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The types of courts exist in Nigeria with their functions. These courts are stratified or tiered and exist in layers of superiority and this comes with some implication. In normal legal parlance, judges, justices, attorneys, barristers, lawyers, magistrates are some popular positions you hear in the Nigerian judicial system. You cant appeal a case dealt with at the supreme court at the appeal court. However, it can be done the other way round. This is because the supreme court is at the highest level of ranking. Nigeria's courts function as the last hope for man to seek justice and each of the eight types of courts in the country have their specific functions. The hierarchy of these courts are fully explained in this write-up and they form the judicial arm of government. The executive and legislative arm do not interfere in the activities of the judiciary, that's why there is a clear separation of powers as entrenched in the Nigerian constitution. Below are the 8 hierarchy of courts in Nigeria explained with their various jurisdictions and functions:

Supreme Court of Nigeria

The apex or number one court in Nigeria is the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Its jurisdiction is the highest and most important in the country. This means that no appeal can be heard regarding matters decided by the supreme court before any other Nigerian court. The Supreme Court began its role as the highest court in the land in 1963.

According to the 1999 constitution as amended, the supreme court is embedded with the jurisdiction to hear appeals from the court of appeal. The rulings and decisions of the supreme court of Nigeria are final and binding. This is shown in its appellate jurisdictions over both federal and highest state courts. It is currently located in Abuja and consists of six Justices of the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice of Nigeria is the head of the court. The other five Justices are the roles of the Nigerian supreme court. It serves as the final court of appeal or court of last resort for all civil and criminal cases in Nigeria. Settles disputes between state versus state, state versus federal government. Functions primarily as appellate court. Serves as an interpreter of the law and constitution. Advisory role to the executive. Guardian of the constitution of the land. Court of Appeal According to the hierarchy of courts in Nigeria, after the supreme court is the court of appeal which has the original jurisdiction to determine and hear any question as to whether any person has been validly voted into the office of the President, Vice President, Governor or Deputy Governor. Although, the court of appeal doesn't try issues, its jurisdiction isn't limited to election matters alone. It also appeal all other courts below it and any other tribunal. It is led by the President of the Court of Appeal, and comprises of 66 judges at all times as approved by the Senate. Unlike the Supreme Court, this one is located in different states of the country and they are 72 appeal courts in Nigeria. Functions of Court of Appeal in Nigeria The roles of the appeal court include: Serves as the intermediate appellate courts of the Nigerian federal court system. It decides the appeals from district courts entrenched within the federal judicial system. Has the power to establish whether the correct results of governorship or presidential elections and their tenure in office. The Federal High Court The Federal High Court is the third in rank according to the hierarchy of courts in Nigeria. Headed by the Chief Judge and contains the number of Judges allowed may be presided by an Act of the National Assembly. Its jurisdiction is mostly limited to civil cases such as matters on taxation, banking, customs and trade, shipping, copyright, etc. However, it can properly consider any matter contained in it. It contains at least one judge in every state and the Federal Capital Territory. The High Court is the second highest court in Nigeria. It has original jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases set out in Section 251 (1) of the 1999 Constitution. These courts can be found in more than 300 states across the country. They handle appeals from the lower courts and also have the authority to issue writs under the law. The State House of Assembly and the National Assembly in the case of the High Court of the FCT. It has the largest jurisdiction over the states of Customary Courts, Area Courts, Magistrate Courts, etc. Functions of State High Courts has the authority to hear matters on both criminal and civil cases in the state as entrenched under the 1999 constitution. They can also hear appeals from customary courts and magistrate courts. National Industrial Court This court is headed by the President of the National Industrial Court divided into various judicial separations for administrative convenience which sits in some states in Nigeria. The address of the headquarters of the National Industrial Court is located at 11, New Bussa Close, Area 3, Garki, Abuja. Established in 1976, it has all the powers of the High Court of a state and the appellate jurisdiction. Below are the duties of the NICN. Functions of the National Industrial Court settle disputes as regards to trade and labour. The NICN hears appeals from the Industrial Arbitration Panel and all other employment matters in the country between employer and employee. The Sharia Court of Appeal The Sharia Court of Appeal is another type of court in Nigeria that is found in the Northern region of the country. It is prevalent in states where Sharia is practiced and these states include Zamfara, Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kebbi, and Yobe states respectively. The sharia court of appeal appellate jurisdiction in civil cases involving issues of the Islamic personal law. It is headed by a Grand Kadhi and contain a number of Kadis. One is located in Abuja and this kind of court can be found in all the northern states. The Sharia Court of Appeal is established by the State House of Assembly and the National Assembly in the case of the High Court of the FCT. 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judicial bodies sit below the tier 2 court. Judgements made here can only be appealed at the Federal Court of Appeal. Here are the various tier 3 judicial bodiesThe Federal High Court is the third-ranked judicial body in Nigeria. It is presided over by a Chief Justice and several Justices as may be determined by the National Assembly. Federal High Courts can be found in more than 35 states in the country. This body was created under Section 249 of the 1999 Constitution and has original jurisdiction over civil cases related to the revenue of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Such cases include admiralty, copyright, banking, exchange duties, customs, and taxation. High Court of a StateThe State High Court is more like the Federal High Court but at a state level. It is provided for under Section 255 of the country's constitution. The provision allows for a State High Court in each of the 36 states in the country.The State High Court is presided over by a Chief Judge and a number of judges determined by the National Assembly or State House of Assembly. The body has the widest jurisdiction of judicial bodies in Nigeria on matters of civil and criminal law.Customary Court of Appeal of a StateA statue of a woman balancing the scales of justice. Photo: pixabay.com, @pixel2013Source: UGCThe Customary Court of Appeal is presided by the president of the body, and is constituted of any number of judges as may be determined by the National Assembly. The body is provided for under Section 265 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.This judicial body exercises appellate and supervisory jurisdiction over civil cases pertaining to customary law. It hears and determines appeals with questions arising from subordinate customary judicial bodies' interpretation or application of customary laws.This type of court in Nigeria is provided for under Section 254A of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is ranked fifth in the list of courts in Nigeria. The NIC has exclusive jurisdiction over all industrial disputes listed below.Workers' Compensation LawTrade Union LawTrade Disputes LawLabour practicesFactory LawSharia Court of Appeal of a StateThis judicial body is provided for under Section 277 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It reviews cases involving the application of Sharia law, particularly in the country's northern areas.The Sharia Court of Appeal is among the constituent judicial bodies of the unified justice system of North-East Nigeria. This is the region in which Sharia law is widely practised.The judicial body is presided over by a Grand Kadi and other Kadis. Here is a look at its primary functions.Reviewing cases relating to Sharia and Islamic personal law.It interprets Islamic customary laws.It handles Islamic litigation cases, especially those involving the poor.Appeals from tier 3 judicial bodies are handled by the respective tier 2 bodies.Tier 4 courtsThese judicial bodies are all at the state level. There is no federal court in this tier. Tier 4 courts are mostly magistrate courts. This body is not provided for under the 1999 Constitution. It is established by the House of Assembly and functions primarily as a judicial body of the summary judgment. This means that all decisions under these judicial bodies are summarily determined.Judgements from the tier 4 courts can be appealed only to their respective higher tier 3 judicial bodies.Which is the lowest court in Nigeria?The lowest judicial body in Nigeria is called the customary court. It is the easiest form of resolving disputes, especially for the commoner.How many state law courts do we have in Nigeria?There are 36 state high courts in the country, one in each state.How many Courts of Appeal do we have in Nigeria?There is only one Court of Appeal. However, it has 72 divisions spread across the 36 states in all six geopolitical zones.Who is the Chief Justice of Nigeria?The current Chief Justice is Olukayode Ariwoola. He was appointed on 27 June 2022 after the resignation of former Chief Justice Tanko Muhammad.Which is the highest court in Nigeria?A gavel and scales depicting justice. Photo: pixabay.com, @sucocoSource: UGCThe Supreme Court of Nigeria is the highest in the land. It consists of the Chief Justice of Nigeria and several Justices of the Supreme Court, not exceeding twenty-one, as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.The hierarchy of courts in Nigeria is based on an elaborate structure that grants the various bodies varying jurisdictions. The hierarchy sees higher tier courts handle matters previously handled at lower tier judicial bodies. The hierarchy ends at the apex judicial body of the land, the Supreme Court.READ ALSO: Types of courts in Nigeria and their functions explained.Ligit.ng recently published an article about the types of courts in Nigeria and their functions. The judiciary is one of the three arms of the Nigerian government. It is mandated to adjudicate disputes arising between individuals, governments, and corporate entities in their inter-relationships with one another within or outside the country under the law.There are different types of judicial bodies in Nigeria, all part of the country's judiciary. The bodies exist in a hierarched order, with those above being superior to the ones below. These bodies also have varying jurisdictions. Source: Legit.ngThe hierarchical system of courts in Nigeria simply refers to the way in which Nigerian courts are arranged and organized at different levels, jurisdictions and regions. This also means that the decision of the lower courts can be appealed to higher courts. If the judgment of the lower court does not reflect justice in a case, the aggrieved party can appeal to the higher court to seek redress and justice. In other words, Nigeria's court hierarchy is an integral part of Nigeria's legal system, which provides organization and clarity for judicial work.However, the various courts established in Nigeria can only exercise their responsibility to adjudicate in accordance with the jurisdiction granted to it by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. JURISDICTION It is a well-known fact in law that jurisdiction is the ladder for establishing court authority. In short, jurisdiction can be simply defined as the courts authority to determine the case submitted in a manner prescribed by law.In the famous case of MADUKOLU V NKEDILIM (1962), 2 SCNLR 341, the locus classicus case for jurisdiction in Nigeria, the Supreme Court held as follows:Before any court of law assumes jurisdiction so as to determine or adjudicate on a cause or matter, the court must be competent. A court is competent when:a The court is properly constituted as regards members and qualifications of the bench and no members and qualifications of the bench and no member is disqualified for one reason or the other.b The subject matter of the case is within the courts jurisdiction and there is no feature in case which prevents the court from exercising its jurisdictionc The case before the court initiated by due process of law and upon fulfillment of a condition precedent to exercise of jurisdiction. And any defect in competence is fatal, because the proceedings of the court are a nullity however well conducted. HIERARCHY OF COURTS IN NIGERIAThe following are the hierarchy of courts in Nigeria: It is provided for under Section 230 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It is the apex court of Nigeria, which implies that the jurisdiction of the court is the highest in Nigeria. The decision of the court is final and cannot be appealed.The Supreme Court is composed of the Chief Justice of Nigeria. The number of Justices of the supreme court does not exceed 21, and the President appoints them on the recommendation of the National Judicial Council (NJC), subject to confirmation by the Senate.Judges of the Supreme Court must be qualified to practice in Nigeria and have at least 15 years of qualifications.The judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria must be retired at the 70 years. By the provisions of Section 233(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Supreme Court shall have jurisdiction, to the exclusion of any other court of law in Nigeria, to hear and determines appeals from the Court of Appeal.There is only one Supreme Court in Nigeria which is located in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Nigeria It is provided for under Section 230 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). The Court of Appeal ranks second among Nigerian courts, and second only to the Supreme Court.It has the original jurisdiction to determine and hear any matter as to whether anyone has been effectively voted for the positions of President, Vice President, Governor and Deputy Governor.Appeals can be made from the Federal High Court, the High Court of a state, the Sharia Court of Appeal in a state, and the Customary Appeal court to the Court of AppealSimilarly, the Court of Appeal has the power to hear and decide appeals made by military courts and other courts in accordance with certain laws of the National Assembly.The Court of Appeal always consists of the President of the Court of Appeal and 49 judges, appointed by the President on the recommendation of the National Judicial Council (NJC), subject to confirmation by the Senate. It is provided for under Section 249 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It is the 3rd in rank of courts in NigeriaIt has original jurisdiction in civil matters and cases as set out under Section 251 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It is headed by the Chief Judge and comprises any number of judges as allowed by an act of the National Assembly. However, it can be properly constituted if it contains at least one judge of the court.The Federal High Court has a division in each of the thirty-six states in Nigeria. It is provided for under Section 255 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Section 255 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides for a High Court in each of the states in Nigeria and in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.It has the largest jurisdiction under the Constitution of Nigeria in civil and criminal cases.It has appellate jurisdiction over decisions of Customary Courts, Magistrate courts etc.Each of the State High Court is headed by a Chief JudgeIn the case of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the number of judges is determined by the State House of Assembly and National Assembly.It is a court of coordinate jurisdiction with the Federal High Court and the National Industrial Court. NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COURT It is provided for under Section 254A of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It is ranked fifth in the Nigerian courts.The Court has exclusive jurisdiction over all trade disputes, labour practices, matters related to the Factory Law, Trade Disputes Law, Trade Union Law, Workers Compensation Law.The Court also accept appeals from industrial arbitration panels and all other employment matters in Nigeria.As a special labour court, all the matters it decides are exclusive to the court, and its judgment so far is subject to appeals only if certain conditions are met. At present, it is possible to appeal to the Court of Appeal with permission. It is composed of the President of the National Industrial Court and is divided into multiple judicial departments for administrative convenience. It is located in some states in NigeriaTHE SHARIA COURT OF APPEALIt is provided for under Section 277 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). The Sharia Court of Appeal is a Court of appeal recognized by the Nigerian governmentThe Court reviews cases involving Sharia law, especially in the northern regions of the country.It is headed by a Grand Kadi and contains a number of KadisTHE CUSTOMARY COURT OF APPEALIt is provided for under Section 280 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). The customary appeal court has no original jurisdiction. Its jurisdiction is only an appeal. Its appeal jurisdiction does not extend to the appeal of the district court. Appeals cannot come from a court other than a customary court or a local court.The Customary Court of Appeal is composed of the Chief Justice of Nigeria. The number of Justices of the supreme court does not exceed 21, and the President appoints them on the recommendation of the National Judicial Council (NJC), subject to confirmation by the Senate.Judges of the Supreme Court must be qualified to practice in Nigeria and have at least 15 years of qualifications.The court is established by the House of Assembly.It functions as a court of summary judgement. I.e., proceedings in the court are summarily determined. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the court is known as Districts courts, while in the Southern part of Nigeria, it is known as Magistrate Court. There, however, exist other courts in Nigeria which include: The election tribunal court is divided into two parts:Presidential Electoral Tribunal: This tribunal hears and determines petition arising from any presidential election. The Court of Appeal Justices are the only judges that can sit in this tribunal in accordance with the constitutional provisions.National Assembly Election Tribunal: This involves petitions for elections in the Senate and House of Representatives.Governor and Legislative Electoral Tribunal: This handle petitions for governor and state legislative elections.The election tribunals are national electoral courts, which usually jointly constituted by the Judges of the superior courts of records and Court of Appeal Justices, in the case of the presidential election. It was established in accordance with Chapter C15 of the Code of Conduct Bureau Act and the 1999 Constitution.The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal deal with corruption complaints made against civil public officeholders.The Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) consists of a chairman and two other members.The chairman and other members of the court are appointed by the president on the recommendation of the National Judicial Council.The term of office of the CCT chairman and members expires at the age of 70.The judgment of the Code of Conduct Court can be appealed to the Court of AppealCONCLUSIONIn short, the advantages of the Supreme Court hierarchy include the doctrine of case law, which stipulates the Higher Court is binding on the lower court. Therefore, if there is no hierarchy of courts, this cannot be achieved.Furthermore, considering the number of courts in Nigeria, it is worthy of note to state that there are competent judicial officers that are strategically posted to handle and resolve disputes seamlessly in Nigeria.The major disadvantage of the Nigerian court system is that there are inadequate judges in each court system, and the judges are thereby overwhelmed with a plethora of cases which causes protracted delays in resolving simple disputes through a court process by the litigants. By Omolade Animashaun, Associate at Resolution Law FirmEmail: info@resolutionlawng.comUnderstanding the Nigerian legal system is crucial for anyone living or doing business in the country. By grasping the intricacies of the legal framework, individuals and organizations can navigate the system effectively and ensure compliance with laws. The Nigerian legal system is based on a combination of common law, customary law, and Sharia law. Additionally, Nigeria operates a federal system of government with laws enacted at the federal, state, and local levels. Having a solid understanding of the legal system in Nigeria is essential for various reasons. It enables individuals to protect their rights, seek redress in case of legal disputes, and ensure compliance with laws and regulations. Nigerias legal system is a complex blend of statutory, customary, and religious laws. This system reflects the countrys diverse cultural heritage and colonial history. Nigeria operates a federal system of government. The legal framework comprises three main sources of law: Statutory Law: This includes the Constitution, acts of the National Assembly, and laws enacted by state legislatures. The Constitution is the supreme law, guiding the governance structure and citizens rights. Customary Law: These are traditional laws practiced by various ethnic groups. Customary law governs personal matters like marriage, inheritance, and land tenure. It varies significantly across different regions. Religious Law: Predominantly Islamic law (Sharia) applied in the northern states. Sharia governs personal and civil matters for Muslims, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The Nigerian legal system features a hierarchical court structure: Supreme Court: The highest court in Nigeria, handling constitutional issues and final appeals. Court of Appeal: Hears appeals from lower courts. Federal and State High Courts: Handle serious criminal cases, Magistrate and Customary Courts: Deal with minor civil and criminal cases, as well as customary law issues. Understanding Nigerias legal system is crucial for several reasons: Protecting Rights:Knowledge of the legal system empowers citizens to protect their rights. It helps individuals understand their entitlements under the law. Ensuring Compliance:Awareness of legal requirements helps individuals and businesses comply with laws. This prevents legal disputes and penalties. Facilitating Justice:An informed public can better access and navigate the legal system. This ensures justice is more accessible and effective. Promoting Transparency:Understanding the legal framework promotes accountability and transparency. It helps combat corruption and abuse of power. Enhancing Business Operations:Businesses benefit from understanding commercial laws and regulations. This knowledge aids in making informed decisions and avoiding legal pitfalls.Constitutional Law:Defines the structure of government and fundamental human rights. Guides the creation and interpretation of all other laws. Criminal Law:Outlines offenses and their punishments. Maintains public order and safety. Civil Law:Governs disputes between individuals and organizations. Covers areas such as contracts, property, and family law. Administrative Law:Regulates the activities of government agencies. Ensures public administration is conducted lawfully. International Law:Governs Nigerias interactions with other nations and international bodies. Includes treaties, conventions, and agreements Nigeria is a party to. Understanding the Nigerian legal system is essential for protecting rights and ensuring compliance with laws. It promotes justice, transparency, and informed decision-making. By familiarizing themselves with the legal framework, Nigerians can better navigate their legal landscape, contributing to a more just and equitable society. When we talk about the historical development of the Nigerian legal system, it is essential to look back at its origins. The legal system in Nigeria has a rich history that dates back to pre-colonial times. Origins of the legal system in Nigeria can be traced back to customary law, which was based on the traditions, customs, and practices of various ethnic groups in the region. These customary laws governed the day-to-day interactions and disputes within communities. With the arrival of colonial powers in the 19th century, the Nigerian legal system underwent significant changes. The British colonialists introduced English common law, which became the foundation of the legal framework in Nigeria. Colonialism played a significant role in shaping the legal system in Nigeria. The imposition of English common law and other legal principles by the colonial powers led to the blending of traditional customary law with Western legal concepts. During the transition to independence in 1960, Nigeria began the process of re-evaluating its legal system to reflect its newfound status as a sovereign nation. The country gradually started to assert its legal independence and sovereignty. One of the key milestones in the development of the Nigerian legal system was the creation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1963. This event marked a shift towards a more indigenous legal system that combined elements of customary law and English common law. Over the years, Nigeria has continued to refine and adapt its legal system to meet the evolving needs of its society. The country has made efforts to streamline its legal processes, improve access to justice, and enhance the efficiency of its judicial system. Today, the Nigerian legal system is a blend of traditional customary law, English common law, Islamic law (in the northern regions), and statutory law enacted by the Nigerian government. This hybrid system reflects the countrys diverse cultural and legal heritage. Essentially, the historical development of the Nigerian legal system is a testament to the countrys complex and dynamic legal landscape. From its origins in customary law to the influence of colonialism and eventual transition to independence, Nigerias legal system continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of its society. Read: Civil Law vs. Common Law in Nigeria Understanding the structure of the Nigerian legal system is essential for comprehending how laws are made, interpreted, and enforced in the country. The Nigerian legal system operates within a federal system of government, which consists of three tiers: federal, state, and local governments. At the federal level, the National Assembly is responsible for making laws that apply to the entire country, while the State Houses of Assembly and Local Government Councils are responsible for making laws that apply to their respective jurisdictions. The federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over certain areas such as defense, foreign affairs, and currency, while the states have authority over issues like health, education, and agriculture. The judiciary plays a crucial role in interpreting and applying the law in the Nigerian legal system. The courts have the power to interpret legislation, resolve disputes, and ensure that laws are upheld. The judiciary acts as a check on the executive and legislative branches to ensure that their actions are in accordance with the law. Furthermore, the judiciary serves as a protector of individual rights by adjudicating disputes and holding both individuals and government accountable for their actions. Generally, the Nigerian legal system is structured to ensure a balance of power between the three tiers of government and protect the rights of individuals through the judiciary. Read: Criminal Law in Nigeria: Key Concepts In Nigeria, the Constitution reigns supreme, serving as the highest law of the land. Enacted in 1999, it outlines the structure of government, fundamental rights, and the judiciarys powers. Legislation originates from the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. These legislative bodies pass laws on various matters, including criminal offenses, civil rights, and economic regulations. The Nigerian legal system operates on the doctrine of precedent.Court decisions establish legal principles.Precedents set by higher courts serve as binding authority.This ensures consistency and predictability in judicial rulings.The judiciary comprises the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and High Courts.They interpret and apply the law. The Supreme Court serves as the final arbiter, resolving disputes of national importance.It ensures uniformity in legal interpretation. Customary law coexists alongside statutory and common law.Particularly in matters of personal and family law.Customary courts handle disputes based on indigenous customs and traditions.Subject to statutory regulation. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms offer efficient means of resolving conflicts. These include arbitration and mediation. They promote timely resolution and reduce the burden on the formal justice system.Legal education and professional training are integral. Nigerian law schools provide comprehensive legal education.They ensure practitioners possess necessary knowledge and skills.The legal profession encompasses barristers and solicitors.Barristers represent clients in court. Solicitors provide legal advice and draft documents.The Nigerian Bar Association regulates practitioners conduct and ethics.Ensuring adherence to professional standards. Legal reform initiatives aim to enhance access to justice.Streamline court procedures and strengthen legal institutions.Efforts to modernize and digitize court processes facilitate efficiency and transparency.Challenges persist, including delays, corruption, and inadequate access to legal services.Particularly for marginalized communities. Addressing these issues requires sustained commitment to legal reform and capacity building.Therefore, the Nigerian legal system, anchored by the Constitution, encompasses diverse laws, institutions, and practices.Legislation, judicial precedents, and customary norms collectively shape legal outcomes. Read: Understanding Nigerian Constitutional Law Lawyers play a crucial role in representing clients in the Nigerian legal system. They are responsible for advocating on behalf of their clients, whether in court or during negotiations. In order to practice law in Nigeria, individuals must meet certain requirements. These typically include obtaining a law degree from a recognized university, completing the Nigerian Law School program, and passing the Bar exam. Legal education and training are essential for aspiring lawyers in Nigeria. These programs help individuals develop the necessary skills and knowledge to practice law effectively. Additionally, ongoing training is important for lawyers to stay updated on changes in the legal system and continuously improve their abilities. In Nigeria, there are two separate court systems: the civil court system and the criminal court system. The civil court system handles disputes between individuals or organizations, while the criminal court system deals with cases involving criminal offenses. Initiating legal action in Nigeria typically involves filing a complaint or petition with the appropriate court. The process may vary depending on whether it is a civil or criminal case. In civil cases, the plaintiff files a lawsuit against the defendant, while in criminal cases, the prosecution brings charges against the accused. In criminal cases in Nigeria, defendants have certain rights that are constitutionally protected. These rights include the right to legal representation, the right to a fair trial, the right to remain silent, and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Defendants also have the right to appeal a conviction. Overall, the Nigerian legal system is designed to ensure justice and fairness for all parties involved in legal disputes. It is important for individuals to be aware of their rights and responsibilities when engaging with the legal system in Nigeria. Read: Roles and Responsibilities of Nigerian Lawyers Get personalized mentorship consulting that tailored to your unique path. Our expert advice is actionable and exclusive. Get Started Corruption within the Nigerian judiciary taints its reputation and undermines trust in justice.Bribery, extortion, and favoritism plague courtrooms, compromising fairness.Inadequate remuneration for judicial officers breeds susceptibility to corrupt practices.Low salaries create opportunities for bribery and compromise judicial integrity.Lack of accountability mechanisms allows corruption to thrive within the judiciary.Transparency and oversight mechanisms are often weak or nonexistent.Judicial appointments sometimes suffer from political interference, compromising independence. These appointments should be based on merit and integrity, not political patronage.Public confidence in the judiciary erodes when corruption allegations surface.Perceptions of bias and unfairness erode trust in the legal system. Delays in resolving legal disputes frustrate litigants and impede access to justice for many.Cases linger for years due to backlog and inefficiencies, exacerbating the burden.Insufficient staffing levels strain the already overwhelmed judiciary, exacerbating delays.Judges and court personnel face overwhelming workloads, impacting the quality of justice.Lack of accountability mechanisms allows corruption to thrive within the judiciary.Transparency and oversight mechanisms are often weak or nonexistent.Civil society plays a crucial role in exposing corruption and advocating for reforms.Pressure from civil society can compel authorities to address systemic issues. Inadequate funding and resources cripple the legal system's ability to function effectively.Courts suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure, hindering operations.Inadequate remuneration for judicial officers breeds susceptibility to corrupt practices.Low salaries create opportunities for bribery and compromise judicial integrity.Increased funding and resources are essential to alleviate the strain on the legal system.Investments in infrastructure, technology, and personnel can enhance efficiency.Collaboration between government, civil society, and international partners is vital.Reforming the Nigerian legal system requires sustained commitment and dedication.It is imperative to uphold the rule of law and protect the integrity of the judiciary.Only through concerted action can Nigeria build a fair and effective legal system. As we conclude our examination of the Nigerian legal system, it becomes evident that challenges persist.Corruption within the judiciary tarnishes its credibility, delays in dispute resolution hinder access to justice, and inadequate funding and resources hamper its effectiveness.Recaping the key points discussed, corruption undermines trust in the judiciary, eroding public confidence.Delays in resolving legal disputes exacerbate the burdens faced by litigants and impede the timely delivery of justice.Additionally, the lack of sufficient funding and resources stifles the systems capacity to function efficiently, impacting its ability to serve the populace effectively.The importance of improving the Nigerian legal system cannot be overstated.A fair and just society hinges upon the integrity of its legal institutions.By addressing corruption, streamlining processes, and bolstering resources, Nigeria can ensure equitable access to justice for all its citizens.Let us unite in the pursuit of a legal framework that upholds the principles of fairness, equality, and accountability. Introduction Nigerias legal education system plays a crucial role in shaping competent and ethical lawyers. It consists of Introduction The legal profession in Nigeria plays a crucial role in upholding justice and maintaining social order. Lawyers Introduction The Nigerian legal system operates under a framework that combines common law, statutory law, and customary law. Introduction Nigerian Constitutional Law forms the foundation of the countrys legal system. It outlines the structure and powers The hierarchy of courts in Nigeria explains how courts are organised, arranged, and structured at different levels. Its designed to ensure justice is served and allows for appeals to higher courts if a lower courts decision is deemed unsatisfactory. In simple terms, the court hierarchy in Nigeria refers to the ranking of courts based on their authority and jurisdiction.Higher courts have more power to decide cases, and their judgments are binding on lower courts.For instance, if a lower courts ruling doesnt seem fair, the aggrieved party can appeal to a higher court for a review. This system is essential to maintain order and fairness in the legal process.Section 6 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) clearly outlines that the judicial powers of the federation shall be vested in the courts.Importantly, a court must have jurisdiction to hear a case.Jurisdiction simply means the authority of a court to hear and decide a case.Without proper jurisdiction, a courts decision becomes invalid. A landmark Nigerian case, Madukolu v. Nkemdimilim, laid out the conditions for a court to have jurisdiction:The court must be properly constituted.The subject matter must fall within the courts authority.The case must follow due process of law and fulfil all conditions.If any of these conditions are missing, the courts proceedings are considered null and void.Hierarchy of Courts in NigeriaIn Nigeria, the judiciary is organised into two broad categories: Superior Courts of Record and Inferior Courts.Each plays a distinct role within the legal framework, operating at different levels of authority within the judicial hierarchy.Superior Courts of RecordThese courts are established under section 5 of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) and possess extensive jurisdiction.They deal with significant matters of law, and their judgments are often binding on inferior courts.These include:Supreme CourtCourt of AppealFederal High CourtHigh Court of the Federal Capital Territory, AbujaHigh Court of a StateSharia Court of Appeal of FCT, AbujaSharia Court of Appeal of a StateCustomary Court of Appeal of FCT, AbujaCustomary Court of Appeal of a State.Such other courts as may be authorised by law to exercise jurisdiction on matters with respect to which a House of Assembly may make laws.a) Supreme CourtThe Supreme Court of Nigeria, established under Section 230 of the 1999 Constitution, is the highest in the land.It is the final arbiter of legal disputes and holds the ultimate authority in judicial matters.The Supreme Court is composed of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) and a maximum of 21 Justices, as prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.The Supreme Court has both original and appellate jurisdiction.Supreme Court have original jurisdiction in the following instances:Federal Government vs State GovernmentState Government vs State GovernmentNational Assembly vs PresidentNational Assembly vs the PresidentNational Assembly vs the PresidentNational Assembly vs State Government, etc.Furthermore, the Supreme Court has appellate jurisdiction:It supervises decisions of the Court of Appeal and other lower courts.It reviews appeals on civil, criminal, and constitutional matters, ensuring justice is upheld.b) Court of AppealThe court of appeal is established under section 237 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended).The Court of Appeal is a court of appellate jurisdiction with limited original jurisdiction in election petition cases.This court has exclusive original jurisdiction to hear and determine any question as to whether:Any person has been validly elected to the office of the President or Vice-President under the constitution or The term of office of the President or Vice-President has ceased or The office of President or Vice-President has become vacant.In its appellate jurisdiction, the court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine appeals from:Federal High Courtthe High of the Capital Territory, Abuja.the High Court of a Statethe Sharia Court of Appeal of the FCTThe Customary Court of Appeal of Federal Capital Territorythe Customary Court of Appeal of a Statea court of martial or other Tribunals as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.Appell lies as the right to the Court of Appeal from the decisions of the Federal High Court of a High Court.c) Federal High CourtThe Federal High Court is established under section 249 of the Constitution. This court exercises appellate and supervisory jurisdiction in civil proceedings involving questions of customary law.Inferior CourtsThese courts handle fewer complex matters and are subordinate to superior courts.These include:Magistrate courtsjuvenile courtsTribunalsNational Industrial CourtCourts Martial, etcA) Magistrate courtsMagistrate Courts are inferior courts, and they dont qualify for records.Each state of the Federation has its own magistrates Court system.These courts are established under the respective Magistrates Courts Law in the Southern States and the District Courts Law in the Northern States.Magistrates Courts, like the superior courts administer both the common law and equity and have the power to grant all legal and equitable remedies.They are enjoined to observe and enforce the observance of every native law and custom that is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience and not incompatible with any local statute.B) Juvenile courtsJuvenile courts also known as Family Courts are special courts established for the trial and welfare of children and young persons.These courts were first established under the Children and Young Persons Ordinance of 1943 providing for the setting up of approved schools, remand homes and probation officers to cater for children under the age of 17.Today, the courts exist in different states.C) National Industrial courtThe National Industrial Court is established under section 20 of the Trade Disputes Act for the settlement of trade disputes, the interpretation of collective agreements and matters connected therewith.The court is conferred with exclusive jurisdiction.To make awards for the purpose of settling trade disputes andTo determine questions as to any collective agreement, any award made by an arbitration tribunal or by the court, and the terms of settlement of any trade dispute.D) Courts MartialThe Armed Forces Act provides for various offences, the punishment thereof and the mode of trial.One of the special courts for the trial of persons of the more serious offences in the armed forces is the court-martial.This was introduced along with military law in Nigeria.The composition, jurisdiction and powers of courts martial in the three armed forces Army, Navy, and the Air Force are now provided for jointly in the Armed Force Decree.The Decree recognises two types of courts martial with different jurisdictions.The general court martial consists of president and not less than four members, a waiting member, a liaison officer and a Judge Advocate, andThe special court martial, consists of a president and not less than two members, a waiting member, a liaison officer and a Judge Advocate.The jurisdiction of a general court martial extends to the trial of persons who are subject to service law under the Decree for an offence triable by a court martial or who by law of war is subject to trial by a military tribunal.E) TribunalsTribunals are an integral part of the entire adjudicatory system.Created by statute, they serve to complement the traditional court system by exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions.Tribunals can settle disputes between parties without them going to court.ConclusionThe advantages of the Nigerian court hierarchy include the doctrine of case law, which stipulates the judgment of the Higher Court is binding on the lower court.Therefore, if there is no hierarchy of courts, this cannot be achieved.The major disadvantage of the Nigerian court system is that there are inadequate judges in each court system, and the judges are thereby overwhelmed with a plethora of cases which causes protracted delays in resolving simple disputes through a court process by the litigants.I hope you found my article on the Hierarchy of Courts in Nigeria helpful.

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