

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A POTENTIAL TOOL FOR GENDER RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Gender inequity although somehow an African problem, is a global problem with differences in existence and practices. However, this study focuses on Africa as it calls for Africans to use African lens to see African problem and finds solution from African perspective in order to uphold African cultures, identities and values for the world is a global village where the different societies in the world are integrated into a whole. The result of this is twofold, that is, both positive and negative. Positively, it is breaking all the distance and uniting the world. Negatively, it leads to loss of cultural values and creation of inequality. Thus, to continue fighting for gender inequity in Africa without reconciling, will affect African posterity and thwart Africans from attaining and sustaining development. Therefore, there is need for gender reconciliation in order to uphold African cultures, identities and values, because if Gender inequity remains a tenacious challenge, it will hinder political, economic, social, and cultural development and progress. This study examines the potential opportunities presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and confirms it as a tool for reconciling and harmonizing gender disparities and challenging restrictive societal norms. The study argues that, when Artificial Intelligence is ethically developed, designed and contextually adapted, Artificial Intelligence can be harnessed to promote greater understanding and inclusivity among diverse gender identities especially when used wisely. And this can be attained and sustained now that Africa is undergoing a digital revolution. The study discovers that if Artificial Intelligence systems are built on biased data or designed without attention to African gender realities, it will risk and worsen gender equity in Africa. So, since gender roles and Artificial Intelligence are humanly made, they can also be solved by human beings by using this potential opportunity presented by Artificial Intelligence. In this context, Artificial Intelligence is not just a technological tool but a transformative force that supports gender justice and reconciliation. The study employs an analysis method to examine the conceptual involvements and their implications, then it concludes that Artificial Intelligence has the potential tool to redesign fairer, smarter and more inclusive system when guided intentionally and will serve as a transformative force for gender equity.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, African AI, gender equity, gender reconciliation.

Introduction

In Africa, majority of the scholars and students are in consensus that there are gender disparities. The effects of this disparity are what resulted to gender crisis which are obvious in families, workplaces, social structures, in religious expression, political structuring and general system of justice delivery. It is assumed that this situation is highly discriminative against women and has thwarted sustainable development in Africa, for

women are the major promotor of every societal culture. Therefore, gender reconciliation is necessary for the development of every sector in Africa because equal access, equity and meaningful participation are preconditions for ensuring mutual continuation of men and women in ideas, developmental directions, policies and practices. According to D.H. Lawrence citing William and Cynthia Brix "...the future of humanity will be decided not by relations between nations but by relations between men and women." (Lawrence & Brix, 2019). This expression shows the importance of gender reconciliation in Africa, which Artificial Intelligence will serve as a potential tool.

During my formative years, I absorbed radical feminist perspectives, portraying men as antagonists and African culture as inherently patriarchal without critical examination or an African lens. My master's thesis defense on "**John Stuart Mill's Concept of Liberty and Women's Participation in Nigerian Politics**" became a turning point. My emotional tirade, though philosophically earnest, lacked nuance. It was only when Prof. Charles Nweke intervened, not to attack or condone, but to teach and trim people's wrong impressions that my understanding deepened. He clarified key concepts such as sex, gender, natural roles, gender roles, equity and equality, teaching that African cultures are "not bad when viewed from African perspectives but require amendment and advancement." This pivotal moment redirected me from advocating Western paradigms toward seeking reconciliation grounded in Africa's rich cultural tapestry.

This study positions Artificial Intelligence as a powerful agent to address the entrenched gender inequities in Africa if properly guided, since human beings are the creators of gender roles and Artificial Intelligence. Furthermore, misuse of Artificial Intelligence can entrench biases, but thoughtfully designed systems can heal the deep wound caused by patriarchal systems across emotional, social, political, and cultural realms.

Conceptual Clarification

Artificial Intelligence: Artificial Intelligence refers to machines and computer systems that are purposely prepared, planned or designed to mimic human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, solving problems and making decisions. It is a system that is capable of performing tasks that require human intelligence, "learning, reasoning, and decision-making" (Russell & Norvig, 2010, p. viii) and "simulating human learning, comprehension, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, and autonomy" (Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2024). Andrew Ng emphasizes, "AI is the new electricity. Just as electricity transformed industries, AI will do the same" (Whitfield, 2025).

African Artificial Intelligence: This is a concept coined by Cissé. It just concerns AI in relationship to Africa. As he explains, "AI can solve African problems with African data" (Cissé, n.d.), underscoring the importance of contextualized, culturally sensitive AI development. Timnit Gebru warns, "If we don't have diverse perspectives involved in building AI, we are encoding our biases into the future."

Gender Equity: Gender equity refers to the fairness and justice in the treatment, opportunities and outcomes for individuals of all genders. It aims to address and eliminate disparities, biases and barriers that thwart people from reaching their full potential simply because of gender.

Gender Reconciliation:

Gender reconciliation is addressing and healing the historical and systemic inequalities

between men, women, and gender-diverse people. In Africa, this means challenging traditional gender roles, cultural barriers, and institutional discrimination that limit access, voice, and opportunity especially for women and girls. William Keeping and Cynthia Brix define gender reconciliation as a “skillfully facilitated forum” where men and women “examine the subtle knots of cultural conditioning ... support each other in healing ... address associated inequities” (Keeping & Brix, 2019).

Importance of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is another opportunity to restructure and recreate human society in a way that will suit and serve both genders in order to attain and sustain development in all ramifications of human life. Artificial Intelligence did not come to take the place of human beings or become human beings but made to help human beings. Yoshua Bengio affirms that “our intelligence is what makes us human and Artificial Intelligence is an extension of that quality.” It is designed and programmed to help human beings, therefore the designers should be guided in order not to teach Artificial Intelligence gender biases and stereotypes, rather Artificial Intelligence should be guided in a way that it will be beneficial to future generations not create burdens or problems. According to Adeleye, “Artificial Intelligence refers to systems that mimic aspects of human intelligence, including learning, problem-solving, language processing, and pattern recognition”. In this context, Artificial Intelligence should be designed to solve problems, correct misconceptions on gender roles, teach truth and store right information that will be helpful to posterity.

According to UN, “Africa's future will not be shaped by technology alone but by the values, visions, and choices that guide it.” Artificial intelligence is a “tool, not a saviour but paired with deliberate gender reconciliation, it holds remarkable potential to build a fairer, stronger Africa for the next generation”. At this juncture, it is crucial to note that Artificial intelligence alone cannot solve Africa's gender problems but when used wisely, it can become a key pathway in larger reconciliation efforts. So since human beings are the creators of gender roles and Artificial Intelligence, human beings should entail in real life, develop and sustain every sector in Africa by using Artificial Intelligence. In this vein, Joy Buolamwini holds that “algorithmic bias, like human bias, can be masked and unmasked”

Realistically speaking, Artificial Intelligence is a potential tool to restructure society, redesign cultural roles, bring inclusive systems and improve livelihoods. In this vein, Artificial Intelligence has the potential to change traditional gender roles, cultural barriers, and institutional discrimination that limit women and girls' voice and thwart women's access and opportunity to excel. When the right data is given to Artificial Intelligence, gender imbalance will gradually fade out and reconciliation will take place. But this can be attained and sustained now that Africa is undergoing a digital revolution and mobile technology. If Artificial Intelligence systems are built on biased data or designed without attention to African gender realities, they risk worsening this gender equity rather than solving them.

To Build Good Legacy: The beginning of a good Legacy for African children starts from good information or right data. Artificial Intelligence can be designed to disrupt discriminatory practices, amplify marginalized voices, and accelerate social progress. But it can also entrench old inequalities if left unchecked. So, there's a need to keep positive information to Africa's future children - a good Legacy! for who designs

Artificial Intelligence matters. Artificial Intelligence is not neutral, it reflects the biases, assumptions, and values of its human creators. If African voices, especially African women's voices, are missing in Artificial Intelligence development, the continent risks importing foreign systems that ignore local realities or reinforce harmful stereotypes.

Decolonization: There is the need for Africa's self-discovery and determination because gender equity is a global problem, not African problem, it has been a long-standing issue in human societies. Despite programmes that lead to progress, gender based discrimination, stereotypes and biases continues showing its ugly face, affecting individuals and communities globally. So, Africa needs decolonization in order to understand African problems and solve African problems from an African perspective. With this, Africa will recover its rich cultural heritage and see things with an African lens. Once Africans have 'self-discovery', there will be sustainable development, environmental protection and community emancipation and empowerment which will suit both men and women.

Who designs Artificial Intelligence matters: There is a need to reconcile in order to be involved in innovation, investment and creativity in this world of technology and modernity. Artificial Intelligence should be the potential tool for Gender Reconciliation because it is trying to recreate, restructure and involve all aspects of humanities. In order to attain and sustain material development, human development should not be ignored.

Artificial Intelligence as Potential Tool for Gender Reconciliation

Using Artificial Intelligence to reconcile both genders need a combined effort from different fields such as philosophy, sociology, computer science, and so on. The fundamental question becomes, how can Artificial Intelligence be harnessed not just as a technological tool, but as a transformative force that supports gender justice and reconciliation in order to reshape Africa's future? For Jean-Paul Sartre, "Man is condemned to be free, because once thrown into the world, he is forced to choose"¹⁰. It is man's freedom to choose that brought the idea of Artificial Intelligence, in order to solve human and societal problems, therefore Artificial Intelligence should be applied positively to liberate not to control, then face the responsibility that comes with developing and using Artificial Intelligence.

Gender Advocacy in African perspective: It is important to note that Artificial Intelligence is a tool in the hands of humanity, it cannot achieve its work without human beings and to achieve this requires gender reconciliation advocacy, that will focus on promoting understanding, empathy and cooperation between both genders in order to address gender crises, settle the conflicts and this should be aimed to create a more inclusive and equitable society. When gender awareness, reorientation and reawakening take place, emancipation and empowerment will be fully implemented, it will wake many from slumber for many are ignorant of gender equity especially from African perspective, starting from family, workplace, education, community development and other aspects of humanities. Doğu Turkey holds that to "prevent gender bias in AI, we must first address gender bias in our society". He further says that "if the AI is trained on data that associates women and men with different and specific skills or interests, it will generate content reflecting that bias. This resonates with Dogus' statement: "artificial Intelligence mirrors the biases that are present in our society" and that manifest in AI training data."¹²

Education: Artificial Intelligence powered with educational tools have the ability to create awareness about gender issues, promote empathy and critical thinking.

Government needs to invest in public education and dialogue, in order to promote public discussions about Artificial Intelligence and gender, ensuring that all citizens, not just elites, are part of shaping Africa's Artificial Intelligence future. So using Artificial Intelligence to attain gender reconciliation through education requires creating inclusive learning environments, understanding and uniformity of ideas from both genders. This logically relates with Bacon's assertion: "knowledge is power". Through education, one can use Artificial Intelligence to detect bias and mitigate gender stereotypes and promote inclusivity.

Human responsibility can close Gender Gap: Since humans create both gender norms and Artificial Intelligence, we hold the responsibility to ensure both are aligned for justice and equity. Artificial Intelligence alone will not solve Africa's gender problems, but with human beings especially when used wisely. It can become a key pathway in larger reconciliation. When Artificial Intelligence is wisely and intentionally designed, developed and monitored, gender gaps will naturally begin to fade since mobile phone is in the hands of everyone. Though in this vein, Judith Butler argues that "Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it's at any given juncture in time. Artificial Intelligence is capable of helping human beings to navigate this complexity by identifying and challenging gender biases, facilitating dialogue and developing more equitable systems.

Bias Detective and Erasure: Artificial Intelligence can be used to detect gender bias and used to erase all the existing gender bias when it is properly trained and guided on biased data. This can help in promoting gender equity. AI systems can uncover hidden biases in datasets "algorithmic bias, like human bias, can be masked and unmasked" (Buolamwini, 2018).

Intentional Development and Inclusive Design: Developing and designing Artificial Intelligence with the intention to close gender gaps in Africa and implement gender inclusiveness is another effective pathway to gender reconciliation. This requires considering the cultural, social, economic contexts of different genders. AI models that integrate African gender perspectives during development can mitigate structural inequities.

Gender Neutral Language Processing: Artificial Intelligence is designed to work for human beings, this requires training Artificial Intelligence with the languages that it needs to be involved with, this will assist in reducing gender bias and stereotypes. Training AI on languages with equitable pronoun usage can reduce gender bias.

Pathways to Implementation

- **Gender Advocacy and Public Education:** AI could be used as a platform for raising gender awareness, reflecting the Baconian principle that "knowledge is power."
- **Human Responsibility:** Judith Butler notes that "gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred" (Butler, 1990). Human designers must responsibly ensure AI's alignment with equity goals.
- **Ethical Governance:** UNESCO and UN Women stress the importance of "data governance frameworks prioritizing transparency, accountability, and fairness." African governments should establish ethical guidelines to prevent misuse of AI.

Challenges and Considerations

Cultural resistance: Gender roles in many African societies are deeply tied to cultural identity, any efforts to use Artificial Intelligence for gender reconciliation must engage with local traditions and values. So community involvement, participatory design, and culturally sensitive messaging are very important. According to Kluwer, Artificial Intelligence should not be trained on data that reflects societal prejudices.¹⁵ For instance, if an Artificial Intelligence is developed on a data that is rooted in biases against women, it can sustain these biases in Artificial Intelligence decision-making processes. Therefore, Artificial Intelligence as a tool in gender reconciliation should not be designed from societal norms and biases, there should be a concerted effort to train more inclusive and equitable systems.

Infrastructure gaps: There are people who are living in the village or underdeveloped areas where there is no reliable internet, electricity, and digital infrastructure, hindering the implementation of Artificial Intelligence solutions. “Gender-sensitive AI strategies must also advocate for broader investments in connectivity and digital literacy, especially for women in marginalized regions” UNESCO

Data governance and ethics: Africans need policies that ensure ethical, inclusive Artificial Intelligence development aligned with local gender realities. Human responsibility is non-negotiable. This means that technologies do not operate in a vacuum; they reflect the priorities and values of the societies that build them. African governments, universities, and tech companies must take collective responsibility for shaping AI policies that prioritize human rights, inclusivity, and gender justice World Economic Forum.¹⁶ Artificial Intelligence systems collect many data from different places and perspectives. This requires questions about privacy, surveillance and consent. “Data governance frameworks must prioritize transparency, accountability and fairness to ensure Artificial Intelligence systems do not exacerbate existing inequalities” says UN women. From this expression, data governance and ethics are crucial for mitigating the risks involved with Artificial Intelligence in gender reconciliation. Therefore, to solve gender bias, requires Data diversity.

Build inclusive Artificial Intelligence ecosystems: Building an inclusive Artificial intelligence ecosystem is important in order to have different perspectives and experiences to design Artificial Intelligence that will promote gender reconciliation. This is one of the challenges that requires urgent attention, to encourage public and private partnerships that can fund both men and women, create fellowships for African youths in machine learning, invest in digital literacy initiatives and other needful aspects

Audit data and algorithms for bias: Auditing data and algorithms for bias is critical step in developing fair and equitable Artificial Intelligence solutions. Algorithm Design to solve gender bias, requires algorithm design and human oversight. African governments, universities, and tech companies need frameworks to check Artificial Intelligence systems for hidden gender biases, cultural norms and traditions that reinforce male dominance.

With its youthful population, fast-growing mobile connectivity, and entrepreneurial spirit, the continent has embraced many innovations. The challenge is ensuring that these innovations serve gender equity goals rather than reinforce biases. There should be deliberate efforts, so that Africa will not risks adopting AI systems that will ignore its unique cultural and social realities.

Leverage Artificial Intelligence for social good: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for social good requires careful consideration of its potential impact on gender reconciliation. There is need to prioritize Artificial Intelligence projects that address core gender challenges, healthcare, education, finance, agriculture, in order to rebuild relationships, institutions, and systems to ensure justice, respect, and dignity for all genders.

Need of more Women in Artificial Intelligence Creation: Globally, more women are accessing the internet daily but few women are creating or developing Artificial Intelligence. According to Natacha Sangwa – a student from Rwanda who participated in the first coding camp organized under the African Girls Can Code Initiative – Artificial Intelligence is mostly developed by men and trained on datasets that are primarily based on men”. Therefore, more women creators and researchers are needed in the field. The unique lived experiences of women can profoundly shape the theoretical foundations of technology. It can also open new applications of the technology. Sangwa, who saw first-hand how that impacts women's experience with the technology maintains that “When women use some Artificial Intelligence powered systems to diagnose illnesses, they often receive inaccurate answers, because the Artificial Intelligence is not aware of symptoms that may present differently in women.”¹⁹ More Women are needed because who creates Artificial Intelligence and what biases are built into Artificial Intelligence data can increase or reduce gender disparities. When Artificial Intelligence is designed and trained on data that sees men and women with various and particular skills or interests, it will generate biased information. Doğuç further says that, “Artificial intelligence mirrors the biases that are present in our society and that manifest in Artificial Intelligence training data.”²⁰ This implies that all the Artificial Intelligence designers and developers are required to be guided in order to know what kind of data it is trained on. When technology is developed with just one perspective, it's like looking at the world with one eye.

Cultural Resistance: AI must respect local traditions. As Kluwer emphasizes, AI shouldn't be trained on prejudiced cultural norms.

Infrastructure Limitations: Reliable internet, electricity, and digital literacy particularly among women in remote regions must be prioritized.

Data Ethics: Policies safeguarding privacy, consent, and fairness are essential to prevent misuse of gender-sensitive data.

Inclusive Ecosystems: Participation from African women in AI development is needed to embed diverse experiences and minimize unintended discrimination. Sangwa observed that AI health tools often misdiagnose women due to lack of gender-specific data.

Conclusion

Africa's future will not be shaped by technology alone but by the visions, choices and values that guide it and Artificial Intelligence is neither a magic bullet nor a guaranteed threat rather it is a tool that mirrors our collective aspirations and blind spots. Africa's future will be shaped not merely by AI technology but by “the values, visions, and choices that guide it” (UN Women, n.d.) Artificial intelligence is a tool, not a saviour but paired with deliberate gender reconciliation, it holds remarkable potential to build a fairer, stronger Africa for the next generation. Africa, a continent rich with cultural diversity, human potential, and natural resources, yet long weighed down by structural inequalities

and systemic gender gaps.

In Africa, colonialism, traditional norms, religious teachings, and modern politics have all combined to shape complex gender dynamics, therefore, gender reconciliation is the solution, using Artificial intelligence as a potential tool to rebuild relationships, institutions, and systems to ensure justice, respect, and dignity for all genders. Furthermore, using Artificial Intelligence as a potential tool to reconcile both genders requires removing gender bias in Artificial Intelligence starting from prioritizing gender equity as a goal, as Artificial Intelligence systems are conceptualized and built. This includes assessing data for misrepresentation, providing data that is representative of diverse gender and reshaping the teams developing Artificial Intelligence to make them more diverse and inclusiveness. AI is not a panacea, yet, deployed alongside deliberate gender reconciliation, it holds promise for building a more equitable, inclusive Africa. Realizing this potential requires intentionally designing systems free from gender bias, ensuring diverse representation in AI teams, and wielding collective responsibility to align AI with justice and human dignity.

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