



CAN AI REPLACE JUNIOR ASSOCIATES IN INDIAN LAW FIRMS?

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the legal profession by automating tasks traditionally performed by junior associates, including legal research, document review, due diligence, contract analysis, and compliance management. This paper examines whether AI can replace junior associates in Indian law firms by evaluating its benefits, limitations, ethical concerns, and future implications. AI offers significant advantages in terms of efficiency, cost reduction, accuracy, and improved access to legal services. However, legal practice requires human judgment, advocacy, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and contextual understanding, which AI currently cannot replicate. The study also highlights challenges relating to data quality, confidentiality, cybersecurity, and the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework governing AI in India's legal sector. It concludes that AI is more likely to augment rather than replace junior associates, enabling them to focus on strategic, analytical, and client-oriented responsibilities while working alongside advanced technological tools.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Junior Associates, Legal Technology, Indian Law Firms, Legal Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Legal professionals traditionally utilise junior attorneys to perform types of work including legal research, review of documents, conduct due diligence, draft contracts, summarise cases, and communicate with clients.¹ The advent of AI, specifically generative AI tools, creates an entirely different operational structure for law offices worldwide.² With the continued digitalisation of the Indian legal industry, AI legal industry tools are being developed and

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¹ Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, OUP 2017).

² Mark A Cohen, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Legal Services' (2018) 37 *Legal Studies Forum* 45.

providing fuel for a larger debate on whether or not AI will replace junior attorneys in Indian firms.

There is no longer speculation as many law offices and legal technology companies are using AI technologies in their workflow processes to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and speed the delivery of services. Although AI can automate many of the repetitive and data-processing tasks that junior attorneys perform, can AI completely replace the human component of legal practice? This article analyses the degree to which AI will replace junior attorneys in the Indian legal profession by exploring: (i) advantages of using AI; (ii) limitations of using AI; (iii) ethical challenges of using AI; and (iv) future implications of the continued use of AI in the provision of legal services.

DEFINITION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is defined as the capability of a machine to do things that require an individual's mental capabilities. AI performs functions such as language processing, pattern recognition and providing decision-making capabilities.³ AI applications are typically used for predictive analysis,⁴ doing legal research, analysing contracts, conducting e-discovery, implementing document automation and overseeing compliance.

Around the globe, legal operations have been revolutionised through the use of HARVEY AI,⁵ LEXIS+ AI,⁶ CASCTEXT⁷ and more. These platforms have made it possible for legal professionals to conduct research and create drafts of legal documents in a matter of minutes. Similar to many other countries, India has developed its own legal technology companies, such as SPOTDRAFT,⁸ PRESOLV360,⁹ and CASEMINE,¹⁰ which have developed AI-driven solutions designed specifically for the Indian legal system.

³ Harry Surden, 'Artificial Intelligence and Law: An Overview' (2019) 35 *Georgia State University Law Review* 1305.

⁴ Frank Pasquale, *New Laws of Robotics: Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI* (Harvard University Press 2020).

⁵ [Harvey AI](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

⁶ [Lexis+ AI](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

⁷ [Casetext](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

⁸ [SpotDraft](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

⁹ [Presolv360](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

¹⁰ [CaseMine](#) accessed 13 May 2026.

AI is particularly useful for many routine legal tasks. An example of this would be the use of machine learning¹¹ to evaluate thousands of case law decisions in a matter of seconds to identify applicable precedents much more rapidly than would be possible by having a junior attorney manually review each database. In addition, automated contract review will enable flagging of inconsistencies, dangerous provisions and compliance issues with a minimum of error. Therefore, the work traditionally assigned to junior attorneys is being accomplished increasingly through the use of technology.

Junior associates serve as the foundation of the majority of law firms.¹² The responsibilities associated with junior associates typically include drafting pleadings, reviewing contracts, legal research and analysis, drawing up case notes, appearing in court and providing support to senior counsel or partners. Due to the nature of many of these tasks being repetitive, time-consuming, and requiring a significant amount of research to be devoted to them, there has been a historical reliance upon junior associates to conduct this work as a result of the nature of the work requiring a volume of human effort and a high degree of accuracy.

ADVANTAGES OF AI IN INDIAN LAW FIRMS

Efficiency and Speed: The most important advantage of AI is its ability to increase efficiency. Large volumes of data can be processed by AI systems instantly,¹³ resulting in a significant reduction in the overall time taken for legal research and document review. Due diligence for merger and acquisition deals generally requires law firms to review many documents (hundreds, if not thousands) of contracts and compliance information.¹⁴ Automation allows law firms to use AI tools to quickly identify key provisions and inconsistencies of contracts or expose risk.

Lowering of Expenses: AI also has a major impact on law firm operations costs.¹⁵ Rather than needing to hire many junior associates to do routine repeat tasks (such as reviewing thousands of documents), a law firm can use automated software to perform these tasks. Corporate law

¹¹ Dana Remus and Frank Levy, 'Can Robots Be Lawyers? Computers, Lawyers, and the Practice of Law' (2017) 30 *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* 501.

¹² Richard Susskind and Daniel Susskind, *The Future of the Professions* (OUP 2015).

¹³ McKinsey Global Institute, *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation* (McKinsey & Company 2017).

¹⁴ John O McGinnis and Russell G Pearce, 'The Great Disruption: How Machine Intelligence Will Transform the Role of Lawyers in the Delivery of Legal Services' (2014) 82 *Fordham Law Review* 3041.

¹⁵ Mark A Cohen, 'Law Firms and the AI Revolution' (Forbes, 15 February 2023) <https://www.forbes.com> accessed 13 May 2026.

firms can benefit from the use of AI to enhance their practices and ultimately increase their profitability and efficiency.

Clients are increasingly demanding fast and inexpensive legal services; law firms that utilise artificial intelligence (AI) as an assistant will be better able to meet these demands while maintaining a very high level of productivity.

Increase Accuracy: Because of human error, errors occur frequently in legal documentation due to itemised repetitive tasks like document review and data analysis.¹⁶ However, AI systems can email reduce human errors and provide a level of consistency in all legal documentation; this is especially critical for precise documentation in a compliance setting.

Legal Assistance Access: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to enhance access to justice in India¹⁷ by delivering low-cost, reasonably available sources of legal assistance through its application to provide low-cost legal assistance through the automation of answering basic legal questions, whose responses are automatically generated for use by members of the public.

AI could alleviate the problem of excessive backlogs of cases before Indian courts, and therefore will speed up the resolution of cases and also reduce the burden of administration on the court system.¹⁸

THE CONSTRAINTS OF AI AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR JUNIOR ASSOCIATES

Despite the benefits that AI provides, the use of AI cannot fully replace junior associates in an Indian law firm.

Lack of Human Judgment: The practice of law involves interpretation, logic and reasoning, negotiation, empathy and human relations, and making strategic decisions through a person's judgment¹⁹. AI does not possess emotion and therefore does not have the ability to understand the context in which the law is being applied.

¹⁶ Benjamin Alarie, Anthony Niblett and Albert Yoon, 'How Artificial Intelligence Will Affect the Practice of Law' (2018) 68 *University of Toronto Law Journal* 106.

¹⁷ Richard E Susskind, *Online Courts and the Future of Justice* (OUP 2019).

¹⁸ Law Commission of India, *Reforms in the Judiciary: Some Suggestions* (Report No 230, 2009).

¹⁹ Frank Pasquale, *New Laws of Robotics: Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI* (Harvard University Press 2020).

Client voicing is an example of how machine-based technology has no ability to provide interpersonal contact or be sensitive to another person in the same way that having an actual person present would. Courtroom advocacy is primarily based on persuasion, spontaneity and the presence of people interacting in front of a judge or jury.²⁰ Practising law requires having trained junior associates develop their intuition or legal analysis through firsthand experience; these experiences cannot ultimately be made up by using a computer program designed to develop algorithms.

The Quality of Data is the Limiting Factor: The functionality of AI systems is dependent on the data it has been trained.²¹ The quality of the databases of legal information available in India may include, among other things, incompatible formatting, incomplete court rulings and language barriers. Consequently, the dependability of AI Legal Analysis will be negatively affected by these factors.

Additionally, Indian legal statutes are often amended through case law,²² making the practical application of AI tools uncertain²³. AI may find it difficult to accurately interpret complex legal principles and adapt to types of laws that change at an accelerated pace.

Ethics and Confidentiality Issues: The aforementioned concerns extend to many ethical issues that arise with the use of AI at law firms and relate to data privacy, confidentiality, and professional competence. Legal professionals are bound by ethical rules to protect the confidentiality of client information.²⁴

Uploading sensitive documents to third-party systems that use AI may result in exposure of client information to cybersecurity risks or possible unauthorised access.²⁵ Furthermore, there is uncertainty concerning who would be accountable if advice from AI contained any errors.²⁶ These ethical issues are further complicated due to the lack of an established, comprehensive regulatory AI framework in India.

²⁰ Martha Minow, 'Human Judgment and Artificial Intelligence' (2020) 109 *Georgetown Law Journal* 431.

²¹ Cary Coglianese and David Lehr, 'Regulating by Robot: Administrative Decision Making in the Machine-Learning Era' (2017) 105 *Georgetown Law Journal* 1147.

²² Constitution of India 1950.

²³ Information Technology Act 2000.

²⁴ Bar Council of India Rules, Part VI, Chapter II, Standards of Professional Conduct and Etiquette.

²⁵ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 'Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023' <https://www.meity.gov.in> accessed 13 May 2026.

²⁶ European Parliament, 'Civil Liability Regime for Artificial Intelligence' (2020) PE 652.356.

Limited Understanding of Indian Courtroom Realities: When participating in litigation in India, litigants must deal with many procedural, Cultural, and practical aspects that may not be reflected in the law books alone. AI cannot adequately interpret and operate in terms of informal courtroom procedures, Judicial conduct, and Sociological issues that may have an impact on litigation.²⁷

In addition, most junior attorneys spend the majority of their time on various aspects of coordinating various proceedings, communicating with court personnel, and working through procedural documents. These types of activities require the ability to be adaptable and apply a personal touch, which AI simply cannot provide currently.

As AI technology affects employment within the legal profession,²⁸ it will disrupt the current structure of employment in Indian law firms by slowly removing some of the repetitive functions that junior associates have traditionally performed. AI will most likely change current legal jobs instead of eliminating them; junior associates will likely spend more time working on high-value activities such as developing strategies, managing clients, and performing complex legal analysis.

Previously, technology has transformed professions, but did not completely replace them; the same is likely true in relation to the legal profession.²⁹ As such, law schools and other institutions must incorporate legal technology, AI ethics, data privacy, and digital literacy into their curriculum.

The Legal Profession in India Today: Currently, no specific legal framework exists to govern the implementation of AI in the practice of law in India;³⁰ however, existing legal principles found within the Information Technology Act 2000,³¹ data protection laws and professional ethics rules apply to AI use in the legal profession. The proposed Digital Personal Data Protection Act and current discussions on governance of AI may have a significant impact on the legal-tech industry. Law firms should carry out their responsibilities relative to confidentiality, cybersecurity standards and ethical conduct when using AI tools. In addition,

²⁷ Upendra Baxi, *The Crisis of the Indian Legal System* (Vikas Publishing 1982).

²⁸ World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2023* (WEF 2023).

²⁹ Richard Susskind and Daniel Susskind, *The Future of the Professions* (OUP 2015).

³⁰ Information Technology Act 2000.

³¹ Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023.

the Bar Council of India may issue guidelines regarding the ethical use of AI for advocates and law firms.³²

CONCLUSION

AI will greatly change how today's law firms conduct business through automating repetitive legal tasks, creating greater efficiency in the operations of law firms. In India, there is a rising acceptance among legal professionals of AI-based legal technology, and its use for research, document review, contract analysis and compliance management is growing rapidly.

Despite this, AI cannot replace all junior-level associates in Indian law firms.³³ Junior-level associates bring much more to the table than just completing repetitive, mechanical-type work. Aspects of legal practice which cannot be substituted by AI include human judgment, advocacy, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning and context to the laws being applied. The future of the Indian legal profession will be based upon collaboration between lawyers and technology.³⁴ Junior associates who are technologically competent, while developing their skills as attorneys, will be valued participants in the future of the legal profession in India.

³² Bar Council of India Rules, Part VI, Chapter II.

³³ Harry Surden, 'Artificial Intelligence and Law: An Overview' (2019) 35 *Georgia State University Law Review* 1305.

³⁴ Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, OUP 2017).