



ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) ON LEGAL EDUCATION AND LEGAL PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The transformative paradigm shift caused by the infiltration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the Nigerian legal architecture has occasioned a widening institutional gap. While the commercial legal marketplace rapidly automates, institutional legal education remains anchored to static, analog methodologies, creating an immediate risk of professional obsolescence and regulatory non-compliance. The paper assesses the dual impact of AI automation on public and private law faculties, the Council of Legal Education curriculum, and contemporary realities within adversarial and corporate legal practices. Adopting a qualitative, doxo-doctrinal research methodology, the study analyses domestic statutes, regulatory instruments, and contemporary peer-reviewed legal literature. The paper finds that while AI serves as an operational force multiplier that drastically reduces judicial case backlogs and processing times, its unregulated application introduces acute threats. These include algorithmic hallucinations of judicial precedents, critical breaches of client confidentiality under the Rules of Professional Conduct, data privacy violations under the Nigeria Data Protection Act, and an uncritical reliance that erodes analytical rigour. The paper concludes that AI is an inevitable socio-legal evolution requiring proactive, structural management rather than defensive rejection. The paper recommends a comprehensive curricular overhaul by the Council of Legal Education, the institutionalisation of binding AI ethical rules by the Nigerian Bar Association, and the establishment of an open-access national legal data registry to domesticate algorithms.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Legal Education, Legal Practice, Regulatory Framework, Nigeria.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The global legal landscape is undergoing a profound paradigm shift driven by rapid advancements in disruptive technologies, chief among which is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Historically characterised by its conservative adherence to precedent and centuries-old traditions, the legal



profession is facing an unprecedented digital transformation.¹ In Nigeria, this technological disruption is no longer a futuristic projection but an active variable changing how law is conceptualized, taught, and executed.² The integration of large language models, automated legal analytics, and predictive justice mechanisms poses both existential challenges and revolutionary opportunities for developing economies, where legal systems frequently struggle with systemic inefficiencies.³ This technological evolution strikes directly at the twin pillars of the country's legal architecture: legal education and legal practice.

For decades, legal education in Nigeria overseen by the Council of Legal Education and hosted across various institutional faculties of law has maintained a heavily doctrinal, analog curriculum primarily focused on rote memorisation and manual adversarial skills.⁴ However, the emergence of AI tools capable of draft-reviewing, sophisticated case-law filtering, and automated brief writing exposes a widening pedagogical gap. If the classroom remains static while the engines of practice digitise, the academy risks producing structurally obsolete legal graduates into an increasingly automated market.⁵ Legal training must therefore transition from teaching students how to find the law manually to training them on how to critically evaluate machine-generated legal solutions.⁶

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¹ Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, Oxford University Press 2017) 45.

² O Ucheagwu-Okoye, and Chidimma Stella Nwakoby, 'Legal Practice and Legal Education in the 21st Century: Harnessing AI for Efficiency, Speed and Accuracy' (2024) (9) (1) Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Law Journal 14. <https://journals.ezenwaohafor.org/index.php/coou/article/view/3136> 11th July 2026

³ A Amuda-Kannike, *et al*, 'Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Threat or Tool for the Future Lawyer in Nigeria?' (2025) (4) (1) *KWASU Law Journal* 88.

⁴ Legal Education (Consolidation, etc.) Act, Cap L10, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004.

⁵ Anita Nwotite, 'Harnessing the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Nigerian Legal Education: The Imperative of a Regulatory Framework' (2025) *Unizik Law Journal* 204.

⁶ Bethel U Ihugba, *Introduction to Legal Research Method and Legal Writing* (Malthouse Press 2020) 57.



Simultaneously, the impact of AI on legal practice across Nigerian courtrooms and corporate law firms is triggering an operational realignment. While premium, tier-one law firms in commercial hubs like Lagos and Abuja are aggressively adopting machine-learning tools to optimize due diligence and document review, the broader bar faces challenges relating to infrastructural deficits, algorithmic biases, and data privacy concerns under the Nigeria Data Protection Act.⁷ Furthermore, the ethical responsibilities of a legal practitioner under the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) are increasingly challenged when tasks traditionally requiring human intellect are outsourced to non-human intelligence systems.⁸ Consequently, this article explores the dual impact of artificial intelligence on the Nigerian legal ecosystem. By examining the current state of legal pedagogy alongside contemporary realities in corporate and adversarial practice,⁹ this study seeks to chart a regulatory and institutional roadmap for the future.

2.0 CONCEPT ANALYSIS OF AI IN LEGAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

To appreciate the institutional realignment currently occurring within the Nigerian legal ecosystem, it is structurally essential to unpack the conceptual parameters of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as it intersects with legal education and practice. In its generic sense, AI denotes a constellation of computational systems designed to execute tasks that traditionally demand human cognitive faculties, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and linguistic processing.¹⁰ Within the legal domain, however, AI is not a singular monolithic entity; rather, it manifests as a spectrum of advanced technologies ranging from rudimentary rule-based systems to highly complex generative large language models (LLMs).¹¹ For the legal educator and the practitioner, this conceptual taxonomy can be broken down into three core functional pillars: Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML), and Generative AI.

⁷ Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24.

⁸ Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023, r 14.

⁹ S I Ihedoro, C R Elendu and J Abdulrahman, 'Contemporary Issues on Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education and Research in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects' (2024) 7 (2) *African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education* 108. < <https://ajleejournal.com/index.php/ajlee> > accessed 11th July 2026

¹⁰ Richard Susskind, *Online Courts and the Future of Justice* (Oxford University Press 2019) 74. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343157105> accessed 11th July 2026

¹¹ Ihugba, (n 6) 89



The first pillar, Natural Language Processing (NLP), serves as the semantic engine of legal AI. Because law is fundamentally an ecosystem built on text, syntax, and rhetoric, computational tools must move beyond simple keyword matching to achieve true context-aware semantic comprehension.¹² In Nigerian legal research, NLP powers advanced electronic law reporting platforms, allowing algorithms to parse judicial precedents, identify the *ratio decidendi* of appellate decisions, and extract thematic legal principles across thousands of volumes of law reports.¹³ The second pillar, Machine Learning (ML), involves systems that autonomously improve their predictive accuracy by identifying hidden patterns within massive datasets without being explicitly programmed.¹⁴ In corporate legal practice, ML drives predictive analytics and electronic discovery (e-discovery), enabling software to flag anomalous clauses in commercial agreements or predict the statistical probability of a judge's ruling based on historical litigation data.¹⁵

The third and most disruptive pillar is Generative AI, which represents a structural leap from data analysis to content creation. Utilizing deep learning frameworks such as transformers, Generative AI models synthesize vast corpora of legal texts to generate human-grade legal briefs, draft complex commercial contracts, and provide instant answers to intricate statutory queries.¹⁶ In the context of legal education, this alters the traditional pedagogical landscape. For decades, the benchmark of a law student's competence has been the ability to retrieve and mechanically synthesize information. Generative AI renders this mechanical capability instantly obsolete by automating the foundational levels of legal drafting and literature review.¹⁷ Consequently, the concept of AI in legal education must shift from a mere technological accessory to an interpretive and critical tool, wherein the core objective becomes training future lawyers in algorithmic literacy, prompt engineering, and the ethical verification of machine-generated outputs.¹⁸

¹² Nwotite (n 5) 204

¹³ Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwakoby, (n 2)

¹⁴ Adewale Taiwo, *Basic Concepts in Legal Research Methodology: A Practical Guide on Writing Excellent Master's and Doctoral Theses* (St. Paul's Publishing 2019) 143.

¹⁵ A Amuda-Kannike *et al* (n 3)

¹⁶ Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 112

¹⁷ *ibid* 115.

¹⁸ John O Asein, *Introduction to Nigerian Legal System* (2nd edn, Ababa Press 2005) 230.



In legal practice, the conceptualization of artificial intelligence (AI) transforms the lawyer from a manual processor of information into an editor and strategic counselor. The traditional hourly billing model, which historically incentivized protracted hours of document review and manual due diligence, faces conceptual collapse in the face of automated systems that can execute identical tasks in seconds.¹⁹ However, this automated efficiency is accompanied by significant conceptual risks, including "algorithmic hallucinations" where AI models confidently fabricate non-existent legal authorities,²⁰ leading to potential professional liability and judicial sanctions.²¹ Furthermore, systemic biases embedded within foreign datasets do not reflect the contextual realities of Nigerian customary, Islamic, and statutory laws,²² creating a severe jurisprudential disconnect when applied to complex pluralistic legal systems.²³

Therefore, a rigorous conceptual analysis reveals that AI in the Nigerian legal sector is neither a complete replacement for human intellect nor a mere passing trend. It is a fundamental systemic re-engineering of legal cognition that demands a corresponding regulatory and pedagogical framework to govern its application.²⁴

3.0 EMERGENCE OF AI IN LEGAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

¹⁹ Richard G Pearce, 'How the Billable Hour Can Survive Generative AI' (2026) 5(1) *Georgetown Law Faculty Publications* 41.

²⁰ A Kovaliuk, 'Quantifying Financial and Reputational Liability of AI Hallucinations in Legal Practice' (2026) 14(3) *Economic and Computer Intelligence Journal* 89.

²¹ J Ventre, 'Citing the Unseen: AI Hallucinations in Tax and Legal Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Professional Responsibility, Procedural Legitimacy, and Sanctions' (2026) *Preprints* <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202601.0187.v1> accessed 11 July 2026.

²² H Al-Faruqi, 'AI-Driven Sharia Governance in Islamic Digital Payment Systems: Developing a Contemporary Islamic Law Framework for Ethical and Regulatory Compliance' (2026) 4(2) *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 112.

²³ MA Fauzi, M Nasrul and A Rahman, 'Da'wah in the Algorithmic Era: Investigating Bias and Validity of Islamic Artificial Intelligence Applications' (2025) 2(1) *Journal of Islamic Digital Epistemology* 45.

²⁴ Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24



The historical trajectory of technology within the Nigerian legal architecture has transitioned from slow digitalisation to sudden, disruptive automation. For decades after independence, legal research and education relied exclusively on physical text, manual law reports, and handwritten judicial transcripts.²⁵ This analogue monopoly began to break in 2006 with the debut of the LawPavilion Electronic Law Report (LPELR) and subsequent platforms like LegalPedia, which digitised decades of appellate jurisprudence.²⁶ While these early electronic law reports automated case-law retrieval, they remained static tools dependent entirely on precise human search strings. The true "emergence" of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an active computational collaborator in Nigeria only materialised with the recent convergence of advanced natural language processing and generative deep-learning models.²⁷

In contemporary legal practice, this emergence is marked by a paradigm shift from simple indexing to predictive analytics and autonomous drafting. Tier-one corporate law firms and tech-forward litigation chambers in commercial centers like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt have aggressively integrated domain-specific tools such as LawPavilion AI and emergent agentic platforms like Lawexa.²⁸ These systems do not merely locate judicial authorities; they actively analyse judge-specific behavioral patterns, flags non-compliance vectors in commercial briefs, and draft introductory court processes.²⁹ Driving this rapid commercial adoption is the severe systemic backlog within the Nigerian judiciary, which forces practitioners to seek computational leverage to process enormous workloads in fractions of traditional billable hours.³⁰

Conversely, the emergence of AI within Nigerian legal education has been reactive rather than proactive. While the private sector adopted automated tools to optimize profitability, institutional legal training remains largely anchored to the static, doctrinal guidelines administered by the

²⁵ Hon. Justice Peter Akhimie Akhihiro, 'The New Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession in Nigeria' (2025) *Edo State Judiciary Lecture Series* 3.

²⁶ Lawexa, *State of Legal Intelligence Report 2026* (LawexaAI Publications 2026) 6.

²⁷ IA Paul and PA Yakubu, 'Regulatory and Ethical Implications of Artificial Intelligence in Nigerian Legal Practice' (2026) *Impact International Journal and Publications* (2)(1) 811.

²⁸ Lawexa (n 26) 9.

²⁹ Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwakoby, (n 2)

³⁰ A Amuda-Kannike *et al* (n 3) 88



Council of Legal Education.³¹ However, the pervasive availability of commercial large language models among undergraduate law students has forced a sudden pedagogical crisis across public and private faculties of law. Universities are discovering that traditional take-home coursework and baseline literature reviews can be flawlessly bypassed by generative software.³² This has triggered an ongoing, grassroots curricular push across institutions like Kwara State University and Nasarawa State University to officially integrate AI literacy and algorithmic ethics into the foundational legal research methodology modules.³³

4.0 RELEVANCE OF AI TOOLS IN LEGAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools within the Nigerian legal architecture has transitioned from a speculative luxury to a structural necessity. In a jurisdiction plagued by chronic judicial delays and severe case backlogs, the primary relevance of AI in legal practice lies in its ability to serve as an operational force multiplier.³⁴ Advanced platforms, including domestic engines like LawPavilion Prime GPT, the newly deployed Lawexa AI legal assistant, and global tools like Lexis+ or Harvey, have revolutionized the speed and precision of legal research.³⁵ By utilizing deep natural language processing (NLP), these tools enable Nigerian practitioners to instantly extract the *ratio decidendi* of complex Supreme Court or Court of Appeal precedents, cross-reference multi-sectoral statutory provisions, and run comprehensive case-validation checks.³⁶ This effectively compresses hundreds of billable hours traditionally spent on manual library searches into seconds. Furthermore, AI tools are highly relevant in automating routine document classification, drafting standardized court processes, and executing commercial due diligence. This allows practitioners to minimize human error, reduce overhead costs, and pivot

³¹ Legal Education (Consolidation, etc.) (n 4)

³² Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 112

³³ Nwotite, (n 5)

³⁴ A Amuda-Kannike *et al* (n 3) 88

³⁵ Lawexa (n 26) 6.

³⁶ Paul and Yakubu (n 27) 42



toward higher-order cognitive legal engineering, strategic litigation planning, and interactive client advisory services.³⁷

Beyond routine administration, emerging agentic AI tools and predictive analytics frameworks are redefining the strategic boundaries of adversarial practice and corporate lawyering in Nigeria. Tech-forward law firms in commercial hubs are increasingly leveraging specialized software to conduct data-driven predictive analysis on litigation outcomes.³⁸ By processing historical judicial data and historical trial trends, these platforms can forecast specific judicial disposition patterns, directly informing strategic decisions regarding bail applications, corporate risk mitigation, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) frameworks.³⁹ This automated efficiency is not merely about scaling law firm profitability; it holds profound relevance for broader socio-legal dynamics. By significantly reducing the operational costs of legal drafting, contract review, and case-file management, AI tools lower the financial barriers to entry for legal services. Consequently, they serve as a vital mechanism for bridging Nigeria's substantial access to justice gap, allowing smaller firms to scale their capabilities and offer affordable, high-quality representation to indigent citizens.⁴⁰

In the realm of legal education, the relevance of AI tools manifests as a profound pedagogical catalyst. The traditional instructional model enforced by the Council of Legal Education historically reliant on rote memorization, dictation, and manual information retrieval is fundamentally challenged by generative tools capable of instantaneous brief writing, case synthesis, and automated essay composition.⁴¹ Recognizing this inevitable shift, the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (NBA-SLP) issued the *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Nigerian Legal Profession*, emphasizing that legal education must shift its focus

³⁷ Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwakoby, (n 2)

³⁸ Lawexa (n 26) 9.

³⁹ E Ojukwu, 'The Future of Legal Practice in Nigeria: AI and E-Commerce in View' (Keynote Address at the NBA Nnewi Branch Annual Law Week, July 2025) 4. <https://ofy-lawyers.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Future-of-Legal-Practice-AI-Ecommerce-Nigeria-NBA-NNEWI-KEYNOTE-2025.pdf> accessed 12th July 2026

⁴⁰ Lawexa (n 26) 12.

⁴¹ Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 112



from preventing AI use to teaching responsible, ethical utilization.⁴² Consequently, the relevance of AI in Nigerian law faculties is to restructure foundational learning; it forces a critical pedagogical shift from teaching students *how to find* the law to teaching them *how to evaluate* the law. By embedding AI literacy, prompt engineering, and computational ethics into the legal research methodology curriculum across public and private universities, institutional faculties ensure that Nigerian law graduates are not structurally obsolete upon entry into an increasingly automated global market, but are instead equipped to navigate the precarious intersection of technology, local statutory compliance, and international justice systems.⁴³

5.0 IMPACT OF AI IN LEGAL PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

The penetration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Nigerian legal practice has catalyzed an operational transformation, redefining the boundaries of corporate lawyering and adversarial litigation. Historically characterized by manual, labor-intensive processes, the Nigerian Bar is experiencing a digital disruption where AI tools act as advanced computational collaborators.⁴⁴ In premium commercial hubs like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, tier-one law firms are deploying specialized machine-learning tools to streamline massive due diligence exercises, automate contract lifecycle management, and execute complex cross-border asset-tracing searches.⁴⁵ By allowing algorithms to parse extensive corporate documentation, regulatory filings, and historical commercial agreements in seconds, practitioners can drastically reduce billable-hour overhead and redirect human intellect toward high-value strategic advocacy, court presentation, and interactive client counseling.⁴⁶ This automated leverage has proved crucial in mitigating the severe systemic inefficiencies, clogged registries, and heavy case backlogs inherent in the Nigerian judicial

⁴² Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice, *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Nigerian Legal Profession* (NBA-SLP 2026) 3. <https://nbaslp.org/ai-guidelines-nigerian-legal-profession.pdf> accessed 12th July 2026

⁴³ Nwotite, (n 5)

⁴⁴ Amuda-Kannike *et al* (n 3) 88

⁴⁵ Lawexa (n 26) 6.

⁴⁶ Paul and Yakubu (n 27) 42



architecture, giving tech-forward chambers a significant competitive advantage over traditional, analog practitioners.⁴⁷

However, this algorithmic shift exposes profound ethical, infrastructural, and regulatory challenges across the wider Nigerian Bar. A primary concern is the friction between AI automation and the strict duties of confidentiality, absolute loyalty, and professional competence mandated under the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC).⁴⁸ When a practitioner uploads sensitive client briefs, proprietary corporate restructuring data, or ongoing litigation files to cloud-hosted, foreign generative AI models, it creates an immediate risk of breaking the privilege rule, while inviting non-compliance penalties under the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA).⁴⁹ Furthermore, the global nature of these computational engines introduces the acute risk of "algorithmic hallucinations" where tools confidently invent non-existent Nigerian statutory amendments or appellate precedents forcing the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (NBA-SLP) to issue strict operational directives warning practitioners against relying blindly on machine-generated brief writing without thorough human verification.⁵⁰

Beyond ethical considerations, the emergence of AI highlights a deepening digital divide within the domestic legal marketplace. While highly capitalized firms can seamlessly integrate localized, subscription-heavy solutions like LawPavilion Prime GPT or global tools like Harvey AI, smaller solo practices and rural practitioners often struggle with basic infrastructural deficits, including irregular power supply and the high costs of broadband internet access.⁵¹ Additionally, AI's capability to instantly draft routine legal documentation directly threatens the traditional pricing models of the profession, which historically incentivized protracted billable hours for low-level document review, property agreement drafting, and corporate incorporations.⁵² Consequently, the

⁴⁷ Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwakoby, (n 2)

⁴⁸ RPC (n 8)

⁴⁹ Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24.

⁵⁰ Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (n 42)

⁵¹ Hon. Justice Peter Akhimie Akhihero, 'The New Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession in Nigeria' (2025) *Edo State Judiciary Lecture Series* 5. <https://edojudiciary.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/THE-NEW-FRONTIERS-IN-ARTIFICIAL-INTELLIGENCE-IN-THE-LEGAL-PROFESSION-IN-NIGERIA.pdf> accessed 12 July 2026

⁵² Ojukwu, (n 39) 4



true impact of AI on Nigerian legal practice is not that it will entirely replace human legal practitioners, but rather that it is structurally replacing the lawyer who refuses to adapt with the lawyer who strategically utilizes AI to deliver faster, highly optimized, and cost-effective legal solutions.⁵³

6.0 The Impact of AI on Legal Education in Nigeria

The rapid evolution of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) demands an immediate paradigm shift in the traditional structure of legal education in Nigeria.⁵⁴ Historically anchored to rote learning and the Socratic method, the contemporary Nigerian legal curriculum risks producing graduates who are functionally obsolete in a rapidly digitizing global marketplace.⁵⁵ Modern legal practice requires professionals to possess not just theoretical doctrinal knowledge, but fundamental technological competence to remain competitive.⁵⁶ This shifting landscape necessitates a transition of academic curricula from static, manual legal analysis toward active engagement with automated document drafting, predictive analytics, and digital litigation tools.⁵⁷

However, integrating these advanced technological tools into the legal academy must be carefully balanced against significant systemic risks.⁵⁸ The primary concerns in both academic and professional applications center on data protection, intellectual property infringement, and the pervasive issue of algorithmic hallucinations.⁵⁹ Legal training must therefore emphasize data privacy, ensuring that student and client data used in AI prompts remains fully secure under

⁵³ Paul and Yakubu (n 27) 48

⁵⁴ Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 200

⁵⁵ Leveraging Digital Transformation, Artificial Intelligence, and New Technologies for Effective Legal Education' (2026) *International Journal of Law and Clinical Legal Education* 12. [file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/1.+\(IJOLACLE+2026\)+MKPO.pdf](file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/1.+(IJOLACLE+2026)+MKPO.pdf) accessed 14 July 2026

⁵⁶ Ezinne M Alinnor and Nancy Amadi-Harry, 'Artificial intelligence, intellectual property and legal education and practice in Nigeria: Need for integration' (2024) 6(2) *International Review of Law and Jurisprudence* 144. <https://www.nigerianjournalonline.com/index.php/IRLJ/article/view/5460> accessed 14 July 2026

⁵⁷ RE Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, Oxford University Press 2017) 64.

⁵⁸ Nwotite, (n 5) 89

⁵⁹ AE Adegbite and GE Oyedokun, 'Regulatory Challenges in the Adoption of Artificial Intelligent for Legal Research and Training in Faculties of Law in Nigeria' (2025) 5(2) *International Journal of Law, Justice and Jurisprudence* 542.



national privacy regimes.⁶⁰ Furthermore, educators must teach students to act as critical editors of AI outputs rather than passive consumers, preserving independent legal judgment and actively preventing academic plagiarism.⁶¹

Successfully navigating and integrating AI into the legal education system requires proactive, standardized regulatory frameworks rather than a passive, reactive approach.⁶² The Council of Legal Education (CLE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) must collaborate to mandate tech-literacy and digital data ethics within the benchmark standards for Law Faculties and the Nigerian Law School.⁶³ This systemic and regulatory steering is essential to ensure standardized access, mitigate the widening digital divide across public and private institutions, and preserve the ultimate integrity and value of Nigerian legal qualifications.⁶⁴

7.0 CHALLENGES IN THE APPLICATION OF AI TO LEGAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

While the operational efficiencies of Artificial Intelligence (AI) present a compelling case for its adoption, its implementation within the Nigerian legal ecosystem faces a complex matrix of structural, ethical, and institutional bottlenecks. These hurdles create a significant lag between technological potential and real-world deployment across both the classroom and the courtroom. Some of these challenges are enumerated below:

7.1 Ethical Contradictions and Regulatory Gaps

The primary friction point in legal practice stems from the strict duties of confidentiality and data security mandated under the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC).⁶⁵ When a legal practitioner uploads sensitive client briefs, proprietary corporate data, or unfiled affidavits into cloud-hosted,

⁶⁰ Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24.

⁶¹ RI Ahmed, *et al*, 'Need for AI Ethics in Legal Education in Nigeria' (2026) 9(2) *Scholars International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 10.

⁶² Nwotite, (n 5) 94

⁶³ Adegbite and Oyedokun (n 59) 548.

⁶⁴ Leveraging Digital Transformation, (n 55) 15

⁶⁵ RPC (n 8)



foreign generative AI engines, it creates an immediate risk of breaking the attorney-client privilege rule.² Furthermore, this practice invites severe financial and legal liabilities under the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA), as most mainstream AI platforms lack localized data residency structures and routinely ingest user inputs to train public algorithmic models.⁶⁶

Compounding this is the phenomenon of "algorithmic hallucinations." Generative models routinely fabricate non-existent judicial precedents, confusing foreign jurisdictions with Nigerian statutory law, or inventing fictitious Supreme Court citations entirely. Blind reliance on these tools directly undermines the practitioner's duty of competence to the client and the court, occasionally resulting in embarrassing professional reprimands before skeptical judges.⁶⁷

7.2 The Contextual Deficit in Foreign Datasets

A deeper, systemic challenge lies in the cultural and legal context of AI models. The vast majority of global LLMs are trained on Western datasets dominated by Anglo-American jurisprudence. Consequently, these models lack deep semantic comprehension of the pluralistic nature of the Nigerian legal system,⁶⁸ which seamlessly co-incorporates English Common Law, domestic statutory enactments,⁶⁹ Islamic *Shari'ah* jurisprudence,⁷⁰ and diverse streams of Customary Law.⁷¹

When an AI tool attempts to draft a commercial agreement or analyze an inheritance dispute within Nigeria, it often fails to account for critical local variations, such as the complex provisions of the

⁶⁶ Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24.

⁶⁷ Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (n 42) 3

⁶⁸ AO Obilade, *The Nigerian Legal System* (Sweet & Maxwell 1979) 17–23; see also Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s 6.

⁶⁹ Interpretation Act, Cap I23, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004, s 32 (incorporating English Common Law and doctrines of equity subject to domestic limitations).

⁷⁰ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), ss 260 and 275 (establishing the Sharia Court of Appeal for the Federal Capital Territory and States respectively); see also *Alkamawa v Bello* [1998] 8 NWLR (Pt 561) 173 (Supreme Court of Nigeria ruling on the autonomous application of Islamic law).

⁷¹ Evidence Act 2011, ss 16–18 (governing the judicial notice and proof of Customary Law in Nigerian courts); see also *Kharie Zaidan v Mohssen Khalil* [1974] 1 All NLR 86 (addressing the choice of law rules in customary succession matters).



Land Use Act regarding governor's consent,⁷² the procedural nuances of *diyyah* (blood money) and restorative justice frameworks in northern states⁷³ and regional customary property rights. Thus, without specialized domestic fine-tuning, these global engines remain contextually colorblind to Nigerian realities.

7.3 Infrastructural Deficits and the Digital Divide

The deployment of advanced computational tools requires robust digital infrastructure a reality that exposes Nigeria's acute digital divide.⁷⁴ While highly capitalized, tier-one law firms in commercial hubs can easily absorb the costs of premium AI subscriptions, enterprise-grade cybersecurity safeguards, and independent power alternatives, smaller solo practices and rural bar branches are fundamentally excluded.⁷⁵ Practitioners across provincial jurisdictions struggle with basic operational deficits, including an unstable national power grid and the prohibitive costs of high-speed, uncapped broadband internet.⁷⁶ Over-reliance on AI threatens to widen this gap, creating a multi-tiered legal market where marginalized practitioners are structurally priced out of technological relevance.⁷⁷

7.4 Institutional and Pedagogical Inertia

In the academic realm, the biggest barrier is the deep-seated institutional resistance to changing traditional teaching methods. The Council of Legal Education (CLE) maintains a highly centralized, static curriculum that emphasizes physical lecture attendance, handwritten

⁷² Land Use Act 1978, Cap L5, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004, s 22.

⁷³ AR Jimba, 'Rights of Muslim Patients to Shari'ah-Compliant Compensation (*Diyyah*) against Medical Negligence in Nigeria' (LL.M. Dissertation Draft, Kwara State University 2026) 114.

⁷⁴ National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Act 2007, Cap N156, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004, s 6; see also YZ Ya'u, *The Youth and the Digital Divide in Nigeria* (Malthouse Press 2005) 45–52.

⁷⁵ Legal Practitioners Act, Cap L11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004, s 22 (as amended)

⁷⁶ Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) Order on Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO) 2024, NERC/GL/2024/001

⁷⁷ AB Kasunmu, *The Legal Profession in Nigeria: Trends and Prospects* (Lagos University Press 1993) 204; see also *Okafor v Nweke* [2007] 10 NWLR (Pt 1043) 521 (Supreme Court of Nigeria ruling emphasizing structural formalisms that can impact procedural access in less-equipped jurisdictions).



examinations, and rote memorization of case law and statutory formulas.⁷⁸ This legacy framework leaves little room for digital tech law or algorithmic literacy.

Furthermore, many institutional faculties suffer from internal tech-resistance among senior academic staff. Lecturers often view generative AI exclusively as an instrument for academic dishonesty and plagiarism rather than a powerful pedagogical aid. This adversarial stance creates a counterproductive loop: instead of establishing formal institutional guardrails and teaching students *responsible, transparent prompt engineering*, faculties rely on crude bans or outdated detection software.⁷⁹ As a result, students continue to use these tools secretly without receiving critical training on verifying machine outputs or understanding algorithmic bias.

7.5 High Financial Cost of Acquisition and Maintenance

Beyond basic internet and power issues, the financial barrier to accessing specialized, enterprise-grade legal AI is a massive hurdle for the average Nigerian law firm and public university. Mainstream legal AI tools are typically priced in US Dollars or British Pounds, calculated on expensive monthly subscription models per user.⁸⁰ Given the continuous fluctuation and devaluation of the Nigerian Naira against major foreign currencies, these licensing fees translate into millions of Naira annually. While a top-tier law firm in Lagos can easily absorb these costs as operational overhead, it is financially impossible for a young legal practitioner starting a new chamber, or a financially constrained public university law library, to maintain such subscriptions.⁸¹ This economic reality threatens to centralize advanced technological relevance into the hands of wealthy elite.

7.6 The Risk of Job Displacement and Redundancy for Junior Associates

Historically, the operational backbone of large Nigerian law firms has relied on junior associates, interns, and paralegals to handle labor-intensive tasks like manual document review, initial draft

⁷⁸ Legal Education (Consolidation, etc.) Act, (n 4)

⁷⁹ Adegbite and Oyedokun (n 59) 542.

⁸⁰ Lawexa (n 26) 14.

⁸¹ Ojukwu, (n 39) 6.



preparation, and physical case-law searches.⁸² Generative AI engines can now execute these identical tasks in a fraction of the time and at a lower long-term cost. This efficiency creates an immediate risk of widespread underemployment and job displacement for young lawyers entering an already overcrowded market.⁸³ Senior partners may scale back junior recruitment, leading to a critical gap in professional development: if AI replaces the entry-level tasks where junior lawyers traditionally hone their skills and learn how to practicalize the law, the profession faces a future shortage of experienced, senior advocates.⁸⁴

7.7 Intellectual Laziness and Erosion of Analytical Rigor

In both the academic environment and legal practice, over-reliance on automated tools risks eroding the core analytical and critical thinking skills that define the legal mind. Law professors across Nigerian faculties note that students increasingly copy and paste machine-generated essays without engaging with the underlying legal principles or checking the source material.⁸⁵ This issue extends into actual practice, where busy lawyers sometimes generate entire court addresses or written arguments without cross-checking the actual physical law reports or analyzing the specific facts of their client's case.⁸⁶ This uncritical reliance devalues the intellectual rigor of the profession, reducing the practice of law from an art form driven by human logic into a mechanical exercise of prompt generation.

8.0 WAY FORWARD TOWARDS STRENGTHENED AI IMPACTS

To transform the disruptive challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into structured instruments for systemic growth, the Nigerian legal ecosystem must move away from defensive containment toward proactive institutional alignment. Maximizing the relevance of AI while safeguarding the core values of the legal profession requires a collaborative, multi-stakeholder strategy involving

⁸² Amuda-Kannike *et al* (n 3) 88

⁸³ Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwakoby, (n 2)

⁸⁴ E Ozoani, 'The Legal Profession: Embracing the Future' (Paper delivered at the 2026 Law Week of the Nigerian Bar Association, Makurdi Branch, Benue State, 2026) 7.

⁸⁵ Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 112

⁸⁶ Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (n 42) 5



the academy, the regulatory organs of the bar, and local technology developers. Enumerated below are some of the possible way forwards:

8.1 Radical Curricular Overhaul by the Council of Legal Education

The structural transformation of Nigerian legal education must begin with an immediate revision of the centralized benchmarks set by the Council of Legal Education (CLE).⁸⁷ Faculties of law across public and private universities must aggressively phase out legacy pedagogical models that reward rote memorization, transitioning instead toward clinical and computational legal training.

- i. **Algorithmic Literacy:** Core modules in legal research methodology should formally introduce specialized units on prompt engineering, algorithmic verification, and legal data analytics.⁸⁸
- ii. **Practical Training:** Rather than executing sweeping institutional bans on generative platforms, faculties should establish supervised legal tech laboratories. Here, students can use domestic tools to draft court processes, while being actively examined on their ability to detect "algorithmic hallucinations" and contextual errors.⁸⁹

8.2 Institutionalizing "Sandbox" Regulatory Frameworks by the NBA

To safely guide the deployment of automated tools in actual practice, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), through its Section on Legal Practice (NBA-SLP), must advance beyond non-binding operational circulars. The bar should pioneer a localized "regulatory sandbox"—a controlled testing framework where tech-forward chambers and local developers can safely experiment with advanced legal AI models under close oversight.⁹⁰ This sandbox mechanism will allow regulators to co-draft binding ethics standards addressing the specific boundaries of confidentiality under the

⁸⁷ Nwotite, (n 5)

⁸⁸ Ihedoro and others, (n 9) 108

⁸⁹ Adegbite and Oyedokun, (n 59)

⁹⁰ Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (n 42) 4



Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC), the commercial limitations of automated billable hours, and client data security mandates under the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA).⁹¹

8.3 Democratizing Access via Local Tech Subsidies

To prevent AI from exacerbating the digital divide within the domestic bar, the NBA should form strategic public-private partnerships with indigenous legal software providers to negotiate highly subsidized, volume-licensed access for young legal practitioners and rural branches.⁹² Furthermore, federal infrastructural interventions aimed at stabilizing the national power grid and expanding rural broadband accessibility must be prioritized as a foundational requirement for socio-legal development. By democratizing access to enterprise-grade tools, the legal profession can lower the operational cost of delivering high-quality representation, ultimately utilizing automated efficiency to bridge Nigeria's persistent access to justice gap for indigent citizens.⁹³

8.4 Advancing Collaborative Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Given the significant financial limitations of public institutions and rural law chambers, the democratized integration of legal technology depends on a collaborative public-private partnership framework. The Council of Legal Education (CLE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should actively partner with leading indigenous legal tech hubs to negotiate deeply subsidized, volume-licensed enterprise packages for public university law libraries and the various campuses of the Nigerian Law School.⁹⁴ By creating structured funding pools and tech-transfer agreements, local tech companies can provide law faculties with cutting-edge software suites, while simultaneously gaining access to highly localized academic legal insights to further refine their product development.⁹⁵

8.5 Establishing Independent Institutional Review Boards

⁹¹ Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2023, r 14; Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24.

⁹² Ojukwu, (n 39) 8

⁹³ Paul and Yakubu (n 27) 46

⁹⁴ Adegbite and Oyedokun, (n 59)

⁹⁵ Leveraging Digital Transformation, (n 55)



To preserve academic integrity and prevent intellectual laziness across the legal academy, institutional faculties of law must move beyond simple plagiarism detection software and create independent AI Ethics and Review Boards.⁹⁶ Rather than enforcing an unenforceable ban on automated tools, these faculty-led committees should evaluate how generative platforms are integrated into classroom assignments. The board's responsibilities include verifying that students maintain research transparency by submitting detailed prompt-logs alongside their briefs, while ensuring that all automated conclusions are backed by verifiable, human-checked domestic legal authorities.⁹⁷

1. Conclusion and Recommendations

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the Nigerian legal ecosystem represents an inevitable socio-legal evolution rather than a transient technological trend. While advanced large language models and automated analytics serve as structural force multipliers that drastically compress research and document-review times, their introduction into a regulatory vacuum exposes the Nigerian legal sector to critical systemic risks. These include compromised client confidentiality under the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC), data privacy vulnerabilities under the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA), and algorithmic "hallucinations" submitted in court addresses.

Simultaneously, the pedagogical gap between a rapidly digitizing commercial legal marketplace and static, analog university curricula threatens to produce law graduates who face immediate structural obsolescence. Defensive rejection of these tools is neither practical nor enforceable. Instead, Nigeria's legal authorities should proactively manage this transition through robust regulatory and pedagogical frameworks that harness AI's profound efficiencies while preserving the ethical tenets, local context, and intellectual integrity of the legal profession. Against the

⁹⁶ Ahmed and Usman, (n 61)

⁹⁷ Adegbite and Oyedokun, (n 59) 548



forgoing backdrop and to achieve a sustainable, tech-forward, and ethically sound legal ecosystem in Nigeria, the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. CLE Curriculum Overhaul: The Council of Legal Education (CLE) should integrate legal technology, computational research, and prompt engineering into university and Law School syllabi, pivoting assessments from rote memorization to the critical evaluation of AI outputs.
- ii. NBA-SLP Code of Ethics: The Nigerian Bar Association Section on Legal Practice (NBA-SLP) should enact binding guidelines regulating data uploads to cloud-hosted public models, enforcing strict compliance with Section 24 of the NDPA and penalizing the submission of unverified, hallucinated court citations.
- iii. National Legal Data Registry: The National Judicial Council (NJC) and state judiciaries should establish a centralized, open-access electronic archive of domestic judgments to enable local developers to train AI models on Customary, *Shari'ah*, and statutory laws.
- iv. Subsidized Tech Access: The NBA should secure subsidized enterprise-grade AI software licensing for junior associates and rural branches, lowering operational overhead and bridging the domestic access-to-justice gap.
- v. Academic Integrity Boards: Law faculties should establish internal AI review boards to regulate automated research in coursework, requiring students to submit prompt-logs to ensure transparency and manual verification of sources.
- vi. Judicial Tech Literacy: The National Judicial Institute (NJI) should mandate continuous technology training for judges, focusing on digital evidence admissibility, deepfakes, and the use of electronic court registries.
- vii. Public-Private Infrastructure Partnerships: The National Universities Commission (NUC) and universities should partner with indigenous tech hubs to establish legal tech laboratories, upgrading the digital infrastructure of public law faculties.
- viii. Regional Framework Harmonization: The Federal Ministry of Justice should align Nigeria's legal tech and data-sharing standards with ECOWAS and African Union protocols to keep domestic practitioners competitive within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).