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Research Paper

AI literacy in india through the lens of national policy: a four-dimensional evaluation

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ABSTRACT

As India seeks to become a global leader in Artificial Intelligence (AI), its national AI policy plays a crucial role in promoting AI literacy. However, a gap exists in the literature regarding analyses of AI policy through the lens of established AI literacy models. This study qualitatively evaluates India's national AI policy document, India AI 2023: Expert Group Report – First Edition, using a four-aspect AI literacy framework. A thematic analysis examines how the policy addresses the dimensions of understanding, application, evaluation, and ethics. Results show that the policy is in line with the four aspects of the theoretical model. The study also identifies three additional sociocultural themes, inclusion, equity, and AI for social good. Gaps that could potentially hinder the policy's ability to fully promote inclusive AI literacy, and solutions, are also discussed. The study highlights the strengths and action ability of India's national AI policy, and it's relevance to fostering AI literacy in India.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is undoubtedly one of the most disruptive technologies of the 21st century. Its ability to analyze large datasets and recognize patterns is vastly superior to traditional computing systems. AI driven innovation is increasingly being seen in business [1], medical sciences [2], law [3], education [4], and many other fields. Generative Pre-trained Transformers (GPTs) AI systems that can seemingly make sense of unstructured human queries have further boosted the adoption of AI. Today,

we are seeing their extensive usage in commercial applications [5], academic research [6], education [7], personal tutoring [8], media [9], medical education [10], mental healthcare [11], and even policymaking [12].

The public release of GPTs in 2022 has led to a massive increase in public interest and awareness of AI in India [13]. This makes AI literacy an important literacy. It allows ordinary people to understand the benefits and how to use AI effectively. India has a well-defined strategy to promote AI literacy. However, there has been limited systematic evaluation of the national AI policy in line with existing models of AI literacy. The present research addresses this critical gap and examines the national AI policy document India AI 2023: Expert Group Report First Edition [14]. Ng four-aspect AI literacy framework [15] is used as the theoretical framework.

2. RELATED WORK

2.1. India's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Countries across the world are working on various initiatives to make their people AI literate. India too has been working on this front, and in 2018 for the first time articulated its main mantra of "AI for All." The goal is to foster human-centric development using AI [16]. The National AI Portal was launched in 2020 [17], followed by the Responsible AI for Youth (YUVAi) initiative for young people [18]. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) established seven working groups to work on an AI roadmap. Their findings culminated in the India AI 2023 report outlining data governance, strategic priorities, and institutional frameworks [14].

Studies have looked at India's national AI strategy from differing perspectives. Researchers have studied implementation roadmaps [19], technical limitations in addressing societal concerns of AI systems [20], and even comparative analyses of India and China's AI strategies [21]. Some have explored the ethical and governance aspects of Indian AI policy [22]. Others have looked at the relation between the policy and constitutional principles [23]. However, a major gap exists in the literature. There is virtually no analysis of the national AI policy document grounded in AI literacy theory Figure 1.

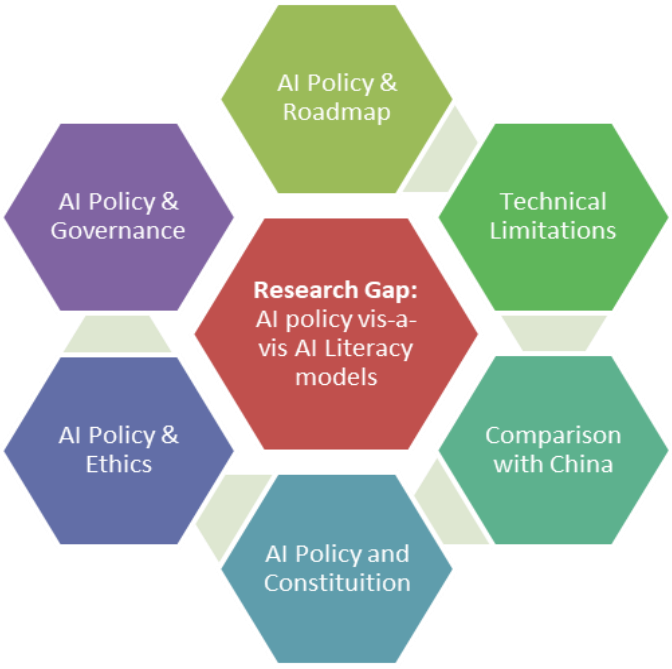

Figure 1. Research Gap

2.2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy

AI literacy is the ability to understand, use, and evaluate AI technologies. Being AI literate means recognizing the risks and having the ability to use AI safely [24]. It is much more than technical concepts

like machine learning and coding. It is a broader competency, that entails understanding the ethical implications of AI and its potential impacts on society [25]. Given that AI enhances productivity, efficiency, and creativity [26], AI literacy assumes greater importance, placing it on par with traditional literacies such as numeracy and scientific literacy.

Globally we are seeing more and more discussions on AI in the wider public sphere [27]. This rapid evolution has driven researchers and organizations to create myriad teaching and assessment frameworks. Models such as those by [24], [28] exemplify these varied approaches, offering distinct competencies and design principles, and for use in different contexts.

One of the most widely researched AI literacy models is by Ng [15]. It outlines four dimensions: know and understand, use and apply, evaluate and create, and ethical issues. This study uses Ng as the theoretical framework.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The four-aspect Ng AI literacy framework [15] is well-suited for analyzing India's AI policy document. The four factors and their conceptualizations are given in Figure 2.

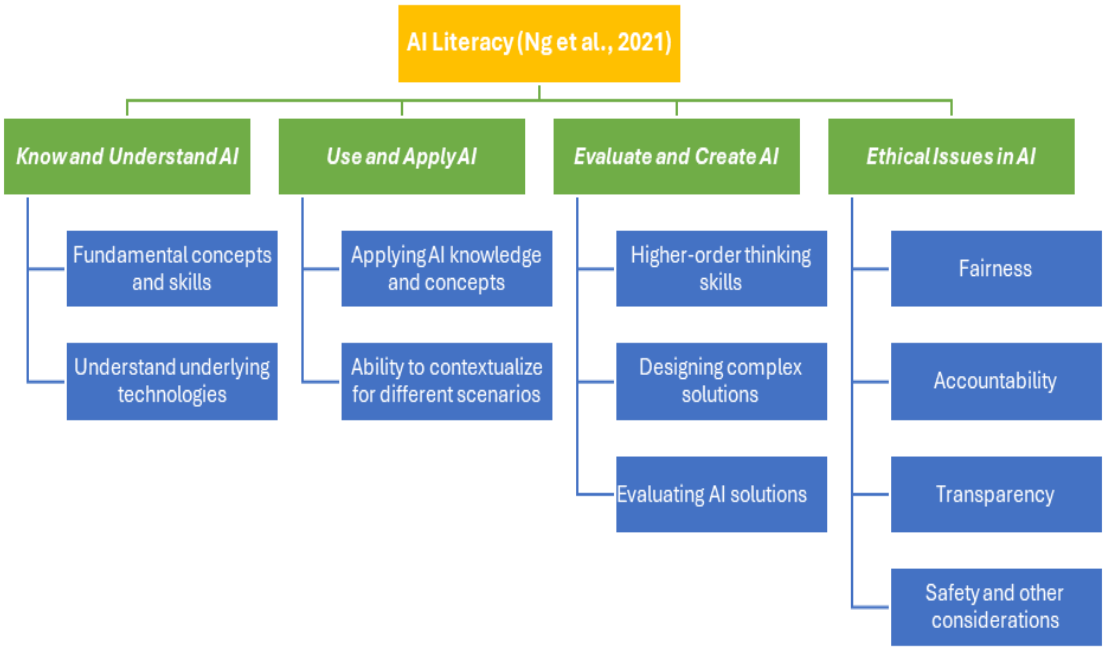

Figure 2. Four Factor AI Literacy Model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Material

The study examines India's official AI policy paper "India AI 2023: Expert Group Report – First Edition" [14], prepared by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

3.2. Design

The study employs a qualitative design. Thematic analysis as outlined in [29] is used. Specifically, a reflexive thematic approach has been chosen. This is a fully qualitative method that emphasizes meaning as contextual and acknowledges multiple realities.

Researcher subjectivity is valued as an important resource [30]. A combination of deductive and inductive thematic analyses was used. The deductive approach was applied initially. This is effective for research based on existing theory [31] as it offers a structured way to find themes. Next, an inductive approach was used to find themes that were not in the theory.

3.3. Procedure

Qualitative data analysis of the AI policy document was performed. First, a series of close, detailed readings were done to familiarize the researcher with the content. This was followed by a thematic analysis, guided by the approach of [29].

The coding process was done systematically, with identified codes grouped into themes. Each theme was then mapped to dimensions of AI literacy theory. The themes were supported by choosing relevant statements from the report. It should be noted that the process was iterative and recursive, involving repeated cycles of interpretation and pattern identification. Analysis was performed manually without any software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After completing the coding process, the identified codes were mapped to relevant themes. The themes which were then systematically organized into the four aspects as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Breakdown of Factors

Factors	No. Themes Per Factor
Know and understand AI	4
Use and Apply AI	3
Create and Evaluate AI	4
Ethics	3

The specific themes identified within each factor are enumerated in Table 2. Details on each aspect and related themes identified are presented in the subsequent section. Three themes were identified, beyond the existing four factors.

Table 2. AI Literacy Themes Identified in Policy Document

Dimension	Theme
Know and understand	
	AI for All
	School Level Integration
	National AI Portal
	Government Initiatives and Public Awareness
Application	
	Prioritizing cross-sectoral AI adoption
	Funding and Infrastructure for AI Startups
	AI Skills Development
Engagement	
	Centres of Excellence (CoEs)
	Emphasis on Research and Innovation
	AI Chipset Development
	Use of AI in Research
Ethics	
	Responsible AI
	National AI Ethics Guidelines
	AI Ethicist Role

4.1. Know and Understand AI

India's national AI policy strongly aligns with the factor, "know and understand AI." Four themes were identified for this factor. These include AI accessibility for everyone, integration into schools, a

national AI portal, and public awareness campaigns. The policy focuses on accessible AI education for every citizen with the vision of 'AI for All' at its very core" [14, p. 5].

It does not matter what someone's background is, or which socioeconomic strata of society they belong to. The program is structured as a self-paced micro-learning course. It is available in eleven Indian languages as well as for "visually impaired learners" [14, p. 97]. The policy encourages teachers to add AI topics to regular school lessons through a "structured path" [14, p. 87]. This can be supported by fun activities like hackathons. Students are also encouraged to form AI clubs. The overall idea is to help students get comfortable with AI early on. The National AI Portal, a one-stop shop for "AI-related news, policies, initiatives, and research in India" is a big part of the policy [14, p. 92]. It is meant to help ordinary people, not just experts, understand what all is happening in the AI space. It aims to expand AI use in India, alongside other government initiatives like Digital India and the Atal Innovation Mission. The National AI Strategy, #AIFORALL, "aims to make India a global leader in AI by 2030" [14, p. 131].

4.2. Use and Apply AI

India's national AI policy emphasizes, the second factor, "use and apply AI" aspect of AI literacy. The identified themes include: prioritizing cross-sectoral AI adoption, funding and infrastructure for AI startups, and AI skill development. The goal is to teach people to use AI practically. The policy emphasizes the use of AI in key sectors such as "Governance, Agriculture, Health, Education, and Finance" [14, p. 156]. Government agencies, academia, research labs, and startups, are all encouraged to create a proper environment.

To support AI-driven startups, the policy proposes funding mechanisms and access to advanced AI infrastructure. This approach will "empower AI startups to make AI-enabled products/solutions for India and the world under Make AI in India & Make AI Work for India initiatives" [14, p. 7]. AI skills development is another important area. The government has called for partnerships and collaborations between industry-academia-research…" [14, p. 78]. There are also recommendations for integrating AI-based curricula at various levels. Special career paths for AI roles have to be created to be future-ready. An India-specific AI community is the need of the hour and the policy talks about it in detail. All these initiatives together are meant to provide people with the skills needed to use AI in their jobs.

4.3. Evaluate and Create AI

In terms of the third aspect, "evaluate and create AI" of the model, we find good alignment. The key is to promote an environment which fosters problem-solving using AI and the development of new AI technologies. One must have the ability to critically evaluate AI products, and the policy talks about that. Key themes that were identified are: Centers of Excellence, research and innovation focus, AI chipset creation, and AI's research applications. The policy proposes establishing Centers of Excellence (CoEs) in leading educational institutions. They are to carry out foundational AI research and drive innovation in different sectors. Partnerships are the key to drive this and these centers can then "act as hubs for AI skill development, bringing together industry experts, researchers, and educators to collaborate, exchange ideas, and create a talent pipeline in AI" [14, p. 86].

There is a strong emphasis on building a strong AI ecosystem, attracting private sector investment, giving research fellowships and grants. The key is to allow a platform where different stakeholders can collaborate to establish AI-focused innovation clusters or centres" [14, p. 92]. AI chipset development is an important area of thrust, and the policy talks about building the capacity for end-to-end chipset development. This needs financial incentives and infrastructure support for domestic companies and startups. This is in line with solving local needs. Thus, chipset development is needed "for multilingual NLP applications, including speech recognition, translation, and sentiment analysis" is crucial [14, p. 172]. The policy also encourages the use of AI in research to help industries, particularly startup and MSME's. This will help make our industries more future-ready but for it to happen companies should "focus on AI-related research, encourage academic collaboration, and upskill the non-IT workforce" [14, p. 9].

4.4. Ethics of AI

The AI policy emphasizes the importance of ethical aspects of AI. The themes identified are: Responsible AI, National AI ethics guidelines, and AI ethicist role. The policy very clearly and in multiple instances highlights the importance of ethical challenges, says that with increased ubiquity of AI, "the need for ethical and responsible AI development and deployment grows" [14, p. 82]. Algorithmic biases, privacy issues, and accountability are some of the issues that are flagged.

The policy emphasizes the need for ethical rules for AI development and usage. The release of National AI Ethics Guidelines in 2022 is a major concrete step toward responsible AI use in India. It provides a definitive "framework for the responsible development and use of AI in India" [14, p. 65]. For the first time ever there is a clear articulation of new roles in this regard: the AI ethicist role. He is supposed to hep companies "navigate the ethical implications of AI technologies, ensuring responsible and unbiased development and deployment" [14, p. 102]. To support this career path, the policy lays down a model curriculum framework that includes K-12 interventions, graduate and postgraduate training, AI-focused research, and competency-based design considerations.

Discussion

4.5. Principal Results

India's AI policy aligns well with all four aspects of the AI literacy model of Ng. It is broad-based as well as forward-looking, and addresses diverse segments of the population. Students, working professionals, government employees, and no one is left out. At the same time, it also caters to various sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and governance. Unlike other policy frameworks which only talk about AI ethics, this framework does address issues like fairness and accountability. There is a conscious effort to ensure that AI serves as a tool for social well-being. The policy acknowledges the diversity of India and notes that such diversity and growth generate "a large amount of "raw" data, which when curated can be used in AI applications" [14, p. 131]. However, there are three limitations that may hinder its overall effectiveness. First, despite its ambitious vision of "AI for All", some demographic groups like students, engineers, and government employees, have better defined road-map than others, like say doctors or lawyers or factory workers. Secondly, we find limited discussion on the contours and evaluation of AI ethics. Third, there is a definite overemphasis on technical training rather than on encouraging the use of AI for critical thinking needed to bring about social change. Addressing these gaps will hopefully make the policy more inclusive and impactful.

4.6. Beyond the Four Factors

This analysis identifies three themes that fall outside Ng four aspect AI literacy model: inclusive AI, equitable AI, and AI for social good. These reflect a socio-cultural orientation of AI Table 3.

Table 3. Additional Themes: Socio-cultural Orientation of AI

Broad Categorization	Theme
Socio-cultural Themes	
	Inclusive AI
	Equitable AI
	AI for Social Good

The policy's focus is clearly defined as "inclusive techno-socio-economic development of the country" [14, p. 68]. It therefore talks about AI solutions for handling India's linguistic diversity and also for people with disabilities. It also advocates for bridging the digital divide by making AI more accessible to people in remote areas. The policy advocates for measures to mitigate biases in AI and to ensure that AI is transparent and aligned with societal values.

Special efforts are to be made to ensure that AI technologies cater to local contexts and serve the needs of "marginalized groups, communities and individuals" [14, p. 100]. AI is to be seen as being "socially embedded, interacting and affecting individuals and communities in myriad ways" [14, p. 94]. Hence,

understanding the "social implications" of AI is important [14, p. 99]. AI must go hand in hand with community empowerment and social well-being. This emphasis on using technology for the benefit of society is a unique Indian characteristic, generally not seen in other mainstream AI ethics codes. This, in fact, stems from the Indian concept of seva (selfless service), which forms the basis of social responsibility and inclusion [32].

4.7. Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. There are different AI literacy models, each with different competencies and design principles. One AI literacy model alone, like Ng [15] used here, cannot capture all aspects of AI literacy. Similarly, looking at only one single policy document restricts the generalizability of the study. In terms of findings, the identified socio-cultural themes, beyond Ng. remain untested. They have to be validated beyond the qualitative exploration in this study. Future research should numerically test whether these themes can be categorized under a socio-cultural dimension. There has to be proper scale development and psychometric validation in this regard. In-depth investigations into each AI literacy dimension is also required. Researchers should also investigate social issues like alignment with SDG's and environmental impact of AI to get a better understanding of AI literacy. Similar studies can also be undertaken for other countries, and perhaps even cross-country comparisons may be done.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on this, it's fair to say that India's national AI policy is mostly consistent with the AI literacy theory of Ng [15]. Based on a vision of "AI for All", the policy emphasizes, among other things, accessible AI in education, workforce upskilling, training for non-specialists, and general public awareness. It supports all four aspects of the theoretical framework, understanding, application, evaluation and ethical aspects of AI. The study also identified some gaps that could prevent the policy from fulfilling its mission of nation-wide inclusive AI literacy.

A few mitigation strategies are been touched upon. While the policy encourages citizen engagement with AI, there is a need to expand its reach to the non-STEM public to make it more impactful. A novel outcome of this study is the identification of three socio-cultural themes. Detailed investigation is needed to see if these themes can be considered a full-fledged dimension. In this way, the study contributes to AI literacy as a growing body of knowledge, as well as from a public policy standpoint. It highlights strengths, limitations and the way forward of the national AI policy. India's AI policy is both comprehensive and forward-looking, and seeks to make citizens adequately prepared for an AI-driven future.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Subhodeep Mukhopadhyay	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				

C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict of interest.

Informed Consent

Not Applicable.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Data Availability

This study draws on publicly available data. No new datasets were created.

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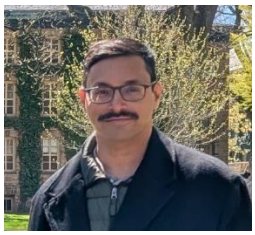

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