

Workshop Report: Research Dissemination of A Survey of AI Ethics Stakeholders in Nepal



NAAMII conducted a research dissemination workshop at GATE College, Mandikhatar, Kathmandu on 27 March 2022 as a concluding event for the TODO. The workshop was an invitation only intimate event. A total of nineteen participants attended the event and consisted of representatives from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, The Open Institute, Policy Research Institute, IT companies in Nepal, and civic organizations. The participants included students, IT professionals, policymakers, and activists.

The main goal of the workshop was to present the main results from the AI Ethics survey and facilitate a discussion among the participants to get the survey work reviewed as well as receive feedback and suggestions for the future direction of the work. The schedule of the event is listed below:

Agenda:

- Introduction - Dr. Bishesh Khanal, NAAMII
- Research Summary - Ms. Shreyasha Paudel, NAAMII
- Comments from stakeholders
 - Policymaker - Dr. Deepak Khadka, Policy Research Institute
 - Faculty - Prof. Bal Krishna Bal, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Kathmandu University
 - Professional - Ms. Anisha Baidya, Head of AI, Dogma Group
 - Student – Mr. Prajwal Bhandari, Kathmandu University
- Audience Q&A and Discussion
- High Tea

During the introduction, Dr. Bishesh Khanal introduced NAAMII as a research organization in Nepal, its mission and the three core focus areas namely, AI research, industry innovation, and outreach and capacity building. Dr. Khanal iterated how the AI and Society research group within NAAMII is a common thread that connects these three focus areas. He then listed some of the ways the findings from this survey project can lead to future work and collaborations with policymakers, university groups, and NAAMII's own outreach activities.

Following introduction, Ms. Shreyasha Paudel, the lead researcher for this project, presented the findings from the survey. Ms. Paudel presented the main objectives for the project, compared and contrasted the responses from the students, professionals, and policymakers regarding the state of AI ethics in Nepal, major concerns, who is responsible, and ways to ensure ethical AI in Nepal. The findings also included some slides on AI ethics and education which discussed the findings related to whether AI ethics is covered in current curriculum and whether education impacted the responses in the survey. Similarly, based on the professional's responses, Ms. Paudel presented findings on AI Ethics in practice focusing on ethical practices in workplace, AI work areas, and knowledge about AI ethics tools among professionals. To conclude, the presentation included major takeaways in the form of observed gaps in understanding of AI ethics and recommendations for future work.



Following the presentation, the comments from stakeholders was combined with the audience Q&A which led to a vigorous discussion and many useful feedback. Dr. Deepak Khadka, the policymaker commentator suggested that these findings be shared with Policy Research Institute (PRI) and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and he hoped that it will serve as a guide for developing ethical guidelines for AI and evidence-based policy making in the context of Nepal. Following his comments, audience members also suggested the need to diversify both the survey and workshop participants by including lawyers, philosophers, and journalists who may already be working in the area. They also pointed out that the survey might be limited and biased due to its focus on a technical audience.

The faculty reviewer, Professor Bal Krishna Bal, complimented the survey questions and the analysis. He also expressed hope that two new degrees Bachelors and Masters of technology in AI started recently in his university would help address some of the gaps found by our survey as both the degrees have courses on ethics and AI and society integrated into the curriculum. He expressed his hope that the responses would show a more increased understanding if the graduates were surveyed in the future. Professor Bal also shared his experience being a part of an AI related discussion group organized by the Human Rights Commission where they explored risks of AI associated with discrimination, privacy loss, surveillance, employment loss, and intellectual property related conflicts. He suggested that our findings would be a great resource for such discussions and pointed out the necessity for more research and future conversations among different stakeholders.



Ms. Anisha Baidya represented the professional group as a reviewer and also pointed out the STEM centric focus of the survey. She pointed out the lack of inter-disciplinary experts and projects in Nepal and hoped that it could change in the future. Sharing her own experience with engineering curriculum in North America, Ms. Baidya emphasized the need for students from computing backgrounds to engage with humanities and social sciences which can broaden their perspectives and address some of the gaps in understanding presented in the findings. Ms. Baidya also said that the survey and our findings were a right direction and a necessary first step but should be augmented by other surveys among social scientists, psychologists, lawyers, and philosophers in the future. She also requested the findings and other reports from this survey to be made public facing and easily shareable. Following Ms. Baidya's comments, members of audience added how AI discrimination from North America or Europe could be different from that in Nepal. The IT experts in the audience also added their concerns about data protection, data security, and AI related infrastructure in Nepal. The audience had questions about governance policies that guide AI hardware and software development and what would be the best ways to structure these so that both consumers could be protected and the small companies can thrive without too much bureaucracy.

The student commentator, Mr. Prajwal Bhandari commented how he finally learned what AI ethics means during the presentation. He mentioned how he always thought ethics was important but was never exposed to ethical theories and concepts formally. He said that he now realized that there is a lack of awareness among students that technology can cause huge impacts in both positive and

negative ways. As feedback, he suggested that he would like to see responses from AI users in the survey.

In addition to the reviews and comments, the audience members also had many questions regarding the survey and the project itself. One participant asked about the design of the survey and whether it was influenced by existing recommendation documents from UNESCO, OECD, and EU. The NAAMII team responded by describing how we took the principles and contextualized them to Nepal in both the survey questions and analysis and takeaways. The audience was also interested in learning more about how the respondents thought about data bias in the context of Nepal and requested for specific examples (if there were any) based on both qualitative answers and focus group discussions. Other questions included next steps and what we see as the most important aspect of this research.

Overall, the research dissemination workshop was fruitful both for us and participants. Participants agreed that this was a much needed and fruitful preliminary research work regarding AI ethics in Nepal. The findings suggested that there are many areas for improvement and potential for future work. The participants also expressed an interest in sharing the findings in their networks and provided many useful feedback and potential areas for collaboration within their respective organizations. NAAMII is looking forward to pursuing these recommendations for future projects.

