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Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Law Office Management and the Need for a Regulatory Framework in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing how people work and make decisions in almost every profession. In the legal field, AI is now being used in law offices to help with tasks such as legal research, document review, case management, and client communication. These tools make work faster and more efficient, but they also raise important questions about ethics, data privacy, and professional responsibility. This paper looks at whether Nigeria has enough rules and laws to guide how lawyers use AI in their offices. It examines existing legal instruments such as the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) guidelines on ethical use of AI. It also compares Nigeria's situation with other countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa, where clearer rules already exist. The study finds that Nigeria's current framework is not strong enough to deal with issues such as misuse of data, bias in AI systems, and accountability for mistakes made by AI tools especially for law office management. The paper recommends creating a clear and specific law to guide the use of AI in legal practice and introducing regular training for lawyers on how to use AI responsibly.*

KEYWORDS: *Artificial Intelligence (AI), Law Office Management, Regulation, Legal Ethics, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).*

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now part of everyday life across the world. It refers to computer systems that can think, learn, and make decisions like humans.[1] Many industries, including health, education, and finance, have already embraced AI to make their work faster and more accurate. The legal profession is not left out. Lawyers and judges are beginning to use AI to manage offices, do legal research, analyse cases, and even predict court outcomes.[2] In Nigeria, this trend is still new, but it is growing quickly. Lawyers are using AI tools to prepare documents, review contracts, and handle clients' data efficiently.[3] Systems like the Lagos State

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[1] S.J. Russell and P Norvig, Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach (4th edn, Pearson, 2020).

[2] K.D. Ashley, Artificial Intelligence and Legal Analytics: New Tools for Law Practice in the Digital Age (Cambridge University Press, 2017) 107.

[3] K.A. Omengala, S.T. Abdulrahman and J. Isiaka, "Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT) and the Legal Profession in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges" (2025) 8(1) African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education 157–174.

Court Management Information System (LagosCoMiS) already show how technology can make legal work easier and more transparent.[4]

AI has many advantages for law office management. It helps lawyers save time and reduce human error.[5] For example, AI can search thousands of cases within seconds, helping lawyers to find relevant precedents more easily. It can also help in managing clients' information securely, automating billing, and improving internal communication in law firms. In short, AI can make legal practice more efficient and client-friendly.[6] However, despite these benefits, there are serious concerns. The major issue is how to make sure that AI is used responsibly and ethically. Questions such as: Who is responsible if an AI tool gives wrong advice? How should lawyers protect clients' confidential information stored in AI systems? How can we stop bias in AI tools trained on incomplete or unfair data? These questions are important and require clear legal answers.[7]

At the moment, Nigeria has no single law that directly regulates the use of AI in the legal profession. The Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 (NDPA) offers some guidance on how to protect personal data, but it does not deal with broader issues such as accountability, bias, or intellectual property in AI systems.[8] The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has also issued ethical guidelines for lawyers on the responsible use of AI, but these guidelines are not yet detailed enough to cover the many risks involved.[9] This lack of a comprehensive legal framework leaves lawyers and their clients exposed to potential harm, especially when AI makes errors or violates privacy.

Comparatively, countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada are already developing stronger AI regulations. In the UK, judges have been cautiously allowed to use AI to help draft opinions, but there are clear rules about when and how this can be done.[10] The Canadian Judicial Council (CJC) has also issued formal guidelines on AI use in courts, focusing on fairness, accountability, and transparency.[11] South Africa is similarly working toward digital transformation in its justice system, including ethical standards for AI use.[12] These international examples show that AI regulation can be proactive and structured to protect the legal process while allowing innovation.

In Nigeria, the need for similar regulation is urgent. Without clear rules, AI could create more problems than solutions in the legal system. For instance, AI could expose sensitive client data, misinterpret local laws, or even make biased decisions if the technology is not properly

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4 LagosCoMiS, 'Lagos State Court Management Information System (Cinfores CoMiS) Dashboard' <https://lagoscomis.lagosjudiciary.gov.ng/> accessed 6 October 2025.

5 O.O. Akanle, "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Legal Services Delivery in Nigeria" (2025) 10 Crescent University Law Journal 16–39.

6 *Ibid.*

7 A.F. Adebayo and A.A. Adullah, "Justice by Algorithm: The Ethics of AI-driven Judicial Decision-Making" (2025) 12(3) International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology, 2349–6002.

8 Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, s 24(1)(a)–(d).

9 Y.O. Ali and Co, 'Artificial Intelligence, the Bar and the Bench in Nigeria' (LinkedIn*,* 2023) <https://www. linkedin.com/pulse/artificial-intelligence-bar-bench-nigeria-yusuf-o-ali-and-co--s86uf> accessed 6 October 2025.

10 B. Melley, 'Judges in England and Wales Are Given Cautious Approval to Use AI in Writing Legal Opinions' (*AP News,* 2024) <https://apnews.com/article/c2ab374237a563d3e4bbbb56876955f7> accessed 6 October 2025.

11 *Canadian Judicial Council, Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts* (1st edn, 24 October 2024) <https://cjc-ccm.ca/en/resources-center/publications/guidelines-use-artificial-intelligence-canadian-courts> accessed 6 October 2025.

12 N. Mamushiane and N. Dlamini, 'Towards a Digitally Transformed Criminal Justice System' (*CSIR ResearchSpace,* 2023) <https://researchspace.csir.co.za/bitstream/handle/10204/13665/Mamushiane1_2023.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025.

monitored.[13] Furthermore, lawyers who depend too much on AI might lose important analytical skills that are essential for justice delivery. Therefore, this paper aims to examine whether Nigeria's current laws are enough to control AI use in law office management or whether the country needs a new and specific regulatory framework. It also looks at how AI is being used and regulated in other countries, and what lessons Nigeria can learn from them.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

AI is often confused with the general use of the internet, but both are very different. The internet is mainly a platform for sharing information and communication, while AI refers to computer systems that can perform tasks requiring human intelligence such as learning, reasoning, and decision-making.[14] In simple terms, the internet helps people connect and access data, but AI helps machines think and act based on that data. AI uses complex computer programs, known as algorithms, to learn from past information and assist in decision-making in different fields, including law.[15]

In the legal setting, AI is changing how law offices are managed. Traditionally, law office management involved organising client files, handling finances, preparing documents, and managing staff. Before now, most of these tasks were done manually or with basic computer tools. The arrival of AI has made it possible for many of these tasks to be done automatically and more accurately. For example, some AI tools can help lawyers search for relevant case laws, prepare standard contracts, or even predict the possible outcome of a case based on past judgments.[16] AI-powered legal research tools such as ROSS Intelligence and LexisNexis Context can read thousands of cases in seconds and give summaries, saving lawyers valuable time.[17] It is important to separate AI use from simple internet use. Sending emails or storing files in the cloud depends on the internet, but these actions do not involve intelligence or independent decision-making. On the other hand, when a law firm uses a computer program that can review contracts or analyse a client's legal problem, that is AI in action.[18] Therefore, the rules that guide the use of the internet or data protection cannot automatically apply to AI because AI systems act with a level of independence that can affect ethical and legal standards in law practice.[19]

In Nigeria, the use of AI in law offices is still very limited. Nigerian law firms use digital tools for research and communication, but few have adopted real AI systems like machine learning or natural language processing.[20] Lagos State has made some progress through its LagosCoMiS, which helps manage court records and processes digitally.[21] However, most

[13] C.I. Obianyo and S.V. Ater, "A Critical Appraisal of the Legal Framework of Artificial Intelligence Governance in Nigeria" (2024) 4(1) Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Journal of Private and Public Law 48–62.

[14] F. Liu, Y. Shi and P. Li, "Analysis of the Relation between Artificial Intelligence and the Internet from the Perspective of Brain Science", (2017) 122 Procedia Computer Science 377–383

[15] A.O. Kehinde, A. Oyedeji and A. Awonuga, "Artificial Intelligence and the Judicial System in Nigeria: The Need for Transformation" (2024) 31(2) Lex ET Scientia International Journal 77.

[16] S.S. Tu, "Artificial Intelligence: Legal Reasoning, Legal Research" (2024) 25(2) Minnesota Journal of Law Science & Technology 105.

[17] A. Faulkner, 'From Case Law to Code: Evaluating AI's Role in the Justice System' (Montreal AI Ethics Institute/Encode Canada, 26 May 2025) <https://montrealethics.ai/from-case-law-to-code-evaluating-ais-role-in-the-justice-system/> accessed 6 October 2025.

[18] Liu, Shi and Li, Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] I.O. Ottah and S.E. Imoisi, "An Appraisal of the Integration and Impact of AI Powered Legal Tools in Nigerian Legal Research" (2025) 9(5) Irish Int'l Journal of Law, Political Sciences and Administration 72–85.

[21] LagosCoMiS, Note 4.

private firms still rely mainly on internet-based tools. This shows that while digital technology is present, true AI usage remains in its early stages. AI can take different forms. Some are "narrow AI" systems that handle specific tasks such as searching legal databases, while others, known as "general AI", can perform multiple kinds of reasoning like humans.[22] At present, Nigeria mostly uses narrow AI tools, such as document automation and legal research systems.[23] These tools have made legal services faster and more efficient, but they also raise issues about data privacy, bias, and professional responsibility.

For this paper, AI in law office management means the use of intelligent computer systems that can learn from experience and assist lawyers in research, document handling, client communication, and case prediction. This definition shows that AI goes beyond internet use, it involves reasoning and learning. Therefore, in discussing how Nigeria should regulate AI, it is essential to distinguish AI from ordinary internet tools. Only by making this distinction can we properly assess whether Nigeria's current laws are sufficient or whether new ones are needed to control the ethical and professional risks that AI brings to legal practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion in this paper is guided by three main theories: the socio-technical systems theory, regulatory theory, and the ethical principles framework. These ideas help to explain how AI works together with people, laws, and professional ethics in law office management. They also help to understand why Nigeria may need stronger rules to control the use of AI in legal practice. The socio-technical systems theory focuses on the relationship between people and technology. It means that technology does not work on its own; it must fit into the social and professional environment where it is used.[24] In law offices, this theory shows that the success of AI tools depends not only on the technology itself but also on the people using it, their skills, and the rules that guide their work. For example, if a law firm in Nigeria introduces AI for legal research or document review, it will only work well if lawyers understand how to use it and if there are proper rules to prevent misuse. Many Nigerian law offices still depend on paper records and face challenges with digital literacy,[25] so this theory shows that human readiness is just as important as the technology itself.

Regulatory theory deals with how rules and laws can guide and control the use of technology. It supports what is called "adaptive regulation," meaning that rules should be flexible and able to change as technology develops.[26] Since AI is growing very fast, regulations must also grow to keep up with it. This theory is useful for examining Nigeria's situation because, at present, the country does not have a specific law for AI. Instead, it depends on general laws like the NDPA and professional codes set by the NBA. Regulatory theory helps to check whether these existing rules are enough to manage risks such as data misuse, bias, or unethical use of AI tools

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[22] L. Sales, 'The Application of Public Law Values and Principles in the Context of Artificial Intelligence' (Supreme Court Lecture*,* 7 August 2025) <https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/speech_lord_sales_07082025_896e01b048.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025.

[23] Akanle, Note 5.

[24] W.M. Fox, "Sociotechnical System Principles and Guidelines: Past and Present" (1995) 31 *J Applied Behavioral Science* 32.

[25] O.A. Bello and C. Ogufere, "The Emerging Artificial Intelligence Legal-Judicial System's Interface: Assessing the State of Nigeria's Judicial System's Readiness for a Revolution" (2024) 2 Commonwealth Cyber Journal 6–24.

[26] G. De Grandis and I. Brass, "Is Regulatory Innovation Fit for Purpose? A Case Study of Adaptive Regulation for Advanced Biotherapeutics" (2022) 17 Regulation & Governance 810–832.

in law offices. It also encourages a balance between encouraging innovation and protecting ethical standards.[27]

The ethical principles framework looks at the moral side of using AI. It focuses on values like fairness, transparency, accountability, and respect for privacy.[28] These values are already part of lawyers' professional duties[29] and must continue to guide how AI is used. For instance, when AI systems are used for case prediction or document review, lawyers must still ensure confidentiality and avoid bias. This framework supports the idea that AI should help lawyers do their work better, not replace their human judgment.[30] The approach follows global standards such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, which calls for the safe and fair use of AI.[31]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writers have shown increasing interest in how AI can change the way law offices work. Many believe that AI can make legal work faster, more accurate, and easier for both lawyers and clients. But others warn that if AI is used without proper control, it could harm professional ethics, client privacy, and the human judgment that makes legal work fair. Supporters of AI in the legal profession, such as Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga, opined that AI tools can change the way law is practiced by helping with time-consuming tasks like reviewing documents, analysing contracts, and predicting legal outcomes.[32] In the same way, Ottah and Imoisi point out that AI tools are already making legal research in Nigeria faster and reducing mistakes in writing and citation.[33] Legg's study of online dispute resolution also supports this idea, showing that technology can help people get justice more easily by cutting down the time and money involved.[34] Reiling agrees, explaining that AI can help courts manage cases better and make the legal process more open.[35]

However, some writers are more cautious about AI. Adebayo and Adullah warn that allowing computers to make legal decisions, what they call "justice by algorithm", can make the legal process unfair, especially if people do not understand how the technology works.[36] Ngige, Awodele and Balogun also worry that AI programs trained with biased data can produce unfair results, repeating existing inequalities.[37] Nwobike, Nwosu and Johnson add that if lawyers and judges depend too much on AI to study legal precedents, they may lose the creativity and reasoning needed to make sound legal arguments.[38]

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[27] Adebayo and Abdullah, Note 7.

[28] B. Li *et al.*, 'Trustworthy AI: From Principles to Practices' (2021) 55 ACM Computing Surveys 835.

[29] See Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners, 2007.

[30] D.C. Giwa, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Law and Justice in Nigeria' (*SSRN,* 2023) <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4566440> accessed 6 October 2025.

[31] UNESCO, Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO Digital Publications*,* 2021) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387331> accessed 6 October 2025.

[32] Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga, Note 15.

[33] Ottah and Imoisi, Note 20.

[34] M. Legg, "The Future of Dispute Resolution: Online ADR and Online Courts" (2016) 17 UNSW Law Research Paper 1–15.

[35] D. Reiling, "Courts and Artificial Intelligence" (2020) 11(2) International Journal for Court Administration 1–10.

[36] Adebayo and Adullah, Note 7.

[37] O.C. Ngige, O. Awodele and O. Balogun, "Judicial Artificial Intelligence Bias: A Survey and Recommendations" (2021) 9(2) Transactions on Engineering and Computing Sciences 74–86.

[38] J. Nwobike, M. Nwosu and O. Johnson, "The Utility of Artificial Intelligence in the Pursuit of Justice through Judicial Precedent in Nigeria" (2024) 15(4) Beijing Law Review 2445–2468.

There are also questions about whether Nigeria is ready to control the use of AI in law practice. Obianyo and Ater argue that Nigeria does not yet have a strong legal structure for AI regulation. They say most of the existing laws, like the NDPA and general professional rules, do not deal directly with issues such as accountability when AI makes mistakes.[39] Giwa thinks that even though regulation is still weak, Nigeria can make progress through guidelines from professional bodies such as the NBA.[40] Bello and Ogufere suggest that instead of rushing into new laws, Nigeria should allow the legal community to test AI tools and learn from experience before writing strict regulations.[41]

From all these studies, one gap stands out. Most of the existing research focuses on AI use in courts or government bodies, but not much has been written about how law firms should manage and regulate AI internally. Also, there are very few practical studies on the challenges faced by Nigerian lawyers, such as the cost of AI tools, lack of technical knowledge, and data protection concerns. This shows that more research and better policy-making are needed to guide the safe and fair use of AI in Nigeria's legal profession.

THE ROLES OF AI IN LAW OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

AI is changing how law offices work in Nigeria. It is helping lawyers and law firms carry out their daily tasks faster and more efficiently. Many activities that used to take several hours can now be done in a short time with the help of smart computer systems. These systems can learn, analyse, and even make suggestions that help lawyers make better decisions. In a country like Nigeria, where law offices face problems such as slow processes, poor record keeping, and limited resources, AI can make a big difference in improving how law firms and courts operate.[42]

One of the most useful areas where AI is applied is in document review and management. Normally, lawyers spend a lot of time going through case files, contracts, and letters. AI can now do this work by automatically reading and sorting these documents. Through machine learning, AI tools can pick out important information, highlight errors, and organise large files in seconds. This saves lawyers time and helps them avoid mistakes. Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga explain that AI tools can quickly check large amounts of legal data and find what is relevant, making the lawyer's job easier and faster.[43] With this, lawyers can focus more on advising clients and preparing their cases instead of spending too much time on paperwork.

AI is also very useful in contract analysis. This is important for lawyers who deal with businesses, property, and financial agreements. AI tools can read contracts and identify unclear terms, missing details, or areas that might cause future problems. These systems help lawyers spot risks early and ensure that contracts follow the law. Akanle notes that using AI in this way helps lawyers offer better advice to clients and make more accurate decisions.[44] Some advanced contract review tools used internationally can be adapted for Nigerian law firms to improve accuracy and speed.

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[39] Obianyo and Ater, Note 13.

[40] Giwa, Note 30.

[41] Bello and Ogufere, Note 25.

[42] B. Abioye, "Court Records Management and Efficient Administration of Justice in Nigeria" (2014) 24(1) African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science 37–51.

[43] Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga, Note 15.

[44] Akanle, Note 5.

Another area where AI is becoming valuable is electronic discovery (e-discovery). This means collecting and reviewing digital evidence, such as emails, chats, and documents stored online, which may be needed for court cases. In Nigeria, with more businesses and individuals using digital platforms, such evidence has become common. AI tools can search through thousands of files to find the ones relevant to a case. Bello and Ogufere point out that as Nigerian courts become more digital, AI-powered e-discovery will help manage this kind of information more efficiently.[45] It also helps ensure that evidence is not missed or misplaced. AI is also changing how billing and financial management are handled in law offices. Some law firms lose money or face disputes with clients due to poor record keeping.[46] AI can track time spent on cases, prepare bills, and even point out errors. This makes billing more transparent and reduces misunderstandings. Ottah and Imoisi explain that AI-powered management systems can monitor a lawyer's work rate, track costs, and improve accuracy in billing.[47] This helps clients feel more confident that they are paying for the right services.

In addition, client management and communication have improved because of AI. Law firms now use AI chatbots and digital assistants that can respond to clients, fix appointments, and give case updates. Clients do not have to wait for office hours to get answers to simple questions. These systems also help law firms keep records of client preferences and history.[48] In cities like Lagos and Abuja, where clients expect quick communication, these tools are becoming more popular and help law firms stay competitive. AI is also used for predictive legal analytics, which means using computer systems to study past court judgments and predict what may happen in future cases.[49] This helps lawyers plan their strategies and prepare better for trials. Ngige and others have shown that AI systems can analyse old judgments of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and predict likely results in similar cases.[50] Studies have also shown that AI could predict court outcomes with impressive accuracy.[51] These tools help lawyers make informed decisions and advise their clients more effectively.

A good example of AI use in Nigeria's legal system is the LagosCoMiS. This system helps the courts manage filing, scheduling, and record-keeping electronically.[52] It reduces delays, prevents loss of files, and makes court processes more transparent. Although the system is mainly used by the judiciary, it shows what AI can do for law office management. Other states in Nigeria are beginning to study how to use similar systems to improve their court operations.[53] AI has also made legal research faster and easier. In the past, lawyers had to go through many law reports and books to find relevant cases. Now, AI-powered research tools can instantly search for case laws, statutes, and judgments. Giwa notes that AI does not just

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[45] Bello and Ogufere, Note 25.

[46] Lawcrafted Team, 'The Essential Guide to Proper Documentation and Record Keeping in Legal Practice' *(Lawcrafted,* 24 November 2024) <https://lawcrafted.com/proper-documentation-and-record-keeping/> accessed 7 October 2025.

[47] Ottah and Imoisi, Note 20.

[48] Nigerian Bar Association, 'Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession in Nigeria' (*NBA-SLP,* 1 April 2024) 4 <https://nbaslp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/GUIDELINES-FOR-THE-USE-OF-AI-IN-THE-LEGAL-PROFES SION-signed.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025.

[49] Ashley, Note 2.

[50] Ngige, Awodele and Balogun, Note 37.

[51] F. Ayankoya *et al*, "Multi-Layer Perceptron Algorithm, an Effective Tool for the Prediction of the Judgments of the Supreme Court of Nigeria" (2023) 11(6) Transactions on Engineering and Computing Sciences 1–18.

[52] LagosCoMiS, Note 4.

[53] O.E. Nwebo, "Administration of Justice and Case Management in Imo State: A Case for Innovation" (2023) 12(2) Nigerian Journal of Legal Studies 1-14.

find information but can also explain patterns and suggest relevant authorities.[54] This helps lawyers prepare stronger arguments and reduces the time spent on research.

Even though AI is not yet widely used in Nigerian law offices, its potential is clear. The main challenges are the high cost of these tools, lack of awareness, and limited digital infrastructure. But as more lawyers become familiar with AI, it will likely become a normal part of legal practice in Nigeria. AI can help lawyers work faster, serve clients better, and make justice delivery more efficient. With proper training and clear ethical rules, AI can be a powerful tool to improve law office management and modernize the legal profession in Nigeria.

AI AS A TOOL FOR LAW OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS (UK, CANADA, SOUTH AFRICA)

In the UK, courts and lawyers are using AI carefully and slowly. The courts allow judges to use AI tools for simple tasks like drafting, summarising, and organising documents. However, judges must always take full responsibility for whatever the AI produces and cannot let it make legal decisions for them.[55] In 2024 and 2025, there were cases where lawyers mistakenly submitted fake judgments created by AI, which caused public concern and disciplinary action.[56] Because of this, the Law Society of England and Wales advised lawyers to be cautious when using AI. Lawyers are told to always double-check any AI output, protect client information, and avoid uploading confidential data into public AI systems.[57] From the UK experience, two key lessons stand out. First, the government and professional bodies do not ban AI use; instead, they remind lawyers of their existing ethical duties, such as confidentiality, honesty, and competence. Second, there is always a human being responsible for checking and approving AI-generated work before using it in court or with clients. These rules help balance innovation with accountability.

In Canada, the approach is more formal. The CJC released the *Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts* in October 2024.[58] These guidelines explain how AI can be used safely and fairly in the justice system. They warn about possible risks such as bias, errors, and the lack of transparency in AI systems. The CJC also reminds judges not to depend entirely on AI and to make sure that their decisions remain fully human. Although these guidelines are not laws, they are widely respected and followed across Canada. They also encourage openness about when AI is used in court processes. For lawyers and law firms, Canada's system shows the value of having clear rules and procedures for using AI. It helps people understand what AI can and cannot do in legal work. It also ensures that fairness, accountability, and transparency are always maintained.

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54 Giwa, Note 30.

55 UK Judiciary, 'Judicial Office Guidance on the Use of Artificial Intelligence by Judges' (Judiciary UK, December 2023) <https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/judicial-office-guidance-on-use-of-artificial-intelligence-by-judges/> accessed 7 October 2025.

56 Law Society Gazette, 'AI Fake Case Citations Lead to Lawyer Sanctions' (Law Society Gazette, 14 February 2024) <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/ai-fake-case-citations-lead-to-lawyer-sanctions/5119408> accessed 7 October 2025.

57 Law Society of England and Wales, '*Guidance on the Use of Generative AI in Legal Practice*' (*Law Society,* May 2024) <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/research/ai-guidance-for-lawyers> accessed 7 October 2025.

58 Canadian Judicial Council, '*Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts*' (CJC, October 2024) <https://cjc-ccm.ca/en/resources-center/guidelines-ai-courts> accessed 7 October 2025.

South Africa has focused on using AI and other digital tools to modernise its justice system. The goal is to reduce delays, improve access to courts, and manage cases better.[59] The government and research organisations have worked together to design a more connected and digital justice system that links courts, police, and lawyers. However, they have also realised that technology can create new problems. Not everyone in South Africa has access to reliable internet, electricity, or digital skills. This means that if reforms are not properly managed, they could make access to justice worse for poor or rural communities.[60] To solve this, South Africa has promoted training programmes and policies to make sure that everyone benefits equally from AI and digital tools.[61]

From these three countries, some important lessons stand out for Nigeria. One lesson is that AI should be guided by principles like fairness, accountability, and transparency. The UK and Canadian models show that having professional guidance and court-level rules helps people use AI responsibly. Nigeria's professional bodies, such as the Nigerian Bar Association, can create similar guidelines for lawyers to follow. Another lesson is that human responsibility must remain central. In all three countries, the rule is clear: AI can assist but not replace humans. Lawyers and judges must always verify whatever AI produces before relying on it. Nigeria can adopt this rule to ensure that professional accountability remains strong. It is also clear that risk checks and record keeping are important. Before using AI tools, law offices should check for errors, bias, and data privacy risks. They should also keep records showing how and why AI was used. This helps ensure that any mistakes can be traced and corrected. South Africa's experience also teaches that infrastructure and equal access matter. Nigeria faces similar challenges with electricity, internet connection, and the cost of technology. Any AI policy in Nigeria must therefore include plans to improve infrastructure and provide training to lawyers in smaller or rural areas.

Finally, education and discipline are key. The UK, Canada, and South Africa all stress the importance of training legal professionals about AI. Nigeria's law schools and professional training institutions should include AI literacy in their programmes. There should also be clear rules about what happens when AI is used wrongly, for example, when lawyers submit AI-generated fake cases or disclose client data by mistake.

REGULATION OF THE USE OF AI IN LAW OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

The regulation of AI in law office management in Nigeria is still developing. At present, there are no detailed laws made specifically for AI use in legal practice. Instead, lawyers depend on a few existing frameworks that give general guidance. These include the NBA Guidelines on the Ethical Use of AI, the role of the General Council of the Bar (GCB), the NDPA, and information from global legal trackers like White & Case. These frameworks help guide the responsible use of AI, but many experts believe that they are not enough to deal with the complex issues that AI creates in law practice.

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[59] Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (South Africa), 'Digital Transformation of the Justice System: Towards an Integrated e-Justice Strategy' (*DoJCD,* 2023) <https://www.justice.gov.za/digitalstrategy/> accessed 7 October 2025.

[60] Research ICT Africa, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Justice in South Africa' (Policy Brief, 2024) https://researchictafrica.net/publication/artificial-intelligence-and-future-of-justice-in-south-africa/ accessed 7 October 2025.

[61] Ibid.

The NBA Guidelines on the Ethical Use of AI 2024 are the first formal attempt to regulate how Nigerian lawyers use AI tools in their work. The Guidelines stress that AI should be used as an assistant, not as a replacement for lawyers. They require lawyers to always maintain human supervision over AI tools, especially when making legal judgments or giving advice. They also warn lawyers to avoid depending entirely on AI for legal research or drafting, as the accuracy of AI outputs is not always guaranteed. The Guidelines further require lawyers to protect client confidentiality when using AI tools and to comply with privacy laws such as the NDPA. The NBA also reminds lawyers that even when using AI, they remain personally responsible for the quality of the legal work they deliver.[62]

The NDPA is another important law that applies to AI use in law offices, even though it is not designed specifically for AI. Section 24(1)(a)–(d) of the Act requires any person or organisation processing personal data to follow rules of fairness, transparency, purpose limitation, and data minimisation. These principles mean that lawyers must ensure that the AI systems they use handle client data lawfully and do not expose sensitive information. Section 25 of the Act also requires that before transferring client data outside Nigeria (for example, when using a cloud-based AI system hosted abroad), the lawyer must ensure that the receiving country provides adequate data protection. Section 34 imposes security duties on data controllers and processors, which include law firms using AI tools. This means that law offices must set up proper technical and organisational safeguards, like encryption and access control, to prevent unauthorised access to client information.

The GCB also plays a supervisory role in maintaining professional discipline among lawyers. Under section 1 of the Legal Practitioners Act (LPA),[63] the GCB is responsible for regulating the conduct of legal practitioners in Nigeria. Although the LPA does not mention AI specifically, the GCB can interpret unethical use of AI as professional misconduct if it leads to negligence, breach of confidentiality, or conflict of interest. The Council can issue further rules or adopt the NBA's AI Guidelines as binding regulations. It can also ensure that AI ethics and digital literacy form part of the mandatory continuing legal education for lawyers. This shows that while the GCB does not have direct AI-specific powers, it can play a strong enforcement role through professional discipline.

In addition, international trackers such as White & Case's AI Watch: Global Regulatory Tracker – Nigeria, 2025 show that Nigeria has no unified or comprehensive AI law.[64] They note that the country is still at the policy-drafting stage, with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) working on a National Artificial Intelligence Policy. The NBA's ethical guidelines are one of the few sectoral rules currently in force. The White & Case report also notes that while the NDPA addresses privacy, it does not cover other AI risks such as bias, discrimination, or transparency in automated decision-making.[65] Therefore, while Nigeria is making progress, it is still behind countries like Canada and the UK, which already have judicial or professional frameworks for AI governance in law practice.

Despite these frameworks, there are still many gaps. The NBA Guidelines are not legally binding, meaning that lawyers cannot be punished under any law for failing to follow them

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[62] Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession in Nigeria, paras 3–7.
[63] Legal Practitioners Act 1975 (as amended), Cap. L11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.
[64] White & Case, 'AI Watch: Global Regulatory Tracker – Nigeria' (White & Case, 27 January 2025) <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/ai-watch-global-regulatory-tracker-nigeria> accessed 22 September 2025.
[65] Ibid.

unless the GCB adopts them as part of the professional rules. The NDPA focuses mainly on data privacy but does not address other important AI concerns, such as algorithmic bias, accountability, or transparency of AI systems. For example, the Act does not explain who is legally responsible if an AI tool gives wrong legal advice or breaches client confidentiality. The LPA also does not contain provisions that clearly define what amounts to professional misconduct when AI is involved. Moreover, many lawyers and law firms in Nigeria do not yet have the technical knowledge or infrastructure needed to assess or monitor AI tools effectively.

Comparing Nigeria's approach with other countries helps to show where improvement is needed. In Canada**,** the CJC Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Courts 2024 clearly outline how judges and court staff should use AI responsibly. These Guidelines emphasise transparency, fairness, and human oversight. In the UK, the judiciary has cautiously approved AI tools for legal writing and case management, but under strict supervision and accountability systems. These examples show that countries with clear AI laws and professional guidelines reduce risks such as bias, misinformation, and misuse of client data.

DANGERS OF USE OF AI IN LAW OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Using AI in law office management can make legal work faster and easier, but it also brings many dangers that must be taken seriously. One major problem is the risk of data privacy breaches. Lawyers often keep private client information such as financial documents, health records, and legal advice. When these are processed by AI tools, the information can be exposed or stolen if the system is not secure. Although the NDPA protects personal data, it can be difficult to control how AI systems, especially those owned by foreign companies, store and share data. This creates a gap that could lead to abuse or data loss.[66] Another danger is algorithmic bias. AI tools learn from data, and if the data used to train them contains errors or unfair patterns, the system will repeat these mistakes. This can lead to wrong legal research results or unfair treatment of certain people or cases. Studies have shown that bias in AI tools can make decisions that appear neutral but are actually unfair, which goes against the lawyer's duty to act justly and equally.[67]

Loss of confidentiality is another serious issue. Many AI platforms store documents in cloud systems to make their tools work. If these systems are hacked or if the service providers have access to the data, private client information can be leaked. Lawyers who use AI without checking how their clients' data is stored risk breaking their professional duty of confidentiality.[68] There is also the problem of accountability. When an AI system gives a wrong answer or misses important information, it is hard to know who is responsible: the lawyer using the system, the law firm, or the company that created the AI. Current professional conduct rules do not clearly say what happens in such situations. This uncertainty can reduce clients' trust in lawyers and lead to lawsuits for professional negligence.[69]

Overreliance on automation can cause even bigger mistakes. A clear example is from the UK, where the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) used an algorithm that wrongly accused

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[66] See NDPA s 24(1)(a)-(d).

[67] N. Kinchin, "Voiceless: The Procedural Gap in Algorithmic Justice" (2024) 32 International Journal of Law and Information Technology, eaae024.

[68] Ngige, Awodele and Balogun, Note 37.

[69] Obianyo and Ater, Note 13.

about 200,000 people of possible fraud.[70] This shows how dangerous it can be when decisions are made by machines without proper human checks. Finally, there is the issue of a lack of transparency. Many AI systems are like "black boxes", people do not really understand how they make decisions. When a lawyer uses such systems, it becomes difficult to explain or justify the results to clients or courts. This lack of openness goes against the legal principles of fairness and accountability.[71]

These dangers show that the current Nigerian laws and guidelines are not enough. The country needs stronger rules to guide how lawyers and law firms use AI. This should include clearer rules on who is responsible when things go wrong, standards for data security, and regular checks to make sure AI systems are fair and transparent.

CHALLENGES OF AI AS A TOOL FOR LAW MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Although AI has great potential to improve legal work, many problems still make it hard for Nigerian law offices to use it effectively. One of the biggest challenges is poor infrastructure. Nigeria still struggles with an unreliable electricity supply and weak internet services, especially in rural areas. This makes it difficult for law firms to use AI tools that need constant power and a strong internet connection to work properly. Even in major cities, internet services are expensive, and many small and medium-sized law firms cannot afford the cost of modern computers and software. Because of this, most Nigerian lawyers still rely on manual work such as physical filing, paper-based research, and human data entry, while law offices in other parts of the world are already using AI to make their work faster and more accurate.[72]

Another problem is the high cost of buying and maintaining AI systems. Many of the tools used for legal work, like programs that review documents, predict case outcomes, or manage client information, require a lot of money to buy and keep running.[73] Most law firms in Nigeria operate on small budgets and may not see immediate profits from such investments.[74] In addition, there are very few local companies that sell or support AI systems for law offices, so many lawyers must depend on foreign products, which increases costs and raises concerns about the safety of client data stored outside the country. There is also a lack of technical knowledge among Nigerian lawyers. Many do not have the training or skills needed to use or manage AI tools effectively.[75] Although the NBA and the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) are starting to train lawyers in digital skills, only a few lawyers have benefited so far.[76]

Ethical awareness is another issue. Some lawyers do not fully understand the professional rules that apply when using AI, such as protecting client confidentiality, obeying data protection laws, and getting client consent before using certain technologies. This lack of awareness could

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[70] R. Booth, 'DWP Algorithm Wrongly Flags 200,000 People for Possible Fraud and Error' (The Guardian, 23 June 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/jun/23/dwp-algorithm-wrongly-flags-2000-people-possible-fraud-error> accessed 7 October 2025.

[71] Sales, Note 22.

[72] Giwa, Note 30.

[73] Akanle, Note 5.

[74] M. Okafor, "Adoption of Legal Tech in Nigeria: Cost Implications and Future Prospects" (2024) 8(1) African Journal of Law and Technology 55–68.

[75] Ottah and Imoisi, Note 20.

[76] H.I. Adebowale, "Legal Training in Nigeria: Innovation, Technology and Regulatory Reforms" (2023) 5(1) Kampala International University Law Journal 91–110.

lead to professional misconduct and violations of the NDPA.[77] Also, many senior lawyers resist automation because they feel technology might replace their traditional way of working. Changing this mindset will require continuous education, mentorship, and showing that AI is not meant to replace lawyers, but to make their work easier and more efficient.[78]

PROSPECTS OF AI AS A TOOL FOR LAW MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

AI has a lot of potential to improve law office management in Nigeria. It can make work faster, more accurate, and easier for both lawyers and clients. In many law firms, AI can handle routine tasks such as organising documents, checking contracts, and managing case files. This means lawyers can spend more time on important tasks like giving advice to clients and preparing for court cases. AI can also make legal work more transparent. Tools like AI can help reduce mistakes and bias when reviewing documents or preparing contracts. AI can even analyse past cases to predict possible outcomes, helping lawyers give better advice and make more consistent decisions. Studies show that machine learning systems can predict the results of Supreme Court cases in Nigeria, which shows how AI can help lawyers understand the law better.[79] Digital systems also allow law offices to track cases and manage information more openly.

AI can also make legal services more available to more people. Tools like chatbots, online legal help platforms, and AI-assisted document preparation can provide affordable legal support to individuals and small businesses. This fits with Nigeria's plan to improve digital services for everyone, as set out in the National Digital Economy Policy 2020–2030.[80] AI can help reduce the gap between people who can easily access lawyers and those who cannot, improving access to justice. The Nigerian courts are already using technology to improve how they work. For example, Lagos State has the LagosCoMiS, which helps manage court records and filings digitally.[81] Adding AI to these systems can help schedule cases, track judgments, and manage court resources better. This shows that AI can support the government's efforts to make the legal system faster and fairer.

Summary of Findings

This research shows that AI can greatly improve how law offices in Nigeria are managed. Tools like AI can help lawyers and staff work faster, reduce mistakes, and save money. AI can be used to review documents, draft contracts, manage cases, track time, and handle billing. By taking over these routine tasks, lawyers can spend more time on important legal advice and complex work. However, the study also finds that Nigeria does not yet have enough rules to guide the use of AI in law offices. The NBA has some ethical guidelines, and the NDPA 2023 offers basic rules for handling data. But there is no specific law that focuses on AI in legal practice. This lack of clear rules can lead to problems, such as mistakes by AI, unfair or biased decisions, and risks to client privacy and trust.

Looking at other countries gives useful lessons. In the UK, courts and lawyers use AI carefully, with clear rules to make sure people remain responsible for decisions. Canada has detailed

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ngige, Awodele and Balogun, Note 37.

[80] Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, 'National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020–2030' (Government of Nigeria, 2020).

[81] LagosCoMiS, Note 4.

guidelines for using AI in courts while protecting fairness. South Africa is working on modernising its legal system with technology, but it also focuses on ethical standards. These examples show that using AI well requires rules to protect people while still allowing the technology to improve work. AI can make law offices in Nigeria more efficient and productive. But to use it safely, Nigeria needs stronger rules that clearly explain how AI should be used, how to prevent mistakes or bias, and how lawyers can stay responsible. Learning from other countries can help Nigeria create these rules and make AI work better for the legal profession.

CONCLUSION

AI is quickly becoming an important tool for law offices around the world, including in Nigeria. It can help lawyers do their work faster, more efficiently, and with fewer mistakes. For example, AI can be used to organise documents, track deadlines, manage clients, and even predict how a case might turn out. These tools can make law offices more productive and reduce the workload of lawyers, allowing them to focus on tasks that require judgment and personal attention. AI also has the potential to improve access to justice by speeding up legal processes and making information more easily available to clients. Despite these benefits, AI comes with risks that cannot be ignored. AI systems can make errors, show bias, or compromise sensitive client information if they are not used carefully. Lawyers might rely too much on AI decisions without properly checking the results. The current rules in Nigeria, such as the NBA ethical guidelines and the NDPA, provide some guidance, but they are not enough. These rules are general and do not directly address many challenges of AI, such as algorithmic errors, accountability, transparency, or the need for client consent when AI is used.

To ensure AI is helpful and safe, there must be clear rules, proper oversight, and education for lawyers. Law offices need to adopt internal policies to guide AI use, and regulators must provide clear ethical standards. Learning from other countries that are already using AI in legal practice can also help Nigeria adopt best practices. By combining clear regulations, professional education, ethical guidance, and internal controls, AI can become a powerful tool for legal practice in Nigeria while protecting clients and maintaining public trust. The careful introduction of AI, supported by rules and training, will ensure that law offices can benefit from technology without putting justice or client rights at risk.

AI Legal Practice Regulation Bill: Nigeria needs a specific law to govern AI in legal practice. This law should clearly explain how AI can be used in law offices, set standards to prevent mistakes, and ensure decisions made by AI are fair, transparent, and accountable. It should also define who is responsible if AI makes errors that harm a client. This would protect clients, give lawyers clear guidance, and increase public trust in the legal system. The law should cover areas like document management, legal research, predictive tools, and client interactions. By having a clear legal framework, law offices can confidently use AI tools without fear of breaking rules, and clients can feel assured that their rights are protected.

Continuous Education by NBA: Lawyers need regular training to understand and use AI safely. The NBA should regularly organise workshops, online courses, and seminars to teach lawyers how AI works and how to apply it in daily legal practice. Training should include how to check AI outputs for accuracy, handle client data securely, and make ethical decisions when using AI. Continuous education will help lawyers stay up-to-date with new AI tools, understand potential risks, and use technology to improve efficiency while maintaining professional standards. This will ensure that AI is used responsibly and that lawyers remain in control of decision-making processes.

Ethical Standards for AI Use: The NBA and the GCB should develop clear ethical rules for AI in law practice. These standards should focus on fairness, transparency, honesty, and client confidentiality. Lawyers should know what AI can and cannot do and be required to supervise AI outputs carefully. Ethical standards will prevent misuse of AI, reduce bias, and protect clients' rights. By embedding these standards into professional conduct rules, lawyers will have a clear guide on responsible AI use, and the public will trust that AI supports, rather than replaces, ethical legal practice.

Internal AI Governance in Law Offices: Law offices should create their own policies to guide AI use. Policies should include checking AI results for accuracy, protecting client data, obtaining consent when AI is used, and assessing risks before introducing AI tools. Offices should regularly review how AI is applied and correct any problems immediately. Internal governance ensures that AI is a helpful tool rather than a source of errors, maintains compliance with regulations, and strengthens client trust. These policies will also help law offices respond quickly if AI-related problems arise.

Learning from Other Countries: Nigeria should study how countries like the UK, Canada, and South Africa regulate AI in law. These countries have developed guidelines for ethical use, supervision, and accountability in legal AI applications. By adopting best practices, Nigeria can create a framework suited to its legal system while avoiding common pitfalls. Collaboration with international experts can also support training, certification, and monitoring of AI use in law offices. Learning from other countries will ensure Nigeria's AI tools are used safely and effectively, keeping lawyers and clients protected while benefiting from technological advancements.