ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE LAW: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND ETHICS PRESENTED BY PROF. YUSUF ALI, SAN, FCIArb, AT THE 7TH ADEBAYO ADELODUN & CO. QUARTERLY ROUNDTABLE ON 20TH DECEMBER 2025.

Abstract.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the legal domain by augmenting efficiency, expanding access to justice, and enabling novel forms of legal reasoning and service delivery. Al systems now assist in tasks such as predictive analytics, automated legal research, document review, and decision support, significantly reducing costs and supporting more equitable access to legal resources[1]. Despite these opportunities, the integration of Al into legal systems raises profound concerns. Algorithmic bias can reinforce existing social inequalities, potentially undermining fairness and due process[2]. The opaque or "black-box" nature of many machine-learning models challenges principles of legal transparency explainability, while questions of liability, accountability, and professional responsibility remain unresolved within existing legal frameworks. Ethical dilemmas including those related to confidentiality, human rights, and responsible automation further complicate the adoption of Al in legal practice.

This paper will try to provide a comprehensive examination of these opportunities, challenges, and ethical complexities, Ultimately, the paper argues for a balanced, human-centric, and ethically grounded regulatory

[1] Sadiku, M. N. O., Ajayi, S. A., &Sadiku, J. O. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions. Journal of Engineering Research and Reportshttps: //journaljerr.com/index.php/JERR/article/view/1456

[2] Nweke, O. C., &Nweke, G. I. (2024). Legal and Ethical Conundrums in the Al Era. International Law Research.https: //www.semanticscholar.org/paper/aeb61faf8ad8aed6bc6382a07aef624600607f21

and architecture that maximizes Al's transformative potential, while safeguarding the integrity, fairness, transparency essential to the rule of law.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly becoming a transformative force multiple across sectors, machine including the legal profession. From automating routine tasks, to supporting complex legal analysis, Al systems-especially those based on learning and generative models are reshaping how legal services are delivered. But with great power comes significant risk: technology that can decide, generate legal content also raises profound questions about fairness, human rights, paper suggest, or and professional responsibility. This systematically examines these opportunities, challenges, and ethical dimensions, and proposes governance deployment. strategies to guide responsible deployment.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most influential technological forces of the twenty-first century, reshaping industries as diverse as healthcare, finance, transportation, and the legal profession. In law, Al technologies including expert systems, predictive analytics, natural language processing (NLP), and increasingly sophisticated generative models transforming how legal services are produced, delivered, and consumed[3]. These systems automate routine and labor intensive tasks such as document review, contract analysis, due diligence, and legal research, thereby reducing operational costs and enhancing both efficiency and productivity within legal practice. At the higher end case-outcome prediction, risk assessment, and drafting decision-making and augmenting human expertise. legal arguments, supporting lawyers in strategic decision-making and augmenting human expertise.

[3] Sadiku, M. N. O., Ajayi, S. A., &Sadiku, J. O. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions. Journal of Engineering Research and Reports https://journaljerr.com/index.php/JERR/article/view/1456

However, this technological transformation brings with it a series of profound risks and ethical challenges. Al systems trained on large datasets may inadvertently reproduce or amplify societal biases, raising concerns about fairness, equality before the law, and non-discrimination[4]. The opacity of many machine-learning models also conflicts with legal principles that demand transparency, interpretability, and reason-giving, especially when decisions affect fundamental rights or judicial outcomes. In addition, questions of liability, accountability, and professional ethics arise when Al-generated outputs influence legal decisions or client advice. Current regulatory frameworks including tort law, data-protection regimes, and professional-ethics codes struggle to keep pace with the speed and complexity of technological innovation, leaving critical gaps in governance.

These tensions highlight a central dilemma, while Al offers unparalleled opportunities to improve access to justice, enhance efficiency, and support innovation within the legal field, it simultaneously challenges the foundational values of the rule of law, including transparency, fairness, and human autonomy. As such, scholars and policymakers increasingly call for interdisciplinary governance strategies that incorporate technical standards, legal regulation, ethical principles, and institutional oversights[5].

2.0 **OPPORTUNITIES OF AI IN LAW**

2.1 **Efficiency and Automation**

One of the most widely recognized benefits of Artificial Intelligence in the legal domain is the significant improvement in operational efficiency. Al-powered tools can automate repetitive and time-consuming legal tasks, including large-scale document review, e-discovery, contract analysis, statutes and case-law retrieval, due diligence, and compliance monitoring. These tasks traditionally consume substantial hours, yet Al systems can perform them with greater speed and increasing accuracy. It has been noted by authors that Al enables legal professionals to "exceed expectations,

[4] Nweke, O. C., &Nweke, G. I. (2024). Legal and Ethical Conundrums in the Al Era. International Law Research. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/aeb61faf8ad8aed6bc6382a07aef624600607/21

[5] UNESCO. (2021). Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. UNESCO Publishing.https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

boost efficiency, and improve client service," highlighting how automation directly contributes to enhanced productivity in legal workflows[6].

Moreover, automation reduces human error in document-heavy tasks, especially in large corporate transactions or litigation proceedings. Natural language processing (NLP) algorithms can identify key clauses, flag anomalies, and categorize documents far more efficiently than manual review[7].

This reduction in routine workload allows lawyers to redirect their time toward higher-value activities such as strategy formulation, negotiations, client counselling, and courtroom advocacy. In large firms, automation at scale can reduce operational costs significantly, while smaller firms benefit by increasing their competitiveness through improved service delivery.

2.2 **Access to Justice**

Al has the potential to significantly expand access to justice by lowering barriers to legal information and services. Al-driven virtual assistants, chatbots, and automated self-help platforms provide individuals, especially those in underserved or low-income communities with low-cost or free legal guidance. These tools offer resources such as document generation (e.g., wills, contracts, complaints), rights explanations, and step-by-step procedural instructions, enabling individuals to navigate legal issues without requiring full legal representation.

Such innovations help address persistent inequalities in access to legal services, often referred to as the global "justice gap," wherein millions face legal problems each year without receiving adequate assistance.

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[6] Sadiku, M. N. O., Ajayi, S. A., &Sadiku, J. O. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions. Journal of Engineering Research and Reports https://journaljerr.com/index.php/JERR/article/view/1456

[7] Madaoui, N. (2024). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Legal Systems: Challenges and Opportunities. Problems of Legality.https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=3920957#::text=ABSTRACT:%20This%20critical%20review%20looks,and%20findings%20in%20legal%20proceedings.

Additionally, Al-enabled translation services and speech recognition tools can help remove linguistic and disability-related barriers, making legal systems more inclusives[8]. By simplifying legal processes and reducing costs, Al democratizes legal information and supports broader societal participation in justice systems.

2.3 Predictive Analytics and Decision Support

Predictive analytics represents another major opportunity offered by Al in the legal field. Machine learning models trained on historical case data can analyze patterns and generate predictions about likely case outcomes, judge tendencies, sentencing trends, and settlement probabilities. Legal practitioners can use these insights to refine litigation strategies, inform negotiation positions, and advise clients more accurately on the risks and benefits of pursuing litigation[9].

Predictive analytics also plays a crucial role in corporate governance, compliance, and risk assessment. Al-driven systems can continuously evaluate regulatory changes, monitor internal operations for potential violations, and generate alerts for risk mitigation. In commercial law, Al systems assist in contract lifecycle management by predicting bottlenecks, identifying risk clauses, and guiding negotiation strategies.

Importantly, data-driven decision support does not replace human judgment but enhances it. By offering quantitative insights based on large-scale data, Al helps lawyers make more informed, consistent, and strategic decisions. Studies show that predictive models can outperform or complement human intuition in certain legal forecasting tasks, although ethical safeguards remain vital.

2.4 Innovation in Legal Education and Research

of Al is also driving innovation within legal academia and education. Legal researchers now utilize Al tools for automated literature review, data mining across case-law databases, and identification

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[8] Leslie, D., Burr, C., Aitken, M., et al. (2021). Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law: A Primer. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350808360 Artificial intelligence human rights democracy and the rule of law a primer

[9] Novelli, C., Casolari, F., Hacker, P., Floridi, L., & Spedicato, G. (2024). Generative Al in EU Law: Liability, Privacy, Intellectual Property, and Cybersecurity.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract id=4694565#text=Abstract.10.1016/j.clar.2024.106066

jurisprudential trends. Generative Al models assist in drafting research summaries, synthesizing case arguments, and experimenting with legal reasoning simulations[10].

In legal education, integrating Al into the curriculum helps prepare future lawyers to work in a technologically advanced environment. Law students are increasingly trained to use Al for research, drafting, and analytical tasks, developing skills in digital literacy, algorithmic accountability, and legal tech management[11]. Some institutions incorporate AI ethics, data governance, and legal-tech entrepreneurship courses into their programs, reflecting the profession's evolving needs.

AI also opens new avenues for interdisciplinary scholarship, allowing legal theorists and computational experts to collaborate on empirical legal studies, regulatory modelling, and the development of algorithmic governance frameworks. Such innovations elevate the quality and depth of legal research, while expanding methodological possibilities.

3.0 **CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING AI INTO THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

1. Algorithmic Bias and Fairness

A central challenge in the deployment of Al within legal systems, is the problem of algorithmic bias. AI models, particularly those trained on large datasets can inadvertently encode and perpetuate structural inequalities embedded in historical data. This becomes especially concerning in legal contexts where algorithmic may influence outputs. It has been emphasized that, biased Al systems threaten the foundational principles of justice discrimination by amplifying disparities rather than correcting them[12].

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[10] Sadiku, M. N. O., Ajayi, S. A., &Sadiku, J. O. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions. Journal of Engineering Research and Reports https://journaljerr.com/index.php/JERR/article/view/1456

[11] Madaoui, N. (2024). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Legal Systems: Challenges and Opportunities. Problems of Legality.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380508967 The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Legal Systems Challenges and Opportunities#text=Through%20an%20extensive%20analysis%20of.practices%20in%20the%20legal%20profession.

[12] Nweke, O. C., &Nweke, G. I. (2024). Legal and Ethical Conundrums in the Al Era: A Multidisciplinary Analysis. International Law Research.https://scispace.com/papers/legal-and-ethical-conundrums-in-the-ai-era-a-1cuj4wilgf

Empirical research in criminal justice already illustrates how algorithmic tools can replicate racial or socioeconomic biases, notably in risk assessment systems such as those used in predictive policing or recidivism prediction. Bias may originate from twisted datasets, biased feature selection, or flawed design assumptions[13]. Ensuring fairness therefore requires a comprehensive governance approach that includes bias auditing, transparent model validation, inclusive data sourcing, and other valuable safeguards. Without such safeguards, Al risks creating selective objectivity, while deepening. systemic injustices.

2. Transparency, Explainability, and "Black-Box" Issues

Another major obstacle to Al adoption in law is the opacity of many machine-learning and deep-learning systems. These "black-box" models produce outputs that are difficult, and sometimes impossible to interpret, even by developers. In legal contexts, however, decision-making traditionally requires clear justification, reason-giving, and accountability.

Lack of explainability undermines due process, as affected parties cannot meaningfully contest or understand the basis of an automated decision. It also hampers trust, as legal professionals may hesitate to rely on Al tools whose logic cannot be disclosed or verified. Consequently, it is important to have an Explainable AI (XAI) systems that offer interpretable reasoning or provide auditable traces of their decision pathways.

Transparency is not merely a technical requirement but a legal and ethical necessity. The need for transparency obligations in high-risk Al systems cannot be overemphasized to ensure compatibility with the rule of law and fundamental rights.

3. Liability, Accountability, and Responsibility

A persistent challenge in integrating Al into legal practice concerns the allocation of liability when Al tools cause harm, produce incorrect legal analyses, or generate misleading outputs. Traditional legal frameworks assume human agents make decisions, yet Al introduces complex layers of responsibility. When errors occur, determining whether blame lies with the software developer, the

[13] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350808360 Artificial intelligence human rights democracy and the rule of law a primer

legal practitioner using the tool, the institution deploying it or the data provider becomes legally ambiguous.

These gaps become even more pronounced with generative Al, where models autonomously generate legal texts, predictions, or advice that may be factually incorrect or legally unsound. As a result, there is need for clearer accountability standards and professional-responsibility rules tailored to Al-augmented legal work. The challenge is not only technical but conceptual, assigning responsibility to an Al system that lacks legal personhood complicates the logic of fault, causation, and redress.

4. Regulatory and Legal Framework Gaps

The pace of Al development has significantly surpassed the evolution of legal frameworks. Many or some of the existing laws ranging from tort liability, to consumer protection, evidence rules, and intellectual property statutes and the rest were drafted in an era that did not anticipate autonomous or generative systems. As a result, Al frequently falls into regulatory "blind spots" where its actions do not clearly map onto established legal categories[14].

For example, generative Al's ability to produce legal documents raises intellectual property authorship questions, while autonomous decision standards for systems challenge traditional professional negligence. Likewise, regulatory uncertainty persists around Al-generated evidence and automated expert testimony in court.

5. Data Privacy and Security

Al systems rely on vast amounts of data, including highly sensitive personal information. This dependence heightens concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and cybersecurity. Legal data often contains privileged communications protected by lawyer-client privilege, making unauthorized access or data breaches especially damaging.

Data protection frameworks impose strict obligations data processing, transparency, storage, minimization, and consent. However, Al systems often require continuous data inputs, model

[14] Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities and Challenges. https://defactolawjournal.org/journal/volume-1/

retraining, and cross-database integration, increasing the potential for privacy violations. Additionally, Al platforms may utilize cloud-based infrastructures, exposing sensitive data to third-party vulnerabilities. Cyber security risks also escalate when adversaries can exploit model weaknesses, poison training datasets, or manipulate outputs, threats with direct implications for legal integrity and fair process.

6. Displacement of Legal Jobs

The automation of routine legal tasks, raises significant concerns about job displacement within the legal profession. Al systems that perform document review, research, and drafting tasks may reduce the demand for junior Associates, and administrative personnel.

However, Al is also expected to generate new roles, such as Al ethics advisors, legal technologists, compliance engineers, and algorithm-audit specialists. The workers displaced from traditional legal support roles may lack the training or pathways to integrate into emerging tech-oriented positions.

Nonetheless, Al is expected to augment legal practitioners, shifting the profession toward higher-value analytical and strategic tasks. The challenge is ensuring ethical, equitable, and well-managed workforce transitions.

4.0 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into legal practice raises critical ethical concerns that directly implicate the professional duties of lawyers. These include obligations relating to competence, confidentiality, independence, accountability, candor, and fairness, all central principles reflected in the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners (RPC) 2023. As legal systems increasingly rely on Al tools for research, drafting, predictive analytics, and client interaction, it becomes imperative to evaluate how these technologies intersect with ethical requirements.

1. Professional Competence and Technological Literacy

It is a duty on legal practitioners to act with competence, diligence, and professional skill. Competence in the age of Al increasingly involves technological literacy, requiring lawyers to

understand the tools they deploy. Section 16 of RPC, 2023 requires lawyers to provide competent services, exercising the necessary legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation.

Failure to understand how Al tools function in particular their limitations, may lead to breaches of the duty of competence. For example, generative AI systems may produce hallucinated cases or statutes, leading to false submissions and potential disciplinary action.

Competence in the Al era is thus both a legal and ethical obligation and therefore requires:

- Awareness of how Al tools generate results
- Verification of Al outputs before relying on them
- Proper training and continuing legal education
- Understanding when Al use may be inappropriate or unethical
- Understanding the limitations of Al tools (e.g., hallucinations, bias, outdated models)
- Knowing when reliance on Al is inappropriate (e.g., sensitive human rights cases, criminal defence)
- Conducting reasonable investigations into Al vendor claims and reliability metrics
- Continuously updating knowledge on AI-law developments

Technological competence is now requirement for modern legal practice a baseline

2. Confidentiality, Data Protection, and Client Privacy

Lawyers must protect all client information whether communicated orally, electronically, or embedded in documents Section 19 of RPC, 2023 provide that lawyers must protect all client information from unauthorized disclosure. The use of Al systems, especially cloud-based platforms, introduces heightened risks of data exposure, unauthorized access, and privacy breaches. Al tools require access to substantial data to operate effectively. When lawyers input sensitive client materials, evidence, contracts, medical records, or privileged communications into Al tools, they risk violating confidentiality obligations if the platform stores or processes data in ways inconsistent with privacy regulations[15],

[15] https://scispace.com/papers/legal-and-ethical-conundrums-in-the-ai-era-a-1cuj4wilqf

Confidentiality concerns are intensified when:

- Al systems transmit data to third-party servers
- Data is used to retrain models without consent
- Weak security protocols expose clients to cyberattacks
- Cloud jurisdictions lack strong data-protection laws

When incorporating Al tools especially cloud-based or third-party platforms, compliance with confidentiality requires:

- Ensuring Al platforms do not store, reuse, or train models on client data without explicit safeguards
- Verifying whether the Al tool complies with data protection laws (e.g., GDPR-like standards)
- It is essential that legal practitioners conduct due diligence in assessing Al tools' security standard
- Using encrypted channels and secure authentication protocols
- Ensuring servers are located in jurisdictions with strong privacy protections
- Implementing internal firm policies restricting what types of client information may be input into Al tools

2. Compliance with RPC Duties Toward the Court and Administration of Justice (PART IV RPC, 2023)

Lawyers owe a duty to the court to uphold the integrity of legal proceedings. Using Al in ways that undermine fairness, accuracy, or procedural integrity may violate this duty. Examples include:

- Submitting Al-generated evidence without verifying authenticity
- Using predictive tools that reinforce discriminatory outcomes
- Relying on opaque algorithms whose reasoning cannot be explained to a judge
- Citing cases generated from Al without verifying

It is important that Lawyers ensure that any Al-generated analysis can withstand judicial scrutiny.

3. Human Rights, Fairness, and Non-Discrimination

non-Al ethics also intersects with core legal values surrounding fairness, human dignity, and equal treatment. Some writers argue that Al systems can influence rights relating to due process, discrimination, and equality before the law. Legal practitioners must therefore ensure that Al-driven tools do not perpetuate or amplify systemic biases[16].

This obligation aligns with the RPC 2023 principles requiring lawyers to:

- Uphold justice and fairness
- Avoid assisting in discriminatory practices
- Protect clients from unfair automated outcomes

For instance, using biased predictive analytics in risk assessments, may undermine procedural fairness and violate legal practitioners' duties under both constitutional and professional ethics standards. Thus, ensuring ethical fairness requires:

- Assessing the datasets underpinning Al tools
- Monitoring outputs for discriminatory patterns
- Avoiding reliance on opaque models in high-impact decisions
- The lawyer's ethical responsibility includes active oversight not blind trust in automated tools.

4. Independence, Objectivity, and Avoiding Over-Reliance on Al

Lawyers must maintain independence of judgment. Al tools, while valuable, cannot replace human legal reasoning or professional discretion. Ethical concerns arise when lawyers overly depend on Al-generated results without adequate scrutiny. Such over-reliance threatens professional independence and could undermine the integrity of legal advice.

To uphold ethical standards, lawyers must:

- Treat Al as a supportive tool not a decision-maker
- Independently verify Al-generated conclusions

[16] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350808360 Artificial intelligence human rights democracy and the rule of law a primer

- Maintain final responsibility for all legal judgments
- Professional independence remains a non-delegable duty.

5. Accountability and Professional Responsibility

Lawyers remain responsible for any work product generated under their supervision, even when assisted by AI. The ethical principle of accountability requires that practitioners ensure the accuracy, reliability, and appropriateness of Al-generated outputs. This duty extends to:

- Al-assisted legal research
- Drafting contracts or pleadings using Al
- Client communication tools
- Case predictions and strategic recommendations

As Al becomes more autonomous, the challenge of attributing responsibility intensifies. However, ethical rules insist that accountability cannot be shifted to an Al system or its developers. Lawyers must maintain ultimate responsibility for their work.

6. Compliance with Regulatory Standards

and The Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners (RPC) 2023 provide the primary ethical and regulatory framework guiding lawyers' behaviours, responsibilities, professional standards. As Al tools become increasingly integrated into daily legal work such as drafting, document analysis, research, client communication, and case management, lawyers must ensure that their use of Al complies with all applicable professional rules. Compliance is not optional as improper use of Al may lead to professional misconduct, sanctions, reputational harm, and breaches of client rights.

Legal practitioners must remain informed about domestic and even international Al regulations to ensure compliance.

7. Compliance with Duty to Avoid Bringing the Profession into Disrepute

The Rules of Professional Conduct 2023 (RPC) contain several provisions addressing a lawyer's duty to avoid bringing the profession into disrepute. These rules collectively aim to ensure lawyers maintain high standards of character, integrity, and discipline.

Improper use of Al such as relying on unreliable chatbots, misusing automation, or sharing confidential client data e.t.c can damage public trust in the legal profession. The RPC requires lawyers to uphold the dignity of the profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATING AI INTO LEGAL PRACTICE WITHOUT COMPROMISING ETHICS

1. **The creation of a well-defined governance framework that sets out the ethical and operational boundaries for AI use within legal practice:** Law Firms/Legal Practitioners should adopt Al governance charter that establishes the purpose of Al deployment, the categories of approved applications, the internal authority responsible for oversight, and escalation mechanisms for high-risk scenarios. This mirrors the growing emphasis on professional responsibility in AI use as highlighted by the American Bar Association's ongoing work on integrating generative Al into legal practice[17]. To ensure continuous accountability, the Firm should establish an Al Ethics or Oversight Committee including legal, technical, security and compliance experts, aligned with best practices recommended in contemporary Al governance regulations. This governance structure should be supported by a formal risk register documenting all Al tools in use, their risk level, safeguards, and review timelines, consistent with risk-based regulatory approaches reflected in emerging frameworks such as the EU AI Act[18].

   2. Rigorous vendor due diligence prior to adopting any Al system: Legal practitioners should evaluate security posture, compliance vendors certifications, encryption standards, data residency, and vulnerability management practices, which Reuters identifies as critical considerations for enterprise Al adoption. Vendor contracts must include explicit terms, governing data usage, protection of client confidentiality, retention limits, and prohibitions on using client information to train external models unless expressly agreed. Liability provisions should be clear, particularly in relation to Al-generated errors, data breaches, or intellectual property violations. Scholars examining liability issues in the EU Al Act stress the importance of contractual clarity for mitigating legal exposure. Additionally, Firms

[17] https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-r archives/2024/07/aba-issues-first-ethics-guidance- ai-tools/

[18] https://www.eualact.com/#text=The%20EU%20A1%20Act,applying%20on%202%20August%202026.

should negotiate audit rights and obligations requiring vendors to provide documentations, explaining model limitations, training data sources, and update cycles.

3. The implementation of strong confidentiality, data-protection, and safeguards:

Lawyers should adopt data-minimization practices, sharing only the information necessary for the intended Al task, which Reuters notes as essential for reducing exposure in enterprise implementations. Where possible, Firms should use enterprise-grade or private Al systems instead of public chatbots, particularly when handling privileged communications, an approach aligned with ethical opinions emphasizing restrictions on disclosing client information to third-party systems. Encryption must be applied to all Al related data flows, and Firms should establish clear policies for key management. Privilege protocols should be established to ensure that all privileged material processed by Al is appropriately labeled and kept within controlled environments, thereby reducing the risk of waiver or unauthorized disclosure.

4. The necessity of explicit human oversight and structured verification workflows: Lawyers must remain the final decision-makers, verifying every substantive Al output before relying on it in client work, generative Al requires careful verification. Workflows should distinguish between low-risk applications such as formatting or citation checking and high-risk applications that influence legal reasoning, strategy, or court submissions, the latter requiring multi-tier review systems. Verification protocols should include source-checking, retrieval-augmented generation techniques, and validation against authoritative legal databases. Reuters identifies retrieval-augmented approaches as a key method for reducing hallucinations in legal contexts.

5. The adoption of comprehensive bias-mitigation examine the measures: Lawyers must representativeness and source of data used by Al tools, as UNESCO emphasizes the risk of systemic discrimination arising from biased datasets[19]. Prior to deployment, Al systems should be tested for disparate outcomes across demographic groups, including analyses of false-positive and false-negative rates in contexts involving predictive or classificatory functions. Firms must document these fairness evaluations and any mitigation strategies implemented. Following

[19] https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics# text The%20level%20of%20T&E%20should benefits%20are%20accessible%20to%20all.

deployment, continuous monitoring of outputs is necessary to detect data drift and emergent bias, recommendations from Al governance researchers.

6. Regulatory compliance: Law Firms and all Legal Practitioners must align Al usage with professional duties, particularly competence, confidentiality and integrity reflected in Rules of Professional Conduct 2023. Firms must also track evolving Al-specific laws, including the EU AI Act, to risk classification, documentation, and transparency obligations. When Al is used in litigation, lawyers should be prepared to disclose its role when required and explain its methodology, ensuring that evidence derived from Al meets admissibility requirements and can be defended under cross-examination.

7. Training and capacity building: Foundational Al competence training should be made mandatory for all practitioners,. Continuing legal education programs should include modules on AI interpretation, risks, data protection, and verification. Cross-functional collaboration should be encouraged by bringing together lawyers, technologists, privacy officers and compliance personnel in the development and review of Al workflows, improving both understanding and safety

8. Professionalizing AI Ethics in Law through Legal Education: A key recommendation for the core responsible integration of Al into legal practice is the professionalization of Al ethics through mandatory training within law schools. As Al technologies increasingly shape legal research, case analysis, dispute resolution, and client services, legal education must evolve to prepare future lawyers for the ethical and professional challenges posed by advanced digital tools. Law schools and law faculties should therefore incorporate compulsory coursework on Al ethics, algorithmic justice, data governance, and technological competence into their curriculum, rather than treating these topics as optional or peripheral. This training should equip students with a foundational understanding of issues such as algorithmic bias, explainability, confidentiality risks, data protection obligations, and the importance of human oversight in automated systems. By embedding these competencies at the formative stage of legal training, law schools ensure that graduates enter the profession fully prepared to evaluate and supervise Al systems responsibly, consistent with ethical duties recognized in modern conduct frameworks. Such professional institutionalization also reinforces the principle that ethical Al use is not a technical accessory but

a fundamental legal skill essential to preserving fairness, accountability, and public trust in the justice system.

CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the legal landscape, offering transformative opportunities, while simultaneously challenging long-standing legal doctrines, ethical norms, and professional responsibilities. As demonstrated throughout this paper, Al holds immense potential to enhance efficiency, expand access to justice, improve decision-making, and stimulate innovation across legal education, research, and practice. The automation of routine tasks and the rise of intelligent decision-support systems signal a profound shift in how legal services are delivered, enabling lawyers to focus more on strategic, analytical, and client-centered activities.

Yet, these benefits are inseparable from significant risks, the legal system can harness Al's benefits while safeguarding the rule of law. The balance is delicate but essential only through responsible, ethically grounded governance from which the society, can fully realize Al's potential in the legal realm.

Ultimately, the integration of Al into legal practice should not be understood as a substitute for human judgment but as a tool that augments legal reasoning, while reinforcing fundamental values. Responsible adoption requires a balanced, human-centric, and rights-respecting approach, one that embraces innovation, while maintaining the primacy of justice, fairness, and the rule of law. By embedding ethical principles into every stage of Al deployment, design, procurement, implementation, oversight, and review, the legal profession can harness Al's immense potential without compromising its core values.

The future of Al in the practice law is neither predetermined nor inherently perilous. It will be shaped by the choices made by lawmakers, legal practitioners, technologists, educators, and the society at large. If guided by prudent regulation, ethical reflection, and professional vigilance, Al can become a powerful ally in strengthening legal systems, enhancing access to justice, and promoting a more equitable and efficient delivery of legal services. The challenge ahead is to ensure that technological progress does not eclipse humanity's most enduring legal values but instead reinforces and reimagines them for the digital age.

I cannot end this presentation without thanking the Firm of Adebayo Adelodun & Co., especially the principal partner Alhaji Adebayo Oba Adelodun SAN for beaming their search light in my direction to deliver this paper.

I want to thank each and everyone of you for your patience in sitting through the lecture.

LAW, ETHICS & INNOVATION: SUSTAINING THE FUTURE OF LEGAL PRACTICE

A Keynote Address Delivered by Prof. Yusuf Ali, SAN, FCIArb, 1st Kuliyan Gari of Ilorin Emirate at the Law Week, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Ibadan Branch 2025.

Distinguished Justices of our Courts, respected Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Learned Colleagues, Friends of the profession, ladies and gentlemen, Good morning.

It is a privilege to stand before this distinguished assembly at the 2025 NBA, Ibadan branch Law Week. Our theme**:"Law, Ethics & Innovation: Sustaining the Future of Legal Practice,"** could not have been timelier, more urgent, or more consequential. The legal profession stands today at a crossroads. Innovation is accelerating faster than regulation. Technology is testing the borders of ethics and the expectations of clients, institutions, and society continue to evolve at a breath-taking pace.

In the midst of all this, one question stands out:

How do we safeguard the dignity, trust, and professionalism of the Bar while embracing the tools and technologies that will define the future of law?

To answer this, we must understand our past, confront our present, and shape our future with deliberate, ethical, and visionary leadership.

1. THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF LEGAL PRACTICE

Across the world, legal systems are undergoing transformation:

- Artificial intelligence is now engaged in document review, risk analysis, and due diligence[1].
- Courts are adopting virtual hearings and electronic filing systems[2]. The digital transformation of judicial systems accelerated globally after COVID-19.
- Cross-border transactions require instant technical expertise.

1 Susskind, R. (2017) "Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future" https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391754398 Tomorrow's Lawyers An Introduction to your Futur

2 UNODC, "Digital Transformation of Judiciary Systems," 2022https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-06/E%20justice-Report%2005.pdf

- Clients demand speed, transparency, and cost-efficiency. Clients today are more informed, more technologically savvy, and more demanding of value.

Richard Susskind, one of the most influential voices on the future of law, puts it succinctly:

> "The role of the lawyer is being redefined. Technology will not replace lawyers, but lawyers who use technology will replace those who do not."[3]

The law, traditionally slow to change, historically evolved conservatively, grounded in precedent and procedural rigidity. However, technology is forcing a paradigm shift and is now required to adapt. Moreover, innovation is not optional; it is inevitable butinnovation without ethics is dangerous.It may improve efficiency but erode trust.lt may simplify processes but undermine fairness. Thus, the central dilemma of our time is clear:

How do we innovate without losing the soul of the profession?

Because:

- Technology can accelerate justice but it can also entrench inequality.
- Al can analyse data but it can also encode bias.
- Digital platforms can reduce delays but may weaken procedural fairness.
- Automated tools can simplify work but may undermine critical reasoning.

The danger is clear:

Innovation without ethics risks eroding trust, fairness, confidentiality, and the dignity of the legal profession. This is why global institutions like the IBA and EU regulators e.t.c insist that the future of legal practice **must be grounded in responsible innovation**. Technology must serve justice, not distort it. It must support lawyers, not replace judgment. It must modernize systems, not weaken ethics.

II. LAW AND ETHICS: THE NON-NEGOTIABLE FOUNDATION

Ethics has always been the anchor of the legal profession.

[3] Susskind, R. (2017), Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future"https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391754398 Tomorrow's Lawyers An Introduction to your Future

The Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) 2023 remain explicit on:

- Duty of competence (Rule 16)
- Duty of confidentiality (Rule 19)
- Duty of candour toward the court (Rule 32)
- Duty of fairness to the opposing side and the to the Court (Rule 27 &32)e.t.c

However, the digital age creates new ethical tensions:

1. When Al drafts a brief, who bears responsibility for errors?

Under Sections 14 & 16 of RPC, the lawyer remains personally responsible for competence, technology cannot be a shield. Legal scholars such as Stanford's Daniel Ho and other Researchers (2023) warn that:

> **"Al hallucinations pose significant risk where legal analysis is automated without human oversight."**

No matter the tool used, accountability rests with the lawyer always.

2. What does confidentiality mean when client data is stored on cloud servers?

Sections 19 requires reasonable care to prevent disclosure, which now includes cyber-security obligations.

3. Can efficiency pressure compromise diligence?

The American Bar Association has already expanded "competence" to include technological literacy'. This comment was added in 2012 to highlight the ethical duty of technological competence for lawyers. Nigeria must follow suit.

4. Does virtual litigation undermine decorum or fairness?

The African Judicial Dialogue Report (2023) highlights disparities in digital access that can undermine equality of arms. Ethics requires vigilance to ensure that innovation does not disadvantage the poor or technologically underserved.

[4] Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners, 2023

[5] https://law.stanford.edu/stanford-legal/al-liability-and-hallucinations-in-a-changing-tech-and-law-environment/#text According%20to%20Stanford%20Law%20researchers%20Professor%20Dan, whether%2Othere%20is%20a%20mistake%20in%20premise.

[6] Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners, 2023

[7](ABA Model Rule 1.1, Comment 8https://www.americanbar.org

Innovation tests ethics, and ethics must guide innovation. The future belongs not to the lawyer who knows the law,but to the lawyer who combines legal knowledge, technological awareness, and unwavering ethical discipline.

III. INNOVATION IN PRACTICE: COURTS, FIRMS & LEGAL EDUCATION

Innovation does not begin with technology, it begins with mind-set.

A. Innovation in Litigation and Justice Delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated what had been slow progress; Virtual court hearings, Electronic filing, Remote testimonies, Digital evidence procedures e.t.c these are now integral to justice administration.

The Nigerian Judiciary Information Technology Policy (2021) calls for adoption of e-filing,digital court recording, electronic case managementand training of judges in technology. (Just like what NEC is doing and I have been privileged to attend as a resource person on different occasions, one of the topic given to me on such occasion was case management). This is progress, but uneven progress because several courts still rely on outdated infrastructure.

We must ensure that innovation is uniform, accessible, and transparent.

B. Innovation in Law Firms

Clients, especially corporate and international clients, expect predictable billing models, technological competence, digital contract management, andcybersecurity measures.

C. Innovation in Legal Education

Our law faculties still teach as though the world has not changed, just for a few who just recently started using E libraries and some Lectures via zoom.However, the modern lawyer must understand technology law,data protection, digital ethics, Al governance, intellectual property in tech, cybercrime frameworks, digital entrepreneurship and the likes.

The Council of Legal Education and the Nigerian Law School must modernize curricula to prepare future lawyers for future realities that will match the Global Standards. A profession cannot sustain its future with outdated training.

IV. SUSTAINING THE FUTURE: WHAT MUST WE DO?To build a future-resilient legal profession, we must adopt a deliberate agenda.

1. Strengthen Ethical Infrastructure.

Our disciplinary mechanisms must evolve to address:

- Misuse of technology
- Unethical online client solicitation
- Virtual courtroom decorum
- Al-generated work misrepresented as original legal analysis
- Digital confidentiality violations

Ethics must be modernizednot diluted.

2. Update the Rules of Professional Conduct: The RPC must be reviewed to reflect explicitly:

- Technological competence requirements
- Cross-border digital practice
- Virtual practise guidelines
- Digital confidentiality standards
- Ethical use of Al e.t.c

3. Invest in Capacity Building: Every judge, Every lawyer, Every chamber, Every Law Student must commit to continuous professional development in:

- Digital literacy
- Cyber-risk management
- Legal technology tools
- Artificial intelligence and the law
- Digital evidence rules and other relevant areas to catch up to Global standards

The legal profession must become a learning profession. Section 11[8] provide for MCPD.

4. Promote Responsible Innovation: Innovation must be guided by accountability, transparency, security, fairnessand rule of law principles. Nigeria must develop its own framework before technology outruns our institutions.

[8]Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners, 2023

5. Build a Future-Oriented Judiciary: A modern Bar cannot thrive without a modern Bench.We must invest indigital case management systems, judicial training in emerging technology, standardized virtual hearing procedures. The judiciary is the backbone of legal innovation.

6. Preserve the Human Essence of the Law: Even in a world shaped by algorithms and automation, the law remains a profoundly human enterprise. Technology cannot replace empathy, candour, discretion, wisdom, fairnessor moral judgment.

The future lawyer must be technologically empowered yet deeply human.

As Lord Denning once held that:

> **"...Justice must be rooted in confidence; and confidence is destroyed when right-minded people go away thinking: "The judge was biased."**[9]

Innovation without integrity destroys confidence.Integrity without innovation destroys relevance. Thus, it is important that we balance both.

V. A CALL TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

and vision as Bar. a The future of legal practice will not be defined by technology alone but by how lawyers use it, how ethically we govern it, and how courageously we adapt We should choose with discipline relevance, innovation, ethics, competence and more importantly progress.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A MODERN, ETHICAL, AND RESILIENT PROFESSION

Distinguished Colleagues,

The future of law in Nigeria will not be built by chance.It will be built by deliberate action, by ethical leadership, and by fearless innovation. Let us embraced the future with clarity, courage, and conviction.

Let us innovate with integrity. Let us modernize with discipline and lead with vision so that the future of ethical legal practice will be sustained.

Thank you.

God bless the Nigerian Bar Association.

[9]Metropolitan Properties Co (FGC) Ltd v Lannon [1969] 1