

USE OF AI IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS: GAP ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ABSTRACT

In an era marked by the rapid advancement of technology, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into political campaigns has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping the dynamics of electoral processes worldwide. The African continent, notably Kenya, stands at the forefront of this digital revolution, witnessing the proliferation of AI-driven strategies aimed at engaging voters, disseminating information, and influencing public opinion. However, alongside the promise of enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, the pervasive use of AI in political campaigns raises profound ethical concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and democratic integrity.

This abstract presents an overview of a research paper aimed at developing ethical AI guidelines tailored to the context of political campaigns in Kenya. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary research approach encompassing literature review and stakeholder engagement, the project seeks to define and refine ethical principles that can serve as a compass for navigating the complex terrain of AI-driven electoral processes. By examining the potential risks and implications of AI deployment in political campaigns, the project aims to foster a culture of responsible AI use, safeguarding democratic values and promoting inclusive participation in Kenya's political landscape. Through a synthesis of empirical insights and normative analysis, this project endeavors to contribute to the advancement of ethical governance and digital democracy in Kenya and beyond.

1. Introduction

1.1. Aim and Significance

Political campaigns in Kenya, as in many parts of the world, are increasingly reliant on digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), to engage voters, disseminate information and mobilize support. While AI offers opportunities to enhance campaign effectiveness and efficiency, its use raises critical ethical considerations. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to develop ethical guidelines for the responsible use of AI in political campaigns in Kenya. These guidelines seek to address the ethical challenges associated with AI deployment in the political sphere, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability.

The significance of this project lies in its potential to safeguard democratic values and uphold the integrity of electoral processes in Kenya. By establishing ethical guidelines, political actors, AI

developers, and election authorities can mitigate the risks of algorithmic bias, manipulation, and privacy violations. Moreover, these guidelines can empower citizens to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in the democratic process, fostering trust and confidence in Kenya's political system.

1.2 Contextualization

The use of AI in political campaigns in Kenya has witnessed a rapid escalation in recent years, driven by advancements in technology and changes in communication patterns. Political parties and candidates utilize AI-driven tools and strategies for voter targeting, sentiment analysis and personalized messaging. Social media platforms play a pivotal role in amplifying political messages and shaping public opinion, often through algorithmic recommendation systems that prioritize engagement over accuracy.

However, the proliferation of AI in political campaigns has raised concerns about its potential negative impacts on democracy. Algorithmic bias, whereby AI systems perpetuate or amplify existing societal biases, can result in discriminatory outcomes and undermine electoral fairness. Furthermore, the manipulation of social media platforms for political purposes, including the spread of misinformation and the use of automated bots, poses threats to the integrity of the electoral process and public trust in democratic institutions.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to develop ethical guidelines that regulate the use of AI in political campaigns, ensuring adherence to democratic principles and safeguarding the rights of citizens. These guidelines must be tailored to the specific context of Kenya, taking into account its socio-political dynamics, cultural norms and legal frameworks.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Approach

The research methodology employed in this project is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from political science, computer science, ethics and law. A comprehensive literature review will be conducted to analyze existing scholarship on AI ethics, political campaigning and the Kenyan context. This review will inform the identification and definition of ethical principles that should govern the use of AI in political campaigns.

In addition to the literature review, stakeholder engagement will be central to the research approach. Key stakeholders, including political parties, election authorities, civil society organizations and AI developers, will be consulted through interviews, focus groups and

workshops. This participatory process will ensure that the ethical guidelines reflect diverse perspectives and are grounded in the realities of Kenya's political landscape.

2.2. Ethical Principles Definition

The process of defining ethical principles will involve synthesizing insights from the literature review and stakeholder consultations. Key ethical principles to be considered include fairness, transparency, accountability and respect for democratic values. These principles will serve as the foundation for the development of practical guidelines to govern the use of AI in political campaigns in Kenya.

Through a rigorous research methodology that combines theoretical analysis and stakeholder engagement, this project aims to contribute to the advancement of ethical governance and democratic integrity in Kenya's political sphere. By establishing clear ethical guidelines, we can harness the potential of AI technologies to strengthen democracy and promote civic engagement, while mitigating the risks of misuse and abuse.

3. Ethical Principles for AI in Political Campaigns

The OECD AI Principles were adopted in 2019 and updated in May 2024. The Principles guide AI actors in their efforts to develop trustworthy AI and provide policymakers with recommendations for effective AI Policies.

During Political Campaigns, AI could be used for the following:

AI Generated Emails-for personalized fundraising communication via email where algorithms will analyse users data and craft emails tailored to the recipients interests and communication that aligns with their political beliefs and speaks directly to their concerns and aspirations.

AI-Powered Chatbots- AI-powered chatbots are poised to play a pivotal role. These digital entities, trained on vast datasets representing candidates' views, personalities, and policy stances, can approximate the act of direct communication. Voters can receive text messages from chatbots urging them to vote, providing real-time updates on campaign events, and even engaging in conversations to address individual concerns. The essence of this approach lies in its ability to scale personalized interactions. While it's impossible for a candidate to show up in person in every home, AI-driven chatbots can emulate the experience of a personalised campaign outreach on a massive scale.

Deepfake AI Technology- AI-powered chatbots can be combined with visuals to enable the spectre of ‘deepfakes’. Deepfake AI is a type of AI that can be used to create convincing images, audio, and video hoaxes. Deepfakes involve altering pre-existing source content, either by replacing one person with another or generating entirely new content portraying individuals engaging in actions or making statements they never actually did. This raises concerns about misinformation and potential misuse, proponents argue that controlled and transparent use of deepfakes could enhance campaign outreach. For instance, a carefully crafted deepfake avatar could deliver campaign messages in multiple languages, engage with diverse demographics, navigate the challenges of a hectic campaign schedule, and significantly lower the costs of campaigning.

This paper will look at the AI Principles and their application in Political Campaigns.

3.1. Respect for the rule of law, human rights and democratic values, including fairness and privacy

This OECD AI Principle provides that AI actors should respect the rule of law, human rights, democratic and human-centred values throughout the AI system lifecycle. These include non-discrimination and equality, freedom, dignity, autonomy of individuals, privacy and data protection, diversity, fairness, social justice, and internationally recognised labour rights. This also includes addressing misinformation and disinformation amplified by AI, while respecting freedom of expression and other rights and freedoms protected by applicable international law.

To this end, AI actors should implement mechanisms and safeguards, such as capacity for human agency and oversight, including to address risks arising from uses outside of intended purpose, intentional misuse, or unintentional misuse in a manner appropriate to the context and consistent with the state of the art.

3.2. Transparency

This Principle provides that AI Actors should commit to transparency and responsible disclosure regarding AI systems. To this end, they should provide meaningful information, appropriate to the context, and consistent with the state of art:

- to foster a general understanding of AI systems, including their capabilities and limitations,

- to make stakeholders aware of their interactions with AI systems, including in the workplace,
- where feasible and useful, to provide plain and easy-to-understand information on the sources of data/input, factors, processes and/or logic that led to the prediction, content, recommendation or decision, to enable those affected by an AI system to understand the output, and,
- to provide information that enable those adversely affected by an AI system to challenge its output.

3.3. Accountability

This OECD AI Principle provides that AI actors should be accountable for the proper functioning of AI systems and for the respect of the above principles, based on their roles, the context, and consistent with the state of the art. To this end, AI actors should ensure traceability, including in relation to datasets, processes and decisions made during the AI system lifecycle, to enable analysis of the AI system's outputs and responses to inquiry, appropriate to the context and consistent with the state of the art.

Further, AI actors, should, based on their roles, the context, and their ability to act, apply a systematic risk management approach to each phase of the AI system lifecycle on an ongoing basis and adopt responsible business conduct to address risks related to AI systems, including, as appropriate, via co-operation between different AI actors, suppliers of AI knowledge and AI resources, AI system users, and other stakeholders. Risks include those related to harmful bias, human rights including safety, security, and privacy, as well as labour and intellectual property rights.

4. Risk Assessment of AI Use in Political Campaigns

Currently, there are no specific laws in Kenya solely dedicated to regulating the use of AI in elections. However, existing electoral laws and regulations may indirectly apply to AI use. The gaps lie in the lack of specific guidelines and regulations tailored to address the unique challenges posed by AI in elections, such as ensuring transparency, fairness and accountability in the use of AI algorithms.

4.1. Issues Arising from the Use of AI in Elections

The use of AI in elections can introduce several potential problems as seen below:

- 4.1.1. *Bias*: Sources of bias in AI can arise from different stages of the machine learning pipeline, including data collection, algorithm design, and user interactions. Data bias occurs when the data used to train machine learning models are unrepresentative or incomplete, leading to biased outputs. This can happen when the data are collected from biased sources or when the data are incomplete, missing important information, or contain errors. Algorithmic bias, on the other hand, occurs when the algorithms used in machine learning models have inherent biases that are reflected in their outputs. This can happen when algorithms are based on biased assumptions or when they use biased criteria to make decisions. User bias occurs when the people using AI systems introduce their own biases or prejudices into the system, consciously or unconsciously. This can happen when users provide biased training data or when they interact with the system in ways that reflect their own biases. During the 2022 election period TikTok 'For You' algorithm was spreading propaganda and hateful videos.
- 4.1.2. *Security Concerns*: There are considerable risks of developing AI in security technologies, the consequences of which may not be fully comprehensible at this point in time. At a global level, the quest for technological advancement may create political divides, upset balances of power, encourage exploitation of underdeveloped nations, and promote the abuse of individual privacy and rights.
- 4.1.3. *Privacy Violations*: AI technologies may involve the collection and analysis of large amounts of personal data, raising concerns about privacy infringement. Since online political microtargeting involves gathering and combining people's personal data on a massive scale to identify political preferences, the data gathered threatens the privacy of individuals. For instance, if people are suspicious that the websites they visit are being tracked, they may not be comfortable to visit certain websites. Additionally, by tracking people's use of the internet, a company can come up with a 'database of individuals and their interests. An example of invasion of privacy is what happened in 2011 in Ireland when Fine Gael's website was interfered with by denial-of-service attacks that resulted in personal details of up to 2000 users of the site being compromised.
- 4.1.4. *Lack of Transparency*: The idea that AI systems must be transparent about how they work, and that the decisions and actions taken by AI systems must be explainable crops up across the AI regulatory landscape (even though in practice, explaining why an AI system makes a certain decision can be incredibly

challenging, as even the creators of these systems frequently refer to them as “black boxes”). Transparency is seen as one way to guard against risks from misinformation – although it is likely on its own insufficient.

4.2. Impact of AI in Elections

The impact of AI in elections can be significant, potentially affecting the integrity, fairness, and legitimacy of the electoral process. AI technologies have the potential to enhance efficiency and accuracy in tasks such as voter registration and ballot counting. However, if not properly regulated and implemented, AI can also exacerbate existing electoral challenges and inequalities.

4.3. Possible Solutions for Ethical Use of AI in Elections

To ensure the ethical use of AI in elections, several measures can be considered:

- 4.3.1. *Regulatory Frameworks*: Develop comprehensive regulations specifically addressing the use of AI in elections, covering issues such as transparency, fairness, accountability, and data protection.
- 4.3.2. *Algorithmic Transparency*: Require transparency and explainability in AI algorithms used in elections to enable scrutiny and understanding of their decision-making processes.
- 4.3.3. *Bias Mitigation*: Implement measures to detect and mitigate biases in AI systems, such as diverse and representative training data and algorithmic auditing.
- 4.3.4. *Cybersecurity Measures*: Strengthen cybersecurity measures to safeguard AI systems and electoral infrastructure against hacking and manipulation.
- 4.3.5. *Public Awareness and Participation*: Promote public awareness and engagement regarding the use of AI in elections, fostering dialogue, education, and accountability.

5. Guideline Development

5.1. Practical Guidelines for Political Actors

Practical guidelines for political actors outline specific actions and behaviors that promote ethical AI use in political campaigns. These guidelines may include commitments to transparency, fairness, and accountability in campaign strategies, as well as prohibitions on deceptive practices

and manipulative tactics. Political actors should be encouraged to adhere to these guidelines to maintain public trust and confidence in the democratic process. An example of specific actions is the public disclosure of any AI generated information that they post on their social media sites. The politicians can also employ use of AI filtration software on the campaign website to enable identification of any published AI content on their website.

5.2. Best Practices for AI Developers

Best practices for AI developers provide recommendations for the responsible design, development, and deployment of AI technologies in political campaigns. These practices may involve incorporating fairness and transparency considerations into algorithmic design, conducting regular audits and evaluations of AI systems, and engaging with stakeholders to solicit feedback and address concerns. AI developers should prioritize the ethical implications of their work and strive to minimize risks to democratic values.

The AI developers can employ technological marking on AI content similar to International Standard Recording Code which encodes a permanent unique identifier of the videos or pictures. The unique identifier can help social media companies to easily track and delete AI content that is harmful or misleading. They could also adopt watermark features that could show that the content generated from their platforms is AI generated to enable people to differentiate the real and AI generated information.

5.3. Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies outline the steps and processes for integrating ethical AI guidelines into political campaign practices. These strategies may involve capacity building and training programs for political actors and AI developers, establishment of oversight mechanisms to monitor compliance with ethical standards, and collaboration with regulatory agencies and civil society organizations to enforce accountability. Implementation strategies should be tailored to the specific needs and context of political campaigns in Kenya, ensuring effective and sustainable adoption of ethical guidelines.

6. Education and Awareness Building

6.1. Training Programs

Training programs aim to educate stakeholders, including political actors, election officials, and the public, about the ethical implications of AI use in political campaigns. These programs may include workshops, seminars, and online courses that provide insights into the risks and

opportunities associated with AI technologies, as well as practical guidance on ethical decision-making and responsible behavior.

6.2. Public Awareness Campaigns

Public awareness campaigns seek to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of ethical AI use in political campaigns and the potential impacts of AI-driven manipulation tactics. These campaigns may involve public service announcements, social media outreach, and community events that promote digital literacy, critical thinking, and civic engagement. By empowering citizens with knowledge and awareness, public awareness campaigns can help mitigate the influence of manipulative tactics and foster a more informed and resilient electorate.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this project has explored the ethical principles guiding the use of AI in political campaigns in Kenya, assessed the risks associated with AI deployment, and proposed guidelines and strategies for promoting ethical AI use. By prioritizing fairness, transparency, accountability, and respect for democratic values, political actors and AI developers can contribute to the integrity and legitimacy of electoral processes in Kenya, fostering public trust and participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this project, several recommendations are proposed for policymakers, election authorities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders involved in political campaigns in Kenya. These recommendations include the adoption of ethical guidelines, the establishment of oversight mechanisms, the promotion of digital literacy, and the enhancement of transparency and accountability in campaign practices. By implementing these recommendations, Kenya can strengthen its democratic governance and ensure that AI technologies serve the public interest.

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