

Digital Governance in the age of AI in the State of Uttar Pradesh: A Data Ethics and Regulatory Framework

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Abstract

In the era where digitalization has taken place and the technology has drastically changed where now the current generation is using AI it becomes increasingly important to examine how the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence-enabled digital platforms is reshaping the governance in the state of Uttar Pradesh, and whether the existing legal and institutional safeguards are sufficient to address the resultant data ethics challenges. Looking at Uttar Pradesh as the state where digital governance, data ethics and algorithm accountability is studied particularly in context with constitutional commitments to equality, privacy and due process. It thereafter tries to map the use of AI in driving various initiatives in respect of policing, justice, welfare delivery and agriculture and analyze the same through ethnic lens focusing on legitimacy, purpose limitation, privacy protection, fairness, transparency, accountability and human oversight. While using doctrinal mode of analysis of various statutes, case-laws and policy document along with reviewing the public records available on state AI deployments, the research paper argues that while AI is framed as a tool for efficiency and predictive governance, current regulatory and institutional arrangements in Uttar Pradesh but it leaves significant gaps in impact assessment, transparency, independent oversight and rights-based redress. At the end of the paper the researcher has proposed a context specific ethical AI governance framework for Uttar Pradesh, combining clear normative principles, strengthened oversight institutions, mandatory algorithmic impact assessments and remedies that are more of citizens oriented, with a vision of aligning digital innovation in the state of Uttar Pradesh with constitutional values and emerging international standards.

Keywords: Digital governance, AI, Data Ethics, Uttar Pradesh, Regulations

a. Introduction and Framework

1.1 Brief background of AI driven Digital Governance in Uttar Pradesh, India

As per Article 38 of the Constitution of India talks about the responsibility of State to secure social order that promotes welfare of the welfare of the people along with ensuring social, economic and political aspects across all national institutions. The article emphasizes the efforts of the State to minimize income gaps and eliminate differences in status, facilities and opportunities among individuals and different groups residing in various areas or engaged in different professions. Since 2020 Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the leader where AI driven digital governance was talked about. There are several key initiatives that are undertaken by the UP under the name AI mission in January 2026 investing 2,000 crores to establish 62 AI labs, centers for data collection and hubs to conduct research with major focus on increasing efficiency, digital inclusion and skilling programs.

1.2 Research Problem

UP has been integrating AI into digital governance for rapid development but lacks data ethics, regulations are not taken care, privacy is compromised, and the marginalized communities are left behind. The core issue is while the initiatives like YAKSH policing, UP AGRIS agriculture platform, Trinetra Surveillance have shown the potential to bring AI transformation, but their operations largely do not follow mandatory guidelines for assessments, transparency norms, independent audits. The DPDP act, and the IT rules though provide for the protection of general data protection, but these national frameworks lack AI specific norms for public- sector

deployments, creating regulatory vacuums around accountability of vendors, minimizing the data and the mechanism to redress the issues related to privacy breach.

1.3 Objectives of the research

The research paper tries to work on the three interconnected objectives to cover the lacuna between Uttar Pradesh's AI driven Digital Governance aspirations and a good data ethics measure.

The aim is to:

- The objective is to identify and map major AI deployments in Policing, healthcare, welfare, agriculture and citizens service sectors where documentation of data is important, vendor roles are identified and decisions are taken which will have impact on the citizens
- The aim is to test the data ethics principles on the scale of fairness, transparency, accountability, privacy and human oversight and their impact on the constitutional provisions article 14, 19 and 21 and the DPDP Act, IT rules.
- The aim is to propose the framework were ethical AI governing principles, institutional oversight and procedural safeguards tailored to Uttar Pradesh's state specific provisions.

1.4 Research Questions

The research question is

- How adequate are current legal, ethical and institutional arrangements in Uttar Pradesh to govern AI-driven digital platforms while protecting fundamental rights and public trust?
- To what extent do these systems comply with data ethics benchmarks regarding legitimacy, privacy safeguards, bias mitigation, transparency accountability and human oversight?

1.5 Scope and limitations of Research

The research paper will focus entirely on AI-driven digital governance initiatives in Uttar Pradesh's public sector which will cover the aspects related to policing, healthcare, welfare delivery, citizens service from 2020 to 2026. The researcher will use doctrinal methods to understand and analyze the laws like DPDP and IT rules, Article 14,19,21 and the policies made by the state along with OECD and UNESCO principles.

The limitation in the research outlines the constraints related to access to data, mostly the reliance on publicly available, the media reports and the announcements made in public. Until present day there is no primary interview with officials or the citizens who are getting affected by the decisions made using AI or no RTI has been filed to extract the data giving insights as to how this is impacting citizens in the ground levels.

1.6 Concept discussion on digital governance, data ethics

Digital governance is the mechanism that organizations use to manage their digital resources, ensuring accountability, transparency and effective decision-making in the digital space. We can also use terms like electronic governance and internet governance to refer to digital governance. Online governance refers to use of information and communication technologies by government or public agencies for public governance. It has four broad pillars people, process, technology and resources.

We can also say that digital governance is the framework for establishing accountability, roles and decision-making authority for any organization having presence over internet which would mean that they have websites, mobile sites or social channels and any other web enabled products and services.¹

On the other hand, when we discuss data ethics, we refer to a practice of using data responsibly, ensuring the principles like fairness, transparency and accountability in the collection of information, processing is done.

b. Legal regulations and policy discussion

2.1 The legal framework on Data and AI and its constitutional validity

India's data and AI legal framework has got transited from IT act 2000 to Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023. This new act of DPDP² talks more about consent data processing online which means if a party's data is being collected it can only be used if that party permits it to be used and all the confidentiality will be maintained.

¹ Ethical Challenges In E-Governance For Transforming India, Himanshu Tiwari, Shrish Kumar Tiwari, ADHYAYAN Volume 10, Issue 2, 2020, Print ISSN: 2249-1066.

² Digital data protection act, 2023.

This will indeed lead to regulate its misuse and deepfakes. AI generated content which harms the person will be taken down from internet within 3 hours as per the rules. This has constitutional validation and rests on the judgment of Puttaswamy³ which was passed in 2017 which makes privacy a fundamental right under article 21 part III of the constitution. Although this has become a fundamental right but AI surveillance also raises the question of compliance of the rules on ground level to safeguard the privacy of individual who has shared their confidential information.

Key components and laws governing the data are:

1. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023: it is the central legislation which governs digital data processing, requiring, consent, purpose limitation and accountability for the systems AI.
2. Information Technology Act. 2000 and Rules: Governs intermediaries and the 2026 amendments has introduced strict regulations for AI generated content, which includes deepfakes, which as per the rules the platforms have to take down any illegal content within 3 hours.
3. Advisory and the guidelines: The MeitY has issued guidelines to regulate AI particularly in the area of high risks application and algorithmic bias.
4. Mission of India AI 2025: This mission aims to promote ethical and responsible AI development which focuses on sovereign AI capabilities.

c. AI-Enabled Governance in Uttar Pradesh: Practices and Ethical Assessment

3.1 Mapping AI use in policing, justice and welfare

Uttar Pradesh government chief minister Yogi Adityanath has inaugurated AI based YAKSH app to strengthen policing and preventive law enforcement in the state. this was inaugurated in a two-day conference called Police Manthan which focused on challenges ranging from cybercrime and human trafficking to emerging issues such as social media. The objective of the conference is to strengthen people-centric policing, develop a technology-based modern policing system and ensure effective and swift action against crime and criminals. YAKSH app is a digital version of the beat book developed using AI and big data analytics. YAKSH will simplify the daily work of beat personnel through features station-wise offender databases, beat-level verification, AI-based suspect identification, voice search, gang-link analysis and movement alerts.⁴

d. Towards an Ethical AI Governance Framework for Uttar Pradesh

4.1 Key findings

The researcher finds that though we have laws, but still at the state level and grassroot level the government is slowly coming up with the changes and implementation of policies. One major issue is that society is also not aware of the laws, which is one of the causes which makes things more difficult.

4.2 Suggestions and Conclusion

The researcher suggests that the government should use its legal aid centers to spread awareness of the use of AI in ethical way and teams should be created which focuses on each part of the state and covers the whole state by conducting research and collecting data on how people are using AI and whether they have this knowledge that it should be used in a ethical way.

³ Justice K.S.Puttaswamy (Retd.) and Anr vs Union of India and Ors 2017.

⁴ UP Government Launches AI-Based App "YAKSH" To Strengthen Policing In State, UP Government Launches AI-Based App YAKSH To Strengthen Policing In State