



CONNECTED MINDS
Neural and Machine Systems
for a Healthy, Just Society

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS OF AI FOR HEALTHCARE IN ETHIOPIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES



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I. Introduction

- AI is transforming various aspects of healthcare.
- AI is vital for improved diagnostic and therapeutic treatments.
- AI drives innovation in health devices & drug development
- Data is essential for AI applications.
- Given potential risks, AI & health data require effective policy and legal frameworks.



II. AI in Ethiopia's Healthcare

- Despite various challenges, there are increasing applications of AI in Ethiopia's healthcare.
- 2.1. AI Applications in Healthcare: TB, heart, cancer, eye cataract and medical imaging.
- 2.2. Potential Benefits: Improved, effective & efficient treatment.
- 2.3. Risks/Challenges: Privacy, Bias & Discrimination

III. Policy and Legal Frameworks

- 3.1. AI Policy Framework:
 - National AI Policy (June 2024): Ethiopia as centre of excellence for AI development in Africa by 2035.
 - Continental AI Strategy (July 2024): Areas of Focus—harnessing AI's benefits, building AI capabilities, minimizing risks, stimulating investment and fostering cooperation.
- 3.2. Legal Framework for AI:
 - Legal frameworks are essential for implementation of AI policy in healthcare sector.
 - No Specific and Comprehensive AI Legislation
 - Relevant Legislation: Personal Data Protection Proc No.1321/2024 & other existing laws.

IV. Prospects & Challenges

- 4.1. Prospects: National AI Policy + Continental AI Strategy
 - Both offer visions, objectives and core principles for robust AI policy framework in Africa.
- 4.2. Challenges: Infrastructure, Ethical Issues & Legal Gaps
 - Infrastructure: Internet, Data, Data Centers, Computing Power & Skilled workforce
 - Ethical Challenges: Privacy, Bias & Intellectual Property (IP)?
 - Lack of Robust Legal Frameworks: Enforcement and Remedies for violations

Conclusion & Recommendations

- The development and applications of AI are critical for health sector in Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia's adoption of national AI policy is a significant step towards harnessing AI for the well-being of its citizens.
- Given the benefits and risks of AI applications, Ethiopia's AI policy should be implemented in a manner that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the ethical and legal risks.
- Implementation of the national and continental AI policies should facilitate ethical and lawful use/integration of indigenous knowledge of diagnostic and therapeutic practices.
- Ethiopia's national health policy should be updated in line with its AI policy and global health initiatives.
- Appropriate legal reforms should be made to address the concerns and foster innovation in AI technologies.