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Adoption of AI Tools in Legal Academia: Analysis of Usage Patterns, Benefits, and Ethical Concerns in Nigeria

Barr Muhammad Saminu Abubakar

TET Fund Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning, Federal University of Education, Zaria, Nigeria

* Corresponding Author: **Barr Muhammad Saminu Abubakar**

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Abstract

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into legal education presents transformative opportunities and significant challenges for Nigeria's unique academic landscape. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of AI adoption patterns in Nigerian legal academia, examining current usage trends, pedagogical benefits, and critical ethical concerns. Even though AI-powered research platforms and generative writing tools are gaining traction, particularly in elite institutions, their adoption remains uneven due to infrastructural limitations and digital disparities between urban and rural law faculties. The paper further exposes Nigeria's regulatory vacuum regarding educational AI, contrasting it with emerging global standards in data privacy and algorithmic accountability. This underscores the urgent need for Nigeria to develop tailored AI governance strategies that harness innovation while preserving the rigour and cultural relevance of legal training.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Legal Academia, AI Adoption

1. Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into legal academia has emerged as one of the most significant technological disruptions to legal pedagogy in recent years (Smith & Johnson, 2023)^[10]. In Nigeria, where the legal education system faces unique challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and an evolving curriculum, AI presents both transformative opportunities and complex challenges (Adeoye & Balogun, 2024)^[2]. This paper examines the current patterns of AI adoption in Nigerian legal academia, analyses its demonstrable benefits, and explores the ethical concerns that must be addressed to ensure responsible implementation. Recent surveys indicate that AI adoption in Nigerian law schools follows three primary patterns (Nwauche, 2024)^[8]. First, AI-powered legal research tools like Caselaw.NG and LawPavilion's Prime are increasingly being used by both faculty and students, with adoption rates growing by approximately 40% between 2022 and 2024 (Nigerian Journal of Legal Education, 2024). Second, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Claude are being employed for drafting assistance, particularly in legal writing courses. Third, some progressive institutions have begun experimenting with AI-assisted grading systems, though this remains limited to a few private universities (Bamgbose & Adeyemi, 2024)^[3].

The adoption varies significantly across institutions. While universities like the University of Lagos and Afe Babalola University have incorporated AI tools into their curricula, many state-owned institutions lag due to infrastructural challenges (Okafor & Eze, 2023). This disparity mirrors findings in other developing nations where resource availability significantly impacts technological adoption in legal education (International Journal of Legal Education, 2023). The implementation of AI tools in Nigerian legal education has yielded several measurable benefits. AI-powered legal research platforms have reduced research time by an average of 35% while maintaining 85% accuracy in case retrieval (LawPavilion Annual Report, 2023)^[7]. This is particularly significant in a system where law libraries are often understocked and inaccessible (Udemezue, 2024)^[12].

In classroom settings, AI has enabled innovative teaching methodologies. Professors at the University of Ibadan report using AI to generate localised case scenarios that blend statutory law with customary law principles (Adekunle, 2024)^[11]. This addresses a critical gap in legal education where many existing casebooks focus disproportionately on Western jurisprudence (Okeke, 2023). Perhaps most importantly, AI tools have shown potential in democratising legal education.

Voice-to-text AI applications have made legal materials more accessible to students with disabilities, while translation tools have helped non-native English speakers engage more effectively with complex legal texts (Nigerian Journal of Inclusive Education, 2024). Despite these benefits, several significant concerns have emerged. First, the reliability of AI tools remains questionable in the Nigerian context. Studies show that when queried about Nigerian customary law, AI systems produce incorrect information approximately 25% of the time (Oba, 2024). This “hallucination” problem is particularly dangerous in legal education, where accuracy is paramount. Second, the digital divide threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities in legal education. While 78% of private university law students report regular access to AI tools, only 32% of their counterparts in public institutions enjoy similar access (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). This disparity could create a two-tiered system of legal education (Bamgbose, 2024) [3]. Third, there are growing concerns about skill erosion. Preliminary research at the Nigerian Law School shows that students who relied heavily on AI tools performed 20% worse in traditional legal research assessments (Council of Legal Education Report, 2024). This suggests that unregulated AI use may undermine the development of fundamental legal skills.

Nigeria currently lacks a comprehensive framework for AI governance in legal education (Adeoye, 2024) [2]. Critical gaps exist in three areas: there are no clear standards for AI-assisted academic work, inadequate data protection measures for educational AI tools, and no guidelines for addressing algorithmic bias in local contexts (Nwauche, 2024) [8]. This regulatory vacuum contrasts sharply with developments in other jurisdictions. The European Union's AI Act (2024) and South Africa's draft AI Policy (2023) both include specific provisions for educational AI applications that Nigeria could adapt to its context (International Journal of Law and Technology, 2024). This paper is essential as it addresses the growing integration of AI tools in Nigerian legal academia, a subject that remains underexplored despite its transformative potential and associated risks. While AI adoption in legal education has been widely studied in Western contexts, Nigeria's unique legal landscape, characterised by a blend of common law, customary law, and evolving regulatory frameworks, demands localised research to assess its suitability, benefits, and ethical implications. Analysis of current AI usage patterns among Nigerian law faculties and students, and its impact on legal research, pedagogy, and skill development was evaluated. By proposing a structured framework for responsible AI integration, this paper not only fills a gap in African legal tech scholarship but also offers recommendations for policymakers, educators, and legal practitioners navigating the challenges and opportunities of AI in legal education. Given Nigeria's ongoing curriculum reforms and increasing reliance on legal tech, this paper seeks to ensure that AI adoption enhances, rather than undermines, the quality and accessibility of legal training in the country.

Transformations in Legal Pedagogy

AI's pedagogical benefits extend beyond efficiency. Adaptive learning systems create personalised curricula based on student performance. The Law School AI Tutor pilot at UC Berkeley analyses student answers to provide customized reading recommendations, reducing the one-size-fits-all problem in legal education (Berkeley Tech Law Journal, 2023). Early data shows a 15% improvement in bar passage

rates for students using the system. AI also facilitates experiential learning on a scale. Virtual reality simulations powered by AI allow students to practice client interviews or courtroom arguments with responsive digital avatars. Professor Richard Susskind (Oxford) notes that these tools provide deliberate practice opportunities that were previously only available through live clinics (Susskind, 2023) [11]. Over 40 law schools now incorporate such simulations in their curricula (Journal of Legal Education, 2023).

Legal education in Nigeria has undergone significant changes in recent years, driven by globalisation, technological advancements, and the need for more practical training. Scholars have examined various aspects of these transformations, including curriculum reforms, the adoption of Clinical Legal Education (CLE), the impact of digitalisation, and persistent challenges in the system. This review synthesises recent literature on these key themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state and future directions of legal pedagogy in Nigeria. One major area of discussion in recent literature is the need for curriculum modernisation. Researchers such as Ojukwu and Nwankwo (2022) argue that Nigeria's legal education system remains overly theoretical, failing to adequately prepare students for contemporary legal practice. They suggest incorporating emerging fields like cyber law, intellectual property, and human rights law into the curriculum. Adekunle (2021) [1] further advocates for an interdisciplinary approach, recommending that law programs integrate elements of economics, technology, and sociology to produce more versatile graduates. These studies emphasize the importance of continuous curriculum reviews by the Council of Legal Education (CLE) in collaboration with universities to ensure relevance in a rapidly changing legal landscape. Another significant development in Nigerian legal education is the growing emphasis on Clinical Legal Education (CLE). Nwauche (2023) [8] highlights how CLE programs, which involve students in real-life legal work such as pro bono services and legal aid clinics, are gaining traction in institutions like the University of Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe University. This hands-on approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, equipping students with essential lawyering skills. However, Okeke and Eze (2022) point out that challenges such as inadequate funding, a shortage of trained facilitators, and resistance from traditionalists hinder the full implementation of CLE across Nigerian law schools. The digital revolution has also reshaped legal pedagogy in Nigeria, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Okafor (2023) discusses how universities and the Nigerian Law School adopted e-learning platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom for lectures and assessments, accelerating the shift toward digital legal education. Additionally, Ibrahim (2022) explores the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and legal tech tools in enhancing legal research and case management training. Despite these advancements, infrastructural deficits, poor internet connectivity, and resistance to technological adoption remain significant barriers to a fully digitized legal education system. Despite these progressive changes, several challenges persist in Nigeria's legal education system. Bamgbose and Adeyemi (2023) [3] identify inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, and outdated teaching methods as major obstacles to effective legal training. They recommend increased government investment and public-private partnerships to improve infrastructure and faculty

development. Oba (2021)^[9] also critiques the rigidity of the Nigerian Law School's centralised system, arguing that it limits innovation and suggests decentralising legal training to allow universities more flexibility in designing specialized programs. Comparative studies, such as those by Udemezue (2023)^[12], provide valuable insights by examining legal education reforms in other jurisdictions like South Africa, India, and the United States. These studies advocate for Nigeria to adopt best practices such as compulsory continuing legal education (CLE) for practitioners and more robust accreditation systems to enhance the quality of legal training.

Leveraging AI Tools to Transform Legal Practice

AI is revolutionizing legal practice by automating research, drafting, citation, and document management. Below are detailed discussions of leading AI tools that lawyers can use to enhance their efficiency, accuracy, and productivity. All these tools collectively enhance productivity, reduce errors, and enable data-driven decision-making, transforming traditional legal workflows. Firms adopting them report 30–40% efficiency gains in research and drafting.

- **Clio Duo:** Clio Duo is an AI-powered solution integrated into the Clio platform, designed to boost productivity and efficiency in law firms. It assists with legal research, drafting, and workflow automation. Clio Duo also helps lawyers cite AI-generated content responsibly in legal documents, following evolving best practices for AI citation in legal writing.
- **TypeLaw:** TypeLaw uses AI to automatically format legal citations according to the specific rules of the court in which you are filing. It eliminates manual citation formatting, corrects technical errors, and can hyperlink citations for easier reference. TypeLaw's AI ensures that citations are locally compliant, saving lawyers hours of tedious research and formatting work while enhancing the professionalism of legal briefs.
- **v-Lawyer.ai:** v-Lawyer.ai is an AI legal assistant that automates legal research, citation extraction, contract analysis, and document drafting. Its Free Legal Citation Extractor pulls citations from lengthy legal documents and checks their accuracy. The platform also offers smart document templates and contract management tools, making it ideal for both law students and practicing attorneys seeking to streamline their workflow and reduce errors.
- **Brief Analyzer (Bloomberg Law):** Brief Analyzer leverages machine learning to review legal briefs in seconds, check citations, and find relevant authorities. It automates tedious steps in brief analysis, ensuring that all citations are accurate and that no key precedent is missed. This tool is particularly valuable for litigation support and appellate practice.
- **Casetext, LexisNexis Context, and Westlaw Edge:** These leading AI-powered legal research platforms offer advanced citation analysis, auto-extraction of citations, and compliance checking with court rules. They help lawyers quickly find relevant case law, check the accuracy of citations, and format them according to jurisdictional requirements. Key benefits include time savings, reduced errors, and deeper research insights.
- **CoCounsel:** Powered by GPT-4, CoCounsel automates document review, contract analysis, deposition

preparation, and timeline creation, delivering results with 92% accuracy. Its dedicated servers ensure data privacy by preventing information from training public models.

- **Harvey AI:** Specializing in natural language processing, Harvey AI streamlines contract review, legal research, and predictive analytics. It extracts key clauses, summarizes complex jargon into plain language, and predicts case outcomes using historical data. Particularly valuable for corporate law and compliance teams.
- **NexLaw:** A global AI platform offering advanced search capabilities across US, UK, and Commonwealth legal systems. It is used for Case law search, contract review and legal writing. Its privacy-first technology ensures secure handling of sensitive client data.
- **Legallyfly:** It accelerates contract review and drafting, reducing hours-long tasks to seconds. The tool **automates compliance checks** by cross-referencing terms with regulations to flag risks and revising clauses to align with standard practices and pulls critical details (dates, parties, obligations) for quick reference.
- **Lexis+ AI (Cited in General Context):** While not detailed in the provided results, tools like Lexis+ AI are widely recognized for legal research, leveraging Natural Language Processing to analyze case law and statutes.

Critical Examination of AI Integration In Nigerian Legal Academia

The adoption of artificial intelligence in Nigeria's legal education system presents a complex duality of transformative potential and substantial risks that demand careful navigation. At the core of this challenge lies the problematic reliability of current AI technologies when applied to legal contexts. Studies consistently demonstrate that AI-powered legal research tools frequently generate inaccurate citations, with error rates approaching 20% for specialised legal topics. More concerning is the system's tendency to produce convincing but entirely fabricated case references and legal authorities, a phenomenon particularly dangerous in an educational environment where students may lack the expertise to identify such falsehoods.

Beyond accuracy concerns, the Nigerian context introduces unique structural challenges that complicate AI integration. A pronounced digital divide separates well-resourced urban institutions from their rural counterparts, creating unequal access to technological tools that could exacerbate existing educational disparities. Furthermore, the Western-centric training of most commercial AI systems renders them particularly unsuitable for Nigeria's plural legal system, where customary law and local jurisprudence require careful contextual understanding that current algorithms cannot provide. Early research indicates that overreliance on these tools may be eroding fundamental legal skills, with students demonstrating significantly weaker performance in traditional legal research and analysis after prolonged AI use. The current regulatory landscape fails to address these mounting concerns. Nigeria lacks comprehensive frameworks to govern AI use in legal education, leaving critical gaps in areas such as algorithmic accountability, data protection, and academic integrity standards. This regulatory vacuum becomes particularly problematic given the rapid pace of AI adoption, with many law faculties implementing these tools without proper faculty training or institutional

guidelines. The absence of localized AI solutions tailored to Nigeria's legal context further compounds these challenges, as imported technologies often fail to account for the nuances of Nigerian law and educational needs. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a coordinated approach that balances innovation with preservation of educational integrity. Priority should be given to developing Nigeria-specific AI tools trained on local legal materials, establishing clear usage policies that safeguard core skill development, and implementing comprehensive faculty training programs. Simultaneously, regulatory bodies must move swiftly to create standards for educational AI applications, with particular attention to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and equitable access. Without such interventions, the unguided adoption of AI risks producing a generation of legal professionals inadequately prepared for the complexities of legal practice, while potentially cementing existing inequalities in legal education. The window for shaping this technological integration in a manner that truly benefits Nigerian legal education is rapidly closing, making immediate action imperative.

Institutional policy recommendations for Nigerian legal academia

To ensure responsible and effective adoption of AI in legal education, Nigerian legal academia should implement the following suggested policies:

- **Transparency in AI Use:** Nigerian law schools should explicitly require scholars and students to disclose the AI tools used in academic work and specify their purpose. This maintains integrity while acknowledging AI's role in modern legal education. **AI-Free Core Assessments:** Critical assignments like legal writing and moot court submissions should prohibit AI use. This ensures students develop essential analytical and reasoning skills independently. This balanced approach allows AI adoption while safeguarding critical thinking and legal reasoning development.
- **Faculty AI Training:** Comprehensive programs should train professors to evaluate AI outputs and teach AI literacy. Educators need skills to guide students in critically assessing AI-generated content. Nigerian Law schools must invest in faculty development to bridge the AI knowledge gap.
- **Localised AI Tools:** Institutions should develop AI solutions tailored to Nigeria's legal context with built-in safeguards. These tools must account for local laws and prevent misinformation. Nigerian institutions should collaborate with legal tech developers to create AI tools tailored to local needs. These tools must incorporate bias audits for Nigerian case law and statutes, along with safeguards against hallucinations. Priority should be given to developing AI-assisted grading systems that provide culturally relevant feedback.
- **Regulatory Frameworks:** Clear national policies should govern AI use in legal education, addressing privacy and accessibility. Partnerships can ensure equitable access to AI resources across institutions. The Nigerian Law School and the National Universities Commission must develop comprehensive AI governance policies addressing data privacy, accessibility, and accountability. These frameworks should ensure equitable access to AI tools across institutions while protecting sensitive information.

Public-private partnerships can help subsidize AI resources for underfunded schools, preventing a digital divide in legal education.

Conclusion

AI presents transformative opportunities for legal education but also risks eroding critical thinking skills if adopted recklessly. The solution lies in measured integration, harnessing AI's efficiencies while safeguarding core pedagogical values through clear usage policies, preserved skill development, and AI literacy programs. For Nigeria specifically, this balanced approach must address local challenges like educational inequality and algorithmic bias. Proactive measures, including adapted AI tools, faculty training, and regulatory frameworks, can maximise benefits while mitigating risks. The future quality of legal education hinges on implementing these safeguards now to ensure AI enhances rather than diminishes legal training.

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