

THE NEW FRONTIERS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION IN NIGERIA

BY

HON. JUSTICE PETER AKHIMIE AKHIHIRO

LL. B (Hons) Ife; B.L; LL.M Lagos.

HIGH COURT, EDO STATE

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a groundbreaking force, sparking a new wave of development that is fundamentally transforming industries worldwide. From healthcare to finance, AI is reshaping how we work, make decisions, and interact with the world around us. The legal profession, an industry traditionally built on precedent and human expertise, is not immune to this technological revolution. For Nigeria, a country with a complex legal system and a judiciary often burdened with delays, the arrival of AI opens new frontiers. It promises efficiency, greater access to justice, and enhanced decision-making, while also raising questions of ethics, regulation, and professional adaptation. It is therefore imperative that members of the legal profession are abreast of this new technology and the evolution it brings.

The arrival of artificial intelligence is set to completely transform the way professional tasks are carried out. It is for this reason that the words of *Professor Richard Susskind* in his book, *'The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts'*, where he said, *"we are on the brink of a period of fundamental and irreversible change... Technology will be the main driver of this change. And, in the long run, we will neither need nor want professionals to work in the way that they did in the twentieth century and before."*¹

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

In the simplest terms, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence by machines. It refers to computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human judgment such as understanding language, recognizing patterns, making predictions, or even drafting text. Modern AI systems go beyond pre-programmed instructions, they are designed to learn from data, adapt to new inputs, and improve over time. Although AI as a concept date back to the 1950s, when computer scientists like *John McCarthy*² first coined the term, the real breakthrough has

¹ Richard Susskind and Daniel Susskind, *The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 1.

² Pigo's team, 'History of Artificial Intelligence: the 1950s: from Alan Turing to John McCarthy' (Pigo AI, 4 April 2025) <https://www.pigo.ai/post/history-of-artificial-intelligence-the-1950s-from-alan-turing-to-john-mccarthy> accessed 21 September 2025.

come in recent years with the growth of “machine learning” (where computers learn from data rather than just following instructions).

One of the most remarkable developments in this area is the rise of **Large Language Models (LLMs)**. These are advanced systems trained on massive amounts of data, enabling them to understand and generate human-like language. When LLMs are applied to create new content be it text, images, or even legal drafts, they fall under what is now popularly known as **Generative AI (GenAI)**. Tools like *OpenAI’s ChatGPT*, *Google’s Gemini*, *Microsoft’s Co-pilot*, and *Anthropic’s Claude* are leading examples of this technology. LLMs like the ones mentioned above are now being used by legal professionals to draft contracts, brief of arguments, summarize case law, and provide legal insights within seconds.

HOW AI IS USED IN THE LEGAL INDUSTRY.

Rather than replacing lawyers, AI is increasingly being deployed as a tool that augments legal expertise, freeing professionals to focus on higher-value advisory and advocacy work. It is revolutionizing the legal industry by automating complex and time-consuming tasks, allowing legal professionals to focus on higher-value work that requires critical thinking and human judgment. Some of the most common applications include:

1. Legal Research and Analysis.

One of the most prominent uses of AI in the legal field is in legal research and analysis. AI-powered platforms can sift through millions of legal documents, including case law, statutes, and academic articles, in a fraction of the time it would take a human. These tools don't just find keywords; they can analyze precedents, identify legal trends, and even predict potential case outcomes based on historical data.³ AI models can analyze litigation history to provide lawyers with data-driven insights, helping them assess a case's likelihood of success. This capability offers a strategic advantage in developing legal arguments and negotiating settlements.⁴

2. Document Review and Automation.

For tasks like due diligence, discovery, and contract review, AI can drastically cut down on the time and cost involved. AI systems are trained to identify, extract, and categorize relevant clauses, risks, and inconsistencies from thousands of documents almost instantly. AI can automate the entire lifecycle of a contract, from initial drafting and negotiation to execution and renewal. It can

³ 'AI-Driven Legal Research and Tools' (Bloomberg Law) <https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/products/ai-and-bloomberg-law/> accessed 21 September 2025.

⁴ White, Stu, 'How AI is reshaping the future of legal practice' (The Law Society, 20 November 2024) <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/partner-content/how-ai-is-reshaping-the-future-of-legal-practice> accessed 21 September 2025.

also monitor for non-compliance and flag potential issues. This allows legal teams to move from reactive to proactive management.⁵

3. Litigation Support and E-Discovery.

In modern litigation, the volume of electronic data (emails, documents, chat logs) can be overwhelming. Litigation, especially in complex commercial disputes, often involves millions of documents. *E-discovery*, short for electronic discovery, is the legal procedure of searching for and retrieving case evidence from digital formats like email, database or social media documents. AI-driven e-discovery tools can scan, categorize, and extract relevant information with far greater efficiency than manual review.⁶ This has become standard practice in the United States and United Kingdom, where electronic discovery is central to civil litigation. AI systems can learn to recognize patterns in data, making them more effective than simple keyword searches.

4. Predictive Analytics.

Advanced AI systems can analyze past judicial decisions to predict the likely outcome of future cases. For instance, by studying patterns in a particular judge's rulings, AI can provide probabilistic forecasts about case outcomes, helping lawyers refine litigation strategy. Such predictive insights are becoming integral to legal risk assessment for corporate clients.⁷

5. Paperwork Automation.

Artificial Intelligence, especially tools like *ChatGPT*, can now read and summarize very large documents quickly. This means lawyers and paralegals no longer need to spend hours going through long paperwork. AI can sort, classify, and highlight the key points in minutes. A newer version of this technology, *GPT-4*, even scored in the top 10% on the U.S. Bar Exam, showing how powerful it is at understanding and writing about the law. Special legal AI tools such as *Casetext*, *Harvey*, and *Latch* have been built on top of *GPT-4*. They are designed specifically for lawyers, helping them find and summarize case law, statutes, and regulations much faster than traditional methods. This allows lawyers to work more efficiently and deliver better results for their clients.⁸

⁵ 'How AI Enhances Legal Document Review' (American Bar Association, 13 February 2025) https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_practice/resources/law-technology-today/2025/how-ai-enhances-legal-document-review/ accessed 21 September 2025.

⁶ Amit Jaju and Ankura, 'The Complexity of e-discovery at Breakneck Speeds: Navigating the Brave New World of Modern Data Growth' (JD Supra, 9 January 2025) <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/the-complexity-of-e-discovery-at-9196440/> accessed 21 September 2025.

⁷ White, Stu, 'How AI is reshaping the future of legal practice' (The Law Society, 20 November 2024) <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/partner-content/how-ai-is-reshaping-the-future-of-legal-practice> accessed 21 September 2025.

⁸ Ellen Glover and Brennan Whitfield, 'AI Lawyers: How AI Is Transforming Law Practice' (Built In, 17 October 2023) <https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/ai-lawyer> accessed 21 September 2025.

6. Compliance and Risk Management.

AI tools assist companies and law firms in monitoring compliance with regulatory frameworks. They can track changes in laws, flag potential violations, and automate reporting obligations. This is especially important in sectors such as banking, oil and gas, and telecommunications, where regulatory compliance is complex and ever-changing.⁹

7. Client-Facing Services and Access to Justice.

AI is also powering chatbots and virtual assistants that provide basic legal guidance to clients. Platforms like *DoNotPay* in the U.S. help users contest parking tickets or navigate small claims processes without hiring a lawyer. These applications expand access to justice, particularly for individuals who cannot afford traditional legal services.¹⁰

8. Court Administration.

Beyond law firms, courts in some jurisdictions are experimenting with AI to assist judges in case management and decision support. For instance, Estonia has piloted an “*AI judge*” for small claims disputes¹¹.

Several trends are accelerating the conversation around AI in the Nigerian legal profession. For example, around the world, courts and law firms are adopting AI to improve efficiency. Countries like China, United States, U.K., etc., have begun to integrate AI in their justice administration system. For example, in China, *AI-powered virtual judges or assistants*, represented by *holograms*, handle procedural tasks like asking questions and organizing evidence in certain online court proceedings. In China, these systems are designed to manage high volumes of routine cases, particularly those related to e-commerce disputes, intellectual property, and online lending.¹² AI is also used in China to analyze past cases and provide recommendations to human judges, suggesting relevant laws and precedents. The goal is to increase the efficiency and consistency of verdicts across the country.¹³ In the United States, AI tools like *ROSS Intelligence*, *Lexis+*, *Harvey AI*, etc. are widely used for legal research and contract analysis.¹⁴ Courts employ AI in electronic

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ellen Glover and Brennan Whitfield, 'AI Lawyers: How AI Is Transforming Law Practice' (Built In, 17 October 2023) <https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/ai-lawyer> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹¹ Keith Binley, 'Digitising Estonia's Judicial Systems' (Courts Data Solutions, 23 March 2024) <https://courtsdatasolutions.com/analysing-estonias-approach-to-digitising-judicial-systems/> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹² Tara Vasdani, 'Robot justice: China's use of Internet courts' (LexisNexis Canada, February 2020) <https://www.lexisnexis.ca/en-ca/ihc/2020-02/robot-justice-chinas-use-of-internet-courts.page> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹³ Nyu Wang and Michael Yuan Tian, "'Intelligent Justice': human-centered considerations in China's legal AI transformation' (National Library of Medicine, 23 August 2022) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9396564/> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹⁴ 'AI for Law Students: Guide for the Future of Legal Education' (The Legal School) <https://thelegalschool.in/blog/ai-for-law-students> accessed 21 September 2025.

discovery and predictive case analytics. In the United Kingdom, AI has been integrated into case transcription and trial preparation tools, reducing administrative burdens. The UK's Ministry of Justice has published an *"AI Action Plan for Justice"* to responsibly adopt AI to address court backlogs and improve efficiency.¹⁵ In Singapore, the judiciary launched a generative AI tool to summarize cases for small claims tribunals.¹⁶ Even smaller countries like Estonia have begun testing an *"AI judge"* to handle small claims disputes (under a certain monetary value). The system been developed in Estonia is intended to automate the resolution of straightforward cases, freeing up human judges for more complex matters. Estonia also uses AI to transcribe court hearings and to anonymize judicial data.¹⁷ Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind if it is to remain competitive in a globalized legal services market.

AI AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION IN NIGERIA.

The Nigerian legal profession is currently at crossroads. While the judiciary and legal practice remain anchored in tradition, there has been a gradual acceptance of digitalization which has increased because of the *COVID-19 pandemic* that necessitated virtual court hearings and electronic filing systems. However, the Nigerian legal profession still faces certain systemic challenges like judicial delays and backlog of cases, some lasting for years or even decades. The cumbersome legal research processes, with lawyers spending long hours combing through case law and statutes is also a challenge in the Nigerian legal system. Some of these problems have led to Nigerian citizens seeking solution to their legal problems outside the law courts. This has led to denial of justice for many.

Against the backdrop of these numerous challenges, AI offers a compelling solution. It has the potential to make legal research faster, streamline judicial administration, and broaden access to justice through automated legal support tools.

The Nigerian judiciary has made strides in digitalization, particularly during the *COVID-19 pandemic* when virtual court sittings became necessary. Recently, discussions have intensified the approach of leveraging on AI for legal research, judgment drafting assistance, and case management systems. Nigeria's judiciary is under mounting pressure to clear backlogs and improve efficiency. The Chief Justice of Nigeria and senior judges have increasingly acknowledged that technology, including artificial intelligence, must be part of the solution. The Chief Justice of Nigeria has hinted at the use of AI to reduce case backlogs and improve judicial

¹⁵ Ministry of Justice, 'AI action plan for justice' (GOV.UK, 31 July 2025)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-action-plan-for-justice> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹⁶ Lydia Lam, 'Judiciary to launch generative AI tool to summarise cases for small claims tribunals' (Channel News Asia, 10 September 2025) <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/judiciary-launch-ai-generation-summary-small-claims-tribunal-5341861> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹⁷ Keith Binley, 'Digitising Estonia's Judicial Systems' (Courts Data Solutions, 23 March 2024) <https://courtsdatasolutions.com/analysing-estonias-approach-to-digitising-judicial-systems/> accessed 21 September 2025.

efficiency, albeit with caution.¹⁸ This year in June, the *Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Benjamin Okezie Kalu*, emphasized that his motivation for sponsoring a bill aimed at setting definitive timelines for civil and criminal cases stemmed from the urgent need to address the staggering backlog of cases crippling Nigeria's judicial system. In his keynote address, he emphasized the importance of leveraging technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), in the judicial system to further enhance justice delivery and further highlighted the potential of AI in transforming the judicial system, particularly in legal research and case management. The deputy speaker stated as follows:

*“Our younger practitioners, often more attuned to technological advancements, are uniquely positioned to excel in these tech-driven fields. The future demands deep specialization and technological fluency, including AI prompt engineering, digital research, and data interpretation...Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Legal Research and Case Management: AI is not a distant concept; it is here, and it is transforming our work.”*¹⁹

The Attorney General of the Federation, *Lateef Fagbemi (SAN)*, has also supported this initiative by urging key players in the nation's justice sector to adopt technology and innovation to reduce case backlogs and make the judiciary fairer, more transparent, and accessible. He listed tools such as *digital case management, artificial intelligence in legal research, online access to legal services*, and *transparent dispute resolution platforms* as critical to achieving a faster and more efficient justice system. At the opening ceremony of the *2025 Justice Sector Leadership Retreat*, themed *“Strengthening Justice Sector Service Delivery through Technology, Innovation, and Coordinated Reform,”* held in Maiduguri, Borno State, the Honourable Attorney General stated that, *“The future of Nigeria's legal system will be defined by how boldly the justice sector integrates technology into the pursuit of justice.”*

INTEGRATION OF AI IN THE NIGERIAN LEGAL SYSTEM.

Top-tier firms like *Aluko & Oyebode and Olaniwun Ajayi LP* have begun experimenting with AI-driven legal research tools and document review software to reduce turnaround time in transactional work. In August this year, *Olaniwun Ajayi LP* became the first law firm in Nigeria and West Africa to adopt *Harvey AI*, one of the most advanced legal AI platforms presently used by leading global law firms across the world.²⁰ *Aluko and Oyebode* also recently partnered with *vLex*, a legal tech company focused on AI-driven legal intelligence, to promote access to legal

¹⁸ Wale Akinselure, Hiradat Hassan and Noheemah Abdulazeez, 'Let AI assist, not replace you, CJN warns judges' (Punch Newspapers, 19 June 2025) <https://punchng.com/let-ai-assist-not-replace-you-cjn-warns-judges/> accessed 21 September 2025.

¹⁹ Dominica Ijeoma Nwabufu, 'Deputy Speaker Advocates for AI Integration for Judicial Efficiency' (Voice of Nigeria, 19 June 2025) <https://von.gov.ng/deputy-speaker-advocates-for-ai-integration-for-judicial-efficiency/> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁰ Africa Legal, 'Olaniwun Ajayi becomes West Africa's first law firm to adopt Harvey AI' (Africa Legal, 22 August 2025) <https://www.africa-legal.com/news/olaniwun-ajayi-becomes-west-africas-first-law-firm-to-adopt-harvey-ai/122867> accessed 21 September 2025.

research materials and resources.²¹ Smaller firms are also gradually exploring AI-based platforms for case law research, thanks to tools like *Law Pavilion*'s AI assistant "*TIMI*", which provides predictive legal analytics and judgment summaries tailored for Nigerian law.

In 2005, *Law Pavilion* was founded. This company revolutionized law reporting and legal research in Nigeria with the launch of the *Law Pavilion Electronic Report (LPELR)*. The company later went on in 2016, to launch Nigeria's first legal analytical software in Africa named "*Law Pavilion Prime*", and then later in 2018, the *Law Pavilion* released *TIMI (Technology Information for Modern Intelligence)*, Nigeria's first *AI legal assistant*. With the rise of local platforms such as *Law Pavilion's TIMI*, Nigerian lawyers now have access to AI-powered research and analytics tools built specifically for the local legal context.²²

Corporate clients and multinational investors now demand faster, data-driven, and cost-effective legal services. Nigerian law firms, to remain competitive, are compelled to adopt new technologies. Professional bodies such as the *Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)* are beginning to integrate AI discussions into conferences, trainings, and policy conversations, signaling a shift in institutional mindset.

CHALLENGES OF AI INTEGRATION IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

While the benefits of Artificial Intelligence in law are undeniable, its integration into the legal profession is not without significant hurdles. There are several challenges that follow the introduction of artificial intelligence in the legal profession. These challenges must be addressed to ensure AI strengthens, rather than undermines, the practice of law. Some of these challenges include:

1. Accuracy and Reliability.

AI systems, especially Generative AI, are prone to producing incorrect or misleading results often referred to as "*hallucinations*". AI tools, particularly large language models, sometimes generate these hallucinations, a word used to describe outputs that look convincing but are factually wrong or entirely fabricated. In the legal profession, this could mean citing non-existent cases, misquoting statutes, or producing flawed contract clauses. Such errors are especially dangerous because they are presented in a confident, authoritative style, making them difficult to detect without thorough verification.

In legal practice, where precision is critical, an inaccurate citation or misapplied principle could have severe consequences for clients and the justice system. Lawyers cannot simply rely on AI outputs without verification, which raises questions about efficiency gains. In 2023, for example, two U.S. lawyers were sanctioned after submitting court documents containing fake AI-generated

²¹ vLex, "Aluko & Oyeboode Gains a Technological Advantage with Access to vLex's Comprehensive Legal Resources" (vlex Blog) <https://vlex.com/blog/Aluko-Oyeboode> accessed 21 September 2025.

²² Olumide Babalola LP, 'Evaluation Study of AI-Enabled Legal Research Tools : Lawpavillion Report' <https://oblp.org/ai-legal-research-tools-lawpavillion/> accessed 21 September 2025.

case citations.²³ This illustrates the risks of uncritical reliance on AI. Nigerian lawyers must therefore treat AI outputs as aids to legal reasoning, not substitutes for professional judgment. This will enable them to avoid allegations of breach of ***Rule 15(3)(b) of the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) 2007***, which prohibits a lawyer from knowingly citing false authorities or misleading the court.²⁴

2. Ethical and Regulatory Challenges.

Another major concern is the potential for algorithmic bias. AI systems learn from the data they're trained on. If historical legal data reflects societal biases, such as those related to race, gender, or socioeconomic status, the AI can perpetuate or even amplify these prejudices, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes. This is particularly problematic in areas like predictive sentencing and bail recommendations.²⁵ Another critical issue is accountability and liability. When an AI system makes a mistake, such as generating fabricated legal precedents ("hallucinations"), it becomes unclear who is at fault: the lawyer who used the tool, the firm that purchased it, or the software developer. The lack of a clear legal framework to govern AI's use and outcomes leaves legal professionals in a precarious position.

3. Confidentiality and Data Security.

The attorney–client relationship is built on confidentiality. When sensitive client information is entered into third-party AI platforms, there is a risk of data breaches or unauthorized use of information. Without strong data protection safeguards, AI use could expose lawyers and firms to ethical violations and liability.²⁶ The legal profession deals with highly sensitive and confidential client information, making data privacy and security paramount. Law firms must ensure that any AI tool they use has robust encryption and strict data handling protocols to maintain client confidentiality and comply with regulations like the GDPR.²⁷ In addition, the quality and availability of data are significant barriers. AI models need vast, high-quality datasets to be

²³ The Guardian, 'Two US lawyers fined for submitting fake court citations from ChatGPT' (The Guardian, 23 June 2023) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/23/two-us-lawyers-fined-submitting-fake-court-citations-chatgpt> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁴ Chidi Ezenwafor, 'Generative AI and the Law: A Train that has already Left the Station' (Law Pavilion Blog, 16 September 2025) <https://lawpavilion.com/blog/generative-ai-and-the-law-a-train-that-has-already-left-the-station/> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁵ Catherine Chow, 'AI in law: evolving ethical considerations' (Legal Cheek, 20 November 2024) <https://www.legalcheek.com/lc-journal-posts/ai-in-law-evolving-ethical-considerations/> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁶ 'AI tools, legal career: The good, the bad and the ugly' (Omaplex) <https://omaplex.com.ng/ai-tools-legal-career-the-good-the-bad-the-ugly/> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁷ *AI for Lawyers Spellbook Legal* <https://www.spellbook.legal/learn/ai-for-lawyers> accessed 21 September 2025.

effective. For many niches legal specializations, such data may be scarce or proprietary, making it difficult to train reliable AI.²⁸

4. Complacency and Diminished Professional Responsibility.

Many jurisdictions, including Nigeria, have strict professional rules about diligence, competence, and client care. If lawyers depend too heavily on AI tools, there is a risk of lowering professional standards. AI in the legal profession has also made lawyers lazy by diminishing critical thinking skills, encouraging over-reliance on automated outputs and leading to complacency, diminished understanding of legal principles, inability to function without AI assistance.²⁹

5. Cost and Accessibility of Technology.

Advanced AI platforms can be expensive to acquire, maintain, and customize. While large international firms may easily integrate AI tools, many small and medium-sized Nigerian law practices may find the cost prohibitive. This could create an uneven playing field, where only elite firms benefit from AI advantages.

6. Regulatory Vacuum.

In Nigeria, there is currently no clear legal framework or ethical guidelines for the use of AI in the legal profession. This absence creates uncertainty about acceptable practices, liability for errors, and standards for AI-generated legal work. Without regulation, there is also the risk of misuse or over-reliance on unverified tools.

7. Job Security and Skills Gap.

Automation of repetitive legal tasks such as, contract review and basic research, has raised concerns about job displacement, especially among junior lawyers and subsidiary employees of legal chambers. Studies show that up to 39% of legal tasks could be automated, with routine functions like document review and contract drafting most at risk. Junior lawyers and legal assistants may therefore face displacement as firms adopt AI tools to handle repetitive work. For example, surveys reveal that nearly one in five aspiring lawyers worry that AI will replace them, while some law firms report paralegals already spend most of their time interacting with AI platforms.³⁰ Although complete replacement of lawyers is unlikely, since tasks requiring judgment, advocacy, and client care cannot be automated, AI adoption is reshaping entry-level roles and demanding new skills. This raises questions about how the Nigerian legal profession will train,

²⁸ Aksh Garg and Megan Ma, 'Opportunities and Challenges in Legal AI' (White Paper, Stanford Law School, 6 January 2025) <https://law.stanford.edu/publications/opportunities-and-challenges-in-legal-ai/> accessed 21 September 2025.

²⁹ 'AI tools, legal career: The good, the bad and the ugly' (Omaplex) <https://omaplex.com.ng/ai-tools-legal-career-the-good-the-bad-the-ugly/> accessed 21 September 2025.

³⁰ '1 in 5 Aspiring Lawyers Fear AI Could Replace Their Jobs, Survey Finds' (Juris Education, 10 September 2025) <https://www.juriseducation.com/blog/1-in-5-aspiring-lawyers-worry-ai-will-replace-their-jobs> accessed 21 September 2025.

employ, and retain young lawyers in the coming years. However, presently, there is a skills gap, as many legal professionals are not trained to use AI tools effectively. This double challenge requires careful balancing between efficiency and employment.

8. Judicial Resistance to Change.

Courts, especially in Nigeria, often move slowly in adopting new technologies. Integrating AI into judicial processes like case management or judgment drafting may face resistance from judges who prefer traditional methods, or who fear that reliance on AI may erode judicial independence. There is often resistance to change from legal professionals who are accustomed to traditional methods. Many lawyers may be skeptical of a technology they perceive as unpredictable or lacking the nuance of human judgment. This resistance is compounded by a lack of internal expertise in AI and a fear that AI will replace entry-level jobs, making it difficult to secure firm-wide buy-in for new technology.

9. Infrastructure Deficiencies.

Nigeria's underdeveloped digital infrastructure poses a serious barrier to AI adoption. Frequent power outages, poor internet connectivity, and limited access to advanced computing resources mean that even when AI tools are available, their consistent use is not guaranteed. This is particularly problematic for courts in rural areas and emerging law firms.

10. Low Digital Literacy.

A significant proportion of legal professionals in Nigeria have limited exposure to advanced digital tools. Many lawyers are still adjusting to e-filing systems and virtual hearings introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without targeted training, integrating AI into practice may widen the digital divide within the profession.

11. Cultural and Institutional Conservatism.

The Nigerian legal profession is deeply rooted in tradition. Senior practitioners and judges may be reluctant to embrace AI, viewing it as a threat to established norms of advocacy, courtroom procedure, and professional expertise. Overcoming this cultural conservatism is as much a challenge as solving the technological barriers.

THE WAY FORWARD: HARNESSING AI RESPONSIBLY IN NIGERIA'S LEGAL PROFESSION.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into Nigeria's legal system is both necessary and inevitable. However, to maximize its benefits while mitigating risks, deliberate action must be taken across regulatory, institutional, and professional levels.

1. Develop a Clear Regulatory Framework

Nigeria urgently needs policies and guidelines that set standards for the ethical use of AI in the legal profession. The *Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)*, the *Body of Benchers*, and the *National Judicial Council (NJC)* should collaborate to issue rules on confidentiality, accountability, and verification of AI outputs. Such frameworks would mirror efforts in the *EU*, where the *AI Act* sets obligations for high-risk uses of AI, including in legal practice.

2. Capacity Building and Training.

Legal education must evolve to include modules on legal technology, data ethics, and AI literacy. The *Council of Legal Education* could integrate courses on legal tech into the *Nigerian Law School curriculum*, while universities should establish research centers focused on Law and Artificial Intelligence. Practicing lawyers should also be required to undergo *continuous professional development (CPD) on emerging technologies*.

3. Judicial Modernisation.

Nigerian courts should expand the use of AI-enabled tools in case management, e-filing, and transcription services, while ensuring judges and court staff receive proper training. For example, platforms like *Law Pavilion's TIMI* have already demonstrated the potential of AI to support Nigerian judges by providing quick access to precedents and statutes. Scaling such innovations nationwide would significantly reduce delays and inefficiencies in the justice system.

4. Infrastructure and Digital Access.

A major challenge is Nigeria's inconsistent internet and electricity supply. Government and private stakeholders must invest in digital infrastructure to ensure equitable access to AI tools across all regions. Without this, only high-income law firms may benefit from AI, further deepening inequalities within the profession.

5. Safeguards Against Hallucinations and Bias.

Lawyers should be required to verify all AI outputs before relying on them in legal proceedings. Firms can implement internal policies that treat AI as a support tool, not a replacement for professional judgment. Locally developed AI systems should also be trained on Nigerian legal data to minimize cultural or jurisdictional bias.

6. Encouraging Homegrown Legal Tech Innovation.

Nigerian startups should be incentivised through grants, tax breaks, or partnerships with law firms to build AI tools tailored to suit the Nigerian legal system. This would reduce dependence on foreign platforms that may not reflect local realities or data protection needs.

7. Protecting Young Lawyers and Jobs.

To address job security concerns, firms should adopt AI in a way that augments, rather than replaces, junior roles. Mentorship programs, re-skilling initiatives, and AI-assisted apprenticeship models can ensure young lawyers still gain hands-on experience while learning to work with technology.

CONCLUSION.

The future of AI in Nigeria's legal profession will be shaped not by whether the technology arrives as it is already here. It will however be shaped by how it is adopted, regulated, and integrated. With forward-thinking policies, investment in infrastructure, and a commitment to ethical practice, Nigeria can transform AI from a threat into a powerful tool for expanding access to justice, improving efficiency, and strengthening the rule of law.

HON. JUSTICE PETER AKHIMIE AKHIHIERO

LL. B (Hons) Ife; B.L; LL.M Lagos.

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