

Designing Data Governance Policies for the Inclusive use of Artificial Intelligence in Africa

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Abstract:

This paper proposes five ideas that the design of data governance policies for the responsible and inclusive use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Africa should consider. The first is for African states to carry out an assessment of their domestic strategic priorities, strengths, and weaknesses. The second is a human-centric approach to data governance which involves data processing practices that protect security of personal data and privacy of data subjects; ensures that personal data is processed in a fair, lawful, and accountable manner; minimize the harmful effect of personal data misuse or abuse on data subjects and other victims; and promote a beneficial, trusted use of personal data. The third is for the data policy to be in alignment with supranational rights-respecting AI standards like the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, the African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, and other international frameworks that recommend responsible data governance and the accountable use of AI (some of which have been developed by some of the United Nations bodies and organizations). The fourth is for states to be critical about the extent that AI systems can be relied on in certain public sectors or departments such as law enforcement, criminal justice, immigration, and national security. The fifth and final proposition is for the need to prioritize the use of representative and interoperable data and ensuring a transparent procurement process for AI systems from abroad where no local options exist.

Keywords:

Data Governance Policy; Artificial Intelligence; Africa; Inclusive Artificial Intelligence; Human Rights.

Policy Significance Statement:

Designing policies on data governance as it relates to the use of AI requires an inclusive and accountable approach: one that ensures a responsible use of both the data and the AI technologies to ensure all human and peoples' rights are protected and respected. Data policy in this area of AI may also require some relativism to be best suited for the people and communities where they will apply (and as defined by them). However, the African region has gotten only very little attention when it comes to the data governance policies for the use of AI in the region. This is partly because the region characterizes an 'under-sampled majority' of people and communities who are marginalised when it comes to inclusive data policies for the use of AI. This paper hopes to highlight a few of the data norms applicable in Africa and more importantly, to share ideas for how the design process for an inclusive data governance policy for the use of AI within Africa could be promoted.