Review Article

Cultural and Regional Influences on Global AI Apprehension

Victor Frimpong[1]

1. Swiss Business School Zurich (SBS), Switzerland

The current discourse on artificial intelligence (AI) is notably lacking in considering diverse cultural, regional, and socio-political factors, primarily due to an overwhelming emphasis on Western perspectives in existing literature. This article presents a qualitative literature review and comparative analysis to examine the varied attitudes toward AI across regions such as Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Our key findings reveal that regional differences in AI governance arise from distinct socio-economic conditions, political frameworks, and cultural values. These differences give rise to specific AI concerns, including privacy issues, surveillance, job displacement, and ethical biases. The study underscores significant gaps in the prevailing AI discourse, which frequently neglects the viewpoints of non-Western societies. The paper advocates for a fundamental shift in AI governance towards a more culturally informed and globally inclusive framework, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptable, region-specific strategies that resonate with local contexts. Such an approach is vital for promoting fair and ethical advancements in AI worldwide.

Correspondence: papers@team.qeios.com — Qeios will forward to the authors

1. Introduction

The discussion on artificial intelligence (AI) brings concerns across cultural and regional contexts to light. However, existing literature predominantly reflects Western perspectives, often neglecting the diverse viewpoints of non-Western societies and cultures[1]. This limited focus partially understands how AI technologies are perceived globally, as most studies revolve around industrialized nations with advanced technological infrastructures. To foster a more comprehensive and fair approach to AI research and governance, it is crucial to integrate non-Western perspectives considering the unique socio-economic, political, and cultural factors influencing AI perceptions in diverse regions. Scholars such as

Sindermann et al.[2] and Kuziemski and Misuraca[3] have stressed the significance of considering local values and socio-economic conditions when discussing AI governance, particularly in public sector decision-making. It is essential to address these gaps in the literature to establish globally inclusive AI governance frameworks that consider regional differences and challenges.

2. Why it matters?

Rapidly implementing AI technologies in public services to improve efficiency could worsen current power imbalances and may not consider the specific socio-economic situations of various communities[3]. Government approaches to AI vary significantly by region. In more authoritarian regimes, AI apprehension is often tied to concerns about how the state will use AI to increase control over its citizens, mainly through mass surveillance technologies[4]. In more democratic societies, the apprehension is more centered around ethical uses of AI in the private sector, such as preventing corporations from abusing personal data[5]. For instance, in China, the state's role in developing and deploying AI for surveillance and social credit systems heightens concerns about individual privacy. However, it does not provoke the same level of public debate seen in Western countries due to differences in political and cultural attitudes towards state intervention. In Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has significantly addressed public apprehension about AI and privacy, leading to a more regulatory-focused discourse on AI risks[6].

Another critical area is understanding the varying levels of technological adoption, regulatory frameworks, and ethical concerns across different societies, which is crucial for addressing global AI challenges[7]. The ethical concerns surrounding AI differ significantly across regions, shaped by local cultural norms, governance structures, and socioeconomic conditions. These differences influence how societies perceive AI and regulate and adopt it. For example, countries with robust regulatory frameworks, like the European Union, prioritize data privacy and human rights concerns. At the same time, in the Asian regions, the focus is more on regulations and economic impact[8] and more on innovation, seeing AI as a tool for accelerating technological progress.[9].

Furthermore, the extent to which AI is embraced can significantly impact societal trust in these technologies. Tjilen et al.[10] emphasized that in regions with limited digital literacy and access to technology, there tends to be more fear and doubt surrounding AI. In contrast, in more technologically advanced societies, the focus of public discussion may shift towards regulatory measures rather than fear

of the unknown. Therefore, considering AI from a cultural and regional perspective demonstrates the necessity of developing tailored approaches for AI governance and policy-making, considering diverse viewpoints. AI governance strategies should take into consideration cultural variations and local contexts. What may be effective in one region may not be as successful in another, so policymaking should prioritize flexibility and adaptability[11].

3. Current and common apprehensions

The apprehension surrounding AI primarily stems from the uncertain long-term implications it carries. Bostrom[12] suggests that the emergence of superintelligent AI could pose existential risks by surpassing human control, leading to unpredictable consequences. This concern is linked to the broader "control problem," which raises worries about our inability to ensure that AI systems align with human values. Additionally, there is a significant worry about the potential widespread displacement of jobs. Authors such as Autor, Levy, and Murnane[13] discuss how historical technological advancements, particularly in automation and AI, have displaced human labor, causing economic disruptions. This has fueled concerns about future job markets. Ethical concerns are also prominently featured in AI literature. Russell, Dewey, and Tegmark[14] delve into how AI systems might make decisions that conflict with moral norms, mainly if they operate without human-like values. Aligning AI's decision-making processes with ethical standards is a crucial issue. Another recurring theme revolves around AI's potential to perpetuate or exacerbate existing social biases. According to Noble[15], algorithmic systems can encode and reinforce biases in the data used to train them, resulting in discriminatory outcomes.

4. Methodology

The article utilizes a qualitative research approach, centering on an extensive literature review to investigate the cultural, regional, and socio-political differences in AI apprehension. The research methodology involves analyzing academic sources, case studies, policy documents, and pertinent AI governance frameworks from diverse regions such as Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. This review aims to ascertain how local socio-political, economic, and cultural factors impact public perceptions of AI and influence governance models.

The research began by systematically collecting literature from JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect databases. Key terms like "AI apprehension," "cultural perspectives on AI," "regional AI governance," and

"AI ethics in non-Western societies" were used to refine the search. Sources were chosen based on their relevance to the topic, prioritizing studies published in the last five years to ensure a focus on recent developments. Additionally, the review incorporated gray literature, including reports from think tanks, government agencies, and international organizations, to complement academic research with policy-oriented insights.

The study employed a comparative analysis framework to examine regional variations in AI apprehension. This involved categorizing findings based on regions and comparing how AI technologies are perceived and regulated within specific socio-political and economic contexts. The research emphasized identifying key drivers of AI apprehension, such as historical legacies (e.g., colonialism), the influence of political regimes (e.g., authoritarian vs. democratic systems), and the role of socio-economic inequalities. The study aimed to reveal patterns and gaps in the literature through this comparative approach, particularly those reflecting biases toward Western-centric viewpoints. This methodology comprehensively explains the regional nuances in AI apprehension and governance, emphasizing the need for more culturally sensitive AI policies. The study lays a critical foundation for future empirical research and policymaking to develop globally inclusive AI governance frameworks by pinpointing gaps in existing research and discussing overlooked non-Western perspectives.

5. Findings

5.1. Regional Variations in AI Apprehension

In Western nations, there is significant concern about AI's impact on employment, privacy, and potential existential risks. Ethical challenges, including algorithmic bias and AI accountability, are also prominent in these regions, emphasizing regulation, data protection (e.g., GDPR in Europe), and the potential for AI to infringe on individual rights[5].

In the Middle East, concerns about AI are shaped by the region's authoritarian political structures and the rapid pace of AI adoption for state control. In Saudi Arabia and the UAE, AI is being aggressively integrated into national strategies for economic diversification, particularly in reducing reliance on oil. However, there is growing apprehension about using AI for surveillance, mainly as these countries invest heavily in AI-driven cybersecurity systems. This has led to concerns about individual privacy and the role of AI in enhancing state power. In Egypt, for example, public discourse has emerged around the use of AI

in monitoring citizens' online activities, with critics warning that these technologies could suppress freedom of expression and increase state surveillance.

In contrast, Japan has a relatively positive perception of AI, shaped by the cultural integration of robots and AI into everyday life. Japan's history with robotics has created a cultural environment where AI is seen as an extension of human labor rather than a threat. For instance, AI is being used in elder care facilities to support the aging population, and there is relatively little apprehension about job displacement, as AI is perceived to complement human workers rather than replace them. This cultural attitude towards technology fosters a more optimistic view of AI and its potential to enhance societal harmony, a key value in Japanese society.

In China, AI is regarded as a tool for technological leadership and state control, with comparatively less emphasis on privacy concerns due to differences in the political system. Nonetheless, there are still reservations about AI's surveillance and state control use.

In Africa, AI apprehension is deeply intertwined with the continent's history of colonialism and ongoing economic inequalities. For instance, Alonso et al.[16] highlight how AI technologies may deepen existing socio-economic divides, with AI development concentrated in the hands of a few elite technologists, leaving the majority without access to its benefits. In some African countries, AI is often viewed through the lens of its impact on employment, as automation threatens to replace low-skill jobs that are vital for large segments of the population[17]. Artificial intelligence is making poverty reduction possible by improving the collection of poverty-related data through poverty maps[18]. The digital divide in these regions exacerbates public concern, as many fear AI will worsen existing inequalities[17]. Additionally, there are concerns that AI could reinforce patterns of technological dependency on Western nations, a legacy of colonialism[17].

5.1.1. South Africa: AI for Social Good and Data Sovereignty

South Africa has positioned itself as a leading proponent of AI adoption on the continent. The government has underscored the pivotal role of AI in propelling social and economic development, mainly through initiatives that harness AI to address poverty, improve healthcare, and expand educational outreach. For instance, AI is instrumental in creating comprehensive poverty maps that inform policy decisions related to resource allocation, directly contributing to poverty alleviation efforts[18]. Additionally, AI is leveraged to analyze extensive healthcare datasets, enabling the prediction

of disease outbreaks and enhancing the allocation of medical resources. These applications vividly illustrate AI's potential to confront critical social challenges within the region.

The issue of data sovereignty has become increasingly prominent in national discussions. With the growing presence of foreign technology companies in Africa's AI sector, there are concerns that African nations may cede control over their data, potentially leading to a type of "data colonialism"[19]. In response, South Africa's AI governance frameworks have implemented policies mandating international companies to collaborate with local businesses and adhere to stringent data protection regulations. These policies aim to ensure that the benefits of AI advancement remain within the local economy and that local data is safeguarded against external exploitation.

5.1.2. Kenya: Balancing Innovation with Ethical Governance

Kenya is one of the countries where AI is being incorporated into national development strategies, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, financial services, and urban planning. The Kenyan government has promoted AI as a catalyst for innovation, as seen in initiatives like "AgriTech," which harnesses AI to enhance farming practices, boost crop yields, and alleviate food insecurity. Furthermore, AI is increasingly utilized in mobile banking platforms to provide financial services to underserved populations, thus promoting inclusion (Yasir et al., 2022).

However, Kenya is encountering significant hurdles in fostering innovation and upholding ethical governance. The deployment of AI-powered surveillance technologies in urban areas of Nairobi has raised worries about privacy breaches and the possibility of excessive government control. Although Kenya's Data Protection Act of 2019 was a significant step toward addressing these concerns by setting out guidelines for data privacy, challenges persist in enforcing it due to limited institutional capacity and technical know-how. These challenges underscore the delicate balance between promoting AI innovation and ensuring that AI governance frameworks safeguard the rights and privacy of citizens.

In Latin America, AI apprehension often focuses on privacy concerns and government surveillance. In countries with fragile democracies or high levels of political corruption, such as Venezuela, the use of AI for mass surveillance has heightened fears that these technologies will be used to suppress dissent and violate human rights. Public trust in AI, therefore, is closely linked to perceptions of government accountability and transparency.

5.1.3. Brazil: AI Scrutiny

A case study from Brazil shows how AI-driven surveillance technologies have been used in urban areas to fight crime. However, there are concerns about civil liberties and the potential for government abuse of these systems. In recent years, Brazil has made progress in AI governance and aims to prioritize responsible and ethical AI governance as a core part of its vision for the future. The economic impact of the AI market in Brazil is projected to increase from around $3 billion in 2023 to $11.6 billion by 2030, with a GDP impact of 6-8%. The country's strengths are in its data policies and e-participation[9].

However, there are concerns that these AI systems could exacerbate existing inequalities by disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, sparking ethical concerns about fairness and accountability. Additionally, there is a significant gender gap in STEM education. With 274 indigenous languages, there is a risk of these languages being marginalized in data sets and AI tools, potentially leaving many indigenous language speakers behind, especially in the case of large language models, as noted by UNESCO[9].

5.1.4. Argentina: National AI Plan

Argentina has adopted a unique approach to AI governance, prioritizing ethical AI utilization and citizen data protection. Launched in 2020, Argentina's National AI Plan is designed to foster responsible AI development while upholding human rights. The country has established principles for the ethical application of AI, focusing on transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination across both public and private sectors. Argentina's AI governance framework also promotes public involvement in AI policy formation, positioning the country as a regional trailblazer in developing inclusive and transparent AI strategies.

6. Cultural Factors Shaping AI Apprehension

6.1.

Studies indicate that in societies with higher levels of institutional trust, where people trust their governments and institutions to regulate AI effectively, there is less fear about the consequences of AI[1].

6.1.1. Trust in Technology and Institutions

The level of public trust in technology and institutions significantly influences the approach to AI governance in different countries. Studies show that trust in government plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of e-government services and, by extension, AI governance. For example, Horsburgh et al.[20] emphasize that the trustworthiness of governmental institutions is vital for gaining public support for e-government initiatives, similar to the importance of trust in AI systems for their acceptance and effective governance[20]. This connection underscores that without a basis of trust, efforts to implement AI technologies may encounter significant public resistance.

Furthermore, the research by Zhang and Kim[21] indicates that public trust in government can be shaped by perceptions of government performance, especially in the context of corruption. Their study suggests that citizens' trust is influenced by immediate government actions and long-term perceptions of governance quality, which can impact how AI governance is viewed and embraced[21]. This highlights the significance of ethical governance and transparency in fostering public trust in AI systems, as citizens are more inclined to support AI initiatives when they believe their government operates with integrity and accountability. In addition, Yousaf et al.'s findings underscore that the government's unethical conduct can erode public trust, which is crucial for the effective implementation of AI governance frameworks[22]. This correlation is further reinforced by the insights of Winfield and Jirotka, who contend that ethical governance is vital for cultivating trust in AI and robotics. They suggest a lack of ethical considerations can lead to public skepticism and resistance[23]. Therefore, the interaction between public trust in institutions and the governance of AI technologies is intricate and multifaceted, requiring a meticulous approach that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and ethical standards.

6.1.2. Religious and Ethical Perspectives

Religious and ethical perspectives play a crucial role in shaping AI governance, mainly as these factors influence societal norms and expectations regarding technology. Integrating ethical considerations into AI governance frameworks is essential for fostering public trust and ensuring the responsible development and implementation of AI systems. For instance, Winfield and Jirotka emphasize that ethical governance is fundamental to building trust in robotics and AI systems, proposing a roadmap that links ethics, standards, regulation, and public engagement as critical components of effective

governance[23]. This framework highlights the necessity of incorporating diverse ethical viewpoints, including religious perspectives, to address the multifaceted challenges posed by AI technologies.

Moreover, the governance of AI must also consider the implications of religious diversity and the interactions between religious and non-religious actors in public policy. Martínez-Ariño discusses how local governance networks can facilitate the regulation of public concerns, including those related to technology, by incorporating the voices of various stakeholders, including religious organizations[24]. This approach underscores the importance of recognizing and integrating religious and ethical perspectives into the governance of AI, as these perspectives can significantly influence public acceptance and the ethical deployment of AI systems.

Additionally, the global landscape of AI ethics guidelines, as outlined by Jobin and Ienca, reflects the diverse interests of stakeholders, including religious groups, in shaping the ethical frameworks that govern AI[25]. The involvement of various organizations in establishing AI principles indicates a collective recognition of the need for ethical guidance that resonates with different cultural and religious contexts. Thus, understanding and integrating religious and ethical perspectives into AI governance is beneficial and necessary for ensuring that AI technologies are developed and implemented in a manner that respects cultural values and promotes social justice.

6.1.3. Colonial and Post-Colonial Legacies

In regions with a history of colonial exploitation, particularly in Africa and Latin America, there is concern that AI technologies may replicate colonial-era patterns of resource extraction and dependency. Birhane[19] critically analyzes how contemporary AI technologies may perpetuate colonial dynamics, especially in African contexts. Birhane argues that the motivations behind algorithmic practices mirror those of historical colonialism, emphasizing the corporate-driven nature of modern exploitation. This raises concerns about replicating dependency and resource extraction patterns reminiscent of the colonial era. This perspective is crucial for understanding the socio-political implications of AI in regions with a legacy of colonialism. For instance, in South Africa, AI governance frameworks have increasingly focused on protecting local data and ensuring that AI development benefits local economies. The government has implemented policies that require international companies to partner with local businesses and adhere to local data protection laws when deploying AI technologies[18]. Munn[26] addresses the intersection of digital labor and AI, emphasizing how these technologies can perpetuate exploitative practices reminiscent of colonial resource extraction and underscore the urgent

need to confront the colonial logic embedded within contemporary AI systems, particularly in regions historically subjected to exploitation. Nikalje and Çiftçi[27] provide insight into the psychological ramifications of colonial mentality, which can be extrapolated to understand the apprehensions surrounding AI technologies in post-colonial contexts. By illustrating how colonial attitudes perpetuate feelings of inferiority and dependency among marginalized groups, their research underscores the potential for AI to replicate these historical patterns of exploitation and reinforce existing inequalities in regions like Africa and Latin America. This connection highlights the importance of critically examining the socio-cultural implications of AI deployment in historically colonized societies.

6.1.4. Societal Attitudes Toward Employment and Automation

A study by Gursoy and Chi (2022) delves into the impact of cultural attitudes on the acceptance of artificial intelligence (AI) devices in the tourism industry. The research underscores the importance of considering cultural context when examining the incorporation of AI technologies in various sectors, including hospitality and airline services. The findings indicate that tourists' readiness to embrace AI varies across services. Moreover, the study suggests that cultural attitudes toward work and employment can offer valuable insights for shaping broader AI governance strategies.

For instance, in China, the government has positioned AI as a crucial driver of economic expansion, placing less emphasis on concerns about job displacement[28]. This reflects a firm conviction in the potential of AI to enhance productivity and technological innovation, with government-led initiatives propelling AI development across different sectors. Conversely, apprehensions about job displacement have been a focal point of public discourse on AI in Western Europe and North America. Policies in these regions underscore the necessity of social safety nets, retraining programs, and labor market protections to alleviate potential adverse effects of AI on employment[29]. This divergence in governance approach is rooted in cultural attitudes toward work and social welfare.

Elamin and Omair (2010) also provide insights into how cultural attitudes, particularly those related to gender roles, can shape perceptions of work and employment within specific socio-cultural contexts. The study reveals that traditional attitudes toward working women persist among Saudi males, with variations influenced by age and education. This underscores the broader implications of cultural attitudes on labor dynamics and governance, particularly in the context of automation and AI.

7. Conclusion for future research

This article underscores the pressing need to expand the worldwide conversation on artificial intelligence (AI) by integrating diverse cultural, regional, and socio-political viewpoints. The existing literature on AI concerns has predominantly focused on Western perspectives, overlooking non-Western societies' distinct challenges and issues. Through a comparative examination of AI concerns in regions such as Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, this study emphasizes the significance of localized factors — including historical legacies, political systems, and socio-economic conditions — in shaping public perceptions and governance of AI technologies. The findings underscore the necessity for adaptable and context-sensitive AI governance. Culturally attuned policies, ethical standards, and regulatory frameworks are imperative for addressing diverse populations' specific needs and worries. A uniform approach to AI governance risks perpetuating global disparities and amplifying existing socio-economic gaps. Pursuing empirical research that complements this qualitative analysis by collecting primary data through surveys, interviews, or case studies in non-Western regions is crucial. Further exploration is needed to understand how particular socio-cultural factors influence the deployment of AI technologies in diverse settings. Collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders is essential for crafting AI governance models prioritizing inclusivity, fairness, and cultural resonance. Expanding the global AI discourse will ensure more equitable outcomes and enhance the societal advantages of AI technologies worldwide.

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