ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION: POSSIBILITY, APPLICATION AND PITFALLS

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence algorithms enable machines to analyse large volume of data, recognise patterns and make prediction or recommendation based on the information processed. The article examines the possibilities and pitfalls of artificial intelligence application in the legal profession. It is found that artificial intelligence can be beneficial to the legal profession in Nigeria, by promoting expeditious presentation and disposal of cases in court etc. However, its application and overdependence particularly in litigation and adjudication can be problematic because of often errors and private bias. Artificial intelligence algorithms can perpetuate existing biases in the legal system. More so, artificial intelligence has the tendency to discourage hard work, critical thinking, ingenuity and creativity which are very fundamental to litigation and adjudication. Against this background, it is recommended that overdependence on artificial intelligence should be avoided and rules should be

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made to ensure that artificial intelligence is deployed responsibly in the legal profession for the dispensation of justice and the benefit of the society. Doctrinal method was used to collate materials.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Legal Profession, Application and Pitfalls

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the development of artificial intelligence has provided an avalanche of opportunities for innovation and progress worldwide. Artificial intelligence holds the potential to significantly improve litigation and adjudication in Nigeria. By leveraging AI-powered tools or soft wares like Case text, CoCounsel, Lex Machina, Brev AI, LexisNexis Compose, LawGeex etc, a lawyer can expeditiously carry out client communication and counselling, legal research, document discovery and review, contract analysis, case management, e-discovery, preparation of court processes, trial preparation and presentation in court among others. Also, in the process of adjudication, the court through artificial intelligence tools can streamline administrative processes, minimise paperwork and expedite or fast rack the determination of cases. There is the tendency for overreliance on artificial intelligence with the attendant erosion of the values of hard work, lack of creativity and critical thinking which are key to litigation and adjudication. Artificial intelligence is a tool for the amplification of human creativity and ingenuity. Artificial intelligence should be an assistive technology and not a substitute or replacement to human touch that is the foundation of the legal profession. Stephen Hawking, while expressing his apprehension over the negative effect of artificial intelligence stated thus: 'I fear that AI may replace humans

altogether. If people design AI that improves and replicates itself. This will be new form of life that outperforms humans.'[1] Similarly, he stated that: 'Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history. Unfortunately, it might also be the last unless we learn how to avoid the risks.'[2] This article examines, the meaning and evolution of artificial intelligence, the possibility and pitfalls of its application in the legal profession. The article concludes with recommendations on how to overcome the pitfalls.

2.0 THE MEANING AND EVOLUTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

2.1. The Meaning of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence referred to as 'AI' has a complex and multifaceted nature. It has been defined differently by different experts making it challenging to come up with a universally accepted definition. Viewed in terms of its composition, AI is described as a system comprising both hardware and software elements. This could refer to a robot, a program operating on a single computer, a program running across networked computers, or any other combination of components that supports an AI system.[3] From a legal perspective, AI is regarded as the product of intellectual activity that can be protected under intellectual property

[1] Stephen Hawking, 'Artificial Intelligence could End Human Race.' <https://m.economictimes.com>news > accessed 7 May 2024.
[2] Courtney Boone, 'Top 10 Expert Quotes that Redefine the Future of AI Technology.' https://www.nisum.comtop-10-t... > accessed 7 May 2024.
[3] K Alzbeta, 'Intersections between Law and Artificial Intelligence' (2017) 27 (1) International Journal of Computer 55-68 <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/229656008.pdf.> accessed 23 June 2024.

through copyright protections.[4] In terms of its purpose, AI is a simulation of human intelligence using machine processes which ultimate aim is to develop artificially intelligent machines often in the form of robots that can perform tasks traditionally carried out by humans, but with greater efficiency and effectiveness.[5]

Artificially intelligence machine is categorised into Generative AI and Narrow AI. Generative AI refers to highly complex machines or algorithms capable of thinking like humans across a wide range of multifaceted problem domains. These systems possess general reasoning abilities and represent a future goal, though they remain hypothetical at present.[6] On the other hand, Narrow AI known as applied or specialised AI consists of systems designed to perform specific tasks or functions. Unlike General AI, Narrow AI does not aim to replicate the full cognitive depth of human intelligence. [7] Examples include playing games like Chess or Go, or diagnosing illnesses. Narrow AI is already widely operational in various areas of human life, often surpassing human accuracy and efficiency.[8] It is noteworthy, that both approaches to AI depend on 'machine learning', a process that involves training a program to learn from data provided by

[4] M D Goldberg and D O Carson, 'Copyright Protection for Artificial Intelligence Systems' (1991) 39 (1) Journal of the Copyright Society of the U.S.A 57-75.
[5] OECD, *OECD Digital Economy Outlook* (OECD Publishing 2017) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264276284-en.> accessed 23 June, 2024.
[6] L Steven and R Mathias, 'The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights' (33) 2 Ethics & International Affairs 141-158.
[7]OECD n 5.
[8] The Law Society of England and Wales, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession' (Scanning Report 2018).

users, enabling it to respond to entirely new data in the future without the need for explicit instructions for every possible scenario.[9]

From the perspective of its artificial nature, AI can be defined as a non-biological autonomous entity. However, the term autonomous in this definition should be taken as the ability of AI to process data by itself and by no means prohibits any situation in which human and AI experts are working alongside one another (co-robotics).[10] 'Artificial' implies a good made by people, often as a copy of something natural, and 'Intelligence' refers to 'the ability to learn and understand or to deal with new or trying situations'; 'the skilled use of reason'; 'the ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one's environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria' [11] In view of that, AI is an artificially developed intelligence, created as an alternative to humans, or a crafted machine with embedded learning and analysis capabilities, mastered to comply with real-life situations and to perform, as much as accurately possible, the tasks and works once done by men.[12] Simply put, AI is that activity devoted to making machines intelligent, and intelligence is that quality that enables an entity to function appropriately and with foresight in its environment. As famously stated by Alan Turing, one of the pioneers in the field of AI, 'a computer would deserve to be called intelligent if it could deceive a human

[9] S Sean and R Zeeve, 'Artificial Intelligence: Application Today and Implications Tomorrow' (2017) (16) Duke Law & Technology Review 85-99.
[10] J B Thomas, 'Artificial Intelligence in Court Legitimacy Problems of AI Assistance in the Judiciary' (2018) 2 (1) Retskraft-Copenhagen Journal of Legal Studies 41-59.
[11] S Maxi, 'Artificial Intelligence and Legal Decision Making: The Wide Open Study on the Example of International Arbitration' (2019) 318 Queen Mary University of London, School of Law Legal Studies Research Paper 1-33. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3392669> accessed 17 February 2025.
[12] D Maxim, 'The Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Criminal Liability, Challenges of the Knowledge Society' (2019) (140) Criminal Law, Lex ET Scientia Int'l J. 48-52.

into believing that it is human.'[13] Thus, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has various meanings but essentially refers to the capability of computer systems or machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include reasoning, learning, problem-solving, decision-making, recognising speech, and understanding natural language. AI is broadly defined as the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems, enabling them to mimic intelligent human behavior or act rationally.

It is important to note that AI does not possess intelligence in the human sense; it does not 'know' what it is doing or why. An AI system does not truly 'reason' or 'think' but instead follows pre-programmed computational steps as in expert systems or mathematically analyses vast amounts of data to infer probabilities as in machine learning.[14] As Steven Pinker aptly emphasised, AI lacks intentionality or genuine attitudes; it operates based on assigned tasks and goals rather than making judgments rooted in principles, rules, priorities, or values, as humans do.[15]

2.2. The Evolution of Artificial Intelligence

The evolution of AI has spanned several decades, beginning with foundational theoretical ideas and progressing to the varied and advanced AI technologies we have today. The early foundation stage spanned between the pre-1950s to 1950s, at this stage, the concept of AI was traced

[13] Deloitte, '16 Artificial Intelligence Projects from Deloitte: Practical Cases of Applied AI Unleash the Power of AI for your Organization' https://ai-hungary.com > accessed 14 June 2025.
[14] L Michael and B Felicity, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession: A Primer' (2017) The Law Society of University of New South Wales.
[15] P Steven, *Enlightenment Now, The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (Penguines Book Limited Publishers 2018).

to the ideas of automata and computation, culminating with Alan Turing's seminal work in the 1950s. Turing proposed the Turing Test to evaluate a machine's ability to exhibit human-like intelligence, marking a formal starting point for AI research.[16]

The second developmental stage saw the birth of AI and symbolic AI spanning 1956 to 1970s, this is when AI as a named field began with the 1956 Dartmouth Conference, where researchers like John McCarthy started work on AI programming languages like LISP (LISP Processing-the earliest type of AI programing language). Early AI focused on symbolic reasoning and rule-based expert systems in the 1960s and 1970s, designed to mimic human decisions using encoded knowledge.[17]

The third period is the Winter which spanned 1970s to 1980s, at this period, AI research faced periods of reduced funding and diminished interest stemming from the inability of expert systems to handle complex and ambiguous real-world problems. The 1990s saw a paradigm shift towards machine learning, where AI systems learn from data using methods like neural networks, decision trees, and support vector machines. This was enabled by increased computing power and data availability. Natural Language Processing (NLP) and image recognition gained traction and prominence during this era.[18] The year 2000 to the present experienced rapid growth and expansion in AI. AI research broadened with advances in deep learning (a subset of machine learning involving layered neural

[16] Bernard Marr, 'The Evolution of AI: Transforming the World one Algorithm at a Time' <https://bernardmarr.com/the-evolution-of-ai-transforming-the-world-one-algorithm-at-a-time/> accessed 14 June 2025.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

networks), reinforcement learning, and robotics. AI became embedded in everyday applications such as voice assistants, recommendation engines, autonomous vehicles, and more. The field continues to evolve rapidly with ongoing research in explainability, ethics, and AI governance.[19] AI's historical evolution moved from theoretical foundations to symbolic reasoning, through challenging winters, towards the modern era of data-centric machine learning and deep learning applications, transforming the technology into an integral part of contemporary society.

3.0 POSSIBILITY AND APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Artificial intelligence offers numerous possibilities of practical applications in the legal profession. It significantly transforms how legal services are rendered and adjudication of cases.

3.1 Lawyers-Legal Practice

In the area of legal practice, artificial intelligence has brought lots of applications making the practice of law relatively easy. Some of the areas it impacted legal practice include:

a. Communication and Counselling

Artificial Intelligence has many possibilities and applications for enhancing communication and counselling between lawyers and clients in legal practice. AI can analyse a client's data and communication history to tailor messages, anticipate client questions, and recall details previously discussed, creating more personalised and attentive communication even

[19] UNESCO, 'Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies' <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence > accessed 5 August 2025.

when messages are automated.[20] Chatbots provide 24/7 instant responses to commonly asked questions about legal services, basic procedures, and firm operations. This improves client access to information and offers immediate support without human presence.[21] AI guides prospective clients through initial intake questionnaires, collecting essential information before a human lawyer becomes involved, streamlining the onboarding process and increasing efficiency.[22] AI systems can automatically schedule appointments, send reminders regarding court dates, deadlines, and document submissions, reducing missed deadlines and enhancing reliability in client interactions.[23] AI assistants help lawyers in managing communication workflows, sorting client emails, organising consultations, and drafting initial message responses, optimising time allocation for substantive counselling.[24] AI can translate complex legal jargon into simple language for clients, improving understanding and reducing confusion during counselling sessions.[25]

b. Legal Research

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative tool in legal research, offering a wide range of possibilities and applications that

[20] Rod Dyquiangco, 'Transform your Practice: AI for Enhanced Client Communication Management in Law Firms' <https://automationlegal.com/ai-client-communication-law-firms/ > accessed 7 July 2025.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Chris Lyle, 'AI Communication Tools in Law Firms: Enhancing Client Service and Efficiency' <https://golawhustle.com/blogs/ai-communication-tools-law-firms > accessed 19 September 2025
[24] Ibid.
[25] Vijit S Chahar, 'AI Communication Tools: Attorney -Client Relations' <https://legalaicentral.com/ai-communication-tools-attorney-client-relations/ > accessed 19 September 2025.

enhance efficiency, accuracy, and strategic decision-making in legal practice. AI-powered platforms can scan and analyse vast databases of legal texts, case laws, statutes, and regulations to quickly locate relevant precedents and authoritative materials. These tools use Natural Language Processing (NLP) to understand the context and rank results by relevance, dramatically speeding up research and reducing the time lawyers spend on manual searches.[26] AI identifies patterns in case law and judicial behavior, offering insights into how certain judges have ruled historically or how specific legal issues are typically adjudicated, aiding lawyers in case preparation.[27]

AI helps draft initial versions of legal documents by integrating research findings, standard clauses, and jurisdiction-specific requirements, allowing lawyers to focus on refining and strategising.[28] AI legal research is often integrated with case management platforms that incorporate docket tracking, evidence management, and legal analytics to provide a comprehensive toolset for litigation preparation.[29] AI promotes legal research by automating labour-intensive tasks, providing predictive insights, improving accuracy, and keeping lawyers updated in real time. This allows legal professionals to redirect their focus from routine data gathering to higher-order analysis and strategic legal counselling. AI

[26] Limitless Team, 'Artificial Intelligence and Law: Legal Impact in 2025' < https://www.limitlesslegal.com/en-us/blog/artificial-intelligence-and-law-legal-impact-2025> accessed 10 October 2025.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

functions as a collaborative partner in legal research, boosting the efficiency and competitiveness of legal practice in 2025 and beyond.[30]

c. Document Discovery and Review

Artificial Intelligence has revolutionised document discovery and review in legal practice, particularly through electronic discovery (e-Discovery). Natural Language Processing (NLP) enables AI to understand the context, sentiment, and intent behind documents and communications, allowing lawyers to filter and cluster related information more accurately than traditional keyword searches. AI groups related communications and documents, enabling reviewers to see the conversation history and thematic links, improving review efficiency and reducing duplication.[31] AI detects emotional tone and flags documents that may indicate fraud, misconduct, or other legal risks, helping legal teams focus on high-risk areas. AI algorithms learn from human reviewers to prioritise relevant documents, significantly reducing the volume of data requiring manual review and saving time and cost.[32] Lawyers can interact with AI-driven search tools using natural language, posing questions to rapidly identify key information within massive data sets.[33] AI in e-Discovery transforms a traditionally manual, costly, and error-prone process into an efficient, accurate, and compliant workflow. Its integration of machine learning, NLP, predictive

[30] Oliver Roberts, 'What to Expect in 2025: AI Legal Tech and Regulations (65 Experts Predictions' <https://natlawreview.com/article/what-expect-2025-ai-legal-tech-and-regulation-65-expert-predictions#google_vignette> accessed 10 October 2025.
[31] Cimplifi, 'Beyond Review: Redefining the Future of AI-Powered eDiscovery' <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/beyond-review-redefining-the-future-of-9880887/> accessed 19 October 2025.
[32] Ritu Kaushal, 'The Future of AI in eDiscovery: Smarter Legal Workflows, Better Outcomes' <https://www.legalsupportworld.com/blog/ai-in-ediscovery/> accessed 19 October 2025.
[33] Ibid.

coding, and generative AI sets a new standard in handling electronic evidence in legal cases worldwide.

d. Contract Analysis

AI tools swiftly analyse contracts to identify, extract, and evaluate key clauses such as indemnities, liabilities, compliance provisions, and renewal terms. This drastically reduces manual review time and increases accuracy by minimising overlooked risks and errors.[34] Modern AI agents go beyond static text analysis by proactively analysing contracts against predefined criteria, suggesting clause modifications, assessing risks, and providing real-time feedback during negotiations. These agents learn and adapt to company-specific standards and evolving legal requirements, continually improving contract quality.[35] Advanced AI models enable precise contract review across multiple languages, capturing legal nuances and cultural context accurately. This facilitates international business operations and reduces language-related misunderstandings or error.[36] These innovations significantly enhance accuracy, efficiency, and legal risk management in contract-related processes.

e. Case Management

Artificial Intelligence (AI) significantly optimises case management in legal practice by automating routine tasks, enhancing data handling, and improving strategic decision-making. AI streamlines workflows by generating case files, populating standard documents, scheduling follow-ups, and triggering approval processes governed by preset rules, reducing

[34] Kathrin Perkovic, 'Trends 2025: AI in Contract Analysis' < https://www.legartis.ai/blog/trends-ai-contract-analysis> accessed 10 October 2025.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

manual administrative burdens and errors.[37] AI summarises depositions, organises transcripts, and surfaces relevant issues, allowing litigation teams to prepare more effectively and confidently.[38] AI-enabled case management efficiently manages increasing volumes and complexity of legal matters, maintaining performance without compromising quality[39]AI-powered systems automatically capture and classify incoming legal requests, routing matters to the appropriate team members based on case type, complexity, and urgency. This prevents important issues from being overlooked and accelerates case initiation.[40]

AI-integrated case management software connects with document management, e-signature tools, and enterprise systems to maintain data consistency and eliminate redundant manual data entry across platforms.[41] Centralised platforms enhanced with AI promote seamless communication among legal teams and business stakeholders, providing real-time updates and fostering coordinated efforts throughout the case lifecycle.[42] These AI-driven innovations empower legal teams to focus on substantive legal work, reduce administrative overhead, and improve case outcomes through intelligent automation, advanced analytics, and streamlined collaboration.

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[37] Beau Wysong, 'Gaining an Advantage in Litigation: Using AI for Case Management' <https://www.artificiallawyer.com/2025/03/19/gaining-an-advantage-in-litigation-using-ai-for-case-management/> accessed 13 October 2025.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Streamline AI, '5 Best AI Tools for Court Cases in 2025' <https://www.streamline.ai/tips/best-ai-tools-court-cases> accessed 15 October 2025.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Hannah DeFreitas, 'The 2025 Guide to AI in Law: Tools, Trends, and Strategies' <https://www.mycase.com/blog/ai/ai-in-the-legal-industry/> accessed 15 October 2025.

f. Preparation of Court Processes

Artificial intelligence substantially enhances efficiency, accuracy in preparation of court processes. AI-powered tools assist lawyers in drafting court documents such as complaints, motions, petitions, and affidavits by generating initial drafts based on case facts and precedents, reducing manual drafting time and minimising errors.[43] NLP technologies review court documents for clarity, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and adherence to court formatting rules, improving the professionalism and acceptance likelihood of filings.[44] AI systems seamlessly integrate with legal research platforms to pull relevant case law, statutes, and procedural rules needed for court documents, ensuring pleadings are well-supported by up-to-date legal authorities.[45]

AI-driven case management software tracks critical deadlines, statute of limitations, and filing schedules to ensure timely submission of court processes and prevent procedural dismissals.[46] By analysing past court rulings and judge behavior, AI can predict the likely responses to motions or procedural requests, helping lawyers tailor their filings for stronger impact.[47] AI ensures court documents meet ethical obligations and procedural requirements, flagging conflicts or breaches before submission. Artificial intelligence tools help legal professionals produce higher quality

[43] British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL), 'Use of Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice' <https://www.biicl.org/documents/170_use_of_artificial_intelligence_in_legal_practice_final.pdf> accessed 10 October 2025.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Marjorie Richter J D, 'How AI is transforming the Legal Profession' < https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/how-ai-is-transforming-the-legal-profession/> accessed 10 October, 2025.
[46] Rod Dyquiangco, n 20.
[47] Limitless Team, n 26.

court filings with reduced administrative burden and enhanced strategic foresight in litigation preparation.[48]

g. Trial Preparation and Presentation of Cases in Court

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought transformative possibilities and applications to trial preparation and the presentation of cases in court, improving lawyer efficiency, strategy, and courtroom effectiveness. AI tools analyse case documents, witness statements, and evidence to help lawyers organise facts, identify key issues, and create comprehensive case files. This systematisation aids trial preparation by ensuring critical materials are accessible and logically arranged. [49] AI simulates questioning patterns and helps prepare witnesses by generating likely cross-examination questions based on case facts, past testimonies, and opposing counsel's strategies. [50] Advanced AI analyses potential jurors' profiles, social media, and behavior to assist in optimal jury selection. It also performs sentiment analysis during trials to gauge juror and judge reactions, guiding lawyers on when to adjust argumentation.[51]

AI analyses historical case outcomes and judicial tendencies to predict trial risks and success probabilities of specific approaches, furnishing lawyers with data-driven strategic insights. [52] During trials, AI-powered digital

[48] NBA, 'Draft Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession in Nigeria' <https://nbaslp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Guidelines-for-the-Use-of-Artificial-Intelligence-in-the-Nigerian-Legal-Profession.pdf> accessed 10 October 2025.
[49] BIICL, n 43.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Lukas Van Der Merwe, '5 eDescovery Trends Shaping Legal Technology in 2025' <https://www.lextrado.com/2025/03/18/5-ediscovery-trends-shaping-legal-technology-in-2025/> accessed 11 October 2025.
[52] Limitless Team, n 26.

assistants provide instant access to relevant case law, evidence, and notes, enabling lawyers to respond to unexpected arguments effectively and enhance courtroom advocacy.[53] AI tools generate compelling visual aids-charts, timelines, video summaries, and simulations to clearly present complex evidence and legal points, improving jury comprehension and engagement. [54] AI transcribes courtroom proceedings in real-time, highlighting critical testimonies and legal points, which assists in immediate referencing and post-trial analysis.[55] AI reviews trial materials to ensure adherence to legal ethics and procedural rules, minimising risks of objections or sanctions related to improper evidence or argumentation.[56] After trial completion, AI analyses the proceedings, outcomes, and judicial feedback to identify areas of improvement for future cases. [57] These Artificial intelligence capabilities collectively improve legal advocacy effectiveness and trial outcomes in contemporary legal practice.

3.2 Court-Adjudication

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly influencing court adjudication by augmenting judicial decision-making, improving efficiency, and enhancing transparency. AI systems analyse case facts, legal precedents, statutes, and evidentiary materials to assist judges in reviewing complex information, thereby reducing cognitive overload and enhancing accuracy in rulings.[58] AI systems prioritise cases based on complexity, urgency, and resource

[53] Marjorie Richter J D, n 45.
[54] Chris Lyle, n 23.
[55] Lukas Van Der Merwe, n 51.
[56] NBA, n 48.
[57] Joely Williamson, 'The Rise of AI in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ethical Considerations' (2025) Colorado Technology Law Journal < https://ctlj.colorado.edu/?p=1297> accessed 13 October 2025.
[58] Limitless Team, n 26.

availability, enabling courts to manage caseloads efficiently and reduce backlog.[59]AI models predict potential case outcomes and sentencing ranges based on historical data, aiding judges in making consistent and informed decisions that align with established legal standards.[60] Natural Language Processing (NLP) helps judges assess the strength of legal arguments and identify relevant authorities, ensuring reasoned, well-supported judgments.[61] AI facilitates the efficient organisation, storage, and retrieval of case documents and verdicts, improving judicial record-keeping and accessibility.[62]AI-based judgments and dispute resolution platforms enable simpler cases to be adjudicated through automated or semi-automated systems, reducing costs and expanding access to courts.[63] AI-powered assistants provide judges with instant access to applicable laws, relevant judgments, and procedural rules during hearings, supporting prompt and accurate rulings.[64] AI enhances court adjudication by supporting judges with comprehensive legal analysis, predictive insights, and streamlined judicial workflows. It fosters fairness, transparency, and efficiency in judicial decision-making while expanding access to justice and reducing administrative burdens.

4. THE PITFALLS IN THE APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the legal profession offers transformative benefits but also has several pitfalls that practitioners must

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Joely Williamson, n 57.
[61] BIICL, n 43.
[62] Lukas Van Der Merwe, n 51.
[63] UNESCO, n 19.
[64] Greg Mitchell, 'The Best AI for Lawyers: Top Tools to Transform your Legal Practice' < https://ailawyer.pro/blog/ai-tools-for-lawyers> accessed 13 October 2025.

be mindful of. One of the most pressing challenges is the 'black box' problem, where AI systems make decisions based on complex algorithms that are difficult to interpret or explain, thereby undermining transparency and accountability in legal process.[65] AI systems can perpetuate or amplify biases present in training data, potentially leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes in case predictions, sentencing recommendations, or client profiling, thus challenging the legal profession's commitment to justice and equality.[66]

Excessive dependence on AI can weaken human legal judgment and critical thinking, leading lawyers to overlook errors or nuances that AI might miss, which are often crucial in legal analysis and strategy.[67] Unclear regulations around AI-generated legal content raise questions about authorship, ownership, and liability, complicating legal work product rights.[68] AI tools may generate inaccurate legal research summaries, flawed document reviews, or inappropriate contract analyses, risking professional negligence claims if outputs are not carefully vetted by qualified lawyers.[69] Implementing advanced AI systems requires significant investment in

[65] Bartosz Brożek and others, 'The Black Box Problem Revisited: Real and Imaginary Challenges for Automated Legal Decision Making' (2024) 32 (2) Artificial Intelligence and Law 427-440 < https://philpapers.org > accessed 13 October 2025.
[66] Arun Narayanan, 'From Data Deluge to Discovery: Navigating E-Discovery Challenges with Generative AI' https://hexaware.com/blogs/from-data-deluge-to-discovery-navigating-e-discovery-challenges-with-generative-ai/> accessed 13 October 2025.
[67] Nocholas Wittenberg, 'The Generative AI Boom: Opportunities and Risks for FOIA and eDiscovery Professionals' <https://armedia.com/blog/the-generative-ai-boom-opportunities-and-risks-for-foia-and-ediscovery-professionals/> accessed 15 October 2025.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Cimplifi, n 31.

technology, training, and ongoing maintenance, which may be prohibitive for smaller legal practices and create disparities.[70]

Handling sensitive client information through AI exposes law firms to risks of data breaches, unauthorised access, and legal liabilities under privacy laws requiring robust security measures.[71] Some legal professionals may resist AI adoption due to fear of job displacement or skepticism about its effectiveness, while ethical dilemmas arise around the degree of AI autonomy in client interaction and decision-making.[72] AI models trained on broad datasets may not be adequately tailored to specific legal contexts or jurisdictions, leading to erroneous conclusions when applied indiscriminately.[73] AI models trained on generalised global datasets may not account for jurisdictional differences in legal systems, leading to misinterpretations or contextually inaccurate conclusions when applied indiscriminately.[74]

Beyond the immediate operational challenges, ethical accountability remains one of the most pressing pitfalls in the application of AI within the legal profession. The question of 'who is liable' when an AI system produces flawed or biased legal output is still unresolved in many jurisdictions. AI tools are typically developed by third-party technology

[70] Hannah DeFreitas, n 42.
[71] Bob Dillen, 'How AI Transforms eDiscovery into a Game-Changer for Legal Professionals' <https://kpmg.com/ch/en/insights/cybersecurity-risk/e-discovery.html> accessed 15 October 2025.
[72] Stu White, 'How AI is reshaping the Future of Legal Practice' < https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/partner-content/how-ai-is-reshaping-the-future-of-legal-practice> accessed 15 October 2025.
[73] Limitless Team, n 26.
[74] Ibid.

companies that may not be directly accountable to clients or courts, creating a complex web of shared responsibility among lawyers, vendors, and regulators. As such, the absence of clear accountability mechanisms could jeopardise public trust in legal outcomes, especially when decisions rely heavily on algorithmic assistance. [75]

The erosion of professional independence and confidentiality of legal practitioners are bound by strict codes of conduct to maintain client privacy and protect sensitive information. However, when AI platforms particularly those based on cloud computing and third-party hosting are used in managing client data, the risk of unauthorised data exposure increases substantially. Breaches or misuse of confidential information could lead not only to reputational harm but also to legal sanctions under data protection frameworks such as Nigeria's Data Protection Act 2023 and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).[76]

The digital divide and unequal access to AI technology pose a long-term risk to the inclusivity and fairness of the legal profession. Larger, well-funded law firms are more likely to afford advanced AI tools, creating an uneven playing field where smaller firms and public interest lawyers may struggle to compete. This technological disparity could exacerbate inequality in access to justice, especially for underrepresented or low-income clients. Moreover, courts and legal aid institutions in developing

[75] Thomson Reuters Institute, 'Responsible AI in Law: Managing Risk and Accountability' <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en/reports/responsible-ai-in-law.html. > accessed 16 October 2025.

[76] International Bar Association, 'AI and Data Privacy in Legal Practice' < https://www.ibanet.org/AI-and-data-privacy-in-legal-practice > accessed 16 October 2025.

countries may lack the infrastructure and technical expertise necessary to implement AI systems effectively. Addressing this imbalance requires deliberate policy interventions such as public funding for legal technology, open-access AI platforms, and partnerships between governments and bar associations to promote equitable adoption.[77]

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the background of the pitfalls in the application of artificial intelligence in the legal profession in Nigeria, the following are recommended:

(a) AI-driven legal processes should always include human review by qualified legal professionals in order to reduce the risks of bias, errors, inaccuracies and over-reliance. Continuously audit and refine AI training data to detect and eliminate bias is very imperative. Diverse datasets and conduct fairness testing to uphold principles of justice and non-discrimination should be deployed.

(b) AI systems based on Explainable AI (XAI) frameworks to make AI decision-making understandable and auditable should be adopted. This enhances trust, supports ethical compliance, and aids legal practitioners/professionals in justifying AI-assisted outcomes. Robust cyber security measures tailored for legal data should be adopted and ensure adherence to relevant privacy regulations (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA). Also, law firms should implement end-to-end encryption, secure data storage protocols, and vendor risk assessments before integrating AI solutions into their operations.

[77] Andrew Arruda, 'AI and Access to Justice: Bridging the Legal Technology Divide' <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarruda/2024/02/ai-and-access-to-justice/ > accessed 16 October 2025.

(c) Ethical frameworks and regulatory guidelines for AI deployment in legal practice to clarify responsibilities, liability, and professional standards should be provided. Also, comprehensive training for legal professionals to understand AI capabilities and limitations should be promoted.

(d) AI outputs should be regularly assessed for accuracy, relevance, and compliance. Use audits and feedback loops to continuously improve AI system performance and reliability. Legal practitioners should be involved in AI design and implementation processes to ensure AI tools meet practical legal needs and ethical standards. The ownership and liability of AI-generated legal content through contracts and professional guidelines should be clarified to avoid disputes and maintain client trust.

6. CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents a revolutionary advancement with immense potential to transform the legal profession by enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and access to justice. In Nigeria, AI-powered tools such as Lex Machina, Case text, and LawGeex etc., can significantly improve legal research, document review and case management among others thereby expediting judicial processes. However, the application of AI has some pitfalls. Over-dependence on AI can erode fundamental professional skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and sound legal judgment. While AI offers immense potential to transform the legal profession by improving efficiency, accuracy, and access to justice, pitfalls such as bias, lack of transparency, privacy risks, and ethical uncertainties pose significant challenges. Responsible AI adoption demands a balanced approach emphasising human oversight, transparency, rigorous testing, and continuous learning. Regulatory frameworks and professional guidelines

are essential to navigate legal, ethical, and operational complexities effectively. With careful management, AI can be a powerful tool that complements legal expertise rather than replacing it, ultimately enhancing legal services.