



From Readiness to Maturity: Institutional Pathways for Responsible AI Transformation in Africa

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in reshaping global economies, governance and development. Yet, the distinction between AI readiness and AI maturity remains conceptually blurred and practically underexplored, especially in developing regions. This gap constitutes the core research problem addressed in this study. This paper aims to clarify these two critical but distinct dimensions of AI capacity development and demonstrate how they interact to shape responsible and sustainable AI ecosystems. The study proposes a conceptual solution by presenting a readiness-maturity transition framework grounded in global evidence and African environments. Drawing from global frameworks, comparative analysis and related insights from Africa and Kenya, the study reveals that AI readiness emphasises the foundational enablers: policy, infrastructure, governance and skills required to adopt AI. Conversely, AI maturity assesses the depth of institutionalisation, ethical deployment and adaptive learning that sustain AI over time. A qualitative, comparative design was adopted, drawing on secondary data from international indices, government reports and scholarly analyses. The results show that countries like Singapore, Canada and Finland demonstrate seamless transitions from readiness to maturity through robust governance, ethical oversight and performance evaluation frameworks, whereas many African countries including Kenya exhibit strong readiness but weak maturity due to fragmented governance and limited ethical compliance mechanisms. Kenya's progress in digital transformation exemplifies this readiness-maturity gap. The paper concludes that readiness and maturity are not linear phases but cyclical and reinforcing processes. Therefore, frameworks linking readiness with continuous maturity evaluation are essential to ensure ethical, inclusive and sustainable AI adoption. The proposed framework can guide African governments and institutions in aligning policy intent with operational capacity, thereby enabling responsible AI transformation and long-term governance resilience.

Keywords: AI Readiness, AI Maturity, Governance, Ethics, Digital Transformation, Kenya, Africa.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a defining force of the 21st century, catalysing transformations across sectors ranging from healthcare and education to finance, agriculture and governance. The global economy increasingly depends on AI-driven systems that enhance efficiency, decision-making and innovation. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), AI could contribute up to USD 15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, underscoring its strategic significance. However, the pace of adoption and the capacity to implement AI responsibly vary widely among nations. This uneven progress raises important questions about equity, preparedness and global inclusivity in the age of intelligent technologies.

Countries such as the United States, China, Singapore and Canada have institutionalised AI within national development frameworks. These countries demonstrate how readiness comprising infrastructure, data systems, human capital and governance can evolve into maturity through continuous evaluation, optimisation and ethical integration. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO have both emphasised that responsible AI deployment requires transitioning from being ready to being mature, aligning technological innovation with ethical and social safeguards. Their approaches illustrate the importance of embedding accountability and public trust into every stage of AI adoption.

Across Africa, governments and regional bodies are recognising AI's potential to advance social and economic development. The African Union's Continental Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2024–2030) and the Smart Africa Alliance Blueprint (2022) highlight growing policy intent. Countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria have made progress in developing AI strategies and investing in infrastructure. However, these readiness efforts have not always translated into sustained maturity. Bridging this gap calls for stronger institutional frameworks, capacity development and collaborative partnerships that ensure AI serves African priorities.

The Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index (2023) ranked Mauritius, South Africa and Kenya among Africa's top performers, yet few African countries exhibit mature AI ecosystems capable of ethical, inclusive and scalable implementation. The gap stems from fragmented data ecosystems, limited coordination and the absence of robust governance mechanisms to monitor AI performance and ethical compliance. This readiness–maturity paradox leaves many African nations “ready” but not institutionally “fit” for responsible AI deployment. As a result, the continent risks missing the full benefits of AI while facing potential social and ethical vulnerabilities.

Kenya stands at the forefront of digital transformation in East Africa. Its Digital Economy Blueprint (2019) and Kenya Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2025–2030) underscore readiness investments in policy, infrastructure and innovation ecosystems. Initiatives such as M-Pesa, Ajira Digital and the Huduma platform reflect Kenya's technological capability and innovation culture. However, challenges remain in institutionalising AI maturity: fragmented governance, lack of ethical oversight and limited inter-sectoral collaboration. Kenya's situation typifies a broader continental challenge that readiness has been achieved, but maturity is lagging. Moving forward, Kenya's experience could provide a valuable blueprint for other African countries seeking to evolve from AI readiness to responsible and sustainable

maturity. Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine the distinction between AI readiness and maturity within Africa using Kenya as a focal case to explore how readiness can be translated into responsible, sustainable and ethically grounded AI maturity.

Problem Statement

Artificial Intelligence (AI) development should evolve from readiness to maturity through a structured and holistic process that combines technical capacity with strong governance, ethical oversight and continuous performance evaluation. In a mature AI ecosystem, readiness indicators such as infrastructure, data systems and human capital are complemented by institutionalised practices that ensure transparency, accountability and sustainability. Such systems not only deploy AI effectively but also manage its societal implications responsibly, contributing to inclusive growth and innovation. This ideal progression enables countries to harness AI's transformative potential while minimising risks related to bias, privacy and inequality.

However, in many developing countries, especially across Africa, the focus has predominantly been on achieving readiness through investments in infrastructure, policy frameworks and digital literacy, while the institutionalisation of AI maturity remains limited. This has created a disconnect where governments and organisations appear technologically prepared but lack mechanisms to evaluate and sustain ethical AI practices. As a result, readiness without maturity often leads to inefficiencies, weak governance and ethical vulnerabilities. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between AI readiness and maturity in Africa, using Kenya as a focal case and seeks to develop a conceptual framework that guides the transition from readiness to responsible and sustainable AI maturity.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- i. To define and distinguish between the concepts of AI readiness and AI maturity, showing how each contributes differently to responsible AI development.
- ii. To explore global and regional trends in how countries assess and progress in AI readiness and maturity, highlighting key lessons and best practices.
- iii. To analyse Kenya's current standing along the AI readiness maturity continuum, identifying its strengths, gaps and opportunities for growth.
- iv. To develop a framework that guides the transition from AI readiness to maturity, supporting responsible and ethical AI governance in Kenya and across Africa.

Literature Review

Defining and Distinguishing AI Readiness and AI Maturity

Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness refers to the degree to which an organisation, institution, or country possesses the foundational prerequisites necessary to adopt and integrate AI technologies effectively. The OECD (2023) defines AI readiness as encompassing five key pillars; digital infrastructure, data ecosystems, governance, human capital and policy frameworks that collectively enable AI adoption. In this sense, readiness is diagnostic rather than operational; it measures potential capability rather than realised performance. According to Oxford Insights (2023) and Smart Africa (2022), readiness provides the foundation for AI-driven transformation by assessing whether enabling conditions exist. However,

scholars emphasise that readiness without a transition toward maturity often results in technological underutilisation and fragmented implementation (World Bank, 2023).

AI maturity, on the other hand, represents the ability to operationalise, evaluate and sustain AI systems responsibly over time. Gartner (2022) defines AI maturity as the institutional capacity to embed AI into processes, culture and decision-making while ensuring adaptability and ethical governance. Mature AI ecosystems are characterised by transparency, accountability and continuous performance optimisation. The World Economic Forum (2022) and UNESCO (2021) note that maturity is multidimensional; it encompasses not only technical and organisational sophistication but also ethical stewardship and regulatory robustness. While readiness focuses on “being prepared,” maturity focuses on “being responsible,” ensuring that AI applications generate long-term societal value. Together, readiness and maturity form a continuum of capability development for responsible AI.

Global and Regional Trends in Readiness and Maturity Assessments

Globally, several countries have progressed from readiness to maturity through deliberate and iterative policy approaches. Canada’s Pan-Canadian AI Strategy integrates readiness components such as research funding and digital infrastructure with maturity mechanisms like ethical guidelines and continuous governance evaluation (CIFAR, 2023). Similarly, Singapore’s Model AI Governance Framework exemplifies how readiness can evolve into maturity through regulatory alignment, public trust-building and participatory evaluation. Finland’s Aurora AI initiative also demonstrates maturity by promoting open data, citizen engagement and transparent AI decision-making processes (Ministry of Finance Finland, 2022). These global examples underline that successful AI ecosystems balance technical readiness with governance maturity.

Regionally, the African Union (AU) has recognised the need to shift from AI readiness to maturity. The AU Continental Strategy for AI (2024–2030) and the Smart Africa Alliance Blueprint (2022) advocate for coordinated policy frameworks, data governance standards and ethical principles to promote responsible AI deployment. Despite growing policy interest, the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index (2023) indicates that while African countries are improving in readiness indicators such as data infrastructure and human capital they still lag in maturity aspects like monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems. This regional trend underscores the need for an integrated readiness–maturity approach to ensure that AI development supports inclusive growth and ethical governance.

Kenya’s Position in the AI Readiness–Maturity Continuum

Kenya stands out as one of Africa’s leading countries in AI readiness, supported by a robust digital ecosystem and progressive policy environment. Republic of Kenya (2019, 2025), and the Kenya Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025–2030 demonstrate Kenya’s strong commitment to establishing an enabling environment for digital innovation. Initiatives such as M-Pesa, Maisha number, Ajira Digital and Huduma Centres reflect a culture of technological entrepreneurship and public-sector innovation. These initiatives have positioned Kenya as a regional leader in digital transformation. However, the transition from readiness to maturity remains incomplete.

The Kenya Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025–2030 frames the country’s forward ambitions: it identifies three core pillars; AI digital infrastructure; data and AI governance; and AI research, innovation and commercialisation. The strategy envisions Kenya as Africa’s leading AI hub for model

innovation, research and development (R&D) and commercialisation of AI solutions tailored to unique national and regional needs. The document emphasises ethics, data sovereignty and inclusivity in deploying AI systems. Despite these ambitions, maturity challenges still persist particularly in governance, ethical oversight and institutional coordination. Fragmented regulatory mechanisms, limited capacity for impact evaluation and a lack of cross-sectoral collaboration hinder sustainable AI governance. Therefore, Kenya represents a critical case for studying the readiness–maturity gap, as it highlights how policy ambition and innovation readiness must be matched with governance and ethical maturity for responsible AI advancement.

Towards a Framework for Transitioning from Readiness to Maturity

Emerging scholarship emphasises the need for frameworks that bridge the gap between AI readiness and maturity, particularly in developing contexts. The World Economic Forum (2023) and OECD (2022) propose that AI development must follow an integrated lifecycle approach that combines readiness assessment with continuous maturity evaluation. Effective frameworks should align policy, technical capacity, ethics and governance within a unified structure that evolves alongside technological change. Gartner’s (2022) AI maturity model, for instance, illustrates how organisations can progress from experimentation to institutionalisation through structured governance, monitoring and ethical learning.

For Africa and Kenya specifically a framework is needed to guide this transition. Such a framework should incorporate localised indicators of maturity, emphasising inclusivity, accountability and societal relevance. This study aims to propose a model that facilitates responsible AI governance by drawing on global best practices and aligning them with Kenya’s policy, institutional and cultural contexts. The framework will not only help policymakers measure progress but also foster institutional learning and public trust, ensuring that readiness investments evolve into mature, ethical and sustainable AI ecosystems.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks viz. the Digital Transformation Capability Framework (DTCF) and the Capability Maturity Model (CMM). The DTCF conceptualises readiness as a process of building foundational capabilities, including infrastructure, human capital and institutional support systems necessary for digital transformation. On the other hand, the CMM, widely applied in organisational development, interprets maturity as a progressive institutionalisation of processes through defined levels: initial, managed, defined, quantitatively managed and optimising. When integrated, these frameworks present AI readiness as the stage of capability formation, while AI maturity represents the stage of capability optimisation, sustainability and ethical institutionalisation within organisations and governance systems.

Across Africa, AI policy and strategy documents largely emphasise readiness, focusing on enablers such as digital infrastructure, policy frameworks and innovation ecosystems. However, maturity characterised by governance structures, ethics and sustainability remains underdeveloped. The African Union (2024) identifies key barriers including fragmented data governance, limited AI skills and weak institutional coordination. In Kenya, AI readiness is relatively high, supported by initiatives outlined in the Kenya National AI Strategy (2024), which prioritises policy alignment, data management and talent development. Yet, Kenya’s AI maturity is still in transition, constrained by limited evaluation mechanisms, weak ethical oversight and the absence of robust monitoring systems. This study builds

on these insights to explore how Kenya and by extension African nations, can transition from readiness to a mature and responsible AI ecosystem.

Conceptual Framework

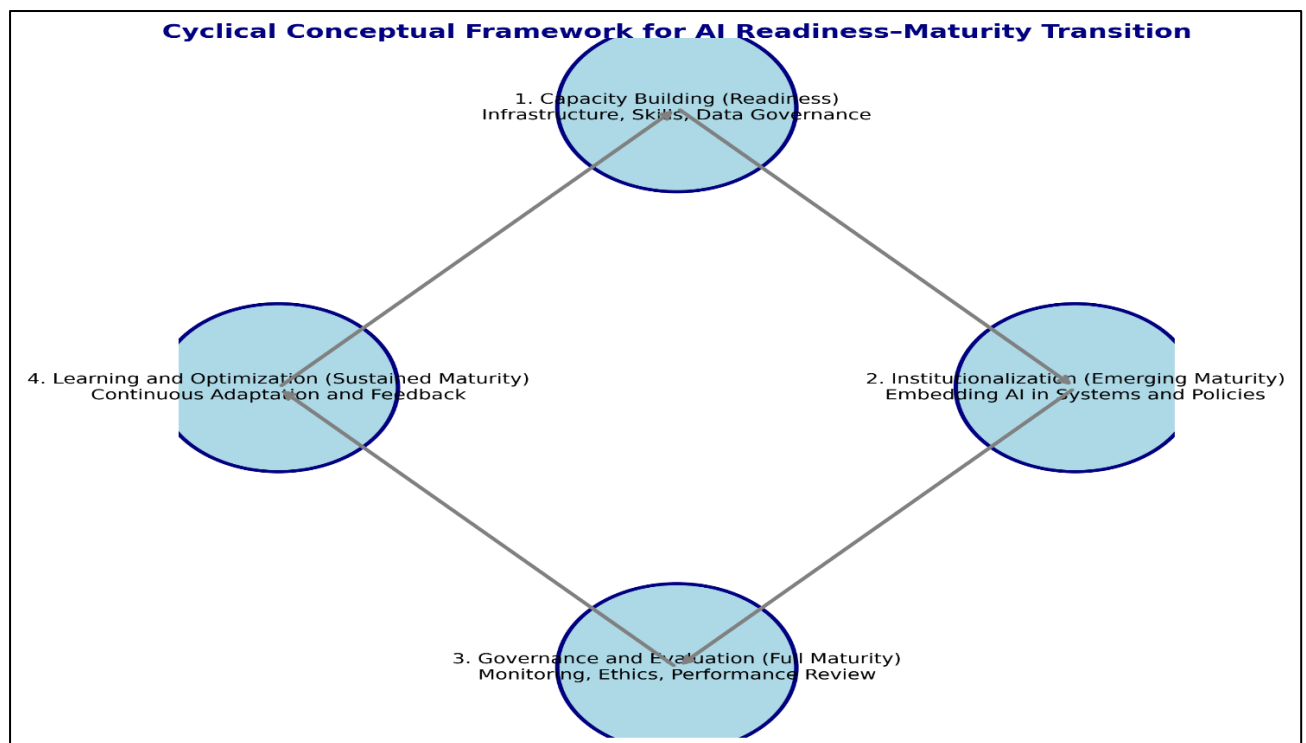


Figure 1: Cyclical conceptual framework for AI Readiness-Maturity Transition

The proposed cyclical conceptual framework illustrates the dynamic progression from AI readiness to sustained maturity. It begins with Capacity Building, where nations or institutions develop foundational enablers such as infrastructure, digital skills and data governance (see Figure 1). This stage transitions into Institutionalisation, where AI practices and policies are embedded within organisational systems. As systems evolve, Governance and Evaluation ensure ethical compliance, accountability and performance monitoring hallmarks of full maturity. Finally, Learning and Optimisation create a feedback loop that supports continuous adaptation, innovation and responsible AI growth. This cyclical process highlights that AI maturity is not a destination but an ongoing evolution grounded in ethics, learning and sustainability.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, conceptual and comparative research design to explore the relationship between AI readiness and maturity across different governance and development environments. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables deep theoretical interpretation, critical reflection and synthesis of complex, evolving ideas relevant for conceptual topics like responsible AI governance (Creswell, 2014). Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed journal

articles, policy documents and global indices such as the OECD AI Observatory, the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index, UNESCO’s AI Ethics Reports and Kenya’s Digital Economy Blueprint and National AI Strategy (2024). In total, 52 documents were reviewed, comprising 27 peer-reviewed papers and 25 institutional and policy reports published between 2018 and 2024. These papers were purposively selected based on their conceptual relevance, credibility and representation of global, regional and national perspectives on AI governance and maturity. The literature review provided the empirical foundation for identifying theoretical gaps and constructing the proposed framework.

A content analysis technique was applied to extract thematic insights related to AI readiness (infrastructure, data and human capital) and AI maturity (ethics, governance and sustainability). The analysis involved deductive coding guided by the Digital Transformation Capability Framework (DTCF) and the Capability Maturity Model (CMM), which structured how readiness transitions into maturity. Comparative mapping was then conducted to identify similarities and differences across environments for instance, how Canada and Singapore integrate evaluation and ethics, compared to emerging frameworks in Africa. The Kenyan case was selected as an illustrative example due to its advanced digital transformation and emerging AI strategy, offering practical insight into readiness–maturity transitions. Triangulation was achieved by contrasting international, regional and national data sources, ensuring validity and analytical consistency. The methodology unfolded in three main phases: conceptual analysis to clarify key constructs, comparative framework mapping to assess global and regional practices and thematic synthesis to integrate findings into a unified conceptual model. This qualitative design was ideal for developing a theoretically grounded and policy-oriented understanding of AI maturity pathways in the African settings

Findings

The study revealed five major findings that illuminate how nations and institutions progress or struggle along the path from AI readiness to AI maturity. Each finding builds on comparative analysis, content synthesis and theoretical framing guided by the DTCF and CMM models.

Conceptual Distinction between Readiness and Maturity

This finding confirms that AI readiness and AI maturity are distinct but interdependent constructs. Readiness focuses on potential; infrastructure, data ecosystems, human capital and policy foundations while maturity captures performance; how effectively, ethically and sustainably AI is embedded into systems.

Table 1: Conceptual Distinction between Readiness and Maturity

Aspect	AI Readiness	AI Maturity	Interrelationship
Focus	Foundational enablers and preconditions	Operationalisation, evaluation and governance	Readiness lays the groundwork for maturity
Measurement	Infrastructure, skills, data and policies	Ethics, governance, performance and adaptability	Maturity evolves through readiness
Nature	Diagnostic (potential)	Evaluative (practice and outcomes)	Iterative and cyclical process
Example	Kenya’s AI Strategy 2024 (readiness blueprint)	Singapore’s AI Governance Framework (mature ecosystem)	Readiness without maturity leads to stagnation

This distinction addresses conceptual ambiguity seen in existing literature, where “being ready” is often misinterpreted as “being mature.” The study, therefore affirms the need for policies that deliberately link readiness metrics to maturity outcomes.

Global Best Practices in Readiness–Maturity Transition

Countries such as Singapore, Canada and Finland demonstrate how readiness and maturity evolve iteratively through feedback, learning and governance integration. These nations embed ethics and performance evaluation into AI deployment from the outset, ensuring that readiness transitions naturally into maturity.

Table 2: Global Best Practices in Readiness–Maturity Transition

Country	Readiness Mechanisms	Maturity Indicators	Key Lesson for Africa
Singapore	National AI Strategy (2019), Smart Nation infrastructure	Model AI Governance Framework, ethics advisory councils	Embed ethics and evaluation in early stages
Canada	Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, academic–industry partnerships	AI ethics guidelines, continuous review and retraining programs	Use adaptive, inclusive governance
Finland	Open data ecosystem, citizen AI education	Transparent AI oversight and citizen participation	Build public trust through transparency
OECD/UNESCO Models	Global AI Principles emphasising fairness, accountability	Maturity tied to ethical use and societal outcomes	Institutionalise cross-sector monitoring

These models show that AI maturity thrives where governance is adaptive, learning mechanisms are institutionalised and ethics are viewed not as constraints but as enablers of innovation.

The African Readiness–Maturity Gap

Despite policy enthusiasm, most African countries remain in the readiness phase, with limited evidence of maturity. Governments have developed AI and digital strategies (Kenya 2024; Nigeria 2022; South Africa 2021), but few have implemented systematic monitoring or ethical evaluation tools.

Table 3: The African Readiness–Maturity Gap

Country/Region	Readiness Strengths	Maturity Weaknesses	Observed Gap
Kenya	Strong digital infrastructure, AI strategy, innovation hubs	Weak ethical oversight, limited evaluation frameworks	Transitional maturity
South Africa	Advanced research capacity, national AI roadmap	Fragmented governance, low coordination	Moderate gap
Nigeria	Growing AI talent pool, national AI policy	Data governance and ethical compliance weak	Significant gap
Continental (AU)	AI Strategy 2024–2030, Smart Africa Blueprint	Poor integration, fragmented implementation	Structural readiness–maturity gap

The study finds that African nations are “ready on paper” but lack institutional fitness for sustained, responsible AI governance. Without performance evaluation, accountability systems and ethical institutions, readiness cannot translate into tangible societal benefit.

Kenya’s Position along the Readiness–Maturity Continuum

Kenya exemplifies the African transition challenge strong readiness foundations but limited maturity depth. The Kenya National AI Strategy (2024) emphasises policy alignment, skills development and data infrastructure, signaling robust readiness. However, institutionalisation and ethical oversight remain weak, hindering progress toward maturity.

Table 4: Kenya’s Position along the Readiness–Maturity Continuum

Dimension	Readiness Indicators (Kenya)	Maturity Indicators (Kenya)	Status
Policy and Strategy	Republic of Kenya (2019), Republic of Kenya (2025)	No national AI regulatory body yet	Strong readiness, weak governance
Infrastructure	Broadband penetration > 85%, strong ICT backbone	Fragmented data-sharing standards	Technically ready
Human Capital	Ajira Digital, Konza Innovation City, TVET AI programs	Limited AI ethics and governance training	Skill readiness, governance gap
Ethics & Evaluation	Policy mentions ethical AI	No operational ethics oversight mechanism	Lagging maturity

Kenya’s case illustrates how readiness alone cannot guarantee responsible AI deployment. Institutional and ethical structures must mature alongside technological advancement.

Towards a Cyclical and Integrated Framework

The final finding emphasises framework integration readiness and maturity must form a continuous cycle of capacity building, institutionalisation, governance and feedback.

Table 5: Towards a Cyclical and Integrated Framework

Cycle Phase	Core Activities	Expected Outcome
Capacity Building (Readiness)	Infrastructure, skills and data governance	Foundational preparedness
Institutionalisation (Emerging Maturity)	Embedding AI in systems and policies	Operational integration
Governance and Evaluation (Full Maturity)	Ethics, accountability and performance review	Responsible AI deployment
Learning and Optimisation (Sustained Maturity)	Continuous feedback, adaptation and innovation	Long-term sustainability

This cyclical approach ensures that readiness continuously evolves through feedback loops into maturity, preventing stagnation or policy decay.

Table 6: Summary of Key Findings — Transition from AI Readiness to AI Maturity

Theme	Insights	Implication
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Conceptual Distinction	AI readiness represents potential—the availability of enablers such as infrastructure, skills and data systems, while AI maturity reflects performance, governance and ethical sustainability. Both are interdependent stages in responsible AI development.	Clarify conceptual boundaries in policy and research to ensure that readiness metrics are linked to maturity outcomes.
Global Best Practices	Countries such as Singapore, Canada and Finland illustrate how readiness and maturity evolve iteratively through adaptive governance, ethics integration and continuous learning.	Adopt feedback-driven, ethical and adaptive AI governance models that integrate evaluation from the outset.
African Readiness–Maturity Gap	Many African nations, including Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria, have achieved readiness through infrastructure and policy development but lack maturity in governance, evaluation and ethics.	Bridge the readiness–maturity gap by establishing evaluation frameworks, ethical oversight and institutional accountability.
Kenya’s AI Status	Kenya’s readiness is strong—supported by its AI Strategy (2024), digital infrastructure and innovation culture—but maturity remains constrained by weak regulatory and ethical mechanisms.	Strengthen institutional capacity, ethical compliance and cross-sector coordination to advance from readiness to maturity.
Cyclical Framework	A cyclical model linking readiness, institutionalisation, governance and learning ensures continuous improvement, ethical sustainability and adaptive transformation.	Implement a cyclical, feedback-driven governance model to sustain responsible AI growth over time.

The overarching insight is that AI transformation requires both readiness and maturity. Readiness builds capacity and maturity ensures sustainability. Systems that remain perpetually “ready” but never mature risk inefficiency, bias and ethical fragility. Conversely, maturity without readiness creates inequitable and unstable digital systems. A cyclical, feedback-driven model like the one proposed in this study offers a balanced path toward responsible AI governance that aligns infrastructure, capability, ethics and accountability in a sustainable, evolving trajectory.

Discussion

The findings underscore that AI readiness and maturity are not linear milestones but complementary, cyclical and mutually reinforcing processes. Readiness lays the groundwork through infrastructure, skills and data governance, while maturity builds upon these enablers to institutionalise ethical and accountable AI systems. Evidence from global leaders such as Singapore, Finland and Canada demonstrates that sustained investment in governance and adaptive policy learning transforms readiness into maturity. For Africa and Kenya in particular, the challenge lies not in initiating readiness but in maintaining the momentum toward maturity. Kenya’s strong digital infrastructure, expanding innovation ecosystem and the launch of the Kenya National AI Strategy (2024) signal progress; however, the absence of robust evaluation frameworks and institutionalised learning mechanisms constrains the translation of readiness into sustained maturity.

At the policy and institutional level, the discussion emphasises that AI maturity should be viewed as a governance capability, not a final state. Governments and organisations must embed ethics, accountability and continuous improvement into their AI ecosystems. This requires cross-sectoral

collaboration among academia, industry and public institutions, guided by data ethics, transparency and inclusive governance. Establishing feedback loops between readiness and maturity stages can ensure systems evolve responsibly in response to related and ethical realities. Ultimately, moving from readiness to maturity demands a learning-oriented governance model one that prioritises adaptability, inclusivity and trust as the pillars of sustainable AI transformation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that AI readiness and maturity are interdependent dimensions of digital transformation, each essential for sustainable and responsible AI development. Readiness equips nations and institutions with the necessary enablers such as digital infrastructure, human capital and policy frameworks while maturity ensures these capabilities evolve into accountable, ethical and performance-driven systems. The global evidence shows that true progress lies in maintaining a dynamic balance between the two, where readiness continually feeds maturity through learning, governance and innovation.

For Africa and Kenya, the progress in AI readiness is both encouraging and strategic, as seen in Kenya's National AI Strategy (2024) and growing digital innovation landscape. However, achieving maturity requires deliberate efforts to institutionalise ethics, evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms. Kenya can transform its readiness into a continental model of responsible AI governance by embedding these elements into policy and practice one that advances innovation while safeguarding societal values, equity and trust in technology.

Recommendations

- i. **Develop Integrated Frameworks:** Governments and institutions should create mechanisms that link AI readiness and maturity assessments within national strategies. This integration will ensure that investments in infrastructure, data and skills translate into measurable, ethical and sustainable outcomes.
- ii. **Institutionalise Ethical Oversight:** Establishing national AI ethics boards and independent audit systems will promote accountability and transparency in AI deployment. Regular ethical reviews can help prevent bias, misuse and inequitable outcomes, reinforcing public trust.
- iii. **Invest in Capacity Building:** Continuous investment in digital, analytical and ethical literacy across public and private sectors is critical. Empowering local experts and institutions enhances long-term capability and reduces dependency on external expertise.
- iv. **Promote Regional Collaboration:** Regional cooperation under the African Union's AI Strategy should be strengthened to share resources, frameworks and lessons learned. This collective approach can harmonize standards and accelerate AI maturity across the continent.
- v. **Adopt Continuous Learning Models:** Governments and organisations should embed feedback-driven evaluation and learning systems into their AI ecosystems. Regular performance reviews and adaptive policy mechanisms will ensure AI systems remain responsive, trustworthy and aligned with societal needs.

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