



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-DRIVEN MEDIATION IN NIGERIA: INSIGHTS FROM EMERGING GLOBAL PRACTICES

Collins Ekpenisi¹, Amos Godfrey Atim², Paul Atagamen Aidonojie³,
Eregbuonye Obieshi⁴, Micheal Inagbor⁵

¹School of Law, Kampala International university, Kampala, Uganda,
collins.ekpenisi@kiu.ac.ug

²School of Economics Finance and Law, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK,
AA3554@student.aru.ac.uk

³School of Law, Kampala International university, Kampala, Uganda,
paul.aidonojie@kiu.ac.ug

⁴Faculty of Law, Edo State University, Edo State, Nigeria,
obishi.eregbuyee@edouniversity.edu.ng

⁵Faculty of Law, Edo State University, Edo State, Nigeria
ingbor.michel@edouniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract

The revolutionary trend and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into all facets of society is no longer a subject of debate. Rather, the present discussion is on the extent to which AI is influencing the global juridical legal system and most especially, mediation practices. While several jurisdictions are rapidly integrating AI into their mediation practices to enhance access to justice, Nigeria remains at an early stage of engagement with artificial intelligence. The research adopted the doctrinal method of data analysis, alongside a comparative approach in examining the extent to which artificial intelligence has been applied to mediation in different countries and how this could serve as a lesson to mediation in Nigeria. The research highlights mediation and technology laws in Nigeria and how they provide a foundation for AI use in mediation practice. It then explores how other countries and jurisdictions use AI in mediation, identifying both practical applications and results. Building on these insights, the paper then outlines specific opportunities for implementing AI in Nigerian mediation practices, while also considering several key challenges. It concludes with policy recommendations to guide structured and effective integration of artificial intelligence in mediation practice within the Nigerian context.

INTRODUCTION

Disputes often arise as a natural consequence of our interpersonal relationships or social interactions, complex environments, differing interests or opinions, and sometimes, from the inherent variations in our priorities and perspectives, necessitating the application of mechanisms and tools to address them. The background to this assertion stems from the strong belief that when humans interact, over time and in close relationships, they are bound to disagree due to their conflicting ideas, values, motivations, desires, perceptions or interpretations (Minson & Chen, 2022). Sometimes, this disagreement appears trivial, but when it is prolonged, triggers strong feelings, is actively contested, and has a specific issue at its core, then disputes or conflict can arise. These disputes can be resource and energy draining, disruptive, put a strain on already established relationships, and might even impact on everyday lives of the parties involved (Ekpenisi et al., 2024). Hence, a functional justice system must not be measured by the absence of disputes, but by the speed, fairness, ease and efficiency with which disputes are resolved or justice dispensed. In the world over, disputes can be resolved through various mediums, including arbitration, litigation, negotiation, mediation, etc. Although litigation is the widely used avenue, mediation has often been seen as a viable alternative to litigation. It assures a great level of efficiency, reduced costs, and unbiased legal outcomes that are often in the best interest of the concerned parties themselves (Sourdin et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Salcedo et al., 2025).

In reality, however, mediation practice, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, faces a lot of legal, procedural and institutional challenges. Case management remains a problem, bottlenecks continuously hinder certain procedures, and acquiring the services of trained mediators is sometimes difficult, especially outside major cities (Gobile & Awoyemi, 2024). At the same time, advancements in technology across the world continue to impact different areas of everyday living, and even the legal space is not untouched (Monika Wyszomirska, 2023). In some countries, modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) have emerged and are being integrated into various aspects of legal practice as a viable tool for mitigating some of the challenges faced in the profession. The incorporation of Artificial intelligence into the legal practice has led to the adoption of innovative approaches in the area of dispute resolution (Abu & Miazzi, 2023).

The application of Artificial Intelligence into mediation processes is better understood when its functions in enhancing mediation across various jurisdictions are categorized and analyzed. First, AI is aiding mediation in the performance of administrative or procedural functions. Its uses improve the mediation process through cases management, scheduling, organizing documents, and facilitating online dispute resolutions. At this level, AI only acts as a complementary tool that improves efficiency without directly affecting the essence of the mediation process. The second mediation function supported by AI is analytical and decision support. In this role, AI provides the mediator with information regarding potential settlements based on risk assessments and other relevant factors.

The relevance of decision-support technology in mediation is also supported by Bellucci & Zeleznikow (2005). Their work demonstrates that AI-based negotiation support can assist mediators by organising preferences, identifying trade-offs, and generating structured options that may help parties move toward settlement. However, the significance of such systems lies in their supportive character. They are not designed to replace the mediator's judgment, but to provide structured information that helps the mediator manage complex interests and facilitate more informed negotiation. This distinction is important for the Nigerian context because it supports a model in which AI strengthens the mediator's capacity while preserving human discretion, neutrality, and party autonomy.

This results in increased productivity for parties to a mediation. The third function involves communication and accessibility. AI facilitates communication in the process by providing such mediation-related tools as; real time translation, chat bots, and various types of assistive technologies. This enables mediation to be available to a wider range of individuals. Lastly, AI assist in drafting functions by providing a mediator with the tools to create, customize and review Settlement Agreements and Summaries. Ultimately, this helps to ensure that all documents are accurate and clear (Rodríguez-Salcedo et al., 2025). These functions are meant to assist and complements human mediators without replacing them, serving as bases for efficiency and effectiveness of human mediators (Karthikeyan, 2024).

In several jurisdictions, the adoption is already helping to cut down the cost of dispute resolution, assisting in granting mediation access to individuals and disputants who otherwise would not have been able to settle their disputes through this procedure, and in some instances, reducing case resolution time from weeks to mere hours (Kumar & Singh, 2025); Syed Shaharyar et al, 2025). However, despite its acclaimed recognition, adoption, and benefits, Nigeria has not been able to effectively integrate advanced technology like artificial intelligence into its legal system or mediation process. The Arbitration and Mediation Act (AMA) of 2023, repealed and modernized the outdated Arbitration and Conciliation Act (ACA) of 1988 (Usman et al., 2025). The Arbitration and Mediation Act (2023), recognised the use of some forms of Information and communication technology (ICT) in mediation practice, as it provided in Section 2(4) for the utilisation of electronic communication data if it is accessible by the parties and the mediators, and subject to references. However, when the issue of AI-assisted mediation is considered, the discussion becomes much more complex, but quite interesting. This is because AI is still a relatively unexplored area in Nigerian legal practice (Ukhurebor & Aidonojie, 2021). These scholars are of the view that with clear regulations and lessons learnt from other jurisdictions that have already adopted AI in their mediation practice, barriers to the process can be eliminated and the system can be more accessible, efficient, and responsive in Nigeria.

The objective of this paper is to explore the intersection of mediation and Artificial Intelligence. The work examines the available legal frameworks for mediation and AI in Nigeria. It also explores AI-assisted mediation practices in other jurisdictions where AI is considerably utilised in mediation, and identifies practical opportunities for application in the country (Aidonojie et al., 2025). While the potential benefits are great, the study points

out and addresses some challenges in adopting AI in mediation practices in Nigeria and offers helpful policy recommendations aimed at achieving a balanced, legally astute, and socially acceptable framework for AI-assisted mediation in Nigeria.

METHOD

The study combines doctrinal legal analysis with a comparative approach. The doctrinal component entails research into doctrines and hence examines legal sources such as statutes, judicial decisions, and policy documents that shape mediation and the use of technology in dispute resolution in Nigeria. It also gains insights from peer-reviewed articles, policy papers, conference proceedings, and industry reports that address AI in dispute resolution, mediation best practices, and technology adoption in the legal sector. The comparative analysis segment is structured to highlight lessons from some selected countries, like the United Kingdom, Singapore, Estonia, China, Canada, Australia, and the United States of America, as well as global platforms like eBay and PayPal. Selections were made based on two main criteria: the existence of formal regulation on AI in mediation or dispute resolution and proven operational use of AI-assisted mediation tools. To strengthen the comparative analysis, this study adopts a clear framework for evaluation. Each aforementioned country is examined based on the following parameters: the legal basis for the use of AI in mediation or dispute resolution, the specific type of AI application in use, the level of human oversight within the process, the procedures and mechanisms set in place to protect parties, and the practical outcomes observed which could provide applicable lessons within the Nigerian legal system. Data was gathered through desk study research, from publicly accessible legislation, regulatory guidelines, mediation platform documentation, and credible secondary commentary. By employing a mixed-methodology approach, this paper seeks to produce recommendations that are feasible, legally effective, and applicable to the Nigerian context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual and Theoretical Discussion on Mediation and Artificial Intelligence

The concept and practice of mediation have been widely discussed by both legal experts and academia in many fields of study. This is based on its recognition as a popular and effective form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (Swanson, 2021). Although the term mediation comes from the Latin word "mediate", which literally means "to be in the middle" (Sherman & Momani, 2025). In formal usage, it is difficult to give a single exact definition because every scholar or jurisdiction tends to have its own definition. Franck was of the view that the meaning of mediation changes as it travels; its instantiation anywhere is subject to local variation and intervention as it makes contact with state and customary law, politics, and social struggles (Franck, 2023). But despite all the controversy surrounding its understanding, mediation could be seen as a form of ADR in which two parties or disputants, with the aid of a third-party, called the mediator, come together to craft their own settlement or agreement on a dispute (Garg, 2024). The Nigerian Arbitration and Mediation Act (2023) actually refers to mediation as a process. In this process, and as

provided in Section 91(1), parties to a dispute request a third person ("the mediator") to help or assist them in their attempt to reach an amicable settlement of their dispute arising out of or relating to a contractual or other legal relationship but the mediator, who is a neutral party, acting as a facilitator, does not have the authority to impose upon the parties a solution to the dispute (Aidonojie et al., 2024). The central quality of mediation has been described as its capacity to reorient the parties towards each other, not by imposing rules on them, but by helping them to achieve a new and shared perception of their relationship, a perception that will redirect their attitudes and dispositions towards one another (Sasmiar et al., 2024).

In this sense, Abdul Ganiyu adds that mediation, led by a mediator, simply offers a quicker, more effective and less hostile outcome when compared to litigation, which is often seen as a cumbersome formal adjudicative system (Ucheakonam, 2023). Legal experts like Melnychuk et al, are fascinated by this ADR mechanism due to its ability to save time and money, its flexibility of procedures, reduction of psychological and emotional stress, capacity to preserve relationships and because it allows for acceptable settlements by assisting parties to understand each other's perspective and to discover their common interest (Melnychuk et al., 2024). However, within the Nigerian context in particular, Sibongile and Olarenwaju have also pointed out some challenges associated with mediation, including the unavailability of qualified mediators, delays in scheduling cases, and a lack of consistent enforcement of guidelines (Gobile & Awoyemi, 2024). These problems have led to calls for more changes, and particularly, for long-lasting solutions to these issues, so as to maximise the benefits of mediation. Therefore, it became necessary to adopt methods that address the limitations of current mediation approaches by leveraging advanced technologies that can organise, analyse and forecast the outcome of a matter, using historical data and algorithms (Karthikeyan, 2024). It is as a result of this that Artificial Intelligence has emerged as a viable tool to aid in mediation practices (Aidonojie et al, 2024).

Today, Artificial Intelligence is on everyone's lips. Many legal experts and authors in theory and practice agree that this technological invention will dominate the coming years of legal practice. Although it may seem new to many people, however, the emergence of AI can be traced back to the United States Dartmouth College conference of 1956, where some renowned scholars first presented it (Nikolaeva, 2023). Over the years, this advanced technology took centre stage and became a relevant subject matter in many fields of study, including science, accounting, medicine, economics, engineering and even law. But it must be noted that before the integration of AI into the legal practice, there were already in existence some forms of technological-assisted dispute resolution mechanisms which could be traced to the late 1990's when online negotiations were first tested by platforms like eBay and PayPal for the settlement of low-value claims (Aidonojie, 2023).

This historical development is important because the emergence of AI-assisted mediation did not occur in isolation, but grew from the broader evolution of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR). Carneiro et al. (2014) explain that ODR emerged as a technology-supported mechanism for facilitating conflict resolution, particularly as

conventional court processes became increasingly slow, expensive, and less responsive to disputes arising from electronic transactions. Their study further shows that AI techniques can strengthen ODR by supporting case assessment, information processing, negotiation assistance, and structured dispute handling. This confirms that AI-assisted mediation should be understood as a development within the wider movement toward technology-supported dispute resolution, rather than as a sudden replacement of traditional mediation.

Although these mechanisms were first designed for dispute settlement efficiency purposes, they later evolved into a larger system that incorporated tools for decision support, features that facilitated real time communications and development of templates for guided negotiations. Presently, artificial intelligence is being applied within mediation practices of many countries, even in more sophisticated ways(Hodge, 2023).

Within the context of this study, Artificial Intelligence (AI), could be seen as supportive tools, aimed at enhancing the mediation process through pre-mediation analysis and prediction, case classification, development of settlement options, drafting of settlement agreements, facilitation of communication through natural languages translations and sentiment analysis for emotional tracking. AI emulates human intelligence within a mediation setting but does not take the place of the mediator(Oluseye & Ajao, 2024; Leonas, 2025). In academic discourse, it includes the study of how algorithms and digital computers carry out tasks and deal with complex problems that typically require human reasoning, intelligence, and predictive ability to adapt to changing circumstances(Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2023). Arakpogun et al explained that AI is a collection of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that imitate human intelligence. It makes it possible for machines to carry out cognitives tasks that were previously associated with human minds alone(Arakpogun et al., 2021). AI is a system that has the capacity to learn by analysing information gathered from its external environment. This learned information or knowledge acquired is then applied to modify existing plans or to the development of new ones to effectively respond to changes in the environment or circumstance. Thus, it consists of the conceptualisation and development of computer systems that are capable of carrying out tasks commonly associated with human intelligence, including speech recognition, information interpretation, and decision making(Rai et al., 2019).

In the legal sphere, discussions on artificial intelligence are no longer anchored on theoretical speculation (Mukhlisha et al., 2025). With pressing demand for due process and essential legal principles like confidentiality, fairness, and impartiality, it has evolved into an urgent need for the application of advanced technology like AI in the legal practice. In different jurisdictions, AI is now assisting mediators in conducting research on specific cases, streamlining administrative duties, providing data-driven insights into cases, and facilitating dispute resolution for disputing parties despite Linguistic or physical barriers(Gul et al., 2025).

The Dispute Systems Design (DSD) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) models are two theoretical frameworks that are relevant to the discussion on the integration of AI in mediation. The first is Dispute Systems Design (DSD), popularised by researchers

Ury, Brett, and Goldberg in the late 1980s. It emphasises that dispute resolution processes ought to be specifically designed to meet the needs, capacity, and context of the dispute and the affected parties (Rabinovich-Einy & Katsh, 2021). In the Nigerian setting, this could mean that any AI-assisted mediation process must reflect the country's legal and cultural realities as well as technological infrastructure. DSD is applied as an evaluative tool in this study on three levels. First, it is used to assess whether the structure of AI-assisted mediation aligns with the types of disputes found in Nigeria such as commercial, family, and small-value claims. It is also used to examine whether various process designs work to preserve core mediation features such as human independence, transparency, and confidentiality when AI tools are introduced. Lastly, it is employed in the comparative analysis section to determine if systems in selected countries were designed in response to specific institutional frailties and pressures, such as court congestion or digital literacy levels and whether similar design choices would be suitable for Nigeria.

Another noteworthy theoretical framework is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), made popular by David Fred. It explains that the way people perceive the usefulness and ease of use of new technologies often influences how those technologies are adopted and used (Mustafa & Garcia, 2021). Applying this AI use in mediation practice suggests that legal practitioners, conflicting and other related parties will only embrace AI tools if they show a considerable level of efficiency that improves the current system, and in a way that is both transparent and fair. In Nigeria, and in this study specifically, TAM is used to understand the points of resistance or acceptance in relation to adopting AI in mediation. For Nigerian mediators and related legal officials, their main concerns would be regarding the reliability of these tools and how prone they are to error. Mediators would also be concerned with whether these tools would interfere with how they may prefer to conduct mediation proceedings. Disputing parties would be more concerned if these AI tools are trustworthy enough. They would be focused on whether the process is truly fair and understandable. TAM is employed in the comparative analysis to explain why certain countries have recorded higher levels of adoption than others, with focus on factors such as user training, clear regulations, and strong institutional support.

By combining these theoretical frameworks, this paper clarifies that AI-assisted mediation should not be considered a threat to existing mediation practice, but as a form of enhancement to the system that must be carefully designed to meet both legal standards and user expectations (Erma et al., 2025). This also shows why applying foreign-centric AI systems in Nigeria without cautious adaptation to the country's context is likely to lead to failure. Differences in law, infrastructure, nature of disputes, and dispute resolution culture all need to be considered.

Legal Framework on Mediation and AI in Nigeria

The enactment of the Arbitration and Mediation Act (AMA) in 2023 significantly transformed the regulation of mediation practices in Nigeria. The legislation replaced the former Arbitration and Conciliation Act (ACA) of 1988 and introduced, for the first time, an in-depth and modernized national legal framework for ADR, especially arbitration and

mediation in Nigeria. It was the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Mediation (2018) that largely influenced the AMA's framework. The AMA has several key features which are aimed at aligning ADR in Nigeria with international standards and enhancing its practice in the country. Section 67 of the Act provides for the scope of disputes amenable to mediation, while the procedure for commencement of mediation is outlined in Sections 69&70. Section 72 specifies the number of mediators required, Sections 73 and 74 delineate the general duties of mediators, while Section 76 addresses issues of confidentiality and many more. The Act also, in Section 82, makes provision for agreement settlements emerging from mediation, and that it is binding on the parties and enforceable in Court as a contract, consent judgment or consent award. This is a milestone as it not only formed the legal solution for mediation as a way of alternative dispute resolution mechanism in Nigeria, but also expanded the mediation practice, giving it better visibility(Usman et al., 2025).

Furthermore, although the AMA does not specifically make provision for the use of Artificial Intelligence in mediation dispute resolution strategy, it provides for the use of Information And Communication Technology (ICT) in the process of dispute settlement. It explicitly recognizes electronic communication for written agreements and provides a framework for virtual mediation. Section 73(5) provides that through the agreements of the parties and the mediator, electronic means such as video conference, electronic communication, or other similar means of transmission of the voice or image, may be used to carry out all or any of the mediation sessions, as long as the identity of the parties concerned are guaranteed and the process complies with the principles of mediation delineated in the Act. Electronic communication within this context and as provided in S. 91(1) includes information generated, sent, received or stored by electronic, magnetic, optical, or similar means, including electronic data interchange (EDI), electronic mail, telegram, telex or telecopy. Although AI was not involved or mentioned in these provisions, they, however, gave an encompassing and wider application of Internet and Communication technology (ICT) into the mediation mechanism in Nigeria.

In addition, a look at other existing legal frameworks in Nigeria shows that in section 84 of the Evidence Act 2011, the admissibility of any computer-generated record in legal cases is also specified. It provides that such records may be admitted in evidence upon meeting certain conditions. The general expectations are that there is proof that the computer system functions properly and that the data supplied was collected in the ordinary course of activity. If AI is involved in this circumstance, these conditions would apply to platform-generated logs and records, transcripts, and settlement documents (Masika Sarah Bino & Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, 2025) . Moreover, Section 17 of the Cybercrimes Act of 2015, recognises electronic signatures as valid and acceptable in a dispute settlement, like in mediation, albeit subject to certain exceptions. This recognition could mean that agreements gotten in similar manner through any AI-assisted platform are enforceable and may be executed without using traditional wet-ink signatures, provided they meet the Act's requirements. The Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) 2023 also helps in setting out

principles for the lawful processing, storage, and transfer of personal data. Mediation essentially involves the use and exchange of sensitive information, which may be either personal or commercial, and AI platforms that process such data would have to strictly adhere to the NDPA's standards on transparency and security. Although Nigeria may not have a binding legal framework specifically designed to regulate AI use in mediation, these Acts and statutes provide a decent foundation.

It is germane to note that the Nigerian government has initiated the process of creating new polices to govern the utilisation of AI in the country, in order to draw benefits from the potential of modern technology such as AI. The National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (NAIS) launched in 2025 is a key policy guiding Nigeria's AI development and implementation. NAIS defines the Government's role in regulation and application of AI in multiple sectors. The strategy was developed by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)(Obidimma & Ishiguzo, 2023). The NITDA has been Nigeria's lead agency for the country's IT Policy since it was established in 2001. The primary functions of NITDA are to regulate and monitor information technology practices in Nigeria and set standards. As part of this function, NITDA has the responsibility of developing frameworks for the development of AI and overseeing the implementation of Nigeria's national digital agenda. Both these functions are being executed by NITDA through its subsidiary/specialized unit, the National Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR), with NCAIR serving as the technical hub and NITDA as the regulatory body. Together they are working to provide an effective framework for governing AI, promoting the ethical use of AI and creating infrastructure necessary to establish Nigeria as a global leader in AI(Obiahu, 2024).

A combined consideration of the NAIS and other statutes and policy documents relating to technological innovations gives a lucid picture of the legal settings that incorporates the law and practice of AI in Nigeria. Execution and enforcement of mediated agreements are supported under the Arbitration and Mediation Act. The adoption and practice of AI in mediation proceedings is strengthened by other related laws such as the Cybercrimes Act, Evidence Act and Nigerian Data Protection Act.

Practically, in Nigeria's legal setting, there is no cogent legal framework to specifically address the creation of procedures for merging AI and mediation in the country's alternative dispute resolution system, and meeting regulatory expectations.

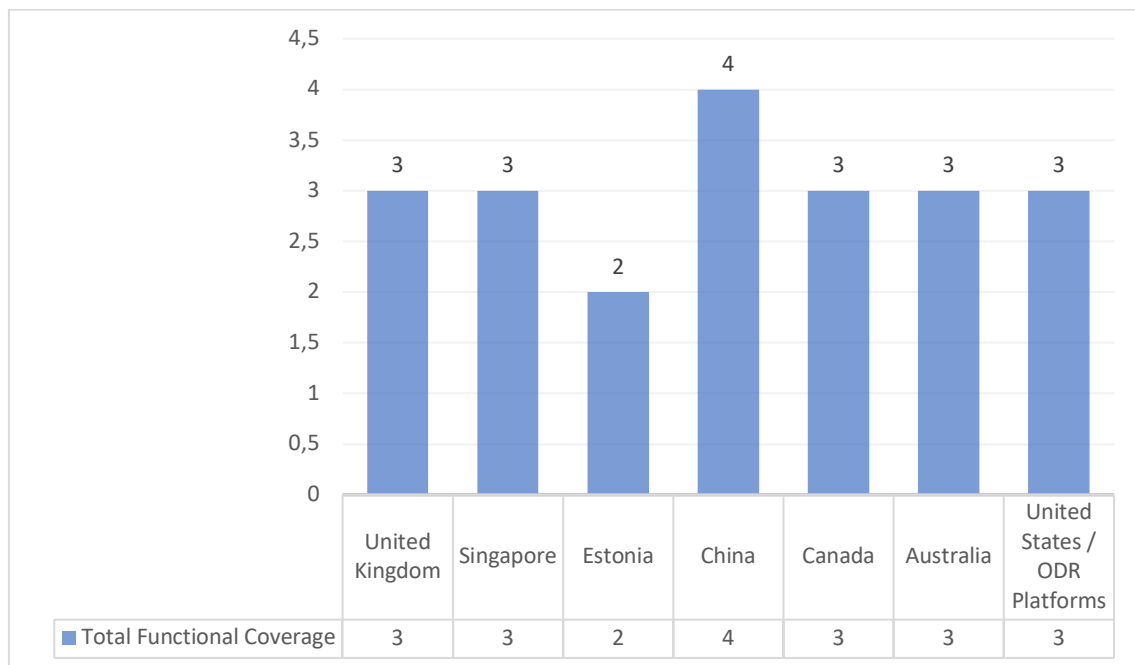
Global Practices on AI-Assisted Mediation

It is no longer news that technology is slowly being introduced and adopted across common law and civil law jurisdictions in such a way that it has already become integral to the legal systems of several countries. Courts and tribunals first began by digitising case scheduling, then online dispute resolution platforms and procedures were designed, and now, various countries are championing the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution(Sourdin et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Salcedo et al., 2025). The degree to which these techno-legal aspirations have been achieved differs across countries. However, it is crucial to scrutinise several real-world examples to gain a better

understanding of the issue and the lessons Nigeria can learn from their experiences and usage.

To make the comparative discussion more systematic, the selected jurisdictions can be mapped according to the functional scope of AI use in mediation and related dispute resolution systems. This article classifies AI functions into four categories: administrative or procedural support, communication and accessibility support, analytical or decision-support functions, and drafting or settlement-document preparation. The following bar chart does not present statistical data from a survey. Rather, it provides a qualitative mapping based on the comparative examples discussed in this section. Its purpose is to show how far AI has been used as an assistive tool in selected jurisdictions, while still preserving the central role of human mediators.

Figure 1. Functional Coverage of AI Use in Mediation and Related Dispute Resolution Practices



Source: (Gyurász & Krkošková, 2024; Laptév & Feyzrakhmanova, 2024; Rodríguez-Salcedo et al., 2025)

Note:

1= one identified AI function

2 = two identified AI functions

3 = three identified AI functions

4 = four identified AI functions

Figure 1 shows that AI adoption in mediation and related dispute resolution practices differs across jurisdictions. China shows the broadest functional coverage because the discussion identifies AI use in procedural administration, communication support, analytical assistance, and document drafting. Singapore, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States show relatively strong but more selective use of AI, particularly for efficiency, case organisation, settlement support, or online dispute resolution. Estonia records a lower functional score because its relevance in this article lies

mainly in court digitisation and administrative workflow, rather than direct AI-assisted mediation.

This mapping reinforces the argument that Nigeria should not immediately adopt a fully automated mediation model. Recent scholarship supports the need to treat AI-assisted mediation as an assistive rather than substitutive mechanism. Rodríguez-Salcedo et al. (2025) argue that AI may improve the efficiency of mediation and arbitration through administrative automation, document analysis, and procedural support, but its use must remain sensitive to confidentiality, fairness, transparency, and human oversight. Similarly, Gyurász & Krkošková (2024) show that AI-driven ADR has become increasingly relevant in digital dispute resolution because it can reduce delay, improve procedural accessibility, and support the management of online disputes. However, (Laptev & Feyzrakhmanova, 2024) caution that AI use in justice systems must be carefully distinguished according to institutional function, because AI tools used in courts, tribunals, or case-management systems do not automatically constitute AI-assisted mediation. Therefore, the Nigerian model should adopt AI only as a supportive layer for case intake, communication, document organisation, translation, and settlement drafting, while leaving judgment-sensitive mediation functions under human control.

In the United Kingdom, for instance, artificial intelligence is currently being used in mediation practices, especially in family mediation. For families going through separation or divorce, artificial intelligence tools are providing guidance and support with extremely helpful and data-driven insights that are necessary for dispute resolution or final agreements. In the UK, Ark Mediation platform initiated an AI-powered mediation service that enables easier access to mediation services and allows individuals to fully understand the mediation process, while exploring the whole process at their preferred pace without the additional pressure of a formal setting (Ark Mediation, 2025). This AI technology is fundamentally reducing costs that would have been incurred during legal battles, ensuring faster resolution of conflicts, improving communication between concerned parties, providing greater control over the outcomes, and offering more information that aids the formal part of the entire mediation process (Hussein, 2025). Predictive modelling and machine learning algorithms also currently show strong potential in facilitating dispute resolutions in this jurisdiction. These kinds of AI-supported predictive models are guiding mediators on how they approach both risk-averse and risk-tolerant parties (Corsano, 2025). AI is also utilised in analysing historical data or legal precedents to inform or guide the entire process of mediation (Leonas, 2025).

In 2024, the Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC) unveiled a new Artificial Intelligence tool meant to serve as a specialised assistant in mediation cases. The main purpose of the AI tool is to streamline the entire conflict resolution process by designing a timeline for necessary procedures, outlining the roles and descriptions of all individuals involved, summarising disputes based on data collected, and drafting initial settlement agreements. As the world evolves and activities keep diversifying, more issues requiring mediation arise. Significantly, the Crypto market in Singapore has also spurred

the SIMC to fast-track the integration of AI in mediation practice(*Singapore International Mediation Centre, 2024*). Legal cases involving crypto assets have increased in the last five years, and with how often the value of these assets fluctuates, crypto holders are always keen on getting faster dispute resolutions. This is why they often turn to mediation and why Singapore is keen on delivering faster and more seamless mediations.

Estonia is another country renowned for its inclusion of technology in its legal system. The country has widely adopted the use of semi-automatic algorithm-based procedures in handling small-scale civil litigation cases since 2006. In 2018, the country's Ministry of Justice drafted a legislative document for the regulation of AI, known as the Krati VTK.. Its purpose was to establish a regulation to protect people's rights and ensure transparency of AI usage in public administration. The Estonian legal system makes use of several AI tools(Härmand, 2023). Generally, AI is adopted in the Judiciary's e-filing system and Court Information System administration. More specifically, however, a speech recognition tool known as Salme is often used to record case hearings and translate them to transcripts, while another tool known as Krati is used to extract personal data of individuals involved in a case. Payment orders are also generated with the help of sophisticated algorithms. Estonia's inclusion of AI in mediation is primarily done to streamline complex processes, and in all cases, human oversight is still highly valued(Siitam, 2025). Implementation of AI in Estonia is mostly done for administrative court procedures. The country could, however, serve as a reference point for how AI-supported court administration can be used in designing systems for AI-assisted mediation, particularly in relation to workflow and efficiency.

China is an extensive example of digital integration across both judicial and dispute resolution processes like mediation. The country's long-term policy towards becoming a global leader in digital development by 2035 involves the promotion of technology integration into multiple sectors of Chinese society, including public administration and law(Fei Lu, 2024). In 2022, the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China published a document titled: 'Opinions on Regulating and Strengthening the Applications of Artificial Intelligence in the Judicial Fields', which outlined several key principles for adopting AI in dispute resolutions, including mediation. China has always maintained the position that AI will take a supportive role in judicial and tribunal decision-making. AI is presenting been adopted in different aspects of the Chinese justice system. In mediation practice in China, AI is majorly used in the area of case management, language translation and transcript generation, drafting awards and documents, and for identity verification. These tools are primarily deployed within court systems and ODR platforms where they bolster procedural efficiency rather than being used in adjudicative or mediation roles (Insight, 2024; Wang & Qu, 2024). Just like Estonia, China's adoption of AI in its legal system does not apply strictly to mediation use. However, they offer significant insights into possible design models and implementation policies that could work in a mediation context.

Canada is well known for its progressive legal innovations and has already begun implementing artificial intelligence into mediation practices. The country has seen the effective integration of AI and Machine Learning (ML) systems into mediation; these systems aid in the prediction of settlement outcomes, measuring the complexity of cases, and facilitating dialogue between the parties involved (Amir Kashdaran, 2024). The most notable example of this application is British Columbia's Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT), the country's first AI-assisted tribunal, built to handle small civil dispute claims, strata property issues, and certain motor-vehicle injury matters. Just like in the United Kingdom, AI technology is also being used for family mediation in Canada, with advanced tools that assist in drafting co-parenting schedules, financial mediation, and real-time negotiation (Mandela & Oluwadara, 2025).

In Australia, AI is being used to design advanced systems for case management, something Victorian courts and New South Wales courts are significantly benefiting from. AI is also used to filter mediation appeals, reducing the time it takes courts to categorise applications for appeal (Justice Needham, 2025). Artificial Intelligence tools also assist judicial officers across different levels in legal research and extensive analysis. Regarding drafting affidavits, statements, and legal documents, AI assists in fine-tuning legal language for clarity and precision, helps with generating standardised contracts and agreements, and also in identifying errors in legal drafts. AI has also been used in the review of certain cases and in providing legal advice, albeit with the risk of inaccuracy in some instances (Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2024; Laptev & Feyzrakhmanova, 2024).

The financing of third-party litigation and several forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) are some of the factors contributing to the high costs of pursuing legal cases and resolving disputes in the United States (Lee & Willging, 2010). AI and other applications of technology to ADR have significantly reduced mediation costs, making the process more affordable. Also in the US, AI tools are being deployed in mediation practice to reduce time spent during dispute resolution, lessen or eradicate the adversary nature associated with the court processes, while making the mediation procedures more understandable, accessible and acceptable to parties. Courts in Ohio, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Utah have activated AI-assisted mediation practices for traffic disputes, small monetary conflicts, family mediation cases, and outstanding warrant issues, with minimal conflict involved.

Globally, companies like eBay, PayPal, SquareTrade portal, and CyberSettle began adopting ODR in the late 1990s (Samuel Hodge Jr., 2024). Today, conversations concerning AI integration into mediation practice have broadened beyond the scope of solving business disputes to possibly addressing large-scale geopolitical conflicts. Artificial Intelligence has shown strong potential in facilitating inclusive mediation processes between communities, particularly when cultural differences, language needs, geographical distance, and illiteracy act as significant barriers to conflict resolution. It can also be applied in peace talks as a vital tool for ensuring seamless dialogue between conflicting parties (Abbott & Elliott, 2023).

Opportunities for the Application of AI in Mediation Practice in Nigeria

Understanding current practices and applications of Artificial Intelligence in mediation procedures allows for a more precise evaluation of its potential in the Nigerian context. Countries that have already adopted AI-assisted mediation, whether in supportive roles or as fully integral systems, provide feasible examples of what is achievable and what possible benefits are to be expected. By juxtaposing these experiences with the realities of Nigeria's legal system, it becomes relatively easy to produce a picture of practical opportunities for AI-assisted mediation within the country.

AI can help fastrack case intake and sorting in Nigeria. Singapore and Australia demonstrate the value of digitising the process of taking in cases and sorting them. This goes beyond the usual form-filling. In both countries, structured online questionnaires and automated checks ensure that only eligible cases proceed towards the mediation stage, incomplete or inappropriate applications are noted immediately, and the right mediator is recommended from the outset. Nevertheless, all this depends heavily on strong digital infrastructure, consistent data entry standards, reliable case databases, and continuous reviews to eliminate possible system errors. Without accurate and properly structured digital records, automated sorting cannot function effectively or may, in many instances, produce unreliable classifications.

The Nigerian court system grapples with an immense number of case backlogs. In 2023, it was discovered that over 60% of cases in the country went unaddressed for a prolonged period (Isiaka et al., 2025). In such a country where manual case intake could take days and weeks, an AI-based system for classifying and sorting cases could drastically optimise the mediation process. This would result in faster dispute resolution and freedom for administrative staff who continuously have to perform mundane and repetitive screening tasks. Additionally, automated matching of mediators to cases based on factors like their expertise and availability would improve the quality of mediation altogether (Sebayiga, 2023; Leonas, 2025). Apart from the need for accurate digitised records, implementing this innovation will require extensive training for administrative staff who would be continuously engaging with these systems to maintain their accuracy. Matching of mediators also depends hugely on regular mediator profile updates and verifications.

instances of AI use in mediation in the United Kingdom have shown just how vital AI tools can be in assisting mediators and other parties involved in the early stages of the mediation process. These tools often help in organising documents and requisite data, summarising claims, and identifying key issues before the first meeting (Bichia, 2023). If applied in Nigeria, such tools could radically improve how mediators prepare for cases. AI-generated case summaries and data save time on research and fact-finding. By presenting a succinct summary of the case, it affords mediators a full understanding of the scope of disputes as they engage in sessions and focus on negotiations. The volume of paperwork is reduced, allowing the mediators ample time to handle cases and thereby creating a more productive mediation process for the benefit of the parties. Despite how efficient this is, the

entire process still requires a secure access to case files and high-quality datasets which the AI systems will be trained with.

In China, diverse languages, which pose a challenge to interpretation during mediation, have been resolved through the "smart court" system, integrated AI-powered language interpreter(Wang & Qu, 2024). In a multi-ethnic country with diverse languages, such as Nigeria, the application and use of such tools will ensure real-time language interpretation during mediation, thereby decreasing the need for reliance on Interpreters. Moreso, the neutrality and accuracy of interpreters are not guaranteed despite the high cost of securing their services, which is usually difficult. The tool will enhance a clearer understanding and confidence in the mediation process while providing an opportunity for a greater number of mediators to handle cases with multi-lingual parties. Nonetheless, the hurdle with expanding the implementation of systems like this is obvious: there are very few high-quality local language datasets, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Not only are such datasets necessary, they also have to be continuously refined to properly communicate legal terminologies and limit translation errors. Even when all these are guaranteed, mechanisms for verifying or challenging certain interpretations or translations also have to be set in place to ensure fairness in the process.

Australia illustrates how AI can be used to create first-draft settlement agreements from discussion points reached during mediation.(Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2024) Mediators then refine these drafts with the conflicting parties in real time to ensure transparency and that no detail is missed. If a similar technology is adopted in Nigeria, it could significantly shorten the delay between verbal agreement and final written settlement. The advantage here is that agreements become finalised more quickly, and while parties are still engaged, reducing the risk of later disputes over unaddressed parts of the settlement agreement. However, this "advantage" could immediately turn problematic if there are no consistent legal drafting conventions, access to structured mediation records, and clear rules on responsibility for final document approval to ensure that parties remain fully aware of what they are signing.

The British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) in Canada makes use of data from past cases to inform parties about common settlement scenarios without prescribing specific outcomes. The tool simply displays the realistic options available to the parties involved, based on similar disputes in the past. A predictive tool would be useful in Nigeria, especially for commercial and business-related disputes. One advantage such a tool could provide is the elimination of strong disagreements; when conflicting parties see that their demands are unrealistic and far from the typical settlement ranges, they may be more willing to adjust positions, saving time and costs. Such systems would, however, depend largely on trustworthy datasets, especially those that are specific to Nigerian disputes. Without that, the entire process could lead to outcomes that are not reflective of the specific dispute or business locality.

In Singapore, the analytical capacity of artificial intelligence technology is often used to track settlement rates, mediation timelines, and other possible obstacles to the mediation

process(*Singapore International Mediation Centre, 2024*). Data derived from this is subsequently used to guide policy adjustments and how the legal system addresses observed inefficiencies. If Nigerian mediation incorporated similar analytics tools, it could become easier to identify where cases tend to stall, which dispute types could benefit most from early intervention, and how settlement rates differ across mediators or case types. The advantage here is that this could result in a holistic improvement of the system, but more specifically, it would involve data-driven decisions, which could, in turn, lead to better programme design, targeted training, and more efficient use of resources. Its long-term sustainability would still depend heavily on consistent and continuous review of the deployed AI systems.

The United States offers an effective way of utilising Online Dispute Resolution to address mediation cases, often allowing for small claims to be quickly resolved and for parties to easily negotiate and conduct mediation entirely online(*Gyurász & Krkošková, 2024*).

The relevance of ODR for Nigeria is further strengthened by Alessa's analysis of the role of Artificial Intelligence in online dispute resolution. Alessa (2022) shows that AI can improve dispute resolution by assisting with information classification, communication management, and decision-support processes within digital platforms. However, the usefulness of AI in ODR depends on whether the system is designed around procedural fairness, user accessibility, and proper human supervision. This is particularly important for Nigeria because an ODR-based mediation model for small-value claims, consumer disputes, landlord-tenant matters, or commercial disagreements would only be legitimate if parties understand the process, retain the ability to participate meaningfully, and are not forced to accept automated outputs without human review.

Nigeria could adopt a similar ODR model for small-scale disputes like landlord-tenant matters and consumer claims. This would improve mediation accessibility as parties would no longer need to incur travel costs or suffer logistical barriers often encountered during mediation. Such a system would also take cognizance of the daily schedules of both parties and assign the most optimal time for mediation sessions. The system would still need to be programmed, in such a way that to deal with abrupt changes in schedules while also being able to appreciate "small-value" claims that have some complexity surrounding them, without it arriving at hasty conclusions based on previous data.

Challenges to the Application of AI in Mediation Practice in Nigeria

There is no doubt that opportunities abound in the integration of AI into mediation practice in Nigeria. The integrations holds the potential of improving the mediation mechanism in the country by enhancing its efficacy, reducing cost, increasing access to justice through mediation, by streamlining case management, automating scheduling, and providing rapid, data-driven insights. But this application faces significant legal, ethical, technical and infrastructural challenges. For instance, the digital divide between a developing country like Nigeria and a developed country like the USA or Singapore can hamper the application of AI in the former. Digital divide encompasses both lack of access

and lack of skills and expertise in using AI tools. In a country as large as Nigeria, access to digital systems, especially emerging technologies like AI, remains a serious barrier for most people. Some part of the country lack reliable internet access, devices, or even the amount digital literacy required to effectively participate in an AI-assisted mediation process. This creates disparities in participation and may disadvantage users in rural or low-resource areas (Fayigbe et al., 2025). It also affects the consistency of engagement with AI-supported mediation systems across different regions. With regards to digital literacy, even mediators may struggle. Some may adopt AI without fully understanding its strengths and inadequacies, while others may resist it altogether.

Among major hurdle is the absence of comprehensive legal framework for the application of AI. The country lacks important statutory and regulatory frameworks to effectively deal with AI use (Okwukwu et al., 2025). The Arbitration and Mediation Act 2023 gives full legal recognition to mediation and some forms of ICT integration and usage. The Data Protection Act 2023 provides guidelines for information handling, both setting a possible foundation for AI adoption in the legal sphere. But there is no legislation or binding guideline that specifically addresses AI-assisted mediation. In practice, this means that any use of AI tools would rely on general principles of fairness, confidentiality, and recognition of each party's interests, without any detailed guidelines on information disclosure or redress should an error occur. This would leave mediators and conflicting parties uncertain about both their rights and obligations.

AI systems used for mediation-related processes may function based on bias present in their training data. This can affect multiple aspects of its use from case classification, to mediator matching, analytical outputs, and even reward outcomes. If historical dispute data contains patterns of inequality or inconsistency of any kind, AI systems may reproduce these patterns in automated recommendations (Daddie et al., 2025). This raises obvious concerns about fairness and consistency in how these cases will be treated. Closely related to the above challenge in the application of AI in mediation practice in Nigeria is the issue of trust. Many people are often too comfortable with the way things are done; hence, the adoption of AI in an already established legal process raises several concerns. There are also doubts about how accurate the technology might be if implemented, and given that Nigeria is not as digitally advanced as some other countries where AI applications are now mainstream, it becomes easier for the efficiency of such a technology to be questioned every time it is employed.

Limited to no explainability is also another challenge. Many AI systems operate in ways that are not transparent to users. Even some AI-experts cannot fully explain how or why AI systems pick specific decisions in non-general contexts. This could become a serious legal concern in mediation practice because parties may not understand how outcomes such as case summaries or recommendations are generated or why it is generated in such manner (Khaleel et al., 2020). Poor explanations weakens the ability of parties to challenge or verify AI outputs, which may affect confidence in the neutrality of the process altogether. In a system where mediated settlements must often be enforced by courts, any perception that an agreement was created by an "unexplainable" algorithm could not just

make the technology but also the courts seem untrustworthy, undermining the very reason for AI adoption.

The major ethical issues with artificial intelligence (AI) used to mediate processes in Nigeria patterns to privacy of all parties; being neutral or unbiased through using only non-biased programming; and allowing for a free will choice by each party; and the responsibility of humans to ensure that these programs act appropriately (Enebeli & Gilbert, 2022). Even in instances where AI tools are trusted and reliable, a new challenge could arise, one of overreliance. Admittedly, there is a real and possible risk that mediators may rely too heavily on AI-generated outputs such as summaries, issue identification, or settlement drafts, reducing independent analysis and affecting the quality of reasoning during mediation sessions. Indeed, too much use of AI in mediation in Nigeria may limit the human element of empathy, compromise privacy when data is leaked from computers, and create an unfair system if it is programmed with prejudices and thus, both transparency in the use of the program and human observation should be part of its development. Also, what happens when AI systems produce errors. In mediation cases, this may include incorrect case summaries, misclassification of disputes, or flawed draft agreements. It is still unclear who bears the responsibility for such mistakes. The critical question of whether the mediator, the courts, or the technology provider should bear the liability in such cases still remains largely unanswered. The absence of a clear allocation of responsibility creates uncertainty for both mediators and parties pursuing dispute resolution.

CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence is applied to mediation practice, not as a substitute for human expertise and judgement, but simply as a supplementary tool. In Nigeria, the level of technological assistance in the legal sphere has not yet been fully realised. Nevertheless, several legal and statutory frameworks also provide a sturdy foundation for its impending introduction. What truly remains absent, however, is not regulation, at least not in general terms. Instead, it is a clear direction on the form that AI integration should take within mediation practice in Nigeria. This study establishes that the most suitable approach at this stage is a human-in-the-loop assistive mediation model, and not just any system seeking to automate decision-making. Under this model, AI would be confined to a supportive functions such as case intake, organisation of materials, translation, and draft preparation, while mediators retain full authority over evaluation, negotiation, and settlement outcomes. This will preserve the essence and defining features of mediation, while still allowing measured technological advancement. Insights from China, Australia, and Singapore show that successful integration does not depend on the speed of adoption, but rather on clarity of the roles and limits placed on AI systems. Their experience supports a gradual approach where AI strengthens process efficiency in legal systems without displacing or threatening human oversight. For Nigeria, the key issue is therefore not whether to adopt AI, but how to define its boundaries in a way that maintains confidence in legal processes like mediation while simultaneously improving its functionality.

It is from this analysis that three policy recommendations emerge. First, there is a need for proper regulatory mapping and the establishment of the most basic level of regulations. In this phase, well-defined and enforceable guidelines for AI use in mediation must be developed. They may be issued as practice directions by courts, policy guides by regulatory agencies, or as part of amendments to rules governing alternative dispute resolutions. The focus here should be to clearly define permissible uses of AI, set certain limits, and address related issues that are common with technology use such as data handling within Nigeria. Second, there should be pilot programmes for implementing AI in clearly defined disputes. AI tools must be first introduced in controlled environments, such as low-value claims or other mediation settings where risks are easier to observe and manage. This phase should allow legal bodies to observe how these AI systems would work in real life, identify technical and technical faults, and make necessary adjustments before wider adoption. Third, there must be a comprehensive training and evaluation plan for legal practitioners who would be working directly with the AI systems. Judicial staff, mediators, and other legal professionals should be sufficiently trained on the capabilities, limitations, and ethical considerations of using AI tools. At the same time, continuous evaluation mechanisms should be put in place to assess system performance and compliance with pre-programmed instructions. Lastly, there should be a gradual scale-up based on audit and reliable public reporting. Expansion of AI programmes should depend on verified outcomes from pilot programmes which must be evaluated by considering factors such as efficiency, fairness, user satisfaction, and ease of use, with results publicly published to educate the masses and gain wider acceptance. All this ensure that growth is evidence-based and measurable, fostering accountability and public trust in the legal system.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. This research was conducted independently and was not influenced by any financial, commercial, or institutional interests that could affect the objectivity or integrity of the study.

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