CEBU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY-UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE

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Software Requirements Specifications

For

ALLY: Leveraging Digital Platforms to Enhance Access to Legal Aid

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I.   Executive Summary

Project Overview

ALLY (**Anonymous Legal Liaison for You**) is a secure, user-friendly, and anonymous digital platform designed to enhance access to legal aid. By leveraging technology, ALLY serves as a virtual bridge between individuals and legal professionals, ensuring that users can seek legal assistance without fear of exposure or discrimination. The platform aims to address the persistent challenges in accessing legal aid, particularly for marginalized communities facing high costs, procedural complexity, and a lack of accessible legal resources. By integrating innovative digital solutions, ALLY simplifies legal processes, provides essential legal resources, and facilitates connections with legal professionals, ultimately empowering individuals to navigate legal issues with confidence.

Problem Statement

Access to legal aid remains a critical yet challenging issue due to financial barriers, legal complexities, and the absence of secure and user-friendly digital platforms. These challenges disproportionately affect marginalized groups, exacerbating systemic inequalities and weakening public trust in legal institutions. Unresolved legal issues—such as housing disputes, employment rights violations, and family law matters—often lead to severe financial, emotional, and social consequences. While digital solutions have transformed many industries, existing legal aid platforms frequently fail to address these challenges comprehensively, leaving many without adequate support.

Proposed Solution & Expected Benefits

ALLY is a digital platform designed to bridge the gap in legal aid accessibility by offering:

- Secure and anonymous access to legal assistance, ensuring user privacy.

- An intuitive, user-friendly interface that simplifies complex legal processes.

- Comprehensive legal resources, including FAQs, templates, and self-help guides.

- Direct connections with legal professionals for personalized guidance.

- Scalability and adaptability, allowing continuous improvement to meet diverse user needs.

Expected Benefits:

- Increased access to justice by providing a cost-effective, digital legal aid solution.

- Strengthening trust in legal systems through secure and transparent services.

- Improved efficiency for legal aid organizations by streamlining service delivery.

- Reduced societal inequality by ensuring marginalized groups receive the legal support they need.

II. Background and Problem Statement

Problem Description

Access to legal aid is a fundamental component of a fair and equitable justice system. However, numerous barriers prevent individuals from obtaining the legal assistance they need. High costs, complex legal procedures, and a lack of awareness about legal rights are among the most significant obstacles. Additionally, concerns about privacy and security often deter individuals from seeking help, particularly in sensitive cases such as domestic violence or employment disputes. These challenges disproportionately impact marginalized groups, including low-income individuals, minorities, and persons with disabilities, who face systemic inequities in accessing legal resources.

Limitations of Existing Solutions

Existing digital solutions aimed at improving access to legal aid have made some progress but remain insufficient. Many platforms:

- **Lack of user-centric design** – Many platforms are not intuitive, making legal processes overwhelming for users.
- **Limited anonymity and security measures** – Privacy concerns deter users from seeking legal aid online.
- **Inadequate resources** – Existing platforms often provide only general legal information or document templates but lack personalized legal advice and secure lawyer-client communication.
- **Limited accessibility** – Some platforms require complex registration processes or are not mobile-friendly, making them difficult to use for those with limited technical skills.

While some platforms offer legal information or document templates, they often do not address the need for personalized legal advice or secure communication with professionals. As a result, many individuals remain unable to navigate critical legal issues, leading to unresolved disputes, diminished trust in legal institutions, and broader societal inequities.

Justification for the Proposed Solutions

ALLY addresses the limitations of existing solutions by offering a **secure, user-friendly, and AI-driven platform** designed to improve access to legal aid. Key features include:

1. **AI-Powered Case Matching** – Automatically connects users with the most suitable legal professionals based on their case details.
2. **Preliminary AI Legal Consultation** – Analyzes cases and provides initial legal insights, helping users understand their legal options.

3. **End-to-End Encryption & Privacy** – Ensures secure and anonymous communication between clients and lawyers
4. **Educational Resources & Self-Help Tools** – Provides legal templates, FAQs, and guides to empower users.
5. **On-the-Spot Online Consultations** – Enables immediate access to legal advice without long wait times.
6. **Case Tracking & Updates** – Keeps users informed about the progress of their legal matters.

By integrating these features, **ALLY** aims to reduce legal costs, simplify legal processes, and enhance trust in legal institutions, ensuring that more individuals have access to justice.

III.   Review of Related Literature

Barriers to Legal Aid Access

Access to legal aid remains a critical challenge, especially for marginalized communities. High costs, lack of awareness, and complex legal procedures prevent many individuals from seeking justice. According to the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index (2023), over 5 billion people globally struggle with legal access due to financial and procedural constraints. In the Philippines, 18.1% of Filipinos live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2022), making legal representation financially unattainable for many.

Legal literacy is another major obstacle. The Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA, 2023) reports that many litigants lack understanding of legal procedures, leading to delays and case dismissals. Moreover, a survey by Torres et al. (2021) found that 63% of Filipinos hesitate to use online legal resources due to privacy concerns and fear of social stigma. The digital divide also limits legal aid accessibility. While urban areas in the Philippines have high mobile internet penetration, only 54% of rural communities have reliable internet access (DICT, 2022). Existing legal aid platforms, such as the Department of Justice's e-Konsulta program, have faced usability challenges due to poor interface design and lack of multilingual support (Gutierrez, 2019).

Effectiveness of AI and Legal Tech in Case Management

The integration of AI and technology in legal aid has significantly improved case management and service efficiency. AI-driven legal chatbots, document automation, and case-matching systems help streamline legal services. Carter and Wang (2023) highlight that AI reduces the time required for case assessments, allowing legal professionals to serve more clients efficiently. The proposed platform leverages AI-powered case matching to connect clients with the most suitable legal professionals based on expertise, urgency, and location. Similar implementations in other legal aid systems have demonstrated

efficiency gains. For example, AI-based legal assistance tools in Malaysia have expedited legal consultations by 40%, reducing backlog issues (Li & Isa, 2023).

However, AI adoption in legal aid comes with ethical concerns. AI lacks the nuanced understanding of human lawyers, raising concerns about the accuracy of legal advice. Foster and Nguyen (2023) emphasize the need for hybrid models where AI supports but does not replace human legal expertise. This is particularly important in sensitive legal cases, such as domestic abuse or labor disputes.

Security Concerns and User Adoption

Privacy and security remain key challenges in digital legal aid adoption. Legal platforms handle sensitive personal information, making them targets for cyber threats. A study by Ramirez (2023) reveals that many digital legal aid systems fail to comply with stringent cybersecurity standards, exposing users to data breaches. In the Philippines, cybersecurity risks are especially high, with the country ranking among those with the highest identity theft incidents in Southeast Asia (Asian Development Bank, 2020). To address these concerns, the proposed platform will integrate end-to-end encryption, multi-factor authentication, and role-based access control to protect user data. Research by Smith and Ortega (2021) supports the implementation of strong encryption protocols to enhance trust and encourage digital legal aid adoption. User adoption is influenced by accessibility, usability, and trust. A report by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP, 2023) found that 72% of legal professionals believe outdated workflows hinder efficient service delivery. Simplifying platform interfaces and providing multilingual support can improve user engagement, especially for non-tech-savvy users.

Legal Aid Challenges in the Philippines and Technology Solutions

Existing digital legal aid initiatives in the Philippines, such as the Supreme Court's eCourts system, have improved case monitoring but remain inaccessible to non-experts (Ombudsman, 2023). Nonprofit organizations like Saligan provide free legal assistance but lack scalable digital platforms. Furthermore, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) often face labor disputes abroad but lack anonymous platforms to seek legal guidance (POEA, 2023).

The proposed ALLY platform aims to address these gaps by:
- Providing a secure, AI-powered case-matching system to connect clients with lawyers.
- Offering educational resources in multiple languages to improve legal literacy.
- Ensuring privacy-focused consultations through encrypted messaging.
- Implementing a mobile-first approach to cater to users in areas with limited desktop access.

Conclusion

Digital transformation in legal aid presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI and legal tech improve efficiency, adoption barriers related to cost, security, legal literacy, and digital access must be addressed. The ALLY platform seeks to provide a secure, user-friendly, and efficient legal aid solution tailored to the unique challenges in the Philippines. By leveraging AI-driven case matching, secure communication tools, and educational resources, the platform aims to democratize access to legal services and enhance trust in the justice system.

IV.   Project Objectives

Main Objectives (SMART Goals)

1. **AI-Powered Case Matching** - Improving access to justice by ensuring clients are matched with the most suitable legal professionals.
2. **Secure Document Management** - Enhancing trust in legal systems by maintaining confidential and secure legal documentation.
3. **AI-Driven Legal Consultation** - Increasing efficiency for legal professionals by providing AI-assisted preliminary legal advice.
4. **On-the-Spot Online Consultations** - Improving accessibility by allowing clients to seek immediate legal advice without lengthy appointment scheduling.
5. **Case Tracking & Updates** - Reducing societal inequality by keeping users informed and engaged throughout the legal process

Specific Objectives (Key Deliverables)

- **Functional Requirements**
    1. User Management System (Lawyer-Side)
        - Profile management for legal professionals.
    2. Analytics and Reporting
        - Provide users with personalized insights into their legal issues and progress.
    3. User Registration and Authentication (Lawyer-side)
        - Allow users to create accounts securely.
    4. Communication tools
        - Secure messaging system with end-to-end encryption.

5. AI Case Matching

- The platform leverages machine learning algorithms to analyze user inputs (e.g., legal issue, location, urgency) and lawyer profiles (e.g., expertise, availability, ratings) to provide accurate and efficient case matching.

6. AI Preliminary Consultation

- The AI-powered preliminary legal consultation analyzes case details by comparing them to past cases, assessing the likelihood of legal action, and estimating potential success rates based on similar case outcomes.

- It provides users with insights on whether pursuing legal action is advisable and suggests possible legal strategies. By leveraging data patterns and legal trends, the system offers an informed starting point before formal legal consultation.

Non-Functional Requirements

1. Usability

- The platform should have an intuitive user interface that is easy to navigate for both clients and legal professionals.

- It should be mobile-friendly and accessible on different devices.

- It must comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) to ensure usability for individuals with disabilities.

2. Security

- End-to-end encryption (AES-256) must be applied to all user communications and document exchanges.

- Multi-factor authentication (MFA) should be implemented for lawyers and administrators.

- The system should comply with data privacy regulations (e.g., GDPR, Data Privacy Act) to protect user information.

3. Stability & Performance

- The database should be optimized for fast response times using indexing and caching techniques.

- The system should handle at least 10,000 concurrent users without performance degradation.

- Case search and retrieval should return results within 10-15 seconds for 95% of queries.

4. **Reliability**

- The platform should have 99% uptime, ensuring continuous availability.

- Automated error handling procedures should be in place to detect and recover from failures.

- The system should include data backup and recovery mechanisms to prevent data loss.

V.   Scope and Limitation

Features and Functionalities Included

The proposed system is designed to connect potential clients with law firms or independent legal practitioners based on their specific legal needs. By leveraging a digital platform, the product streamlines the process of finding and consulting with lawyers, making legal services more accessible and efficient. The specific capabilities of the software include:

- **Client-Lawyer Matching**:

  - An AI-powered matching system connects clients with the most suitable legal professionals based on their legal needs, location, and case type.

  - Lawyers can manage their profiles, expertise, and availability through a dedicated dashboard.

- **Virtual Organization of Legal Processes**:

  - Clients can securely upload and manage legal documents, allowing lawyers to access case files remotely.

  - A centralized document repository ensures all relevant information is available in one location, reducing the need for physical paperwork.

- **Preliminary AI consultation**

  - The AI-powered preliminary legal consultation analyzes case details by comparing them to past cases, assessing the likelihood of legal action, and estimating potential success rates based on similar case outcomes.

  - It provides users with insights on whether pursuing legal action is advisable and suggests possible legal strategies. By leveraging data patterns and legal trends, the system offers

an informed starting point before formal legal consultation.

- **On-the-Spot Online Consultations**:

  - A temporary messaging system enables clients to seek immediate legal advice without lengthy appointment scheduling.
  - Conversations are designed to be temporary, ensuring privacy and security by not retaining long-term communication history.

- **Case Tracking and Updates**:

  - Clients receive automated email updates about the progress of their legal matters, notifying them of important developments or required actions.

  - A case tracking ID is assigned to each case, allowing clients to independently check their case status through the platform.

- **Virtual Organization of Legal Processes**

  - Clients can securely upload and manage legal documents, enabling lawyers to access case files remotely.

  - A centralized document repository ensures all relevant information is stored in one location, reducing the need for physical paperwork and improving efficiency.

- **Educational Resources**

  - A comprehensive library of legal resources, including FAQs, templates, and self-help guides, is available to educate users about their rights and legal processes.

  - Resources are accessible offline, ensuring availability even without an internet connection.

- **Security and Privacy**

  - End-to-end encryption ensures the confidentiality of all user data and communications.

  - Multi-factor authentication (MFA) and secure login mechanisms protect user accounts from unauthorized access.

Constraints and Exclusions

1. **Functional Limitations**:

   - The system does not replace in-depth legal representation or formal court proceedings. It serves as a tool to orchestrate initial legal consultations and case management.

   - The temporary messaging system does not store long-term communication history for anonymity and privacy. Users must document key details externally if needed.

2. **Dependency on User Input**:

   - The effectiveness of lawyer-client matching depends on the accuracy of client-provided information (e.g., legal issue, location, urgency).

   - Lawyer availability may affect response times, and the system cannot guarantee immediate assistance in all cases.

3. **Technical Constraints**:

   - The platform relies on internet connectivity for most functionalities. Offline access is limited to specific features like educational resources.

   - The system's performance may be affected by high user traffic or server load, requiring scalable infrastructure to handle peak demand.

4. **Budget and Timeline**:

   - Development and maintenance costs may limit the scope of advanced features, such as integrating additional AI capabilities or expanding the legal resource database.

   - The project timeline may restrict the ability to implement all desired features in the initial release, requiring phased development.

5. **Legal and Regulatory Constraints**:

   - The platform must comply with data privacy regulations (e.g., GDPR, CCPA), which may limit data storage and retention practices.

   - Legal restrictions in certain jurisdictions may affect the availability of specific features or services.

VI. Proposed Solution and Methodology

Overview of the Software

The proposed solution is a mobile application designed to simplify access to legal aid for the public. The app will allow users to anonymously seek legal advice, access educational resources, and connect with legal professionals.

How it works:

- The platform will provide lawyers with a dedicated dashboard to manage their profiles, caseloads, and client interactions, enhancing their efficiency and ability to deliver timely legal assistance.
- Users and lawyers will have access to personalized insights and performance metrics, enabling them to track progress, identify trends, and make informed decisions about their legal matters.
- The platform will offer secure and anonymized account creation with multi-factor authentication, ensuring user privacy and data protection while maintaining ease of access.
- A secure, encrypted messaging system will facilitate confidential communication between users and legal professionals, supporting file sharing and organizing record-keeping for efficient collaboration.

Technologies and Platforms

Frontend Development:

- **Android with Kotlin**: The primary framework for building the mobile application, leveraging Kotlin's modern features for clean and efficient code.
- **Jetpack Compose**: A modern UI toolkit for building native android interfaces with less code and better performance.
- **Retrofit:** For handling API requests and responses efficiently.

Backend Development:

- **Spring Boot (Kotlin)**: Kotlin-based backend for consistency

Database:

- **SQLite:** A relational database for structured data storage.

Authentication and Security

- **JWT Authentication**: a stateless authentication method that securely transmits user data between a client and a server as a digitally signed token.

Monitoring and Analytics:

- **Google Analytics:** For tracking user engagement and behavior

Development Approach (Agile Methodology)

The project will adopt the Agile methodology to ensure flexibility, collaboration, and iterative progress throughout the development process. The development will be structured into two-week sprints, each with clearly defined deliverables. During sprint planning, features will be prioritized based on user needs and project goals, such as user registration, resource database development, and the implementation of a matching system to connect users with legal professionals. Daily standup meetings will be conducted to discuss progress, address challenges, and plan the next steps, ensuring the team remains aligned and responsive to emerging issues.

1. Planning & Requirements Analysis (Week 1)

- Define system architecture and technical requirements.
- Identify security protocols for data encryption and anonymity.

2. Design & Prototyping (Week 2 – 3)

- Develop wireframes and UI/UX designs for the platform.
- Set up the backend infrastructure with Spring Boot and SQLite.

3. Development & Iteration (Week 4 – 5)

- Build core functionalities, including document automation and case management.
- Integrate secure lawyer-client messaging features.
- Implement Firebase Authentication for secure user login.
- Conduct internal testing and refining based on feedback.

4. Testing & Optimization (Week 7)

- Conduct usability testing with real users.
- Perform security penetration testing to ensure data protection.
- Optimize performance for improved efficiency.

5. Deployment & Final Review (Week 8)

- Finalize the platform and deploy it on a cloud-based server.
- Monitor system performance and user engagement.
- Prepare final documentation and research reports.

VI. Target Users, Customers, Beneficiaries, and Partners

Primary target users of the system are law firms that house a multitude of associates that handle medium to massive lawsuits, lawyers in independent practice that specializes in handling a specific branch of law, and the general populace that are potential clients for the legal practitioners.

The product generates a massive clientele for legal practitioners which translates into more workload and increased profit while also formulating connections for future opportunities. The system not only boosts immediate earnings but also creates networking opportunities that can lead to future referrals and collaborations. However, the increased demand requires efficient time management to maintain high-quality legal services and client satisfaction.

Clients receive quality legal assistance and can easily connect with lawyers for their specific legal needs. The platform eliminates the hassle of searching for a lawyer, providing a convenient and efficient way to access legal services. Additionally, clients have access to educational resources that keep them informed about their legal rights and updated laws, empowering them to make well-informed decisions.

VII. Technical Requirements

The project will utilize standard development resources ensuring security and functionality. The technical requirements encompass both hardware and security needs for successful implementation.

Hardware and Software Requirements

- Development will be conducted on standard laptops or desktop computers equipped with at least an i5 processor, 8GB RAM, and 256GB storage. These specifications ensure smooth running of development tools and local testing environments.
- Standard development tools and IDEs will be utilized, including Visual Studio Code or similar free development environments that support our chosen technology stack.

Security Infrastructure

- User authentication will be handled through JWT tokens and secure password hashing, protecting user credentials and maintaining session security.

- The system will implement role-based access control to manage different user permission levels appropriately.

VIII. Evaluation and Success Metrics

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **User Adoption Rate:** Track the number of registered users within the first month
- **User Satisfaction:** Gather user feedback through surveys (targeting a 70% satisfaction rate)
- **System Uptime:** Maintain at least 99% uptime for platform reliability

Testing and validation strategies

- **Usability Testing:** Conduct A/B testing to optimize UI/UX
- **Beta Testing:** Pilot launch with select users before full-scale deployment
- **Performance Testing:** Load testing to handle concurrent user sessions

IX. Conclusion

This comprehensive digital platform addresses the critical need for accessible legal aid through innovative technology solutions. By implementing robust security measures, user-friendly interfaces, and efficient communication systems, we aim to revolutionize how legal assistance is delivered to those in need.

The success of this platform will be measured through:

- User adoption and engagement metrics
- Security and privacy maintenance
- System performance and reliability
- Social impact and accessibility improvements

This solution represents a significant step forward in democratizing access to legal resources while maintaining the highest standards of security and user privacy.

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