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A decorative graphic in the lower half of the cover features a network of glowing blue nodes and lines. The nodes are represented by small circles containing a white person icon, and they are connected by thin, white lines that form a complex, interconnected web. The background is dark teal with scattered blue dots, suggesting a digital or networked environment.

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The Regulation of Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Profession

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ABSTRACT

The use of artificial intelligence is fundamentally changing the legal profession more than ever before, altering the provision of legal services in terms of research, drafting, contract analysis, predictive analytics, and dispute resolution. Along with the scope and importance of this change, the current regulatory frameworks encompassing international governance tools, supranational laws, national laws, and the frameworks of professional bodies are structurally unsatisfactory to tackle the unique accountability, transparency, confidentiality, access to justice issues that AI creates in the legal environment. The paper contributes to the theoretical and conceptual reasoning about the regulatory issues of AI in the legal profession based on the regulatory theory, legal theory, and the new interdisciplinary research on AI regulation. The paper takes a critical look at the key uses of AI in legal practice, compares five regulatory domains with the particular needs of legal AI governance, and a conceptual model basing on four normative pillars: transparency, accountability, human oversight, and access to justice. The model is designed on the basis of a co-regulatory institutional framework that combines binding statutory standards with professional body skills and international harmonisation processes. The article claims that to regulate AI responsibly within the legal profession, it is necessary to find a purposeful reconceptualization of regulatory architecture that would be responsive to the technical realities of AI deployment but not lose sight of the foundational values of the legal profession and the rule of law.

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated adoption of artificial intelligence by the legal profession is one of the most fundamental structural changes that have taken place in the legal practice. Since the automation of document review and legal research up to the introduction of predictive analytics in litigation strategy and even the creation of generative AI systems with the ability to write legal memoranda and give first-level legal advice, AI has found its way into the entire range of legal services. This change, although it provides significant efficiencies and even possible democratising advantages to access to justice, also introduces a variety of normative, ethical, and regulatory issues that current legal and professional systems are poorly-prepared to handle. The legal profession, based on the principles of fiduciary duties, professionalism, and the rule of law, experiences an exceptionally acute regulatory problem in how to regulate responses to technologies that run with opaqueness, act autonomously and have a serious vulnerability to harm, when used in a careless or otherwise unsupervised manner.

The issue statement that drives this article is simple and pressing: the current regulatory provisions that regulate the legal profession were made in a world of human lawyers working within the conventional boundaries of professional practice, and they have failed to keep up with the technicalities of the application of AI to legal practice. The key question, as Remus and Levy (2017) noted, is not whether computers are capable of handling legal tasks, but whether the current professional and regulatory structures can accommodate, restrict, and regulate

the AI systems that now perform said tasks. Inequity of the current frameworks is not just conceptual. The spread of generative AI products, most of which are adopted without any formal professional advice, has put lawyers, clients and courts at risk with the creation of AI-generated made up legal references, the unintended release of client information through third-party AI service, and systematic marginalisation of poorer litigants to AI-assisted legal services.

In this regulatory gap, academics and policy makers are now proceeding to develop governance responses of different magnitudes and objectives. The OECD AI Principles and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI provide a normative framework at the international level, and the EU Artificial Intelligence Act presents the world's first risk-based regulatory regime. Bar associations and law societies in a range of jurisdictions have provided guidance on competent and ethical use of AI, but these frameworks are inconsistent, not well enforced, and are not well tuned to the technical aspects of AI use in the legal practice. The outcome is a governance gap which subjects clients, lawyers, courts and the general populace to avoidable and increasing injuries.

There are three main purposes of this article. It will first aim to build a conceptual description of the unique regulatory issues that AI is throwing the legal profession, using legal theory and regulatory theory as a basis and the emerging body of scholarly work on AI governance. Second, it critically analyses the existing regulatory frameworks in the international, supranational, national and the professional

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bodies level, and finds the structural loopholes that make the frameworks poor. Third, as a framework of workable regulatory reform, the article proposes four normative pillars transparency, accountability, human oversight, and access to justice, as a potential basis of regulatory change in the future. The paper is structured in the following way: Section 2 will encompass thematic literature review; Section 3 will involve the description of the methodology; Section 4 will include results and discussion that will include comparative model analysis as well as the suggested conceptual framework; Section 5 will represent conclusion and the identification of future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Applications of AI in the Legal Profession.

Artificial intelligence has infiltrated all aspects of legal practice virtually. The most developed applications are in the field of legal research and document review where AI-driven applications use natural language processing and machine learning to find relevant legal authorities and simplify the research process. It has been noted by McGinnis and Pearce (2014) that computational tools would essentially upend the routine legal research market which is to a large extent already being fulfilled through the proliferation of AI-assisted research tools. Surden (2014) believes that legal AI will be conceptualised in terms of systems that utilise the latent organization of legal resources (case law, statutes, and contracts), to execute complex analytical procedures on scale, which offers a theoretical account of how legal technologies have been used. The shift of the keyword-based search

to the semantic and predictive legal search tools is a qualitative change in the intellectual requirements of supervising lawyers, who now must evaluate the reliability of the outputs of the algorithms they are going to use, instead of evaluating the thoroughness of their manual searches.

The second significant type of AI implementation is contract analysis and due diligence. Machine learning can process thousands of documents on contracts, extract material clauses, find anomalies, and indicate risk, which in earlier times would have entailed many junior lawyers working over a long period of time. Remus and Levy (2017) estimate that AI systems will be able to complete a high percentage of task-hours that are currently billed in document-intensive legal matters, and implications are far-reaching in the economics of legal practice or the regulatory structure of applying professional judgment. Probably the most normatively controversial use of AI is the type of predictive analytics tool like Lex Machina and Premonition, which produces probabilistic estimates of litigation outcomes, raising serious concerns about judicial integrity and access to justice (Sourdin, 2018). The most rapidly evolving and normatively significant frontier, marked by an acute threat of confabulation and professional duty violation, is the development of generative AI - such as large language models that can be asked to draft pleadings and memoranda, along with correspondence to clients (Linna, 2025; Hacker *et al.*, 2023; Larson, 2025; Ben-Daniel, 2025). The following table (Table 1) will give a systematic presentation of the major AI tools implemented in the legal practice fields and their respective regulatory issues.

Table 1: Summary of AI tools and their legal applications

AI Tool / System	Legal Application Area	Key Capabilities	Regulatory Concerns
ROSS Intelligence / Westlaw edge / LexisNexis AI.	Legal Research	Search in natural law; synthesis of the case law; support in statutory interpretation.	Precise responsibilities; capabilities responsibilities; excessive trust risk.
Kira / Luminance / Relativity	Contract Analysis and Due Diligence.	Clause mining; anomaly identification; risk indication in thousands of documents.	Liabile in case of mistakes; uploaded data confidentiality; UPL jurisdiction.
Lex Machina / Premonition	Predictive Litigation Strategy & Analytics.	Probability outcome modelling; analytics of judges and venues.	Courts Judicial integrity; training data bias.
Harvey / CoCounsel / ChatGPT (legal use).	Generative AI Drafting	Writing pleadings, memos, correspondence; preliminary legal advice.	Confabulation risk; fake citations; violation of professional responsibility; data privacy
Modria / ODR platforms	Online Dispute Resolution	Knowledge based, automatic mediation and adjudication of low value disputes.	Due process; right to human adjudicator; access on digitally excluded.
Several e-Discovery systems.	Document Review	Machine-assisted IBM review and relevance classification of massive document sets	Accidental reveal of privilege; responsibility of supervision of the profession.

Rating: Synthesised using Surden (2014); Remus and Levy (2017); Sourdin (2018); Larson (2025); Linna (2025); Hacker *et al.* (2023); Zalmierite *et al.* (2019).

Online dispute resolution (ODR) platforms that deploy AI tools represent a new frontier that has great access to justice implications. Sites that use algorithmic mediation and adjudication on low-value civil cases increase access to litigation to litigants who are not traditionally able to afford legal services, but at the same time, they also create concerns regarding the due process, the right to a human adjudicator, and the digital disadvantaged populations. The growing range of AI use in all practice fields implies that the regulatory issue is not limited to technology lawyers specializing in regulation but cuts across the board and requires a regulatory response on a similar scale.

Legal Problems of AI Regulatory Challenges

The academic sources establish a complex of regulatory issues created by AI in the legal field. The first and the most core one is the accountability gap: the challenge of determining and attributing legal and professional accountability to the output of the AI systems functioning based on the processes which cannot be fully understood even by the creators of the system (Wieringa, 2020). The allocation of professional responsibility is structurally unclear when AI systems generate legal work product, sharing it among the deploying attorney, the firm that hires them, and the developer of the AI systems in ways that cannot be easily formulated within a traditional system of professional liability (Remus, 2024; Binns, 2018). Such accountability diffusion is not an added theoretical inconvenience, but it results in practical enforcement loopholes that leave injured clients with no means of redress and responsible parties with little incentive to guarantee quality assurance.

The second significant issue is related to the privacy of data and confidentiality of clients. Legal issues are associated with a high level of confidentiality, and the implementation of AI-based platforms on the cloud necessitates the creation of client data, most of which is often transferred to third-party systems, often across the jurisdiction boundary. Sartor and Lagioia (2020) establish that the current data protection tools such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation introduce major limitations to the AI implementation in legal settings - limitations that do not perfectly interoperate with the professional duty of confidentiality. A third plane of academic interest is the problem of algorithmic bias and its impact on access to justice: AI-based systems that run on historical case data might repeat and reinforce the biases of the historical data with disproportionate impact on marginalised litigants (Martínez, 2022; Binns, 2018). Larson (2025) refers to the unauthorized practice of law (UPL), as to whether AI-generated legal advice is the practice of law and licence whom it is, as a conceptual problem that cannot be addressed through an interpretive response but a legislative one. These issues are placed by Cath (2018) and Daly *et al.* (2019) into a more global view of AI governance literature, and Mayson (2025) gives the latest, most extensive coverage of responsible regulatory design in the legal profession in particular.

The blistering development of AI poses one more regulatory challenge on a structural level: there is the issue of regulatory lag. The conventional regulatory procedures such as consultation, drafting, parliamentary review, and implementation are moving at a timescale of years whereas AI capabilities move at a timescale of months. This time lag implies that the normative systems of rules-based regulation face the threat of becoming obsolete even prior to their established, and that regulatory agencies must acquire adaptive capabilities of government that are not easily facilitated by traditional forms of legislation. These problems are worsened by the issue of jurisdictional fragmentation: key AI systems are created in few technological centres, but implemented on the international level, which introduces systematic discrepancies between the national jurisdictional range of professional regulation and the transnational nature of the deployment of AI tools. A Lagos lawyer who is trained on a large language model trained in California and stored in servers in Ireland at any given time is interacting with at least three different jurisdictions legal systems, none of which is in charge of all the accountability chains.

Current Regulatory Structures and Their Shortcomings

The regulatory frameworks that are in place cut across numerous levels of governance, but they all fail to offer a holistic solution to the problems presented above. On the global scale, both the OECD AI Principles and the UNESCO AI Recommendation create non-binding normative frameworks with a strong focus on transparency, accountability, and human rights, yet due to the lack of enforcement mechanisms and non-binding nature, they have minimal regulatory effectiveness (Daly *et al.*, 2019). The EU Artificial intelligence act introduces the first risk-based system of AI regulation in the world that is binding. According to Veale and Borgesius (2021), the risk-based architecture conceptually is quite reasonable, but its choice of definitions might fail to reflect the peculiarities of the legal application of AI. According to Ebers (2021), the choice to be substantively delegated to technical standardisation bodies is a flaw of the Act, whereas Floridi (2021) praises its realistic philosophical approach. The connection between the AI Act and the GDPR, especially concerning the rights of people whose cases fall under the influence of AI-facilitated legal proceedings, is a fairly ambiguous legal matter (Sartor & Lagioia, 2020). Novelli *et al.* (2024) examine the institutional governance design of the AI Act, and its multi-level system of authority can be viewed as an exciting prospect in terms of sector-specific adaptation. On the professional body level, Mayson (2025) and Smuha (2021) meet halfway and state that current ethics-based frameworks cannot work without hard law mechanisms. Professional body guidance includes the Model Rules on competence of the American Bar Association, and the AI guidance of the Law Society of England and Wales, as well as other similar bodies, offer valuable normative

guidance but have no enforcement infrastructure to make all members of the profession act uniformly. Rodgers *et al.* (2023) paper records the disproportionate and mostly reactive character of law firm AI governance in action, discovering that the vast majority of firms have embraced AI technology without having initiated coherence in governance structures. Such implementation-before-governance is typical of the adoption of technology in

regulated professions and establishes the circumstances of the responsibility gaps and breaches of professional duty that the academic literature has found to occur. The figure below (F1) demonstrates the regulated architecture of AI that regulates the legal profession at the international regulatory standards, all the way to the firm level.

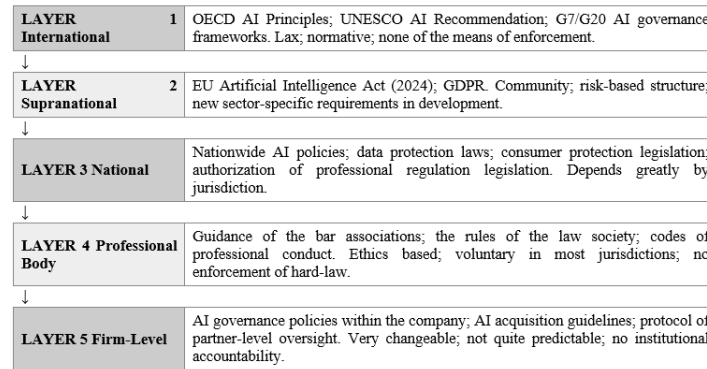


Figure 1: Regulatory layers governing AI in the legal profession

References: We have made the source of Veale and Borgesius (2021); Sartor and Lajoia (2020); Ebers (2021); Daly *et al.* (2019); Mayson (2025); Novelli *et al.* (2024).

The flaws of current frameworks are not only issues in under-cover but they demonstrate underlying structural incompatibilities between the governance framework of the legal profession and the technicalities of AI systems. Professional regulation was meant to regulate the behavior of individual human practitioners who have a personal professional judgment whereas AI systems have distributed development, deployment, and use relations that cannot be readily defined in terms of the individual-practitioner model. The way forward in dealing with this structural mismatch is not gradual adaption of existing structures but purposeful re-conceptualization of regulatory architecture the theoretical input that this article aims to make.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper takes the theoretical and conceptual approach to research, which is aligned with its goals of creating normative frameworks and critically reviewing the current regulatory architectures instead of creating or examining empirical data. Theoretical and conceptual articles take a well-established and appreciated place in legal research, to synthesise current knowledge, define gaps in the literature, and promote new analysing paradigms, which can shape further empirical studies and policy change (Hildebrandt, 2018; Cath, 2018).

The theoretical traditions that lie behind the methodological approach are three interwoven theoretical traditions. First, the literature on the rules-based, principles-based, risk-based, and co-regulatory governance models is known as regulatory theory and offers the analytical instruments, which allow assessing the sufficiency of current governance mechanisms and determine alternative regulatory designs (Guihot *et al.*,

2017; Calo, 2015). Second, normative legal theory, the Fullerian theory of the rule of law and the modern legal positivist theories, offer a philosophical basis of the evaluation of the compatibility of AI implementation in legal operations with the foundations of how legal systems operate (Hildebrandt, 2018; Zalnieriute *et al.*, 2019). Third, the recent interdisciplinary research on AI governance and AI ethics such as the frameworks developed by Floridi (2021), Smuha (2021), and Daly *et al.* (2019) offers the larger governance sense that would help place the legal profession AI regulation into the global AI governance framework.

The methodology applied the systematic review of the appropriate peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and regulatory tools. The literature was found based on the searches of the following databases: Scopus, Web of Science, HeinOnline, Google Scholar, and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN). The search terms that were used were combinations of: artificially intelligent legal profession regulation, AI governance law, algorithmic accountability legal practice, legal ethics AI, EU artificial intelligence act legal services, and co-regulation artificial intelligence. The search was limited to the publications in 2014-25 years with a priority given to the years after 2017 when the academic literature on legal AI regulation has evolved most significantly. A preliminary set of around ninety sources was found; after the inclusion criteria, namely, relevance to AI governance in the legal profession, theoretical significance, and scholarly quality, twenty-five sources were obtained to be analytically systematized. The choice of literature was predetermined by the topicality to the chosen situation of AI in the legal profession, with a focus on the intersection of regulatory theory and the implementation of legal AI.

Conceptual framework that was developed in Section 4 came about as a result of applying these theoretical lenses to the regulatory issues found in the Literature Review and thus leads to a normative synthesis which constitutes the major theoretical contribution of the article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical study provides two main lines of findings, the first one is a comparative evaluation of the existing regulatory frameworks and their appropriateness in the context of AI regulation within the legal profession, and the second is a conceptual regulatory model based on four normative pillars and a co-regulatory institutional architecture. The discussion section explores how these findings are relevant to the regulatory reform, professional responsibility and future of legal scholarship on AI governance. The following way of presenting these results and implications is integrated.

Comparative Regulatory Model Analysis

The regulation can be achieved through rules, which provide clarity and predictability but are not well adjusted to the regulation of fast changing AI technologies. Unlike the futuristic sci-fi creation of cyberlaw that Calo (2015) illustrates through the similar history of the cyberlaw development, when technology evolves, prescriptive rules soon start to lose relevance, and regulatory lag is a structural characteristic inherent in rules-based models used to apply to digital innovation. This issue is even exacerbated by the legal AI situation: as capabilities in large language models and machine learning systems develop, the rules that were written to regulate existing AI models will be outmoded in several months, and new risks will not be properly addressed.

Technology-neutral and flexible and therefore principles-based regulation, which is the approach in which most professional regulatory bodies are available, creates regulatory uncertainty and benefits well-resourced actors who can work without particular guidance on applying broad normative principles (Guihot *et al.*, 2017). Where a professional code of conduct stipulates competence in use of technology, it gives too little direction to that individual practitioner as to what particular due diligence,

disclosure, or oversight duties must be undertaken in the use of a generative AI drafting tool and gives too little notice to enforcers as to what particular conduct should be the subject of sanction.

Risk-based, as is the case with the EU AI Act, scales the intensity of regulation based on the level of potential harm and, in theory, its efficiency and proportionality are appealing. Veale and Borgesius (2021) praise its architecture by mentioning classification problems; Floridi (2021) supports its practical philosophical basis without saying that it should be rigid in terms of definitions. The risk-based model, applied to the legal profession, has real strengths: it would subject AI systems applied in high-stakes legal decisions - criminal sentencing analytics, asylum determination support tools, and predictive risk assessment tools - to the most stringent regulations, and softer rules would regulate lower-risk applications such as legal research assistance. The weakness is rooted in the issue of definition: the distinction between high-risk and limited-risk applications of legal AI is debatable and prone to abuse through the implementation of firms that have an interest in avoiding regulatory heavy-handing by trying to frame high-risk uses of AI as limited-risk.

Co-regulation is the most theoretically promising model of legal AI regulation that arises through the comparative analysis that provides the complementary institutional benefits of statutory authority, namely, legitimacy, enforcement capacity, and public accountability of interest, and professional self-governance, namely, domain expertise, contextual responsiveness, and practitioner engagement (Mayson, 2025). The main risk that it faces is regulatory capture and this issue should be mitigated by having good public interest protection enshrined in the statutory framework. Although it is close to what is practiced in most jurisdictions, the concept of pure self-regulation is evaluated as structurally inadequate as it fails to consistently reconcile professional to client and the general population interests (Rodgers *et al.*, 2023). A comparative analysis of these regulatory models is organized in a table provided below (Table 2), where each of them is evaluated in terms of their suitability to the particular requirements of legal AI governance.

Table 2: Comparative analysis of regulatory models applied to AI in the legal profession

Regulatory Model	Key Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses	Suitability for Legal AI
Rules-Based	Prescriptive law rules, stating what is permitted/prohibited is done.	Regulatory lag; stifles innovation; makes it obsolete.	Regulatory lag; obsolescence; inhibits innovation	Low — strict regulations are not able to foresee the changing AI skills.
Principles-Based	Normative standards on high levels and the interpretations of the things that are regulated.	Malleability; unbiasedness in technology; flexibility.	Uncertainty in regulation; lack of even-handed enforcement; playing to the advantage of well-endowed actors.	Moderate - applicable in the professional ethics layer, inadequate on its own.

Risk-Based	Intensity of regulation adjusted to potential harm (e.g., EU AI Act) Proportionality; efficiency;	targeted resources in areas of most risk; impacts sector-specific adaptation by definitionally; gaming risk	Challenges classification; definitional uncertainty; gaming risk	Challenges classification; definitional uncertainty; gaming risk
Co-Regulatory	Statutory framework and professional self-governance	Combines power with knowledge of the domain; ad hoc; interests of the public.	Regulatory capture risk; coordination costs; complexity of implementation	High -most appropriate in context of distinguishing institutional structure of the legal profession
Self-Regulatory	Statutory mandate-free professional body governance.	Knowledge in the field; professional acquiescence; adaptability	Insufficient accountability; conflict of interest; inadequate protection of the people by the system	in place Low - is the same as it is now but constitutionally unsatisfactory

The source was synthesised based on Calo (2015); Guihot *et al.* (2017); Veale and Borgesius (2021); Floridi (2021); Mayson (2025); Rodgers *et al.* (2023).

The comparative analysis confirms that there is no one regulatory solution that would be sufficient to handle the multidimensional issues of AI in the legal profession. The shortcomings of the rule-based regulation such as inflexibility and regulatory lag and the shortcomings of self-regulation such as lack of accountability and subordination of the public interest all lead to the conclusion of using hybrid strategies that incorporate the statutory power into the professional expertise. The documented hybrid approach has a theoretically justifiable foundation in the proposed co-regulatory framework which would be based on the four-pillar architecture as presented in the next section. Most importantly, the framework is intended to be dynamic: the co-regulatory architecture places the continuous task of rendering statutory principles context-specific guidance on the professional bodies, which would eliminate the obsolescence trap that plagues prescriptive models of regulation (Guihot *et al.*, 2017; Calo, 2015).

Proposed Conceptual Regulatory Framework

The suggested conceptual framework is based on four normative pillars all of which respond to a particular dimension of the regulatory gap that was revealed in the literature review. The transparency pillar mandates the appropriate level of understandability in AI systems applied in legal practice so that lawyers can exert meaningful control over them, clients can make informed choices, and regulators can determine compliance (Wieringa, 2020). The concept of transparency is construed to include technical explainability, process transparency, and systemic transparency, where the latter means the availability of information concerning the design and functioning of AI systems to regulatory agencies. The main regulatory tools by which this pillar

would be operationalised are disclosure obligations to clients on the use of AI tools in their affairs, and the mandatory audit trail, under which the post-hoc review of the AI-assisted decisions would be generated.

The second pillar, accountability, combats structural accountability gap through creating defined chains of responsibility that include not only the deployment of lawyers but also the oversight of law firms and AI developers, and backed by powerful contests and redress mechanisms that abuse AI-generated harm (Binns, 2018; Hacker *et al.*, 2023; Remus, 2024). The framework embraces a distributed accountability approach: the lawyers who deploy AI to client matters have primary professional accountability to the outputs of the AI; the law firms have secondary institutional accountability to procurement standards, training and oversight systems; and the AI developers have the remaining product liability due to system failures which can be attributed to design defects. This allocation of the accountability is not new, it resembles the liability allocation frameworks used in other professional settings that involve complex tools and systems but its active legal codification in AI regulation must be considered a critical measure to address the accountability gap that the current frameworks introduce. Human oversight is the third pillar that presents the normative obligation to maintain human judgment in the legal decision-making of Hildebrandt (2018), Sourdin (2018), and Linna (2025). According to the lawyer-in-the-loop principle, AI systems must be open to significant professional control instead of superficial control, and that meaningful human override must be preserved as a form of structure to AI use in legal activities. The direct effect of this pillar on the duty of competence is that a lawyer who has sent an AI-generated work product to a client with little or no substantial review has not

performed the professional judgment which the lawyer-client relationship demands, even though the output is technically competent. The framework states that regulatory authorities define the minimum oversight standards that should be used regarding various types of AI implementation to give practitioners tangible information about what level of professional oversight should be considered a minimum.

The fourth pillar, the access to justice, is needed to make the regulatory frameworks proactively address distributional implications of the AI application, so that the efficiency benefits of legal AI are not monopolised by well-endowed actors at the cost of more disadvantaged litigants (Remus & Levy, 2017; Martínez, 2022; Okibe & Essien, 2025). The pillar acknowledges that the regulatory issue of legal AI is not merely a governance problem, but also a justice problem: legal actors with greater financial resources are likely to be the first to adopt AI tools, which will lead to the creation of a two-tier justice system

where the quality of legal representation is increasingly contingent on access to AI infrastructure, not on the quality of legal decision-making. The regulatory duties under this pillar contain anti-discrimination principles and rules applicable to AI systems deployed in the judicial decision-making process, natural access by legal aid providers to AI services, and continuing checks on the distributional impact of AI on access to legal services. It is theorized that these four pillars are mutually reinforcing and mutually necessary: a system that is transparent and accountable and does not focus on access to justice is normatively incomplete and a system that promotes human oversight and does not focus on accountability structures will not be able to effectively redress the failure of professional oversight. The conceptual framework and the institutional architecture in which it will be applied is shown in figure 2 below that will be presented in black and white to be published.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR AI REGULATION IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION	
CO-REGULATORY GOVERNANCE: Statutory authority combined with professional body expertise	
PILLAR I Transparency	Predictably explainable AI results; reporting responsibilities to the clients; technical writing requirements; auditing of the system by regulatory bodies; transparency of the system to the oversight bodies. Ref: Wieringa (2020); Novelli et al. (2024).
PILLAR II Accountability	Easy to understand chains of liability between lawyer, firm and developer; professional indemnification of AI mediated harm; dispute and redress systems; audit trails. Reference: Binns (2018); Hacker et al. (2023); Remus (2024).
PILLAR III Human Oversight	Lawyer-in-the-loop requirement; actual professional oversight (as opposed to nominal oversight); ability to override; by make fully automated legal decisions without human approval. Hildebrandt (2018); Sourdin (2018); Linna (2025).
PILLAR IV Access to Justice	Fair access principles; anti-discrimination and the law Non-discrimination on AI use; Integration of legal aid Systems that disenfranchise marginalised litigants impede the use of AI. Reference: Remus and Levy (2017); Martínez (2022); Daly et al. (2019).
INTERNATIONAL HARMONISATION MECHANISM: Mutual recognition; cross-border enforcement cooperation; convergence of technical standards	

Figure 2: Proposed conceptual framework for AI regulation in the legal profession

Source: Constructed from Wieringa (2020); Binns (2018); Hacker et al. (2023); Linna (2025); Hildebrandt (2018); Remus and Levy (2017); Novelli et al. (2024); Daly et al. (2019); Smuha (2021).

The implication of the proposed framework on the professional responsibility is also important. The pillar of transparency necessitates the reformulation of the duty of competence - to technological competence in the design, evaluation and supervision of AI systems deployed in legal practice (Larson, 2025; Linna, 2025). This directly relates to the legal education that should include AI literacy as a professional skill and not as a technical add-on. The accountability pillar demands the professional liability structures to be reformed to deal with AI-mediated harm, and formulate clear standards concerning the acquisition and utilization of AI systems by law firms that not only the outputs but also the conditions of AI use are the concern of the professional responsibility. The human oversight pillar supports the fiduciary aspects of the lawyer-client relationship the duty to exercise undivided loyalty and actual professional application against the commercial incentive of replacing AI outputs with an individualised professional judgment (Remus, 2024).

The pillar of access to justice is perhaps the most creative aspect of the suggested framework. The current literature on AI and its role in access to justice, such as

the original work by Remus and Levy (2017) and the more recent study by Martínez (2022) on the ethics of AI use in justice systems set the distributional stakes of AI implementation into law, although has not yet developed an extensive normative approach to making sure that the regulatory design has an active part in promoting equitable results. Theoretical contributions in the future must expand the access to justice pillar more specifically by utilizing the theory of legal aid, equality law, and the wider access to justice literature to indicate the regulatory norms that derive out of the commitment to equitable AI application in the legal practice.

The international harmonisation aspect of the proposed framework is another dimension that will also be subject to more theoretical involvement. Daly et al. (2019) and Smuha (2021) distinguish the need to have international convergence as the key to successful AI regulation, yet the mechanisms under which the convergence could be realised in the given scenario of legal profession AI regulation are under-theorised. The new institutional structure of the EU AI Act, which can be explored in detail by Novelli et al. (2024), offers a possible prototype of sector-specific international coordination, but it would

have to be extended to legal services to interact with the heterogeneous system of institutional provisions of the international legal regulation, such as the divergent professional regulation regimes of the common law and civil law worlds.

Ethical aspects of AI in legal practice, including lawyer competence, candour and confidentiality duties, and fiduciary responsibilities also come into conflict with but are not recapitulated in the regulatory framework promoted in this article. The normative basis of professional ethics frameworks on which regulatory requirements are framed and the reconceptualization of professional ethics in the wake of AI is itself an ambitious theoretical project. The story of law as computation by Hildebrandt (2018) poses the most primordial questions here in that sense that, in case AI systems can replicate, and to a certain extent outperform the analytical activity of a human lawyer, what is the unique normative aspect of the human legal professional to the justice system? This question leads to the more radical theoretical undertaking of the connection between AI and legal professionalism and the anthropocentric assumptions of legal systems - a project which the current article seems to recognize as an attention point within future research.

CONCLUSION

This article has gone further to support a theoretical and conceptual discussion of the regulatory imperatives of artificial intelligence in the legal profession, as well as, suggesting a normative framework of regulatory reform based on four pillars, namely, transparency, accountability, human oversight, and access to justice, organized around a co-regulatory institutional structure. This analysis has shown that the current regulatory frameworks, at all levels, including both international normative tools and professional bodies advice, are structurally ill-equipped to deal with the accountability gaps, risks of confidentiality, the risk of bias, unauthorised practice issues as well as jurisdictional concerns that AI presents in legal practice. The comparative study of regulatory models confirms that co-regulation, which is a blend of statutory power and professionalism, provides the most theoretically justifiable governance structure in the legal AI situation. This co-regulatory architecture is enacted through the normative content that is offered in the four-pillar framework. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework across common law and civil law jurisdictions, deepen the theoretical foundations of the access to justice pillar, and examine the professional responsibility consequences of large language model deployment—all in service of preserving the rule of law as AI transforms legal practice (Ben-Daniel, 2025; Okibe & Essien, 2025).

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