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Arab Experiences in the Field of Implementing Digital Management: A Reading of the Qatari Experience through Qatar E-Government "HUKOOMI"

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to provide a model for the application of digital administration in the Arab countries, by reviewing the experience of the State of Qatar as an ideal model, by highlighting the strategy of transforming the government of the State of Qatar into a digital government and the role of the Qatar e-government platform "Hukoomi" in promoting this transformation.
The study concluded that the digital government strategy of the State of Qatar is one of the most critical steps to promote digital transformation and achieve sustainable development goals at all levels.

1. Introduction:

In the early 21st century, the world witnessed numerous major transformations encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects. Among these significant shifts, we find technological and digital transformations that have profoundly impacted all aspects of human life. The evolution of technology has led to the emergence of the internet, smartphones, artificial intelligence, and other advanced technologies, accelerating the pace of digital transformation and enhancing its importance and development to affect various aspects of life, business, societies, and even governments. Digital government, also known as e-government or smart government, is one of the prominent aspects of this digital transformation. It represents the comprehensive shift undertaken by governments to adopt modern electronic technology in all their operations and activities.

The primary aim of digital government is to improve the delivery of government services in general, providing them faster and more conveniently to individuals and institutions through electronic portals, mobile applications, and centralized systems. This allows citizens to access various government information, submit government requests and transactions, pay fees, and track the status of their requests with ease, ultimately enhancing government efficiency, reducing bureaucracy, and improving citizens' quality of life.

Qatar is among the most important countries regionally and internationally that has kept pace with digital transformations, giving great importance to digital government in its strategy and future vision. From the foregoing, the main problem of this study crystallized as follows:

What strategy did Qatar adopt to develop its digital government? And what role does the Qatar e-government platform "Hukoomi" play in promoting digital transformation in Qatar?

To address the research problem, we will rely on the following hypothesis: "Qatar adopted a comprehensive strategy to develop its digital government, including improving digital infrastructure, developing electronic government services, and establishing policies and laws to enhance the safe use of digital technologies. At the same time, the Hukoomi electronic government platform played a pivotal role in improving and enhancing digital transformation in Qatar, by bringing together digital government services in one place, making them easily and securely accessible to

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individuals and institutions."

In another context, this study aims to shed light on Qatar's strategy for transitioning to a digital government and the role of the Hukoomi e-government platform in enhancing this transformation. In other words, the aim of this study is to attempt to understand Qatar's strategies and practices in digital transformation and improving electronic government services through analyzing this experience, identifying the challenges it faced, and determining the factors influencing its success, in order to provide recommendations and lessons learned to improve the experiences of digital governments in Arab countries.

The importance of the study also lies in highlighting the Qatari experience in implementing digital government. This experience serves as an inspirational model for Arab countries to improve the delivery of government services and enhance digital transformation in the Arab region.

Finally, to address the research problem, we have divided this study into three parts. In the first part, we will discuss the conceptual framework of digital transformation and digital government, while in the second part, we will delve into Qatar's digital government strategy. As for the third and final part, we will examine the experience of Qatar's e-government platform "Hukoomi."

2. Conceptual Framework of Digital Transformation and Digital Government:

2.1. Conceptual Framework of Digital Transformation:

Before delving into the important concepts related to digital government and the digital divide, we will first define the conceptual framework of digital transformation. This involves addressing the concept of digital transformation, as well as its benefits.

2.1.1. Concept of Digital Transformation:

Digital transformation refers to the use of technology to support radical change processes in institutional operations (Terry & Others, 2009, p. 11). It can also be defined as the process of companies transitioning to a business model that relies on digital technologies to innovate products and services, provide new revenue streams, and enhance the value of their offerings (Abdelhamid, 2022, p. 80).

2.1.2. Benefits of Digital Transformation:

Digital transformation offers numerous benefits, among the most important are (Iraqi Authority for Technology Experts, 2020, p. 13):

- Changing business models and enhancing thinking methods;
- Achieving radical improvements in services provided to individuals in areas such as health, education, safety, and security, enhancing their experiences and productivity;
- Improving efficiency, reducing expenditure, streamlining procedures, and rapidly implementing new and flexible services;
- Reshaping how people live, work, think, interact, and communicate, based on available technologies, with continuous planning and ongoing efforts to reshape practical assets;
- Providing a strategy for creating higher competitive value, advanced work teams, and sustaining a culture of innovation;
- Empowering faster innovation to achieve desired outcomes and move towards success;
- Leveraging modern technologies to be more aware and flexible in work, capable of predicting and planning for the future.

2.2. Conceptual Framework of Digital Government:

After identifying the key concepts related to digital transformation, we will in this theoretical part of our study define the most important concepts related to digital government.

2.2.1. Concept of Digital Government:

Digital government, as defined by the World Bank, refers to the use of information technologies such as wide-area networks, the internet, and mobile computing by government entities through mutual relationships between citizens, institutions, governmental entities, and other stakeholders. This aims to achieve a range of objectives including improving the delivery of government services to citizens, enhancing interaction with the business sector and industry, improving accessibility levels, and achieving more efficient government management (Gustova, 2017, p. 4).

2.2.2. Objectives of Digital Government:

Among the most important objectives of digital government are (Al-Olaq, 2004, p. 32):

- Providing services better and faster to individuals and the business sector;
- Creating an encouraging investment climate and removing obstacles for both local and foreign investors;
- Providing accurate and updated information to citizens, businesses, and other government institutions;
- Enhancing the efficiency of the government apparatus, oversight, and monitoring methods;
- Saving money and time by streamlining traditional transactions, which will involve monitoring citizens and institutions;
- Activating the role of citizens in development;
- Increasing transparency and credibility in government transactions.

3. Reading into Qatar's Digital Government Strategy:

The digital government strategy of Qatar represents one of the most crucial steps towards achieving further digital transformation that positively impacts the daily interactions of citizens, residents, businesses, and governmental entities in the country. Moreover, Qatar's digital government strategy aims to achieve the main objectives of Qatar's National Vision 2030 by benefiting all individuals and business entities through digital communication with governmental entities that constantly strive to provide more transparent and effective services.

In this part of our study, we will delve into the benefits of implementing Qatar's digital government strategy, as well as the role of digital government in achieving sustainable development in Qatar.

3.1. Benefits of Implementing Qatar's Digital Government Strategy:

The benefits of Qatar's digital government strategy extend to all segments of society, including users, governmental entities, and the state as a whole, based on international experiences and national requirements (Qatar e-Government Strategy Report, 2020, p. 3).

- **Benefits for Users:** The digital government will provide significant value to users by saving time spent commuting to and from government offices. It will also enhance the user experience in transactions that do not require paper forms or certificates, and it will elevate the level of services as electronic services are characterized by speed and reduce the likelihood of errors.
- **Benefits for Governmental Entities:** The digital government regulates a wide range of administrative processes. By digitizing complex processes, the government can increase productivity and allocate resources and personnel to the most important priorities. Moreover, digital government can help improve the operational efficiency of the government across all governmental entities by leveraging platforms, data, and shared resources.
- **Benefits for the State as a Whole:** At the national level, digital government enhances the advantages and gains that accrue to the entire state. Improving services in Qatar will uplift the standard of living for both citizens and expatriates alike. Accelerating the pace of services provided to companies and providing them with valuable open data sets will drive national economic development. Additionally, the success of digital government will enhance the reputation and status of Qatar globally. Furthermore, increased transparency fosters trust and facilitates communication and interaction among different parties. Specifically, digital government supports the transparency of government performance by enabling monitoring of the speed and quality of execution. This transparency can also be enhanced by providing access to open data, such as healthcare outcomes. Finally, electronic channels allow citizens to increase transparency and openness, encouraging participation from various segments of society in policy-making.

3.2. The Role of Digital Government in Achieving Sustainable Development in Qatar:

Qatar's digital government contributes to achieving the main objectives of Qatar's National Vision 2030 and also plays a role in achieving sustainable development goals as outlined in the following table:

Table 1: The Role of Digital Government in Achieving Sustainable Development in Qatar

Sustainable Development Agenda		The Role of Digital Government
Human Development	• Culturally Enriched Society • Society with Good Health: Physical and Mental • Empowered and Motivated Workforce	Qualifying specialized personnel in the field of communications and information technology, and empowering users of e-government services by increasing awareness of the importance of using electronic services in both personal and business transactions.
Economic Development	• Sound Economic Management • Responsible Exploration of Oil and Gas • Suitable Economic Diversity	The realized value for individuals, companies, and the government sector will positively contribute to driving economic growth forward.
Social Development	• Social Care and Protection • Sound Social Infrastructure • International Cooperation	Strengthening the pillars of social development through enhancing transparency, communication, and participation by members of the community.
Environmental Development	Balancing Development Needs with Environmental Protection	Community engagement will reflect on the development of innovative solutions to the environmental challenges facing the society.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government Strategy Report for the year 2020.

4. Reading into Qatar's e-Government Experience "Hukoomi":

Hukoomi is the official portal for the electronic government of Qatar. The project was initiated in 2003, with its first version launched in 2008. In 2015, the mobile application "Hukoomi" was introduced.

The role of the Hukoomi portal is to provide government information and services more efficiently and effectively, aiming to facilitate access for all citizens, residents, visitors, and businesses. It also aims to increase public awareness of government programs, events, news, and initiatives, aligning with the goals outlined in Qatar's e-Government Strategy. Through collaboration with government entities and service providers, Hukoomi enables users to access information and services electronically in a more convenient and rapid manner. The portal offers a wide range of important e-services, including access to service request forms, official documents, and general information. The evolution of Qatar's e-Government performance, aided by Hukoomi, has led to notable achievements. According to the Global Information Technology Report 2014 by the World Economic Forum, Qatar ranks fourth globally in government usage of information and communication technology (Electronic Government of Qatar, 2023).

4.1. General Statistics on e-Services Available on the Hukoomi e-Government Portal:

In the context of continuous digital advancement, Qatar strives to achieve comprehensive digital transformation across all aspects of governmental life. In this regard, Qatar works on providing advanced and innovative e-government services through its digital government portal. The aim of this part of our study is to present general statistics on the e-services available on the Hukoomi e-Government Portal.

The following table ranks 68 Qatari government entities based on the percentage of e-services they offer on the Hukoomi e-Government Portal. It is observed that 21 Qatari government entities have embraced Qatar's governmental digital transformation and converted their paper-based and informational services into digital services, offering 100% of their services digitally on the Hukoomi portal. This demonstrates the significant importance of this portal in accelerating the government's digital transformation process.

In the same context, 21 other Qatari government entities have also transformed their paper-based and informational services into digital ones, offering more than 60% of their services digitally on the Hukoomi e-Government Portal. Meanwhile, 19 Qatari government entities still provide their services digitally on the portal, but the percentage of their digital services does not exceed 60%. On the other hand, there are still 6 Qatari government entities whose percentage of digital services provided is 0%.

Table 2: Ranking of Government Entities According to the Percentage of Electronic Services Provided on the Qatar e-Government Portal

Entity	The percentage of electronic services	Entity	The percentage of electronic services
General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority	100%	Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs	79%
General Tax Authority	100%	Aspire Zone Foundation	75%
Qatar Tourism Authority	100%	Qatar University	74%
Ministry of Culture	100%	Primary Health Care Corporation	67%
Ministry of Sports and Youth	100%	Qatar Red Crescent Society	67%
General Customs Authority	100%	Ministry of Municipality and Environment	65%
Qatar Financial Markets Authority	100%	Ministry of Commerce and Industry	64%
Qatar Voluntary	100%	Qatar Development Bank	64%
National Cyber Security Agency	100%	Ministry of Education and Higher Education	62%
Qatar Aeronautical Academy	100%	Hamad Medical Corporation	57%
Qatar Museums	100%	Ministry of Public Health	55%
Supreme Committee for Projects and Legacy	100%	Ministry of Transport	55%
Administrative Control and Transparency Authority	100%	Public Works Authority (Ashghal)	52%
State Audit Bureau	100%	Civil Aviation Authority	52%
Qatar Cultural Village Foundation (Katara)	100%	Qatar Cancer Society	50%
Qatari Diabetes Association	100%	Qatar Financial Centre	50%
Qatar Ports Management Company	100%	Qatar Olympic Committee	50%
Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship and Professional Development	100%	Sulaiti	50%
Hamad Bin Khalifa University	100%	Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs	47%
National Human Rights Committee	100%	Qatar Chamber	46%
Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority	100%	Mowasalat	42%
Ministry of Justice	99%	Planning and Statistics Authority	40%
Supreme Judiciary Council	98%	Qatar Postal Services Company	37%
Ministry of Finance	97%	General Authority for Minors Affairs	37%
Ministry of Interior	95%	Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zaid Cultural Islamic Center	33%

Public Prosecution	94%	Ministry of Municipality	28%
Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development	91%	Empowerment and Care Center for the Elderly (Ehsan)	25%
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology	88%	Family Consultation Center	25%
Community College in Qatar	88%	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	0%
Ministry of Labor	87%	Charitable Activities Regulatory Authority	0%
Civil Service Affairs and Government Development Bureau	86%	Protection and Social Rehabilitation Center	0%
Qatar National Library	83%	Doha Exhibition and Convention Center	0%
Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation	80%	Qatar Calendar House	0%
Communications Regulatory Authority	80%	Qatar Energy	0%

Source: Compiled by the researcher relying on the official website of the Government of Qatar - 2023

The following table represents the ranking of the top ten government entities in terms of the number of electronic services they offer on the Qatar e-Government Portal. It is noteworthy that six ministries are ranked in the top positions, with the Ministry of Interior leading the list. Despite the large number of services provided to citizens by this ministry, estimated at 239 services, the number of digital services offered by the ministry reached 228, representing 95 percent of the total services. This is a significant percentage that reflects the Qatari government's keen interest in the digital transformation of services provided to citizens.

Table 3: Ranking of the Top Ten Government Entities in Terms of the Number of Electronic Services Offered on the Qatar e-Government Portal

Organization	Number of Paper-Based Services	Number of Information Services	Number of Electronic Services	Total Number of Services	Percentage of Electronic Services
Ministry of Interior	5	6	228	239	95%
Ministry of Justice	0	1	151	152	99%
Ministry of Commerce and Industry	61	3	114	178	64%
Ministry of Public Health	32	27	73	132	55%
Ministry of Municipality	174	7	71	252	28%
Ministry of Labor	8	2	66	76	87%
General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority	0	0	58	58	100%
Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation	4	10	55	69	80%
General Tax Authority	0	0	53	53	100%
Qatar Tourism Authority	0	0	51	51	100%

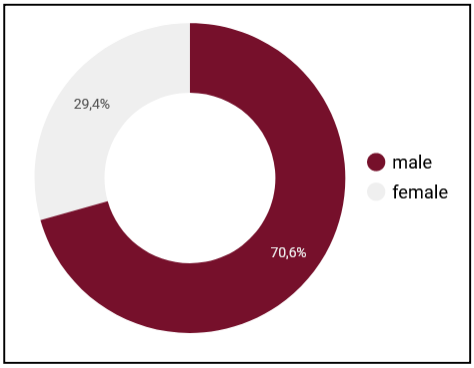
Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government Portal – 2023

4.2. General Statistics on the Usage of Qatar e-Government Portal:

The usage statistics of the Qatar e-Government portal have exceeded all expectations, demonstrating a significant increase in the number of users and the community's utilization of the services provided through the platform. The electronic portal has facilitated citizens and residents in obtaining government services with ease, reducing the time and effort required to conduct official transactions. The figures indicate that the number of users of the Qatar e-Government portal exceeded 15 million users in August 2023, reflecting the success and widespread adoption of the portal among various segments of society. Therefore, the objective of this section is to present the most important statistics regarding the usage of the Qatar e-Government portal.

Through Figure 1, which represents the percentage of users of the Qatar e-Government portal by gender, it is observed that approximately 70% of the users were male, compared to about 30% female. This result can be attributed to the gender distribution in Qatari society, as per the latest statistics indicating that the male population constituted about 72% compared to 28% females in 2023. However, there may be other factors explaining this disparity.

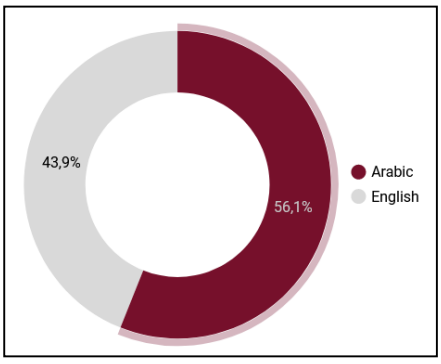
Figure 1: Percentage of users of the Qatar e-Government portal by gender



Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website - 2023

The proportion of language usage on the Qatar e-Government portal is a very important factor. Through Figure 2, which represents the percentage of the most commonly used language on the Qatar e-Government portal, it is noted that Arabic is the most commonly used language, accounting for approximately 56% compared to about 43% for English. This result can be attributed to several factors, most notably that Arabic is the official language in Qatar and is the official communication language between government entities, citizens, and residents. This means that many government services provided through the portal are written in Arabic, which may encourage people to use it, thus contributing to the advancement of Qatar's digital government.

Figure 2: Percentage of the most commonly used language on the Qatar e-Government portal



Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website - 2023

On the other hand, through Figure 3, which represents the top five most requested services on the Qatar e-Government portal, it is observed that the service for querying traffic violations is the most requested service on the digital government portal with about 191,000 requests. This service is of great interest to many citizens and residents in Qatar in general. By using the digital government portal to inquire about traffic violations, users can avoid visiting official government centers in person or contacting them by phone, contributing to saving time and effort and making the inquiry process more convenient and easy for everyone. Additionally, it is noted that the demand for jobs and

education-related services is also among the most requested services on the Qatar e-Government portal, reflecting the importance of the education sector in the State of Qatar.

Figure 3: Top five most requested services on the Qatar e-Government portal

Page	Users
الاستعلام عن المخالفات المرورية	191,5 k
طلب وظيفة من خلال منصة كوادر الوطنية للتوظيف (للقطريين)	123,8 k
إصدار الشهادات الدراسية	61,8 k
منصة قطر للتعليم	52,2 k
التقديم على وظيفة في وزارة التربية والتعليم والتعليم العالي	46,9 k

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website - 2023

In the same context, through Figure 4, which represents the number of users of the Qatar e-Government portal by country, it is observed that Qatar ranks first with approximately 13 million users. This is natural since the portal is directly aimed at Qatari citizens. Additionally, it is noted that Egypt ranked second in terms of the number of users, followed by Pakistan, Jordan, and then India. These results can be attributed to the nationality of the majority of expatriates and workers in Qatar from these four countries.

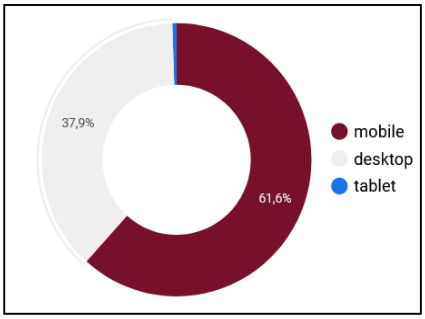
Figure 4: Number of users of the Qatar e-Government portal by country

Country	Total users
Qatar	13 M
Egypt	1,1 M
Pakistan	322,6 k
Jordan	251,7 k
India	236 k

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website - 2023

On the other hand, through Figure 5, which represents the percentage of devices used to access the Qatar e-Government portal, it is observed that smartphones rank first with approximately 61% of portal usage, followed by computers with about 38% of portal usage. Tablets rank last in third place with a percentage of usage not exceeding 0.1%. These results can be attributed to the importance of smartphones in individuals' daily lives, as they enable easy and flexible access to the internet and applications, making them a convenient and common means of accessing e-government services. Additionally, the launch of the "Hukoomi" mobile application, which allows easy and flexible access to the Qatar e-Government portal, directs most users to use smartphones to access digital government services.

Figure 5: Percentage of devices used to access the Qatar e-Government portal

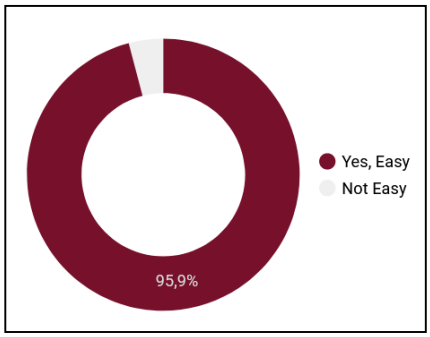


Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website - 2023

Finally, through Figure 6, which represents the satisfaction rate with the ease of use of the Qatar e-Government portal, it is noted that the majority of portal users, approximately 96%, are sufficiently satisfied with the portal in terms of the services it provides and its ease of use. This can be attributed to several factors and reasons, including the quality

of services provided by the digital portal, ease of use, the portal's good responsiveness to users' needs, providing necessary interaction, assistance, and support when needed, in addition to providing the most important element in digital services, which is security and privacy.

Figure 6: Satisfaction rate with the ease of use of the Qatar e-Government portal



Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the Qatar e-Government website – 2023

5. Conclusion:

This study attempted to address the problem statement, which revolved around the nature of the strategy adopted by Qatar to develop its digital government and the role of the Qatar e-Government platform "Hukoomi" in enhancing digital transformation in Qatar. The study reached several important conclusions, which can be summarized as follows:

- Qatar's digital government strategy is one of the most crucial steps towards achieving further digital transformation, aiming to accomplish the main objectives of Qatar's National Vision 2030;
- The digital government strategy benefits all segments of society, including users, government entities, and the state in general, based on international experiences and national requirements;
- Qatar's digital government contributes to achieving the main objectives of Qatar's National Vision 2030, as well as the goals of sustainable development in all its human, social, economic, and even environmental dimensions;
- The "Hukoomi" portal is the official portal of the Qatari government, with its project being established in 2003 and the first version of the portal launched in 2008;
- The role of the "Hukoomi" portal is to provide government information and services more efficiently and effectively, aiming to facilitate access for all citizens, residents, visitors, and businesses;
- There are 21 Qatari government entities providing all their services digitally on the Qatar e-Government portal;
- The Qatari Ministry of Interior ranks first in terms of the number of electronic services provided on the Qatar e-Government portal;
- The number of users of the Qatar e-Government portal exceeded 15 million users in August 2023;
- Approximately 70% of users of the Qatar e-Government portal are male, compared to about 30% female;
- Arabic is the most commonly used language on the Qatar e-Government portal, accounting for approximately 56% compared to about 43% for English;
- The service for querying traffic violations is one of the most requested services on the digital government portal, with about 191,000 requests;
- Approximately 13 million users are from Qatar, and the portal is also used by expatriates and workers in Qatar, especially from Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, and India;
- Smartphones rank first in device usage on the Qatar e-Government portal, with approximately 61% of portal usage, followed by computers with about 38% of portal usage;
- The majority of users of the Qatar e-Government portal, approximately 96%, are sufficiently satisfied with the portal in terms of the services it provides and its ease of use.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Enhance communication with citizens and residents regarding available digital government services, and provide awareness on how to use electronic platforms easily and safely;
- Arab countries should invest in developing digital infrastructure, including fast networks and cybersecurity, to support sustainable digital government development;
- Governments should establish policies and procedures that enhance cybersecurity and protect users' privacy when using digital government services;
- Arab governments should engage in exchanging experiences and knowledge about digital government practices, and collaborate with the private sector and academic institutions to promote sustainable and comprehensive digital transformation.

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