilitation is undermined as it presupposes the trust and autonomy.

This legal and ethical discussion therefore supports one major finding of this paper, that technology in prisons is not simply a tool, but a judgmental decision. Its ability to align with rehabilitative justice relies on intentional legal design, principled constraints and tools of accountability that can maintain constitutional values in digitally mediated custodial spaces.

## 8. Policy Recommendations

The discussion that was conducted as the present review suggests that the rehabilitative capabilities of the digital prisons in India are based not only on the complexity of the technological equipment

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. *Digital rehabilitation in prisons*. Turin: UNICRI; 2024.

but rather on the normative and institutional conditions under which they are deployed. Policy interventions should then shift out of ad hoc digitisation to the rights-oriented and rehabilitation-based model of technological governance in prisons.

To start with, digital prison projects ought to be placed squarely on the rehabilitative goals by either a statutory or regulatory articulation. Nowadays, much of the technology-based intervention is being justified on an administrative basis leaving rehabilitative outcomes implicit and under-assessed. By defining rehabilitation as a directive intent clearly, normative guidance would help offer a clear direction to digital interventions and allow them to be evaluated using meaningful criteria, instead of efficiency metrics.

Second, information management policies in prisons are in dire need. The use, storage, sharing and collection of personal data of the prisoners should receive statutory protection, where special attention should be paid to medical and psychological data. The prisoners should be able to access simple data concerning the utilization of their data and the ways to appeal against unfavorable rulings based on digitised systems.

Third, equal access should be considered one of the fundamental design principles. There should not be selectivity in digital rehabilitation programs, as these should be available to a limited group of inmates and superior facilities. There should be the inclusion of undertrial inmates, short-term inmates and marginalised groups in the digital welfare services so that no technology allows technology to consolidate the hierarchies which are already in force. The staff training and infrastructural capacity must also be invested in so that the digital access is not continued to be unequal and symbolic. Lastly, the systems of digital prisons should be audited by independent oversight mechanisms. The functioning of the digital infrastructures should be reviewed by the external bodies which have technical and legal experience and determine their rehabilitative effect and adherence to the constitutional standards. Digitisation is likely to become self-justifying and beyond challenge without regulation, wrapped in the cloak of technical incomprehensibility.

## 9. Limitations

There are a number of limitations that should be noted to this review. To begin with, existing literature on digital prisons in India is institutionally unequal and there is much disparity in depth and quality between jurisdictions. The literature on empirical research assessing rehabilitative effects of digital interventions is quite scarce, which makes it impossible to come up with unambiguous conclusions about the effectiveness of it.

Although this methodology is suitable, it does not provide the opportunity to estimate cause and effect relationships in the process of digital intervention and rehabilitative outcomes. Third, the review is based mostly on published and publicly available sources, which might be biased in reflecting the lived experiences of prisoners with regard to digital governance. The discussion is usually dominated by institutional views, which do not address such crucial questions as agency, consent, and daily interaction with technology.

## 10. Future Research Agenda

Although digitization of prisons in India is not yet fully established, future studies in this area should focus more on longitudinal and outcome studies that could help measure the rehabilitative effect of technology in the long term. Follow-up of post-release outcomes: Access to healthcare, employment stability, and recidivism would give much-needed information on whether digital intervention offers long-term reformative benefits outside of incarceration. It is also necessary to include the points of view of prisoners. Qualitative studies of how imprisoned patients receive digitally mediated care, communication, and surveillance would contribute to a better comprehension of the ethical and treatment implications of digitisation. These studies would also contribute to unintentional omissions or harms that have been clouded by institutional discourses. The development of domestic policy can also be informed by comparative research which is well contextualised.

Lastly, legal scholars, criminologists, technologists, and public health researchers need to engage in inter-disciplinary collaboration to come up with holistic models of digital rehabilitation that combine the element of doctrinal integrity with institutional feasibility.

## 11. Conclusion

The idea of digital prisons in India is one of the major shifts in the governance of correction. They cannot be simply administrative modernisation, neither can they be blindly accepted and adopted as reform tools. Technology, as illustrated in this systematic review, is a factor that enhances access to rehabilitative services and presents new dangers of alienation, spying, and dispassion. Digital prisons are thus a contingent promise of rehabilitation as opposed to a promise of inherent rehabilitation.

Digitisation led by administrative expediency only will foster custodial control and make accountability more obscure. Technology can be used as a means of rehabilitation and not its replacement where it is incorporated into a constitutional system that is conscious of dignity, privacy, and fairness. After all, the dilemma concerning the Indian prison reform is not about the possibility of digitalisation, but how to control digital structures that will not betray the rehabilitative principles that lie at the core of the penal system. In this paper, it is suggested that rehabilitation should not be a by product of the technological change, but its direct and permanent goal.

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