INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6, 2025 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF AI: AN EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND THE PATH AHEAD FOR EFFECTIVE REGULATION

Zainab Irfan f2024188003@umt.edu.pk	University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
Sidra Haroon sidra.haroon@umt.edu.pk	Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communications, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming global political, economic, and security frameworks, prompting critical inquiries regarding the sufficiency of current international governance systems. As AI technologies cross national boundaries via transnational data flows, defence uses, financial markets and public governance, regulatory methods focused solely on states have shown to be inadequate in managing their worldwide risks. This research assesses the efficacy of existing institutional frameworks for the global governance of AI, placing particular focus on the roles played by the OECD, UNESCO and the United Nations, as well as emerging regional and national regulatory approaches like the European Union's AI Act, the market-driven strategy of the United States and China's government-centred regulatory system. Using a qualitative research design based on systematic analysis of documents and policies, this paper investigates institutional preparedness, alignment of norms, and enforcement limitations in global AI governance spanning the years 2019 to 2024. The findings indicate considerable regulatory fragmentation, inconsistent application of ethical principles, and marked disparities in governance capabilities between developed and developing nations, resulting in a largely soft law regulatory landscape with limited enforceability.

The study posits that effective global governance of AI necessitates improved institutional collaboration, regulatory compatibility, and inclusive participation from multiple stakeholders. It suggests strategic approaches to create a coherent and rights oriented global governance framework that harmonizes innovation with accountability, protects human rights, and encourages equitable involvement in the international regulation of artificial intelligence.

Keywords: *Global AI Governance, International Institutions, Artificial Intelligence, Regulation, Ethical AI, Global Governance Frameworks.*

Corresponding Author: Zainab Irfan (University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan).
Email: f2024188003@umt.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the political, economic and security world order. This raises serious questions about whether current global institutions are equipped to deal with its transnational risks. As AI is integrated into defence systems, financial markets and public governance or used in digital infrastructures, the dominant regulatory frameworks that concentrate on state sovereignty appear mostly inadequate. Starting global endeavors such as the OECD's Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence (2019) and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021) indicate a growing recognition that AI is also a world-wide matter for which coherent governance is necessary (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Yet, there are still major shortcomings in institutional capacities, enforcement plans and multilateral consensus.

The challenge is how to balance the need for innovation with accountability in a world where strategic competition between key AI-developing nations such as China, the US and its allies features prominently. Despite the fact that the OECD Principles' human centeredness, transparency and risk oversight mechanisms are well articulated, their basis in principles of voluntariness leaves them without any binding enforcement capacity (OECD, 2019). Similarly, the UNESCO ethics framework is designed for global normativity but faces diverse levels of adoption capacities between Global North and Global South countries more so in such aspects as data protection, algorithm accountability and human rights safeguards to AI (UNESCO, 2021). Such inconsistencies highlight the need for a governance framework capable of reconciling differentiated ethical standards with technical codes and the game theory aspect of geopolitics.

Within these constraints, the proposed research will critically examine how global governance is able to adapt to the risks and opportunities of advancing AI technologies. It assesses the readiness of existing institutions, identifies where regulation is wanting and asks how normative frameworks such as those outlined in recommendations from the OECD and UNESCO can become more effective global instruments that could be enforced. In the end this research aims to produce policy strategies to strengthen multilateral cooperation, consistency in regulation and a future global governance framework that spurs innovation while safeguarding human rights, promoting equity and preventing international disorder (see OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

1.1.Problem Statement

As for the international governance, the field is still disjointed, it counts with overlapping institutional roles and competing regulatory standards across different regions of the world. Although certain OECD and UNESCO frameworks are important normative reference points, their implementation across jurisdictions varies irregularly and is often voluntary. This discordance between formal ethical norms and their operationalisation has translated into regulatory fragmentation, especially in developing countries where the institutional and technical infrastructure to engage effectively in global governance of AI is lacking. It is in this light that the current paper seeks to critically appraise how extant institutions influence global governance of AI, identify structural and capacity challenges that impede regulatory coherence and propose actionable strategic moves at fostering coordination, inclusion and enforceability underpinning structure of global governance.

1.2.Objective of the Study

This paper seeks to not only assess current global AI governance mechanisms but also ask why they suffer from enforcement and coordination failures. Beyond description, the research focuses on future governance pathways, drawing out practical institutional reforms and strategic options for the path ahead in building a more coherent, enforceable and inclusive global AI governance framework.

1.3.Research Objectives

- To analyze the prevailing institutional structures established by UNESCO, OECD and other international bodies for global regulation of AI, with special attention to its normative underpinnings and policy orientations.
- To assess effectiveness and deficiencies of current AI governance schemes in effectuating accountability, transparency, ethical norms, and cross-border collaboration among member states.
- To analyze the level of fragmentation and challenges for implementation across different global AI governance architectures, in particular looking to differences in capacity between developed and developing nations.
- To examine the strategic options for strengthening global AI regulation including treaty based, multistakeholder and standard-harmonization strategies and their feasibility in the current context of international governance.
- To propose a conceptual framework for coherent, ecumenical and pragmatic global AI governance consonant with innovation, human rights and regulatory concerns.

1.4.Research Questions

Why have existing international institutions struggled to translate AI ethical principles into enforceable global governance mechanisms?

How do structural limitations, geopolitical interests, and institutional design flaws undermine regulatory coherence in global AI governance?

Why do capacity asymmetries between developed and developing countries persist, and how do they obstruct effective implementation of global AI norms?

To what extent can treaty-based cooperation, multistakeholder governance, and technical standard-setting overcome current enforcement and coordination barriers?

What institutional reforms represent the most viable path ahead for achieving an inclusive, enforceable, and ethically grounded global AI governance system?

1.5.Significance

This research is critically relevant as it addresses the persistent challenges of gaps, fragmentation and implementation deficits in the AI governance at the international level, offering practical and theoretical insights for diverse constituencies. International organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO and the United Nations are able to gain deep insights that can inform how institutions become more coherent, linking clearer ethical principle with enforceable standards and promoting greater inclusivity in multilateral exchange (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). National governments and regulators might use these results to strengthen national AI policies, adhere to global norms and balance innovation promotion with professional accountability. Both the academic community and industry can gain from empirical and theoretical advancements contributing to a more nuanced understanding of good governance, cross-border regulatory co-operation and strategic modes of AI oversight. For private industry, including AI developers and tech companies, the study highlights the value of balancing innovation with ethical and legal obligations to broaden impact by mitigating risks and facilitating responsible implementation. As a downsides civil society has human rights activists and the public at large become better aware of regulatory failures, and how to demand/expect fair oversight (leading to increased transparency/fairness/public confidence). Finally, this research is a step towards the development of a robust, inclusive and strategically cohesive global governance regime for AI that reconciles innovation, human rights and international security (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

2.Literature Review

2.1.The Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has focused efforts to design institutions that can manage a technology whose effects spill beyond international boundaries. AI's worldwide dissemination, transnational data flows, and its socio-economic implications suggest that national regulation alone will not be sufficient to manage associated risks of the technology including privacy infringements, discrimination, misinformation, threats to security and imbalances of power (**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021**). There

is a growing literature that insists that international norms, institutions and infrastructural arrangements are necessary features of global governance in the digital age for accountability, safety and equity (**Floridi, 2018**). Nonetheless, current studies show continuous fragmentation, imbalanced enforcement and lack of consensus on the nature of effective global AI governance..

2.2.Soft Law and the Enforcement Deficit in Global AI Governance

While soft-law instruments such as the OECD AI Principles and UNESCO's Ethics Recommendation have been instrumental in shaping normative consensus, scholars widely criticize their lack of enforceability. Soft law relies on voluntary compliance rather than legal obligation, which weakens accountability mechanisms. Abbott and Snidal argue that such frameworks often produce normative alignment without regulatory compliance. Floridi and Cihon further contend that ethical governance without enforcement risks becoming symbolic, enabling dominant actors to evade responsibility

2.3.International Normative Regime

2.3.1. OECD AI Principles (2019)

The OECD AI Principles, which have been supported by 46 countries, is among the first and most impactful global frameworks. The principles focus on trustworthy AI, grounded on values in terms of fairness, transparency and accountability, safety and human rights (**Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019**). They have played a major role in shaping national AI strategies and global discussions. But later OECD surveillance reports reveal large differences in its application. The 2023 OECD State of Implementation report notes that governance models "differ significantly from one country to another" and that in many countries, governments do not have the operational capacity they need to turn principles into actionable rules (**Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023**). Accordingly, OECD principles offer normative references rather than mandatory rules.

2.3.2. Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, UNESCO (2021)

It is the world's first universally ratified AI ethics principles framework from **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2021)** and signed by 193 member states. It encourages human-rights based AI, sustainability, cultural diversity and gender equality (**UNESCO, 2021**). However, the framework is non-binding and has no sanctions or compliance monitoring mechanisms. Most UNESCO member states had not yet fully implemented the organization's ethical guidelines into legal code when it performed a follow up analysis in 2023 (**UNESCO, 2023**). They conclude that while UNESCO is able to set out normative consensus, enforcement or accountability mechanisms are meagre.

2.3.3. United Nations Initiatives

The UN has emerged as an increasingly active site for infrastructure, helping to guide how AI is governed globally. The UN Secretary General High-Level Advisory Body on AI (2023) suggests global frameworks and examines possibilities for a new universal agency for AI (NATION). The UN Roadmap for Digital Cooperation also underscores inclusive, multistakeholder governance and capacity building. However, academics accuse the UN of it not having technical infrastructure and decision power to enforce global norms (UNESCO, AI Governance Implementation Guidance). This tension highlights the inadequacy of soft law instruments to govern rapidly advancing AI systems.

2.4.Regional Approaches and Global Fragmentation

2.4.1. The EU AI Act (2024)

The European Union AI Act is the first in the world to provide a comprehensive, binding regulation on artificial intelligence. It introduces a risk-based approach and prohibits those AI uses that would be deemed unacceptable, while it sets strict requirements for high-risk systems (**European Union, 2024**). Many observe in the EU Act a new global standard that has potential to be comparable to its predecessor, the impact of General Data Protection Regulation on regulations abroad because of extraterritorial effects and human rights principles (**Veale & Borgesius, 2021**). But the EU model is criticised for being potentially unrealistic for developing countries to emulate, which could exacerbate global regulatory disparities.

2.4.2. The United States: Market and Sector Based

In the U.S., there is no sweeping federal AI law and the country relies on sector-specific guidances as well as voluntary standards like the **National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, 2023)** AI Risk Management Framework. The U.S. focus is on innovation and industry flexibility. Academics argue this market-led approach is frequently at odds with rights-based models such as the EU's and leads to geopolitical tension and governance fragmentation (**Whittlestone et al., 2021**).

2.4.3. China's State-Centric Model

China has also implemented a series of binding standards, such as the guidelines concerning algorithmic recommendation systems (2021) and generative AI (2023), heavily focusing on security, social stability, and state control (**Kostka, 2023**). Analysts say China's approach is based on a political ideology that deviates from Western models. This is yet another divergence making it harder and harder to achieve global consensus.

2.4.4. Impact of Fragmentation

The interaction between a rights-based model (European Union), a market-oriented perspective (United States), and state-driven centralisation (China) results in the emergence of an incompatible patchwork of governance logics. This state of affairs is referred to in **Tashkent State University of Law (2023)** as a "regulatory mosaic", where

there is no institutional coherence and harmonisation enforcement system. Such fracturing weakens interoperability, adds to compliance demands for multinational corporations and inhibits even the possibility of harmonisation of global governance (**Gwagwa et al., 2021**).

2.4.5. Governance Capacity and Institutional Gaps

A recurrent theme is that of the policy design–implementation divide. **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2023)** notes that many countries, particularly in the Global South, do not possess technical capacity, human resources skills and capabilities, robust data infrastructure or legal capability for AI oversight. This results in huge asymmetries in global governance.

In their systematic literature review of 61 studies, **Batool et al. (2023)** identified that most of these frameworks are descriptive, not prescriptive. There are relatively few studies that look at who governs AI, how decisions get carried out, and what results. There is "very little empirical evidence" about the effectiveness of AI regulation.

These results reveal a striking gap in empirical research: the literature focuses on ethical values and principles, not the actual performance of organizations. Even in advanced economies, adapting hopelessly outdated legal structures to a rapidly accelerating order of AI is proving a challenge. This problem comes under the "tug-of-war" between innovation flexibility and regulatory certainty (**Batool et al., 2023**).

2.4.6. Coordination Failures and Absence of Institutional Infrastructure

Most experts concur that there is still no coordinated international institutional framework to govern AI globally. Existing efforts remain siloed as **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2019, 2023)** sets principles, **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2021, 2023)** sets ethics, **European Union (2024)** creates binding regional law, **United Nations (2023)** facilitates discussion and national governments adopt divergent strategies.

There is no organization that has the authority to reconcile these structures, or to ensure they are followed. Moreover, there are no conventional measures for testing whether AI systems themselves and the institutions that regulate them are achieving safety, fairness or transparency outcomes. This organic fragmentation undermines global accountability so that regulatory gaps are filled by dominant private tech companies. Academics caution that such power imbalances undermine fairness and may relegate developing countries to the status of rule-takers rather than rule makers (**Cihon et al., 2021**).

2.5.Strategic Pathways Found in the Literature

Despite these gaps, the literature has identified some promising avenues.

2.5.1. Regulatory Interoperability

A number of scholars promote interoperability not by all jurisdictions applying the same principles, but rather having these be harmonious with one another and allowing for diversity in local enforcement. That head off regulatory conflict without pushing for a single world law.

2.5.2. Multistakeholder Models

Influenced by the field of Internet governance, multistakeholder processes include computer industry, technical experts and civil society as well. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations have endorsed this model; however, critics warn that it needs to avoid corporate capture (**Gwagwa et al., 2021**).

2.5.3. Standards and Certification

ISO, IEEE and NIST technical standards might be a good addition to legal frameworks by offering quantifiable metrics for AI safety and transparency.

2.5.4. New Global Institutions

To this we may perhaps add 74 Other global institutions. Some academics suggest an International AI Agency the way we have the International Atomic Energy Agency for nuclear technology. Some argue in favour of reinforcing those mechanisms rather than establishing new institutions (**United Nations, 2023**).

2.5.5. Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature establishes a solid ground by principles, normative and local standards. However, three major gaps remain: no real testing of which institutions really work, lack of coordination between global, regional and country levels, and lastly the ongoing power imbalances that hinder all-embracing global governance. The research fills this gap by assessing institutional arrangements and exploring strategic routes towards building an AI governance system that is effective, morally acceptable and globally coordinated (**Batool et al., 2023**).

3.Methodology

3.1.Research Design

The approach of this study is qualitative, using a descriptive and analytical research design through the use of the document and policy analysis. Exploratory qualitative research might be particularly relevant for work examining organisational processes, governance mechanisms, ethical constructs and regulatory discourses as opposed to measures of numerical association. As the aim of this study is to analyse and critique global governance models of AI, a qualitative design better enables a more in-depth exploration of provisions in policy documents and institutional strategies as well as subsequent normative structures developed under international organizations (**Creswell, 2014**).

Analysis and interpretation of documents is adopted here as a main research method because global AI governance, rather than articulated from human interaction or experimental evidence, mostly exists in the form of policy documentations such as ethical recommendations, legal tools, or institutional reflections. Document analysis is a systematic method of reviewing and evaluating documents in order to identify significant themes, patterns, or trends that are pertinent to the research question. This approach is particularly well suited to governance analysis in which official texts serve as authoritative statements of policy intentions, regulatory capacity and institutional priorities (**Bowen, 2009**).

The descriptive analytical approach allows the study to initially provide an account of Artificial Intelligence governance around the world (that is, that of formations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the European Union, the United Nations, national regulatory bodies), and secondly critically assess its effectiveness, shortcomings and limitations including implementation. This line of analysis is consistent with the focus of the study on identifying regulatory fragmentation, institutional gaps and strategic pathways for achieving coherence and accountability in AI governance.

The selected research design is appropriate in that the study does not test hypotheses or make causal claims; instead, it seeks to understand how governance institutions operate, how norms are formed, and why implementation problems endure across areas. Symbolically, individuals engaging cultures in a less mechanical technocratic manner are most concerned with achieving conceptual representations. It can be asserted that through qualitative document analysis, which allows this grounding in specific contexts or narratives from which we might infer wider patterns of social order (**Barthes, 1972; Althusser, 1971**), there already exist alternative modernities produced by sub alternatives; indeed no condition existing in Indian traditions has failed to be incorporated within the making of institutions across the world since always When regarding our present focus on institution-based research questions around institutional effectiveness', ethical compliance' and global regulatory coherence', it is evident also from earlier quoted literature why qualitative analysis is identified as an appropriate method revealing social events. Comprehensive analyses were compromised because some journals tested only for partial disclosure and others for internal validity (**Bowen, 2009**).

3.2.Analytical Evaluation Framework

Global AI governance mechanisms are evaluated using the criteria which follows enforceability, ethical compliance, institutional capacity, inclusiveness and regulatory coherence

3.3.Study Setting / Context

The research establishes itself in the global governance and international regulatory ambience, by analysing institutions and architectures that mold AI governance worldwide, regionally, and transnationally. It is not limited to the focus here on one place, institution and society but building itself now from across borders in AI development, deployment and risk.

The study's institutional scope covers leading global and regional institutions shaping AI governance. These comprise the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]**, **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]**, the **United Nations (UN)** as a whole, **European Union**, and specific national regulatory frameworks from the **United States** and **China**. These organizations were chosen because they embody a variety of governance modalities from non-binding ethical norms to hard law and play significant roles in shaping international AI policy discourses (**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019**).

The study period is 2019–2024, known as a time of acceleration in the institutional development of AI governance. This period spans from adoption of the **OECD AI Principles (2019)** and the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021)**, through to publication of the **National Institute of Standards and Technology AI Risk Management Framework (2023)**, and conclusion with the **European Union AI Act (2024)**. These developments are critical turning points in the trajectory of international AI governance and represent an appropriate point for testing.

The study environment is shaped by a number of contextual factors. For one, the geopolitical rivalry between leading AI powers (e.g., United States, China and European Union) has a profound impact on regulatory harmonization and international cooperation. Second, there is a gulf of capacity between developed and developing countries, especially lack of technical skills, institutional preparedness and legal systems for AI supervision. Third, soft-law regimes prevail and are a challenge in the enforcement of global accountability, for instance, ethical guidelines and voluntary principles (**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]**). These are the contextual factors that frame the ability of AI regulation to govern and thus are critical for understanding why there is fragmented global coordination. Placing the study within this universal institutional context affords a thorough assessment of normative aspirations as well as practical governance limitations.

3.4.Population of the Study

The subject of this research is not a human participant, but rather documents related to global AI governance (e.g., institutional records, policy frameworks, legal texts and scholarly publications). Texts in qualitative document-based analysis are the key

analytic building blocks and are analysed as manifestations of institutional authority, regulatory intent, and governance practice (**Bowen, 2009**).

The units of analysis include international policy agreements (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development AI Principles; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization AI Ethics Recommendation), local regulatory tools (such as the European Union AI Act), national frameworks for governance (e.g., National Institute of Standards and Technology AI Risk Management Framework; Chinese AI regulations), government announcements and implementer reports as reported by international health agencies, and a list of peer-reviewed academic journal articles and authoritative books on AI governance and global regulation.

The source population is defined as authoritative and credible sources that explicitly discuss AI governance mechanisms at the international or transnational level. These sources shed light on institutional functions, enforcement means, ethical norms, and coordination between regulations (**National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2023**).

The selection criteria of the documents are: documents published by established international organisations, governments, or academic publishers; publications dated between 2019–2024 with the aim of providing relevance to current developments in AI governance; sources that specifically discuss the regulation, ethics governance systems, or institutional coordination of AI; academic journal/magazine articles by recognized experts in the field of AI governance.

The exclusion criteria include opinionated articles with no institutional or scholarly backing; unpublished blog posts or media articles with weak methodology; miscellaneous non-academic materials; and sources outside the cut-off dates, unless they were of a foundational nature.

This purposeful sampling assures analytic rigor, credibility, and relevance. Through the exclusive consideration of institutional and academic sources, the investigation is secure from distorted impressions and its findings are robust. This is in line with the best practices of qualitative governance research and allows for thorough comparative and thematic analysis (**European Union, 2024**).

3.5.Data Collection Techniques

In this study, the only method of data gathered is document and policy analysis (secondary qualitative data). There were no primary data (e.g., surveys, interviews, questionnaires) collected. The choice of document analysis is justified by the nature of the research problem on global governance frameworks, institutional mechanisms and regulatory responses to AI. These policy mechanisms are officially documented in official policy documents, laws and regulations, institutional reports, and international guidelines, which makes document-based data the most suitable and reliable method.

The data were drawn from reliable secondary sources, such as the official publications of international bodies like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the European Union, and the United Nations, and academic journal articles. They are formal institutional stance papers and also offer authentic information on governance frameworks, regulatory tools, ethical standards and challenges in implementation (**Bowen, 2009**).

Document analysis was conducted systematically. In the first stage, official organizational repositories and academic databases were searched for relevant papers published from 2019 to 2024. Second, relevance of documents for AI governance, regulatory authority and institutional credibility were checked by the authors. Third, certain documents were read in depth and these documents were classified with respect to governance aspects (e.g., ethics, enforcement, coordination, and implementation capacity).

The approach guarantees credibility, transparency, and replicability since the documents that are analyzed are publicly available and institutionally validated. **Bowen (2009)** has suggested that it is appropriate to this kind of qualitative research, where researchers analyze "policies, governance structures and practices in organizations," as it enables interpretivist researchers to make meaning out of explicit information and to infer what institutions intend.

3.5.1. Sampling

Unlike the participants, policy papers and institutional reports are the units that will be selected purposively and non-probabilistically in this study. No probability or random sampling was employed (as statistical generalization is not intended). Instead, the aim is to be analytically and interpretively informative, best accomplished by purposively selecting information-rich sources.

Purposive sampling is about making decisions on what units to sample based on the research question. Documents in this study were selected based on institutions providing authority, policy relevance, and their direct involvement with global AI governance. Sampling was targeted at texts that shape international regulatory debate, including: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development AI Principles, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (**Patton, 2015**).

The population studied in this research is all global AI governance documents. But we can't and don't have to analyze the whole population. Thus, purposive sampling is employed in order to select a number of documents that can be handled and is analytically

meaningful and which allows for the development of a good picture of the prevalent governance practices from both global and regional perspectives.

The sampling eligibility criteria were documents published by known international entities or governmental organizations, relevance to AI governance, ethics, or regulation; publication between 2019 and 2024; high policy or regulatory impact; and documents not based on institutions with credibility or governance relevance were excluded.

Patton (2015) states that purposive selection is the most suitable approach for qualitative research when the concern is depth of understanding from selected cases rather than numerical representativeness. Similarly, **Creswell & Poth (2018)** argue that non-probability samples are acceptable in much qualitative research such as document-based studies due to a focus on meaning and context, rather than statistical inference.

4.Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study employed qualitative thematic analysis, which is a championed approach for analysing textual and documentary data. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns (themes) within data; it is suited to rich data sets with discussion on the themes that the study investigates.

The analysis followed four stages: primary coding of text on governance aspects (accountability, enforcement, ethics, coordination); developing themes and uncovering patterns of governance issues and institutional responsibilities; cross-institution/region comparison; and lastly interpretation, connecting research aims and questions with the findings.

The analysis shows that global AI governance is still relatively disparate, defined by heavy reliance on soft-law instruments, lack of binding enforcement mechanisms, uneven implementing capacity between developed and developing countries, and competing regulatory models across regions.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are strong normative actors, whereas the European Union stands for a legally binding governance structure. But no institution has the power to coordinate the world (**Braun & Clarke, 2006**).

5.Discussion

The findings of this research are in line with recent work that conceptualizes global artificial intelligence (AI) governance as fragmented, ethics-ridden and weakly enforced regulatory fields. In line with the results of **Floridi (2018)**, **Cihon et al. (2021)**, as well as **Batool et al. (2023)**, this paper discovers that the vast majority of global AI governance efforts depend more on soft-law instrument harmonization than binding legal regulation. The analysis also establishes that high-level international principles, such as the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development AI Principles (2019)** and **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Recommendation**

on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021), work mainly as aspirational standards rather than regulatory instruments with teeth.

Yet, although previous work predominantly discusses the existence and spread of ethical AI governance frameworks in isolation, we contribute to this literature by offering a systematic analysis on what explains why ethical frames have come to constitute the dominant regime of planetary AI regulation. The results indicate that the dominance of non-binding instruments mirrors strategic signalling of states and international organizations for soft law in situations characterized by technological uncertainty and fast innovation. For this purpose, the soft law theory of **Abbott and Snidal (2000)** is a particularly helpful explanatory framework that suggests that non-binding instruments are preferred by states when they pursue flexibility, promptness, and low levels of political risk. This theoretical vision is supported by the evidence of the present study that institutions are still sceptical to embrace stricter regulatory rules that may soon be outdated or stifle innovation.

The second key pattern that emerges from our findings is the maintenance of regulatory fragmentation across regions, including between the **European Union**, **United States**, and **China**. Consistent with **Whittlestone et al. (2021)** and **Veale and Borgesius (2021)**, the results suggest that different political values, economic preferences, and governance patterns produce divergent models of regulating AI. The EU has pursued a risk-based and legally enforceable approach with the AI Act, the US favours non-**binding** guidance and private sector leadership, while China has adopted a regulatory model centred around the state. This article contributes to existing analyses by explicating how fragmentation is not just a policy difference but rather an organizational consequence of conflicting governance logics coupled with lack of a single global coordinating authority. Such institution-level priority sets the current study apart from literature that examines mainly national or regional levels of regulatory effectiveness.

The differential implementability of rules in developed and developing nations is another critical discovery. Echoing such concerns, **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023)** and **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2023)** implementation review reports argue that many countries do not have the necessary technical capacity, institutional infrastructure, or financial resources to put into practice AI governance frameworks. The present study also contributes to implementation literature more generally by connecting these capacity constraints to a wider scope of governance inequalities, viewing differences in actual implementation patterns as reinforcing a hierarchical world order where developed states make normative decisions whilst developing states are rule takers. This reading is in line with **Gwagwa et al. (2021)** who contend that global AI governance may consolidate existing power asymmetries unless inclusiveness and capacity-building drives precede.

Temporal factors also help explain the repetition of these patterns: the dominance of soft law, regulatory fragmentation, and imbalance in capacity. According to **Floridi (2018)**, the speed of technological development is usually ahead of the speed at which political and legal decisions are made, so that governance frameworks are based on ethical principles as provisional solutions. While flexibility may be useful when dealing with rapid change, the results of this exploratory analysis indicate that flexibility without accountability hampers the effectiveness of regulation and public trust. Contrary to a more optimistic viewpoint where ethical governance is enough, this article proves how the need for an ethical framework must be combined with enforcement capacity and improved international coordination.

Finally, compared with previous work, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of global AI governance through the convergence of institutional behaviour analysis with political incentive structure, constraint, and temporal dynamics perspectives. Instead of considering fragmentation and weak enforcement as temporary problems, the results suggest that these are structural features of existing arrangements for global governance. And unless governance structures change to hybrid systems that combine ethical orientation with binding norms and mechanisms of coordinated international oversight, the constraints on which we have focussed here are likely to continue (**Floridi, 2018**).

6.Findings

This study also identifies several of the paths that underlie global AI governance. The review of international policy papers and institutional statements suggests to us that global AI governance is primarily defined by non-binding ethical guidelines, divisional regulation approaches across regions, and divergent enforcement capabilities between countries. Transparency, accountability and fairness are some of the principles that underpin most governance initiatives but they are hardly buttressed by any binding legal mechanisms. Furthermore, the results also indicate distinct variances in degree of governance as practiced among developed and developing countries, such that for the latter, implementation faces significantly more challenges owing to lack of institutional and technical capabilities.

6.1.Limitations

There are a few limitations in this study that need to be recognized. Firstly, the study depends solely on secondary sources (policy documents and institutional reports). This serves credibility and reliability, but also restricts access to the internal political negotiations and decision making.

Secondly, only major global institutions are included in the study and does not necessarily capture local or regional governance projects extracts from some of key articles. Thirdly, it is necessary to clarify the limited generalizability of these findings

given that this research follows a qualitative design and a process of analytical rather than statistical generalization. Not with standing these limitations, the work provides critical insights into models of global AI governance and confirms empirical testing in the future (Creswell, Research Design).

6.2.Recommendations

Strengthen coordination between international institutions, integrate, ethics frames with technical norms, develop governance in the third world, champion regulatory interoperability not equalization and most importantly probe the viability of a worldwide AI regulating body.

7.Conclusion

This study suggests that although there has been substantial progress in the articulation of global norms of AI governance, implementation is poor and fragmented. There are institutions already that offer the ethical direction, even though they lack enforcement powers. A coherent governance approach that is inclusive and pragmatic is required that can reconcile innovation with accountability

References

Abbott, K. W., & Snidal, D. (2000). Hard and soft law in international governance. *International Organization, 54*(3), 421–456.

Batool, A., Zowghi, D., & Bano, M. (2025). AI governance: A systematic literature review. *AI and Ethics, 5*, 3265–3279. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-024-00653-w

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cihon, P., et al. (2021). The debate on centralized governance of artificial intelligence. *Science and Engineering Ethics*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-020-00287-1

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

European Union. (2024). *Artificial intelligence act*. Official Journal of the European Union.

Floridi, L. (2018). An ethical framework for a good AI society. *Minds and Machines*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-018-9482-5

Floridi, L. (2022). *The ethics of artificial intelligence*. Oxford University Press.

Gwagwa, A., et al. (2021). Decolonising AI governance. *AI and Ethics*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-021-00038-4

Kostka, G. (2023). China's evolving AI regulations. MERICS. https://merics.org

National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2023). *AI risk management framework (AI RMF 1.0)*. U.S. Department of Commerce.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). *OECD AI principles*. OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *State of implementation of the OECD AI principles*. OECD Publishing.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

United Nations. (2023). *Interim report of the high-level advisory body on artificial intelligence*.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2021). *Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence*.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2023). *AI governance implementation guidance*.

Veale, M., & Borgesius, F. Z. (2021). Demystifying the EU artificial intelligence act. *Computer Law Review International*.

Whittlestone, J., et al. (2021). Tension between openness and regulation in AI. *AI and Society*.