Ethics in Computing in the age of Generative AI: Unit 1 , Reflective Activity 1

Introduction

In recent years generative AI has become more prominent, influencing various sectors of industry all over the world. While AI is not a novel concept, the current generative AI revolution necessitates an re-evaluation of ethical frameworks which can govern developments and applications in AI . Correa et al. (2023) state that while various guidelines have been proposed in the form of policies of private companies, governmental and non-governmental institutions as well as academic institutions, a lack of consensus among the diverse global stakeholders is inherent.

A pivotal study by Fjeld et al. (2020), highlights 8 key themes which are apparent in most AI governance policies , these include safety and security ,fairness and non-discrimination, accountability, transparency and explainability, professional responsibility, human control of technology, privacy, and promotion of human values. However, the study also underscores the importance of understanding the principles of a policy in AI through the lens of the cultural, geographical as well as political context.

Global Governance Frameworks for AI

Different countries have approached the topic of ethical AI governance from varied perspectives, shaped by cultural, economic, and political contexts. For example the European Union (EU) has established a comprehensive legislative framework with its proposed AI Act, which classifies AI systems based on risk, and which also states

the obligations to which high-risk applications must be subject to. (European Commission, 2023). This legal framework ensures that the AI systems align with the safety of individuals, fundamental rights of individuals and organisations as well as ethical principles. On the other hand, in 2024the United States has adopted a Federal Government wide framework, via the Executive Order on the use and development of Artificial Intelligence .The executive order enforces safety and responsibility in the use and innovation of AI systems by emphasizing principles such as fairness, privacy, transparency, and accountability (White House, 2023). China integrates AI Standardization into its national strategy, for instance the 2018 version of the Chinese Artificial Intelligence Standardization White Paper mentions that AI can serve as an information collection tool on the population, thus serving state interests while advancing AI development (Corrêa, 2023).

Recommendations for Ethical AI Governance

I am of the opinion that data protection is one of the most critical principles of AI ethics for regulating AI systems that rely heavily on data. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the EU sets a comprehensive framework for data privacy, granting individuals transparency and control over their personal information and also ensuring that strict data protection measures are adhered to by data processors (European Union, 2016). The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) clearly reflects these principles as well and this serves to protect consumer rights and to promote transparency in data handling , for example by allowing consumers the right to know what data a company collects about them , how it is used and how it is shared (California Legislative Information, 2018). However, the rapid evolution of

generative AI means developers and policy makers must always be well informed on advances in AI and engage in policy discussions to help shape the regulatory frameworks which govern the ever-advancing AI systems. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of AI systems, as proposed by Brundage et al. (2020), are also imperative actions to identify ethical dilemmas and ensure compliance.

 From a governance standpoint, international collaboration is essential due to the globalized nature of today's society. UNESCO's efforts to design ethical AI policies have already placed importance on the theme of Multi-stakeholder and Adaptive governance & Collaboration, in which international law and sovereignty must be respected in the use and innovation of AI systems (UNESCO, 2023). I think that such initiatives in governance can facilitate the sharing of best practices and ensure that ethical standards are upheld globally.

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration between professionals from various disciplines is another critical act. Involving computer science professionals, ethicists, policymakers, and the public in the governance and policy making process ensures that various perspectives contribute to the development of AI legislative frameworks. For instance, the Directive on Automated Decision –Making by the Government of Canada is a result of the collaboration and engagement between government-wide stakeholders and with partners in other jurisdictions to develop common strategies, approaches, and processes which supports the responsible use of automated decision systems (Government of Canada, 2023).

Impact of Ethical AI Governance

The impact of these suggested strategies are myriad. Legally, globally harmonized ethical standards could ease the processes involved in collaborations and international treaties by reducing ambiguities in cross-border AI applications. On the social front, transparent, and ethical AI practices can foster public trust, thereby allaying fears of data misuse. Lastly, a clear ethical framework equips computing professionals with guidelines to responsibly develop and apply AI tools. Ethical AI governance can drive ethical innovation by ensuring that AI systems are designed with human values in mind, thereby enhancing their societal relevance and utility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rapid advancement of generative AI underscores the urgency to establish comprehensive ethical frameworks. By incorporating international collaboration, consulting diverse stakeholders in policy making, and continuous evaluation of the current AI systems, we can properly address the generative AI revolution. These efforts must be informed by robust research, and be grounded in existing legal frameworks such as the GDPR and CCPA. Such an approach would ensure that AI technologies are developed responsibly, in a way that benefits society while respecting ethical principles.

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