African Union Agenda 2063: Digital Development in the Age of Digital Coloniality

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Abstract
This paper examines the African Union's Agenda 2063 in the digital domain, focusing on digital coloniality. It argues that Ubuntu and decolonial methodologies can promote equitable and sustainable digital development. The concept indicates that global digital networks reinforce historical power imbalances, limiting African technological agency (Bon et al., 2021). Digital coloniality involves re-assessing imported technological frameworks that often conflict with indigenous African epistemologies and communal values (Stam, 2021). The goal is to generate insights and provide recommendations for the multilateral organisation, academia, and stakeholders. The study is based on a conceptual framework of Ubuntu and decoloniality, which serve as pathways for fair and sustainable technological progress, representing a significant contribution to knowledge for the AU. The conceptual approach employs a comparative desktop research analysis, the findings show that a Western-European-centric approach still dominates the development and implementation of technology frameworks, perpetuating dependency cycles and further undermining the development and deployment of context-appropriate technology, including artificial intelligence. Therefore, the research advocates for a collective strategy for technology development and deployment that is rooted in African values and effectively addresses African challenges.

Achievements of the African Union Agenda 2063

This section examines how AI and digital transformation can help the African Union achieve its key objectives under Agenda 2063. It demonstrates how modern technologies can enhance the continent's economy, foster human capital development, and enhance governance. To achieve "The Africa We Want" (Samarawickrama, 2022), it is vital to utilise AI to improve public services, increase transparency, and foster civic participation. To ensure that solutions are suitable and sustainable within the African-specific context, relevant AI development must be carefully evaluated through the lens of indigenous knowledge and practices (Mienye et al., 2024). To promote justice and equity in African communities, it is essential to thoroughly scrutinise AI ethics, including algorithmic biases and data privacy (Samarawickrama, 2022; Ochasi et al., 2024).

Africa requires a decolonial AI governance framework to foster the development of contextually aware AI technologies that reflect its rich socio-cultural diversity and address its unique developmental challenges through an intersectional lens (Ayana et al., 2024; Zimba, 2025). This approach enables African nations to take the lead in creating specialised innovative solutions tailored to their needs by moving away from Western-centric AI development and governance models (Ayana et al., 2024). Such contextualisation is essential for social justice and equitable economic growth. It ensures that AI development aligns with the core principles of Agenda 2063 (Ade-Ibijola& Okonkwo, 2023; Wall et al., 2021). A decolonial framework enables African countries to shape their technological future and promote AI justice by addressing historical power imbalances and fostering digital self-determination (Ayana et al., 2024). Through AI governance organisations, national initiatives, and data protection laws, this proposal prioritises African sovereignty and the utilisation of local data. This initiative goes beyond mere awareness; it is a proactive effort of decolonisation (Ayana et al., 2024). Africa must engage in global discussions on digital ethics and governance to defend its digital sovereignty and economic interests (Salami, 2024). Building capacity and encouraging collaboration in this sector will strengthen Africa's AI landscape. This will

enable the continent to harness new technologies for sustainable growth (Ayana et al., 2024). Such a forward-looking stance ensures Africa's inclusion in the global digital economy and enables it to chart its path in accordance with its developmental goals and values (Mensah &Wynsberghe, 2025).

This comprehensive intersectionality approach must emphasise culturally relevant ethical frameworks that maximise benefits and minimise drawbacks to ensure that AI technologies respect and embody African values and norms (Mahamadou et al., 2024). The focus on AI ethics from Western perspectives, while overlooking African viewpoints, has raised concerns about "ethical colonialism" and "epistemic injustice" (Yilma, 2025). To address this, AI ethics frameworks should integrate African ethical traditions such as Ubuntu to foster context-aware AI development that aligns with the continent's unique needs and cultural values. This approach would provide a foundation for sustainable and equitable AI use in Africa rooted in African values rather than European ones (Mensah &Wynsberghe, 2025; Grancia, 2024). This requires a shift from passive AI consumption to active, Africa-led co-creation of ethical AI-by-design involving ethicists, sociologists, and civil society leaders (Zimba et al., 2025). The Ubuntu normative framework and current AI governance initiatives in Africa do not offer a clear or practical basis for "African AI ethics" (Yilma, 2025), complicating their implementation. Integrating Ubuntu into the global conversation on AI ethics enables the development of AI policies that are culturally appropriate and inclusive. These policies should also address African challenges and opportunities (Gwagwa et al., 2022).

Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence.

To support the continent's growth, Agenda 2063 must fully leverage AI (D'Souza et al., 2024). To develop and implement AI ethically, transparently, and responsibly, we need strong ethical standards and regulations (Radanliev, 2025; Zhang & Zhang, 2023). These frameworks should address data ownership, privacy, and security. They must also specify how diverse teams collaborate to use AI(Pesapane et al., 2021) safely. Stakeholder involvement in AI innovation guarantees that the social, cultural, and economic contexts of African communities are considered (Agbozo&Spassov, 2018). To eliminate bias and promote equitable use of AI, ethics should include data governance, algorithm transparency, and accountability (Nazer et al., 2023; Panch, 2019). These principles must also tackle algorithmic bias, which occurs when AI systems trained on historical data reinforce disparities. Relevant stakeholders should take part in data collection and algorithm development (Pham, 2021; Zou &Schiebinger, 2021). Current approaches can produce biased systems; therefore, they need to be modified to maximise AI benefits (Okolo, 2022). To prevent inequalities, ethical AI principles must be embedded in development processes (Dankwa-Mullan et al., 2021). Equity should be a core focus of AI programmes, which involves assessing datasets for representativeness and overseeing AI systems post-deployment to counteract distributional shifts by considering race, sex, and gender (Gurevich et al., 2022). Community and policymaker input is vital during the design, implementation, and governance of AI systems to ensure they align with societal values and goals (Olawade et al., 2024).

The distribution of AI technology must prioritise fair resource allocation and universal access to development, especially in low-income and developing countries (Akinrinmade

et al., 2023). Community engagement in AI co-design can reduce bias and benefit society at large, particularly marginalised groups (Bazzano et al., 2025; Nazer et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

Most research on technology development in Africa has been conducted within global North frameworks, where technology has progressed rapidly. Technology evaluation frameworks need to be revised to meet Africa's specific needs (Nazer et al., 2023; Bazzano, 2025). This has resulted in a decline in research on the intersection of technology and social development (Moyo et al., 2022). The intersectionality approach offers a comprehensive, Afrocentric perspective that is currently lacking; where it does appear, it is often anecdotal in the literature.

If this problem isn't fixed, Africa's unique social and cultural challenges will remain unsolved because the Global South relies on the Global North for technology, often for profit through surveillance capitalism and data extractivism. (Zou &Schiebinger, 2021; Cachat-Rosset & Klarsfeld, 2023; Ayana, 2024).

Ubuntu's emphasis on connectedness and its cooperative model of accountability can bridge the responsibility gap in AI ethics by encouraging community commitment to ethical outcomes (Ferlito et al., 2024). This perspective directly challenges the Western-centric notion of a "responsibility gap" in AI, arguing that the technology's opacity and autonomy make it harder to assign blame for adverse AI outcomes (Ferlito et al., 2024). Ubuntu-inspired disposition asserts that the community shares responsibility for AI ethics, leading to a re-evaluation of accountability frameworks (Ferlito et al., 2024).

Research Questions

- How can Ubuntu ideals be applied in digital development to promote equitable access, participation, and benefit-sharing within the African digital economy?
- What policy ideas, informed by Ubuntu and decolonial perspectives, can impact the African Union's Agenda 2063 to alleviate digital coloniality and encourage digital growth?
- What role could African indigenous knowledge systems, such as Ubuntu, play in developing AI ethics frameworks that are inclusive, culturally suitable, and unbiased?
- What steps can be taken to integrate marginalised populations in Africa in the design and management of AI systems, beyond just token participation?
- How can the African Union’s Agenda 2063 incorporate decoloniality into digital development strategies to empower African communities through AI adoption, rather than perpetuating colonial power structures?
- What are the impacts on data governance, algorithmic fairness, and accountability of an Ubuntu-inspired AI ethics framework inside African digital ecosystems?

Literature Review

Strategic Pathways for the African Union Agenda 2063

By 2063, this comprehensive plan for social and economic growth and integration aims to turn the continent into a global powerhouse. Digital transformation is essential to the goals of this agenda. However, the use of Western-centric AI ethical standards in Africa highlights the tension between technological progress and decolonisation (Mahamadou et al., 2024). This inconsistency often leads to culturally inappropriate frameworks that ignore local norms and priorities, thereby reinforcing epistemic injustice (Gwagwa et al., 2022). An Ubuntu-inspired perspective on AI ethics within Agenda 2063 can serve as a vital counter-narrative, ensuring that digital technology upholds human dignity and community welfare rather than fostering power imbalances (Gwagwa et al., 2022).

Integrating Ubuntu's communal and relational principles into AI ethics provides a strong foundation for addressing the shortcomings of individualistic ethical models, fostering equitable benefits and ongoing progress in AI-driven research interventions (Odero et al., 2024). The communitarian philosophy, often summarised as "I am because we are," can help resolve complex ethical issues in AI development, where debates over data ownership, privacy, and benefit sharing sometimes conflict with Western individualism (Mahamadou et al., 2024). Technological innovation is regarded as uniting global society and enhancing wellbeing, where AI is rapidly transforming service delivery (Ochasi et al., 2024). Incorporating Ubuntu concepts such as communalism, peace, and community-centred decision-making will ensure that AI-driven development for all Africans (Odero et al., 2024). This paradigm is crucial for addressing the "responsibility gap" in AI decision-making. Everyone involved in the AI lifecycle bears responsibility (Ferlito et al., 2024). A more equitable distribution of moral and legal responsibilities fosters trust and the ethical deployment of AI (Ferlito et al., 2024).

A retrospective on Agenda 2063

The African Union celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2013, the year it launched Agenda 2063. This 50-year strategic framework aims to transform Africa into an "integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent, driven by its own citizens and playing a dynamic role on the global stage." It envisions a continent that utilises its rich human and natural resources for sustainable and inclusive development, addressing historical injustices and modern challenges through self-reliance and pan-African solidarity. The plan relies on science, technology, and innovative ideas, especially digital technologies, to achieve its goals (African Union, 2023).

Technology should support the continent's cultural values and development objectives, rather than merely importing ideas from outside (Ferlito et al., 2024). This ensures that technological efforts benefit African societies and promote self-sufficiency (Ferlito et al., 2024). To foster continental connectivity, economic independence, and indigenous innovation ecosystems, these technologies must be employed strategically. This approach highlights the importance of policies that promote local skills development, protect intellectual property, and build digital infrastructure specific to Africa, reducing dependence on global technology corporations (Moyo et al., 2022).

It also demands regulatory frameworks that safeguard data sovereignty and prevent digital extractivism, ensuring fair benefits from technological progress for African

nations. Such a strategy will support digital transformation that promotes self-determination, economic growth, and protects against digital colonialism (Grancia, 2024). The agenda's focus on research and technology means that digital efforts must go beyond merely using ICT. This will allow Africans to maximise the advantages of 21st-century technology (Vinuesa et al., 2020). To participate in the global digital economy, prioritising the safety and resilience of digital public infrastructure and skill development is essential (Vinuesa et al., 2020). To defend African interests against digital colonialism, it is vital to collaborate to ensure that all perspectives are represented in global standard-setting and to improve local technology governance skills (Muliro, 2024; Salami, 2024). This requires comprehensive public policy frameworks that regulate the fair use of AI and align with national development goals and ethical governance (Frimpong, 2025). This paradigm shift must be purposeful to eliminate colonial knowledge-generating processes that sustain global resource inequity and biases (Ayana et al., 2024). Such an approach will evaluate the decolonisation of AI governance in Sub-Saharan Africa through national policies, data protection laws, and data sovereignty (Ayana et al., 2024). The assessment indicates that only a few Sub-Saharan African countries are actively advancing the decolonisation of AI governance (Ayana et al., 2024).

Historical resource exploitation has led to AI development being concentrated in the Global North, reinforcing existing inequalities and hindering Africa's ability to deploy AI fairly and effectively (Okolo et al., 2022). This creates a "politics of locationality,' where AI systems are mainly situated in industrialised nations, perpetuating power imbalances and marginalising African participation in AI governance and development (Obia, 2025). Due to Africa's geographical challenges, establishing regulations and overseeing AI becomes even more complex. Therefore, current approaches require re-evaluation to ensure Africans have meaningful influence and participation (Obia, 2025). Global AI readiness assessments often overlook the significant progress and structural challenges faced by African nations (Diallo et al., 2025). Although many African governments are developing AI policies and projects, these efforts are often ignored in international readiness evaluations (Diallo et al., 2025). This can create a distorted perception of Africa's capacity for AI development, hindering the creation of AI systems that are contextually aware and driven by African needs (Diallo et al., 2025; Zimba, 2025). This disparity underlines the urgent need for customised evaluation frameworks that accurately reflect the socio-economic and infrastructural realities of African countries, thereby improving understanding of their AI readiness (Diallo et al., 2025).

Advancements and Contradictions in African Digital Development

Digital infrastructure and internet access across the continent present significant opportunities and challenges, particularly concerning equitable access and governance (Gikunda, 2024). This dual reality calls for a nuanced understanding of digital development, where technological progress is evaluated by its capacity to reduce inequalities and fight digital colonialism (Mienye et al., 2024).

Consequently, debates on digital development must go beyond merely adopting new technologies to include empowering local communities and ensuring data sovereignty (Ayana et al., 2024). This calls for a thorough examination of the design, implementation, and governance of digital tools and platforms to ensure they align with African values and goals, rather than perpetuating external dependence (Ochasi et al., 2024; Baidoo-Anu, 2024). These shortcomings highlight the need for contextually suitable AI solutions and policies that prioritise equitable access and mitigate the technological gap between urban

and rural areas, which could worsen socioeconomic inequalities (Ochasi et al., 2024). An inclusive strategy is crucial to ensure that digitalisation advances genuine progress by tackling structural and systemic challenges rather than merely reflecting global power imbalances (Muliro, 2024). This involves analysing AI discourse, primarily originating from developed industrial nations, which often emphasises utopian benefits while neglecting digital inequalities in underdeveloped economies (Dlamini & Ndzinisa, 2025).

Therefore, developing African-specific ethical AI frameworks that confront bias and promote equity is vital, moving beyond Western-centric paradigms (Ochasi et al., 2024). To mitigate risks and prevent emerging technologies from deepening societal disparities, a justice-centred framework for AI in Africa must incorporate principles of solidarity, the common good, and sustainability (Ochasi et al., 2024). Looking at how digital infrastructure is expanding.

Methodology

Conceptual and comparative methodologies are used to examine the theoretical foundations and policy impacts of these technologies for sustainable, inclusive growth. It draws on data from various studies, journals, and academic publications to identify key topics, research gaps, and emerging trends relevant to the study's aims (Siqueira et al., 2024) and AI in Southern Africa development and its challenges (Niyitunga, 2023). It explores how AI affects social, economic, and environmental sustainability from the African context through the prism of the Ubuntu Philosophy (Năstasă et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Critical insights from the African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasise the need for a decolonial framework in AI and digital development, illustrating how current AI applications sometimes perpetuate "enduring colonial repercussions" (Dlamini & Ndzinisa, 2025). This research shows how dependence on Western technologies, lacking proper regulation or thorough scrutiny, results in a loss of sovereignty over digital infrastructure and data, while ignoring African ethical considerations (Salami, 2024). This reinforces digital colonialism, as African nations are viewed as technology consumers rather than creators of the digital future. It also amplifies power imbalances in global technology (Muldoon &Wú, 2023).

A similar pattern was observed when African raw materials were exploited to support industries in the Global North. AI has become a new asset in the data economy. Cognitive imperialism occurs when Western epistemologies embedded in AI systems erase Indigenous knowledge systems and spread biases (Ofosu-Asare, 2024). It is crucial to prioritise African perspectives and ethical frameworks in AI development to foster digital futures that are equitable and accessible to all (Muldoon &Wú, 2023). This re-centring is vital to address algorithmic biases caused by differences between colonised and non-colonised nations. These biases lead to digital discrimination and impede progress on the continent (Menon, 2023).

Many Sub-Saharan African countries recognise the need for AI governance to be decolonised, yet only a few have taken meaningful steps to develop institutional and national strategies (Ayana et al., 2024). This highlights that local populations understand and engage in decolonial AI efforts in various ways (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024). Such

disparities underline the urgent requirement for continent-wide collaboration to embed decolonial theoretical frameworks into policy and institutional reforms. These reforms are essential to combat data exploitation and foreign technological regulations that worsen power disparities rather than addressing Africa's specific developmental needs (Salami, 2024; Muldoon &Wú, 2023).

Digital colonialism exploits African data, often under the guise of technical aid by companies that do not genuinely support the region (Salami, 2024). The concentration of benefits—talent, data, infrastructure, and computing resources—in wealthier countries marginalises the Global South (Kponyo et al., 2024). Despite their significant contributions through data extraction and clickwork (Fischbach et al., 2023) (Muldoon &Wú, 2023), African nations remain behind in technology and governance. As AI becomes more prevalent in the Global North, AI applications in Africa often underperform because they tend to fail to adapt to local contexts (Okolo et al., 2022).

Due to this mismatch, the Global South receives digital technology, funding, and organisational structures from wealthier countries, which increases their vulnerability and dependence (Astobiza et al., 2022). This dependency makes it harder for African nations to establish AI norms and regulations, worsening global AI inequalities and limiting their ability to find suitable solutions for their own contexts (Obia, 2025). This reliance highlights the urgent need for self-sufficiency and local AI development to attain digital sovereignty (Obia, 2025). Such initiatives are crucial to prevent Africans from becoming "digital refugees" and to equip them with tools to create AI ecosystems and behaviours that benefit their communities (Ruttkamp, 2025). To avoid exploitative techno-neocolonial partnerships and ensure AI serves all stakeholders' interests, it is vital to prioritise equitable collaborations and ethical issues in AI development (Kponyo et al., 2024). AI colonialism, especially in the Global South, underscores the need for measures to protect vulnerable communities from being exploited as "human natural resources" by Western technology corporations (Mahamadou et al., 2024; Muldoon &Wú, 2023; Regilme, 2024). The environmental impact of large-scale machine learning models—often relocating their processing power and energy consumption to the Global South—worsens climate change and resource depletion (Regilme, 2024). For this mitigation to gain traction, it requires a collective effort through the re-purposing of the African Union to take the centre stage in negotiations, setting of standards and enforcing compliance on the technological companies that are by and large owned and domiciled in the West (MISA, 2025)

This results in a new form of digital and environmental exploitation that benefits the Global North while harming the Global South (Regilme, 2024). It highlights the need for an ethical framework in AI governance that shifts power towards inclusion to address structural inequalities (Chan et al., 2021). To tackle these complex issues, comprehensive global AI governance frameworks centred on human rights and attentive to the vulnerabilities and developmental needs of the Global South must be established and implemented (Astobiza et al., 2022). These frameworks should prioritise cultural diversity and justice. To ensure benefits for all communities — not just those with strong economies — local stakeholders must be involved in AI development (Nyaaba et al., 2024). A liberatory design approach is needed to help educators and learners identify and challenge oppressive AI frameworks, fostering indigenous knowledge and digital literacy (Nyaaba et al., 2024). The high cost of advanced Generative AI technology worsens educational inequalities, and the data practices of GenAI often lead to commercial

exploitation that does not serve the needs of local students and communities (Nyaaba et al., 2024). This relationship often exemplifies digital neocolonialism, where materials and curricula mirror Western ideology while marginalising non-Western perspectives and languages (Nyaaba et al., 2024a, 2024b).

Transnational technology companies may promote a digital culture that could lead to more uniform GenAI content, limiting local viewpoints and reducing the diversity and freedom of indigenous peoples (Nyaaba et al., 2024). To avoid this, adopt liberatory and foresight-driven design strategies. Such approaches enable the creation of GenAI technologies within specific cultural contexts without imposing external rules (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

AI development and deployment should support cultural diversity and address algorithmic biases that marginalise non-dominant groups through human-centred approaches (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Decentralised hubs and local policy frameworks can foster culturally sensitive and equitable GenAI, helping to counter neocolonialism (Nyaaba et al., 2024). These design strategies empower students and educators to critically examine and challenge Eurocentric biases in GenAI, thus resisting digital neocolonialism (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Liberatory and foresight-driven approaches can mitigate the neocolonial aspects of Generative AI, promoting a more egalitarian and culturally responsive application within educational settings (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Such frameworks are essential for empowering marginalised communities in AI development and policymaking, moving beyond superficial notions of inclusion. This fosters a global AI ecosystem that values and integrates diverse ways of knowing, rather than imposing a Western perspective (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

Decentralised GenAI hubs and localised design initiatives enable region-specific solutions and reduce Western technological dominance (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Indigenous communities have developed GAI tools to safeguard their data rights and revive their languages and cultures, serving as inspiring success stories for other projects (Nyaaba et al., 2024). This approach surpasses mere adaptation of Western technologies to local needs by endorsing authentic innovation rooted in indigenous knowledge and cultural values (Nyaaba et al., 2024). These strategies help address biases in AI systems trained primarily on Western datasets, which often marginalise non-dominant cultures and languages (Nyaaba et al., 2024). An in-depth analysis of how AI algorithms—often developed within Western paradigms—perpetuate and reinforce cultural prejudices through data processing and output is necessary, as these influence educational content and pedagogical practices globally (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Global tech corporations promote digital cultural hegemony, leading to GenAI content that is uniform worldwide, silencing local voices and reducing cultural diversity and freedom among indigenous peoples (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

AI-based educational tools risk unintentionally reinforcing Eurocentric perspectives, constraining global knowledge frameworks, and hindering the development of culturally relevant curricula (Nyaaba et al., 2024). To counteract these persistent neocolonial tendencies, AI development must adopt human-centred, liberatory design methodologies and foresight-based principles (Nyaaba et al., 2024). This approach reduces the risk of cognitive imperialism arising from Western dominance in AI development by ensuring systems are technically proficient and aligned with community norms (Ofosu-Asare, 2024). For AI systems to respect and reflect worldwide cultural diversity, GenAI

development should incorporate diverse data sources, local training, and community-driven initiatives. Achieving this requires transformation across the entire AI ecosystem. AI design, development, and deployment must go beyond technological progress to include cultural considerations. This involves integrating indigenous knowledge systems and local language frameworks from the outset (Xiao et al., 2025; Nyaaba, 2025). Such integration makes GenAI outputs more culturally relevant and meaningful, fostering more inclusive and welcoming educational environments (Bozkurt et al., 2024). This directly challenges GenAI's 'whiteness', which is rooted in Eurocentric standards and the neglect of indigenous and minority languages (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

The widespread bias embedded in GenAI systems fosters cognitive imperialism by marginalising indigenous knowledge, which is vital for inclusive technology (Ofosu-Asare, 2024). Ideological and cultural biases may lead GenAI models to replace human oversight, critical thinking, and empathy with algorithmic solutions (Bozkurt et al., 2024). Educational institutions utilising AI must balance technological innovation with ethical responsibilities, particularly in maintaining cultural authenticity and intellectual diversity. To ensure AI systems are advanced, ethically responsible, culturally inclusive, and adaptable across global educational contexts, the GenAI framework must incorporate principles such as Ubuntu and decoloniality. While there is a risk of GenAI stifling creativity and critical thinking, full integration of these principles can prevent bias and exclusion (Bozkurt et al., 2024). The manifesto underlines that GenAI is ideologically and culturally biased, omitting many perspectives (Bozkurt et al., 2024). As AI algorithms reshape social interaction and content creation, education needs a critical community perspective (Bozkurt et al., 2024).

Knowledge Contributing Framework & Recommendations

An Integrated Framework and contributing model

The model, *'An Intersectionality Digital Transformation and AI for the African Union Agenda 2063,'* presents a holistic approach that guides the evolution, development, and deployment of technology through an intersectionality lens rooted in the Ubuntu/Afrocentric perspective. The framework asserts that Africa's digital transformation under Agenda 2063 is inclusive, guided by intersectionality theory; adaptable, through the diffusion of innovation theory; empowering, via the capability approach; and culturally sovereign, grounded in the Ubuntu Philosophy or the Afrocentric approach. This is depicted in the tabular summation in Table 1, and depicted in Figure 2 through a diagrammatic summation.

Table 1: An Intersectionality Digital Transformation &AI Model for the African Union Agenda 2063

Theory	Key Insights	Role in Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence	AU Agenda 2063 Alignment	Policy Implications
Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)	Digital disparities are multi-dimensional	Identifies marginalized groups in tech access	Inclusive development (Aspiration 6)	Inclusive AI Policies: Use intersectionality to design gender-responsive, disability-inclusive digital strategies.
Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 1962)	Adoption of technology and innovation is unequal	Optimises AI adoption rates across Africa	Infrastructure & innovation (Aspiration 7)	Localised Innovation: Apply diffusion theory to tailor AI solutions (E.g Swahili NLP for East Africa).
Capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011)	Technology must enhance human freedoms as a whole	Measures real freedoms enabled by digital tools	Prosperity & well-being (Aspiration 1)	Human-Centric Tech: Leverage the Capability Approach to prioritise education and healthcare AI.
Ubuntu Philosophy/Afro-centric Approach	Ensures digital transformation is community-cantered	Ensures culturally rooted, equitable AI governance	Pan-Africanism (Aspiration 5)	Ethical AI Frameworks: Ground AI ethics in Ubuntu to prevent exploitation and data colonialism.

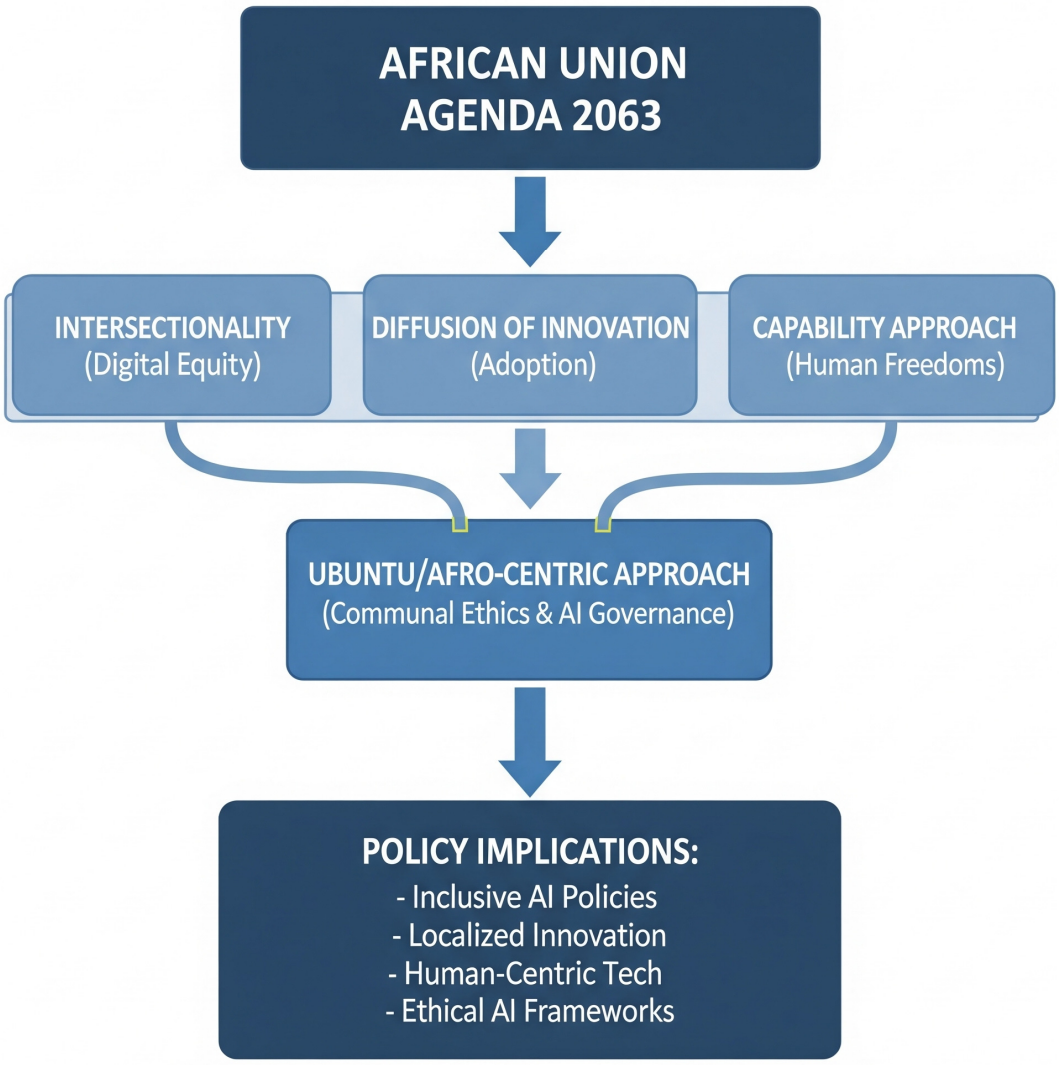

Figure 2: Diagrammatic illustration of the Intersectionality Digital Transformation &AI Model for the African Union Agenda 2063(Researchers' Construction)

Ethical Digital Progression Grounded in Ubuntu

Ubuntu, which emphasises connection, community, and shared humanity, provides Africa with an ethical foundation for responsible digital development. This concept offers a compelling counter-narrative to the individualistic and exploitative ideas of digital colonialism. It advocates for technological progress that benefits society (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Ubuntu promotes respect and dignity for all, ensuring various African groups work together voluntarily to develop AI solutions (Nyaaba et al., 2024). This comprehensive approach safeguards local languages and prevents cultural dominance on key internet platforms, thereby limiting diverse content and local viewpoints (Nyaaba et al., 2024). The Ubuntu framework encourages AI systems to prioritise community needs over individual demands, resulting in a fairer distribution of digital benefits (Nyaaba et al., 2024). To prevent misuse and ensure equitable benefits, discussions concerning data ownership and control—particularly genetic and biometric data—are crucial within this

Ubuntu framework (Mokoena, 2024). This approach would promote sustainable practices rooted in collective accountability to lessen the environmental and social impacts of AI development and disposal, which often burden African communities, especially women (Mensah &Wynsberghe, 2025).

Comprehending Ubuntu in Digital Ethics and Governance

The ideals of Ubuntu in digital ethics present an innovative approach to addressing Africa's unique challenges and opportunities in digital technology (Mishra & Kugler, 2024). This framework helps assess AI policies to ensure they align with African lived experiences and values, rather than merely adopting European models (Mensah &Wynsberghe, 2025). It involves examining data governance entities, such as data trusts, and conceptualising data protection as data justice, especially considering low literacy levels that hinder informed consent (Mishra & Kugler, 2024). This approach is crucial to prevent algorithmic colonialism, which could marginalise African perspectives and exacerbate digital power imbalances (Ruttkamp, 2025). An Ubuntu-based digital ethics framework can help develop data governance models that prioritise communal benefit and prosperity over individual ownership, thereby countering data colonialism (Mahamadou et al., 2024). In healthcare data ethics, African philosophies, particularly Ubuntu, provide a culturally meaningful foundation for AI ethics (Odero et al., 2024; Mahamadou et al., 2024). Ethical standards must be inclusive and recognise cultural diversity, taking into account political, cultural, and historical factors, such as colonialism (Mahamadou et al., 2024). Ubuntu advocates a communitarian approach that emphasises community welfare and social cohesion in the design and implementation of AI systems, challenging the Western focus on individual autonomy in data ethics (Mahamadou et al., 2024). This requires a rethinking of ethical AI frameworks, primarily of Western origin, which may not adequately represent African values and societal norms (Mahamadou et al., 2024). Such re-evaluation would support contextually relevant and comprehensive AI ethics frameworks that address digital commerce and sustainable development (Adeola, 2024). Ubuntu-inspired frameworks promote fairness, communal well-being, human dignity, respect for individuals, and trust, ensuring that AI systems are collectively developed and utilised to deliver equitable care and social benefits (Amugongo et al., 2023).

Privacy and data sovereignty with Ubuntu

Ubuntu prioritises social well-being over individual domination and provides a holistic framework for reconsidering data ownership and privacy (Mahamadou et al., 2024). This approach challenges traditional ideas of informed consent, which require carefully balancing individual rights and collective responsibilities (Mahamadou et al., 2024). In African communal settings, community consent, often mediated by elders or leaders, can take precedence over individual agreement, as decisions usually reflect family and communal interests (Mahamadou et al., 2024). This collective view stresses that a person is linked to their community, so decisions, especially those regarding data, should be made together (Mahamadou et al., 2024). Unlike Ubuntu, Western ethical frameworks tend to prioritise privacy and individual liberty over interdependence (Mahamadou et al., 2024). However, integrating individual and communal consent, as seen in many African countries, encourages ethical data governance and benefits society (Mahamadou et al., 2024).

This hybrid approach balances personal rights with communal responsibilities, creating a more comprehensive and culturally relevant digital ethics framework in Africa

(Mahamadou et al., 2024; Odero, 2024). An Ubuntu-inspired model recognises issues of data exploitation and biases, especially when AI models are developed without considering diverse environmental contexts (Mahamadou et al., 2024). It emphasises the importance of designing contextually appropriate and ethical AI systems to ensure technological advancements promote social equality rather than deepen inequalities (Odero et al., 2024). In 2022, 35% of African governments lacked data protection regulations, complicating ethical data management; therefore, Ubuntu principles must guide efforts to safeguard privacy and promote fair data practices (Mahamadou et al., 2024).

This gap highlights the need for comprehensive, culturally responsive legal frameworks that balance communal values and individual rights in digital policy. Such frameworks require re-evaluating informed consent models to accommodate cultural diversity, particularly in biomedical research involving group consent (Akpa-Inyang & Chima, 2021; Mahamadou et al., 2024). These approaches acknowledge that, in many African cultures, human identity and well-being are fundamentally rooted in community, making individual consent insufficient (Akpa-Inyang & Chima, 2021). This underlines the importance of a deeper understanding of privacy, which, within an Ubuntu paradigm, includes community safeguarding and data stewardship (Olinger et al., 2007). In this broader view, collective entities, including communities, hold data rights that protect them from exploitation and ensure that data-driven innovations benefit the entire community (Akpa-Inyang & Chima, 2021; Appiah et al., 2024).

Decolonisation: Regaining Digital Control

Decoloniality helps analyse and challenge colonial power structures that continue to influence African technological development and governance (Barrett et al., 2025). This perspective clarifies how Western-centric technology and data laws maintain digital colonialism and block Africa's digital future (Mahamadou et al., 2024). The study highlights that Africa often adopts Western technologies without considering or respecting local values, interests, and opinions (Salami, 2024). This reliance results in data extraction practices favouring foreign firms over local communities, resembling past resource exploitation (Mahamadou et al., 2024). This issue, referred to as "digital coloniality," arises when external standards and moral frameworks are imposed on Africa without regard for its social, cultural, and developmental context (Barrett et al., 2025). Such practices hinder the growth of indigenous technology solutions, maintaining a cycle of dependence and limiting African sovereignty in shaping the digital landscape (Barrett et al., 2025). A decolonial approach promotes African-centric digital policies and technological innovation grounded in local epistemologies and development goals, aiming to reduce power imbalances (Barrett et al., 2025). This involves rejecting the idea that Western IT firms are "digital saviours" and recognising that they often view Africans as "human natural resources" for profit (Mahamadou et al., 2024).

This perspective highlights that many AI and data-driven systems benefit global superpowers, creating systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact the Global South (Barrett et al., 2025). These issues are worsened by algorithms reflecting their creators' biases, leading to digital discrimination and new forms of colonialism (Menon, 2023). Western firms predominantly own AI intellectual property and computing infrastructure, echoing historic colonial patterns where external powers exploited indigenous labour and resources (Salami, 2024; Muldoon &Wú, 2023). "Technocoloniality," or modern coloniality, utilises technology to control and dominate,

much like Western digital tools did in the past (Nkoudou, 2023). This enables foreign firms to control critical digital infrastructure, resulting in uneven data flows and enduring power imbalances across Africa (Salami, 2024). Foreign companies often provide technological support that increases dependency and facilitates access to African data (Salami, 2024). Digital extractivism—the extraction and commercialisation of raw data from the Global South by the Global North—worsens global power inequalities and resource extraction (Barrett et al., 2025). Digital technologies often conflict with indigenous African epistemologies, further deepening these disparities (Stam, 2021).

Supporting Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation Frameworks

To counteract cognitive imperialism and ensure that technological progress aligns with cultural values and ethics, Indigenous epistemologies must be actively integrated into AI frameworks (Ofosu-Asare, 2024; Lewis et al., 2024). This approach, called "Abundant Intelligences," promotes Indigenous-led research to conceptualise and develop AI systems rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, emphasising abundance rather than scarcity and embedding technology into traditional ways of life for future generations (Lewis et al., 2024). To fight digital neocolonialism, this plan prioritises cultural diversity and fairness in AI development. Local communities and educators have the power to dismantle oppressive structures within generative AI systems (Nyaaba et al., 2024a, 2024b). The widespread use of Western languages and cultural references in generative AI marginalises non-Western students and threatens indigenous languages, underlining the need for human-centred enhancements (Nyaaba et al., 2024). The cost of using generative AI reduces educational equity, and monopolistic ownership of GenAI data allows corporations to profit without benefiting local communities or learners (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Liberatory design can make AI more culturally relevant and meet the needs of diverse educational communities worldwide (Nyaaba et al., 2024). To prevent algorithmic bias and ensure GenAI supports cultural norms and identities in education, it is essential to adopt human-centred approaches that value cultural diversity (Nyaaba et al., 2024). This involves developing culturally relevant AI systems that incorporate diverse cultural backgrounds and foster critical thinking to challenge stereotypes and assumptions (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Initiatives focused on innovative design and foresight can assist in creating ethical, culturally inclusive AI from the outset (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Such efforts will reduce the risk of neocolonial power dynamics and oppression in educational content, making learning fairer and more culturally appropriate (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Te Hiku Media exemplifies this well. According to Nyaaba et al. (2024), a Māori-led organisation developed generative AI tools to revive Te Reo while also empowering the community over their data rights. Localised, community-driven GenAI development enables indigenous peoples to create technology aligned with their cultural and linguistic needs, resisting digital neocolonialism (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This comprehensive strategy ensures that AI is developed and used in ways that respect local values, promote diversity, and address the past wrongs of digital colonialism, thereby creating a fairer and more sustainable digital future for Africa (Ayana et al., 2024). It underscores the importance of proactive governance that combines relationality and data justice to prevent "digital refugees" and equip people with the tools to manage their AI ecosystems (Ruttkamp, 2025). To ensure AI growth aligns with African values and objectives, strong regulations and significant investment in local innovation and capacity-building are essential. This enhances digital sovereignty, fostering technological progress and independence while challenging digital colonialism (Ayana et al., 2024).

Combating cognitive imperialism and supporting inclusive global AI requires integrating indigenous knowledge systems with diverse data ethics (Ofosu-Asare, 2024; Barrett et al., 2025). This framework emphasises that African governments must establish clear ethical standards and implement regulations that ensure technology development and deployment are transparent and accessible to all. Protecting Africa's digital sovereignty and economic interests is crucial (Salami, 2024). It is vital to prevent power imbalances and create a fairer global digital landscape, enabling African governments to become active providers of technology rather than mere consumers (Barrett et al., 2025). Understanding power distribution in AI development and recognising how historical and geopolitical factors influence perceptions of the decolonial framework are essential (Muldoon &Wú, 2023). Research indicates that decoloniality challenges Western supremacy in AI; however, entrenched neocolonial frameworks and the dominance of AI benefits in wealthy nations complicate its realisation (Kponyo et al., 2024). These neocolonial dynamics call for a reassessment of global AI equity and self-determination frameworks (Salami, 2024). This emphasises the need for African nations to develop their own AI capabilities and actively participate in international AI governance to incorporate their perspectives into global standards and norms (Dlamini & Ndzinisa, 2025). Addressing transparency, accountability, and the risk of AI misallocating limited resources away from vital services—potentially worsening inequality—requires proactive engagement (Adams, 2021) (Frimpong, 2025). This ongoing dialogue highlights the importance of prioritising human health and wellbeing, cultural diversity, and equitable access to emerging technologies in the Global South during AI development and deployment (Muliro, 2024; Nyaaba et al., 2024). Muldoon and Wú (2023) aim to establish a decolonial AI ecosystem that benefits all communities, transcending localisation and rooted in Ubuntu. This vision involves a thorough re-evaluation of AI from its inception, focusing on relationality and collective welfare (Roche et al., 2022). It contrasts with Western-centric AI ethics, which often ignore indigenous ethical frameworks such as Ubuntu, exemplifying "epistemic injustice" or "ethical colonialism" (Yilma, 2025). Such neglect reinforces the idea that AI ethics prioritise Western viewpoints while neglecting African narratives and values (Yilma, 2025). This raises fundamental questions about Africa’s perspective on AI ethics and governance on a global level. It highlights the importance of legislation and ideas rooted in African contexts (Grancia, 2024).

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