

## **E-GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN THE ARAB WORLD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ALGERIAN AND SAUDI EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

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### **Abstract**

This study seeks to analyse the transition from administrative reform to digital transformation in Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a particular focus on communication practices and their role in promoting e-governance. Adopting a comparative approach, the research examines the policies and communication mechanisms implemented in both countries during the period from 2015--2025. The findings reveal similarities and differences in the utilisation of digital communication as a tool for transparency, accountability, and the enhancement of public services. The significance of these results lies in supporting policymakers in developing more effective communication strategies that contribute to accelerating digital transformation. The study concludes by offering practical recommendations to strengthen e-governance within Arab contexts.

**Keywords:** E-governance, government communication, administrative reform, digital transformation, Algeria, Saudi Arabia

### **Introduction**

In recent decades, the world has undergone a profound transformation driven by the digital revolution, which has had a significant impact on various spheres of life. Public administration and governance have been particularly affected, as digitalisation has become a strategic tool for reengineering administrative processes, achieving transparency and accountability, and enhancing the quality of public services. In the Arab context, there has been a pressing need to move beyond

traditional models of administrative reform, which have often been hindered by procedural delays and bureaucratic complexities, towards adopting advanced e-governance practices that align with the requirements of sustainable development and are responsive to citizens' aspirations for openness and participation.

Government communication, particularly in its digital form, constitutes the cornerstone of these transformations. Communication is not only a means of transmitting information but has evolved into a tool for building trust between the state and society, shaping public awareness, and ensuring the effectiveness of public policies. Effective communication strategies enable governments to explain administrative reforms, mobilise human and institutional resources, and confront resistance to change that may obstruct digital transformation.

Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stand out as two prominent models within this framework, each reflecting distinct paths towards administrative modernisation and digital transformation. Algeria has, for years, pursued gradual efforts to modernise public administration and improve its relationship with citizens amid challenges related to digital infrastructure, bureaucratic legacies, and levels of public participation. In contrast, Saudi Arabia is advancing a rapid digital transformation process driven by Vision 2030, which has restructured its governmental institutions, developed advanced electronic platforms such as *Absher* and *Nafath*, and placed a strong emphasis on digital communication as a key element in gaining public trust and ensuring the effectiveness of reform programs.

A comparative analysis of the Algerian and Saudi experiences presents an opportunity to understand the dynamics of communication and e-governance within two distinct Arab environments that differ in terms of economic capabilities, administrative cultures, and political and social contexts. It also contributes to addressing a research gap in the Arabic literature, which often limits itself to descriptive accounts of experiences rather than engaging in comparative analysis.

This study employs a comparative approach spanning the period from 2015--2025. It aims to analyse how digital communication contributes to supporting the trajectory of administrative reform and the transition towards e-government in both countries. It also seeks to identify the

strengths and weaknesses of communication practices and their impact on promoting the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation. Through this analysis, the study provides practical recommendations that can help policymakers in the Arab world develop more effective digital communication strategies to support e-governance and promote sustainable development.

## **Research Problem**

Despite the administrative reforms and digital transformation initiatives undertaken in Arab countries, e-governance practices continue to suffer from weak governmental communication, infrastructural gaps, and slow citizen engagement. Algeria and Saudi Arabia represent two contrasting experiences: the former is progressing gradually, whereas the latter is adopting a rapid transformation within the framework of Vision 2030. This contrast raises questions about the role of digital communication in supporting e-governance and the factors that influence the success of both experiences.

Accordingly, the central research question can be formulated as follows:

To what extent do digital government communication practices in Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contribute to strengthening e-governance during the transition from administrative reform to digital transformation, and what are the similarities and differences between the two experiences?

This central question gives rise to several subquestions, including the following:

- What are the central policies and programmes adopted by Algeria and Saudi Arabia in administrative reform and digital transformation?
- How are digital communication strategies employed in each country to support transparency and accountability and improve service quality?
- What factors have facilitated or hindered the success of these practices in each experience?
- What lessons can be derived and generalised to other Arab experiences in the field of e-governance?

## **Research Hypotheses**

## **Significance of the Study**

The scientific significance of this study lies in filling a research gap concerning the role of digital government communication in supporting e-governance through a comparative analysis of the Algerian and Saudi experiences. It also has practical importance by offering recommendations that contribute to improving digital transformation strategies and enhancing transparency and efficiency in the performance of governments across Arab states.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyse digital government communication practices in both Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the transition from administrative reform to digital transformation.
2. To compare e-governance strategies between the two countries to identify similarities and differences.
3. To determine the factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of digital communication in supporting e-governance.
4. To derive lessons and recommendations that may assist other Arab countries in developing their digital policies and improving the quality of their governmental services.

## **Research Methodology**

The study adopts the comparative method, which is generally defined in English literature as a research approach used to compare two or more cases (such as countries, institutions, policies, or systems) to identify similarities and differences and understand the factors influencing the phenomena under examination (Todd, 2008, p. 15). In this study, official documents, international reports, and performance indicators were analysed, with a focus on the period from 2015--2025.

## **Sample and Research Tools**

The study is based on a purposive sample encompassing the Algerian and Saudi experiences in e-governance and government communication during the period 2015–2024, as both represent distinct models of digital transformation. The analysis relies on official documents (including strategies, laws, and governmental reports), international indicators such as the United Nations E-

Government Development Index, and the comparative method and qualitative content analysis of governmental discourse across digital platforms.

## **1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Comparative research in the fields of media and communication requires a clear definition of the central concepts underlying the research problem, as conceptual clarity helps standardise terminology and ensures precision within the scientific context. On the basis of this study's topic concerning e-governance and government communication in Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, several key concepts emerge that form the theoretical foundation of the analysis, as follows:

### **1.1. E-Governance**

This concept refers to the use of digital technologies and electronic networks by governments to improve their internal operations, deliver public services more efficiently and transparently, and enhance civic participation. It is closely linked to e-government, as digital government communication is viewed as a pivotal tool for building trust between the state and citizens, simplifying administrative procedures, and enabling interactive participation in decision-making (Fountain, 2016, p. 781).

### **2.1. Digital Transformation**

Digital transformation is defined as the process of integrating and adopting digital technology across all areas of operation within governmental or private institutions, leading to a fundamental redesign of service delivery methods, the development of business models, and the creation of added value for beneficiaries through improved efficiency, transparency, and interaction. It extends beyond the automation of administrative procedures to encompass the reshaping of organisational culture, the enhancement of human capacities, and the development of a supportive legislative and regulatory environment.

In the governmental context, digital transformation is regarded as a key driver of e-governance and administrative reform, as it facilitates access to information, strengthens transparency, and reduces

the gap between citizens and the state, thereby achieving the objectives of sustainable development and national modernisation visions (Vial, 2019, pp. 118–144). From another perspective, it can be defined as the process of reshaping governance models and interaction mechanisms between the government and society and innovating in policy, regulation, and services through the use of digital technologies, thereby enhancing efficiency and transparency and achieving sustainable development (UNDESA, 2022, p. 23).

### **3.1. Administrative Reform**

Administrative reform can be defined as the changes introduced to the structures or processes of public governmental organisations to improve outcomes or respond to public demands in terms of accountability or transparency (Ali, 2023, pp. 1–12). In another similar definition, administrative reform is described as a political and administrative process undertaken to improve or reorganise public sector organisations. The scope of reform may range from launching comprehensive political changes aimed at achieving broad strategic objectives to implementing minor technical regulations intended to preserve state authority, organisational capacity, and functional efficiency.

#### **Administrative Reform in Algeria Since 2015: Legal and Environmental Determinants and Structural Drivers**

Since assuming office in 1999, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has affirmed that corruption has harmed Algeria more than terrorism, calling for the moralisation of administration and the economy, although concrete measures have been delayed. In 2002, the Public Procurement Law was amended to enhance transparency and combat bribery in coordination with international bodies, introducing dual evaluation mechanisms and guaranteeing contractors' right to appeal. Procurement committees were granted broader powers to reduce bureaucracy and accelerate decision-making. In 2004, the government reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and citizens' right to access information, alongside the activation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

In 2015, Algeria entered a new stage of administrative and governance reforms, recognising that modernising public administration required an advanced legal environment that supported

efficiency, transparency, and digitalisation. These reforms laid the legal and institutional foundation that later facilitated the integration of digital transformation and e-governance within administrative reform efforts after 2015.

The 2016 Constitution represented a cornerstone in this process, enshrining the principles of good governance, establishing the right to access information, and emphasising decentralisation as a mechanism for bringing administrative decision-making closer to citizens.

At the level of regulatory laws, Algeria adopted Ordinance No. 15--01, aimed at simplifying administrative procedures and improving relations between administrations and citizens. This ordinance obliged government bodies to reduce documentation requirements, eliminate bureaucratic complexities, and introduce electronic services as an effective alternative. This approach was reinforced by Executive Decree No. 18--199 of 2018, which digitised civil status and launched centralised electronic portals to provide public services. The 2018 Transparency Law, which requires administrations to publish information on the public interest, further supported this policy direction.

Law No. 17-01 on combating corruption was a pivotal measure, reorganising the National Authority for the Prevention of Corruption and granting it expanded powers, thereby enhancing oversight and accountability in public administration. In the same context, amendments to the Municipal and Wilaya Laws in 2019 expanded the powers of local authorities within the framework of decentralisation and promoted public participation in decision-making.

In 2020, Algeria established oversight bodies such as the National Authority for the Prevention and Fighting against Corruption, which play a central role in monitoring administrative performance and identifying irregularities. This was followed by the Executive Decree on electronic signatures (2021), aimed at formalising and securing electronic transactions, a cornerstone of any digital reform. Additionally, the 2021 Organic Law on municipalities and wilayas sought to strengthen decentralisation and grant wider powers to local communities in management, directly impacting administrative performance at the local level.

By late 2023, Algeria had witnessed an administrative reform movement, as addressed in numerous official, analytical, and academic sources. These reforms were closely linked to the country's political and economic transformations, particularly following the 2019 protest movement, the resignation of President Bouteflika, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this period, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune affirmed that digitalisation is a strategic choice for building modern state institutions founded on transparency, integrity, and strengthened trust between citizens and the administration. The focus during this phase was on enhancing cybersecurity as a fundamental pillar for achieving digital sovereignty, alongside the implementation of e-governance practices across various sectors. In this context, projects were launched to restructure public administrations by reviewing competencies and more clearly delineating powers, thereby facilitating the simplification of administrative procedures and bringing services closer to citizens.

These reforms formed part of a broader decentralisation agenda, where the policy of upgrading delegated provinces (*wilayas*) to fully empowered provinces emerged as a mechanism to alleviate pressure on central provinces such as Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. A plan was announced to upgrade seven delegated provinces to fully independent administrative provinces by 2025, reflecting the state's commitment to expanding regional development and ensuring greater equity in the distribution of resources and services. These reforms were accompanied by tangible efforts to digitise civil records, transition to electronic payments, and generalise digital platforms for the management of key sectors such as customs, taxation, and education, thereby enhancing the quality of public services and combating bureaucracy and corruption.

In terms of human resource development, the government undertook reforms in recruitment and promotion systems, adopted continuous training programmes for state employees, and encouraged a culture of performance and innovation. The strategic role of digital government communication was reinforced, with ministries and public institutions required to establish official websites and portals and to publish open data to build public trust in the government.

Concurrently, efforts have been made towards a more comprehensive e-governance approach within the framework of the national digital transformation strategy, which aligns with the goals of

sustainable development and Algeria's Vision 2035. Nevertheless, the practical implementation of these reforms has encountered challenges, including resistance to change within certain institutions, shortages in digital competencies, and uneven technical infrastructure across provinces.

Algeria's e-government strategy has become one of the most prominent avenues of administrative reform in recent years, marked by the launch and development of numerous digital platforms aimed at simplifying procedures and bringing services closer to citizens. These initiatives include the Electronic Public Services Platform, overseen by the Ministry Delegate responsible for Small Enterprises, as well as electronic portals linked to various ministerial sectors. Additionally, the widespread adoption of electronic payment systems for administrative fees enhances transparency and reduces the need for paper-based transactions.

Simultaneously, public service reform has been prioritised through restructuring recruitment, training, and promotion systems on the basis of competence and performance rather than through seniority alone, in line with the government's action plan, which emphasises improving the business climate and facilitating investment.

The state has also devoted special attention to combating bureaucracy and administrative red tape, reflected in reforms regarding the issuance of official documents and commercial licences via digital channels. Moreover, efforts to increase transparency and fight administrative corruption have intensified, with authorities implementing surprise inspection campaigns supervised by the general inspectorates of ministries to detect irregularities and violations, including unjustified employee absenteeism. This approach reflects the political will to consolidate a culture of good governance grounded in integrity and digitalisation. Algeria's e-government strategy has become a prominent component of recent administrative reforms, with numerous digital platforms launched and developed to simplify procedures and bring services closer to citizens. Key initiatives include the Electronic Public Services Platform, managed by the Ministry Delegate responsible for Small Enterprises, as well as electronic portals across various ministerial sectors. The widespread implementation of an electronic payment system for administrative fees enhances transparency and reduces the need for paper-based transactions.

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## **1.2. Efforts of the Algerian State in Administrative Reform:**

These efforts can be summarised as follows:

- Planning for administrative reform: Addressing economic, social, and political imbalances and improving the performance of the administrative apparatus to lead development.
- Legislative and regulatory reforms: Issuing laws to combat corruption, improve working conditions, and enhance the efficiency of the public service.
- Reforming state structures and functions: Consolidating the rule of law, simplifying procedures, promoting social justice, and protecting freedoms.
- Restoring trust between citizens and administration: Ensuring transparency, simplifying procedures, achieving equality, and protecting citizens from arbitrariness.
- Rationalising and renewing central and regional administration: Redefining strategic tasks, modernising management, and expanding decentralisation by granting greater powers to provinces and municipalities.

The combination of legal and structural reforms reflects Algeria's awareness that modernising administration is not merely the digitalisation of services but rather a comprehensive societal process to rebuild trust between the state and citizens. The new legal framework provided a strong

foundation for transparency and accountability, whereas administrative reforms offered practical mechanisms to implement these principles on the ground. As reforms continue, the challenge lies in ensuring coherence between legal texts and actual implementation, as well as in translating the reform vision into a deep-rooted institutional culture that supports innovation and popular participation.

## **2.2. Obstacles to Administrative Reform in Algeria:**

Despite the significant efforts and attention devoted by the Algerian state to administrative reform, most of these reforms or reform attempts have failed for several reasons:

### **First Branch: Political Causes**

The state of political instability and insecurity has adversely affected public administration. Since October 1988, Algeria has been engulfed in a severe political crisis that has led to the near paralysis of most public institutions and facilities, while various successively unstable governments have been preoccupied with resolving security and terrorism issues. This situation relegated administrative reform to a secondary, nonurgent matter compared with the serious security challenges faced by Algeria. Moreover, political pluralism was a novel experience for Algerian society, leading to the emergence of conflicting currents within the community (Mustafa, 3200, p. 187) and escalating conflicts and entanglements, which became evident from June 1991 through a series of political events experienced in Algeria. **1.2. Efforts of the Algerian State in Administrative Reform:**

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- Reforming state structures and functions: Strengthening the rule of law, simplifying procedures, promoting social justice, and protecting freedoms.

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The combination of legal and structural reforms reflects Algeria's recognition that modernising administration is not merely the digitalisation of services but also a comprehensive societal process to rebuild trust between the state and citizens. The new legal framework provided a strong foundation for transparency and accountability, whereas administrative reforms offered practical mechanisms to activate these principles in practice. As reforms continue, the challenge is to ensure coherence between legal provisions and actual implementation, transforming the reform vision into an institutional culture that fosters innovation and popular participation.

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### **First Branch: Political Causes**

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### **Second Branch: Economic Causes**

The socialist economic strategy, which relied primarily on heavy industry, failed in Algeria. The deterioration of oil prices, the primary source of national revenue, intensified the situation, leading to an economic and financial crisis characterised by a rise in Algeria's external debt. This prompted urgent measures, including budget cuts for public administrations and granting autonomy to public economic enterprises. Consequently, most governments and political parties prioritised the economic problem because of its clear impact on citizens' social lives, often neglecting administrative reform.

### **Third Branch: Administrative Causes**

These refer to purely administrative issues:

1. The sequence of reforms previously outlined consisted of partial, sporadic, and arbitrary reforms, coupled with continuous government reshuffles, resulting in many administrative reform programmes remaining at the theoretical stage.
2. The instability of the bodies responsible for administrative reform, which were sometimes attached to the Ministry of Interior and at other times to the Directorate of Civil Service, caused a lack of stability and unclear objectives. Personnel changes also led to a deficiency of experience in the field of administrative reform.
3. Most administrative reforms were inspired by foreign models, particularly those of the French, leading to their rejection by employees, as these reforms were often perceived as alien to their social and cultural context.
4. There was a general underestimation of the administrative reform process at all levels, from leadership to the base of the administrative hierarchy, as evidenced by the frequent postponement of strategies and initiatives.

## **3. Since 2015, Digital Transformation and the E-Government in Algeria**

### **1.3. Phases and developments**

| Period | Characteristics/Key Initiatives                                                          |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-   | Early projects, such as "E-Algérie 2013," aimed to integrate ICT into administration but |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2015          | experienced delays and inconsistent implementation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2015–<br>2019 | Focus on ICT infrastructure, legislative reform attempts, improving digital access, and piloting some e-services. Increasing awareness of e-government as a tool for transparency and service improvement.                                                                                                                  |
| 2020–<br>2022 | The acceleration of digitalisation, particularly through central initiatives, led to the modernisation of administration and legislative updates, as well as the integration of electronic services and the activation of the digital government portal. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote services. |
| 2023–<br>2025 | Launch of the "Algérie Numérique 2030" strategy, identifying over 500 digital projects for the short term (2025–2026), with a focus on public services, infrastructure, digital governance, human resource training, and digital inclusion.                                                                                 |

### 2.3. Major Achievements

- **Digital Government Portal:**
- The digital government portal provides more than 300 digital public services from 29 ministries, which are available 24/7 to citizens. This represents a shift towards easier service access and a reduced need for physical movement and paper procedures (Online, 2022).
- **Digital Transformation and Smart Services Projects:**
- Platforms such as "Djebaytak" and "Moussahmtek" in the field of tax collection and dues show a growing use of digital financial services. Digitisation includes civil status records, reports, administrative documents, some university services, and vocational training.
- **Comprehensive National Strategy: Algérie Numérique 2030:**
- This strategy encompasses five key axes: basic infrastructure, human resources, training, research and development, digital governance, the digital economy, and the digital society. It identifies 25 strategic goals and advances a short-term plan (2025–2026) covering over 500 projects, primarily focused on public services (Invest, 2024).
- **Legislative and regulatory improvements:**

- Move towards enacting regulatory laws such as personal data protection, digital administration statutes, and frameworks for electronic transactions. Responsible bodies for oversight, such as the Higher Commission for Digitalisation, were established.
- **The Infrastructure Enhancement and Expansion of Digital Access:**
- Development of networks, expansion of internet capacity, attention to clean internet, and improvement of fixed and mobile internet connectivity. An information exchange platform was implemented between ministries (interoperability), promoting system integration and interconnection.

### 3.3. Evaluation by indicators

Algeria has witnessed a significant improvement in the United Nations's E-Government Development Index (EGDI). In 2018, Algeria ranked 130th out of 193 countries with an EGDI of approximately 0.4227, reflecting moderate to below-average standing compared with many Arab countries. By 2022, Algeria had advanced to 112th place, with an estimated EGDI of 0.5611. This increase was noted in the latest report under the classification of countries with a high average rating. Despite this progress, Algeria remains within the medium--low category globally and regionally, ranking below several Arab countries that achieved higher indicators in terms of e-service quality, digital infrastructure, or human capital (Nations, 2022, p. 45).

## 4. Legal Framework and Administrative Reform in Saudi Arabia Since 2015

Since 2015, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has experienced unprecedented reform momentum closely linked to the Vision 2030 pathway launched in 2016 as the overarching framework for economic, social, and administrative transformation. At the legal level, the Kingdom underwent significant amendments to the Labour Law in 2015, introducing over 38 modifications aimed at strengthening localisation (Saudisation), improving employment conditions, and developing continuous training linked to performance and competence. This step sought to adapt the labour market to the requirements of the new economic growth paradigm.

With accelerating steps towards digital transformation, the need for a new regulatory framework to lead e-government has emerged. In 2021, the Council of Ministers issued Resolution No. 418,

establishing the Saudi Digital Government Authority (DGA) and granting it broad powers to set policies and regulatory standards, as well as supervise government digital projects (Council of Ministers Resolution No. 418: Establishing the Digital Government Authority (DGA), 2021).

The Authority subsequently adopted a regulatory framework for digital government, marking a qualitative shift in governing digital performance through principles such as "Digital by Design," "Mobile First," and "Once Only." These principles are inspired by global digital transformation experiences to ensure high-quality service and seamless integration across various government entities. This was followed by the approval of the Digital Government Policy in September 2021, which included subpolicies concerning service governance, a beneficiary focus, and the management of the digital service lifecycle, ensuring standardisation and avoiding disparities between institutions.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia enhanced the legal framework for electronic transactions by enacting legislation related to digital signatures, digital identities, and open data. Since its establishment in 2019, the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) has developed regulations to organise data circulation, classification, and privacy protection. It has also established standards for the gradual release of government data, supporting transparency and enabling civil society and the private sector to benefit from it. This was accompanied by the development of laws governing e-commerce and digital transactions aimed at building trust in the virtual environment.

Administratively, royal decrees were issued in 2020 to restructure ministries in line with the requirements of Vision 2030. The Ministry of Civil Service merged with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to become the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, aiming to link employment with human development and to steer efforts towards building a modern and flexible labour market. The General Investment Authority (SAGIA) was transformed into the Ministry of Investment, reflecting the strategic approach to enhancing Saudi Arabia's attractiveness to investors and increasing economic competitiveness. These reforms also included reorganising other ministries, such as the Ministry of Commerce and Investment, to become more specialised and responsive to market demands.

All these decrees and reforms reflect a clear political will to overcome traditional bureaucracy by integrating technology at the core of administrative processes and adopting transparency as a fundamental criterion for evaluating governmental performance. These reforms extend beyond structural changes to include establishing a comprehensive legal framework that supports good governance within the digital context. Efforts are ongoing to institutionalise digital transformation through binding reference frameworks that keep pace with rapid technological advancements, thereby enabling the development of a more efficient and interactive government that engages effectively with its citizens.

#### **1.4. Obstacles to administrative reform in Saudi Arabia:**

Despite the significant momentum behind administrative reform in Saudi Arabia since the launch of Vision 2030, the process has faced several structural and objective obstacles that have limited the speed and depth of the desired change. The foremost challenge is the legacy of an entrenched traditional bureaucracy that has developed over decades, with some government agencies still struggling with complex procedures and weak managerial flexibility. This makes the transition to a modern, more efficient administration a gradual process requiring more time. Resistance to change by some employees and administrative leaders also poses a significant barrier, as administrative reforms require a new mindset on the basis of performance and results. In contrast, traditional workplace cultures in some sectors remain hierarchical and conservative.

Another significant obstacle is the gap in human competencies. Digital and administrative transformation requires high-level expertise in areas such as e-governance, data management, and artificial intelligence, relatively new fields in which the local labour market is still developing. This necessitates substantial state investment in training and attracting expertise. Additionally, the multiplicity of agencies and oversight bodies during specific periods creates challenges related to overlapping authorities and duplicated responsibilities, which can slow decision-making processes.

Financial and organisational challenges also arise, as reforming the administrative infrastructure demands massive investments in digital infrastructure, systems, and software development. This poses a burden on budgets, especially amid fluctuations in oil prices that directly affect public resources. Moreover, the rapid social and economic changes occurring in the Kingdom exert

continual pressure on the administration to keep pace with transformations, sometimes creating a gap between the announced pace of reforms and the administrative capacity to implement them effectively.

Although some of these obstacles have been addressed through phased plans and supportive programs, they remain objective challenges that require balancing the strategic ambitions of Vision 2030 with the realistic capacities of the Saudi administrative apparatus. This balance is achieved by fostering a culture of change, developing human resources, and unifying institutional efforts to ensure the coherence and integration of reform policies.

## **2.4. Major Achievements**

Since 2015, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed a qualitative leap in administrative reform and governance, reflected in notable achievements that laid modern foundations for state management and its institutions. The most prominent of these achievements was the launch of Vision 2030 in 2016, which was considered a comprehensive roadmap targeting administrative, economic, and social transformation. This coincided with the establishment of the Government Performance Measurement Centre (Ada'a) to monitor effectiveness and efficiency indicators, alongside the formation of the National Centre for Privatisation, which led to the transfer of many government services to the private sector.

In the realm of legal and institutional reform, important initiatives included restructuring the Council of Ministers and its affiliated bodies to increase decision-making speed and policy integration, establishing strategic entities such as the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) with greater effectiveness, and launching an independent Public Prosecution Office to uphold the rule of law principle. The state also adopted regulatory packages to modernise civil service systems, linking recruitment and promotion to performance indicators instead of traditional seniority.

With respect to digital transformation, Saudi Arabia has achieved significant progress through the launch of national electronic platforms, including the Absher platform, which provides over 350 government services to citizens and residents; the Etimad platform, which is used to manage government procurement and contracts; and the unified Nafath platform, which facilitates access

to services. These efforts were accompanied by improvements in the United Nations' e-governance indicators, with the Kingdom advancing to top global and regional ranks, owing to substantial investments in digital infrastructure and the adoption of artificial intelligence and big data in administration.

The period since 2015 has also seen intensified transparency and anticorruption efforts, with the Kingdom launching extensive accountability campaigns against financial and administrative corruption and establishing specialised bodies to oversee public expenditure and ensure integrity, thereby bolstering confidence in administrative effectiveness. On the other hand, the state supported the empowerment of women and youth in the labour market and administration through legislative reforms and expansions in employment sectors, contributing to the modernisation of human capital in Saudi administration.

Notably, these reforms had a direct effect on improving the business environment and attracting foreign investment, as the Kingdom made notable progress in the Ease of Doing Business Index by simplifying procedures and reducing bureaucracy, strengthening its image as a leading regional and global investment destination.

### **3.4. Evaluation by Indicators in Saudi Arabia**

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has adopted an approach based on measurement and evaluation through indicators as a central tool to monitor the implementation of administrative reforms and Vision 2030. The National Centre for Performance Measurement of Public Agencies (Ada'a) was established as the national reference body responsible for designing performance measurement indicators and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of ministries and government entities. The centre develops digital dashboards that enable government agencies to monitor achievement levels in real time and compare their performance against strategic objectives.

At the international level, Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in several global indices. It improved its ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index, issued by the World Economic Forum. It advanced in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, driven by procedural simplification and reductions in time and cost. Saudi Arabia also recorded a leap in the United

Nations E-Government Development Index, rising from 52nd place in 2014 to high ranks in 2020 and beyond, owing to the expansion of digital services and the adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (Forum, 2019).

Moreover, the Kingdom relies on specialised sectoral indicators, such as integrity and transparency measures overseen by the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), as well as public expenditure efficiency indicators that measure resource rationalisation and value addition. The performance of educational, health, and municipal institutions is also evaluated according to standardised criteria to ensure quality and compliance with international standards.

This move towards indicator-based evaluation represents a qualitative shift in Saudi administration, as reform is no longer limited to enacting laws or launching initiatives but is tied to objective mechanisms for monitoring and accountability. These indicators have contributed to enhancing transparency and fostering positive competition among government entities while providing a robust database for decision-makers to correct imbalances and allocate resources more efficiently.

## **5. Digital Transformation and the E-Government in Saudi Arabia (2015–2025)**

Since the mid-2010s, Saudi Arabia has embarked on a disciplined path toward digitalising the state not merely as a technical tool but also as a fundamental component for restructuring the economy and society within the framework of Vision 2030.

Between 2015 and 2025, the Kingdom transitioned from scattered sectoral projects to an integrated national system that places data, artificial intelligence, and digital governance at the core of executive and political planning.

### **1.5. Concise Timeline of Key Phases (2015–2025)**

| Period    | Activity                    | Characteristics/Key Initiatives                                                                                         |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2015–2016 | Prevision and initial focus | Early steps on electronic portals and services across multiple ministries, but lacking full institutional coordination. |

|           |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2016      | Announcement of Vision 2030                                              | Strategic turning point, making digitalisation a national pillar for economic rescue and diversification.                                                              |
| 2016–2019 | Preliminary implementation programmes                                    | Launch of the National Transformation Program (NTP) and gradual institutional funding guarantees for digital initiatives.                                              |
| 2019      | Establishment of SDAIA (Saudi Data and AI Authority)                     | Central institutional creation to manage data and establish national frameworks; a pivotal shift in making data a policy tool.                                         |
| 2020–2022 | Intensification of digital service delivery (COVID-19 as an accelerator) | Development of unified government portals, deployment of digital health solutions and remote education, with planned expansion of electronic payment services.         |
| 2022–2023 | Smart Government Strategy                                                | Transition of operational standards into “Smart Government” and focus on measuring user experience.                                                                    |
| 2023–2030 | Digital Government Strategy 2023–2030                                    | Consolidation of DGA’s role; transition from digitalisation to integrated digital government; development of strategic programmes and national performance indicators. |
| 2024–2025 | Deepening of data and artificial intelligence focus                      | Investments in data infrastructure, national data centres, a national AI strategy, and enhanced open data capabilities.                                                |

## 2.5. Key Strategies, Initiatives, and Their Outcomes

- **Unified Portals, Identity, and Citizen Services**
- The national platform my.gov.sa consolidates multiple services into a central portal, facilitating the user experience and measuring satisfaction indicators. This initiative has improved accessibility and reduced transaction completion times.
- **Government Digital Strategy (Smart → Digital)**
- The transition from the concept of "electronic services" to "digital/smart government" involves services built on data, the design of services responsive to citizens' lives (mobile-first, digital-by-default), and the measurement of user experience.

- **Data and artificial intelligence**

- National programmes aim to transform data into "data wealth" and activate AI applications in health, transportation, energy, security, and public services. Saudi Arabia invests heavily in data centres and R&D initiatives.

- **Open Data**

- Notable progress in Open Data Inventory rankings in 2024 reflects improved coverage and ease of access. This development enhances transparency, facilitating research and innovation.

- **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure**

- Substantial investments in national data centres, cloud infrastructure, and centralised security policies aim to counter the rising risks in the digital market.

- **Sectoral Impact (Practical Models):**

- Health: Adoption of electronic health records, remote platforms, and data analytics for epidemiology and healthcare planning, improving responsiveness and record management.

- Education: National e-learning platforms, expanded use of technology during and after the pandemic, and initiatives to train staff in digital skills.

- Financial Services and FinTech: Expansion of digital payments, modernisation of payment systems (steps towards open banking), and enhancement of digital channels through SAMA and market initiatives.

- Employment and Economy: Accelerated company registration and digital services for investors, linked databases to simplify procedures and reduce licensing times.

### **3.5. Saudi Arabia's Position in Global Indices**

Saudi Arabia has achieved notable progress in its rankings within open data reports, with improved coverage of national statistics and ease of access. These achievements are underpinned by the launch and continuation of clear national strategies such as the Smart Government Strategy 2020–2024 and the Digital Government Strategy 2023–2030, which include clear implementation documents and precise institutional classifications.

### **4.5. Core and Critical Challenges:**

- Transforming institutional governance into sustainable operational practice: The existence of strategies and authorities alone is insufficient; there is a need for mechanisms to localise decision-making within ministries, operational financing methods, and genuine performance-monitoring capacities.
- Skills gap (human capital): A wide-reaching national qualification programme is needed for personnel in data management, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and change management.
- Specialised regulatory legislation: Laws concerning privacy, AI accountability, and data governance require completion and uniform application.
- Dependence on private/global infrastructure: A balance must be struck between global partnerships (such as cloud providers and data centres) and digital sovereignty.
- Cybersecurity and critical infrastructure risks: With the expansion of services, risks also increase; therefore, a national incident response system and strict enforcement of standards are imperative.

Between 2015 and 2025, Saudi Arabia made qualitative progress in digital transformation, evolving from scattered projects to a national system led by SDAIA and DGA, supported by interconnected strategies and advanced international metrics. The upcoming phase is not limited to digitising services. However, it necessitates deepening data governance, localising human capabilities, and establishing legal and ethical frameworks for artificial intelligence to ensure sustainable and comprehensive transformation.

## **6. Comparison [between the Algerian and Saudi Experiences in E-Governance and Government Communication]**

### **1.6. Similarities between the Saudi and Algerian Experiences\*\*\*\*1.6. Similarities between the Saudi and Algerian Experiences**

- Both countries embarked on comprehensive administrative reforms aimed at modernising public administration and improving governance through digital means from 2015–2025.
- E-governance is central to reform efforts, with a strong emphasis on enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement via digital communication and services.

- Both nations have invested in developing digital infrastructures, such as unified government portals and online platforms for providing public services, alongside strategies to promote digital inclusion.
- There is a common focus on leveraging data and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to improve public sector efficiency and policy-making.
- Both countries face challenges related to human capital development, particularly in acquiring advanced digital and managerial skills to support ongoing transformation efforts.
- Cybersecurity and data governance emerge as priority concerns in both contexts, necessitating robust legal frameworks and operational mechanisms to protect digital assets and services.
- The transition from isolated digital projects to integrated national digital government strategies characterises the development trajectory of both Algeria and Saudi Arabia.
- Both countries recognise the importance of institutionalising digital transformation through regulatory reforms, performance monitoring systems, and the creation of specialised agencies to oversee digital governance.

**Table 01:**

*Similarities between the Algerian and Saudi Experiences in E-Governance and Government Communication*

| Axis                | Common Situation                                                                                                      | Real-Life Examples                                                 | Impact/Reflection                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Framework | Both countries have adopted long-term national visions, with digital transformation at the core of their development. | Digital Algeria (2030). Saudi Vision 2030                          | Confirms political awareness of the necessity of digitalisation to enhance economic competitiveness and improve the state’s image |
| Political Will      | Political will is clearly present in official discourse and                                                           | Speeches by heads of state on digitalisation, ministerial councils | Reflects that digital transformation is no longer a technical choice but a                                                        |

|                              |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              | government programmes.                                                                           | dedicated to monitoring digital projects                                                                               | matter of sovereignty and political modernisation                                              |
| Investment in Infrastructure | Both invested in the internet and infrastructure development, with varying levels of investment. | Algeria: fibre optic projects + 4G, Saudi Arabia: 5G expansion and data centres                                        | Enabled digitalisation as a service, albeit with varying degrees of coverage and speed         |
| Cybersecurity                | Increasing awareness of digital threats and the need for protection                              | Establishment of the National Cybersecurity Authority in Saudi Arabia and the National Cybersecurity Centre in Algeria | Reflects a shift from technical thinking toward sovereign protection of digital infrastructure |
| Digital Laws                 | Both are updating legislative frameworks to keep pace with digitalisation                        | Algeria: Personal Data Law (2023), Saudi Arabia: Personal Data Protection Law (2021)                                   | Reinforces trust in e-services and encourages investment                                       |
| Government Communication     | Awareness of the importance of digital platforms in conveying governmental messages              | Algeria: Ministry of Health data shared on Facebook during the pandemic; Saudi Ministry of Health Twitter accounts     | Beginning transition from traditional to digital communication, with variation in maturity     |
| E-Participation              | Opening digital channels for citizen interaction                                                 | Algeria: Some municipalities' complaint platforms; Saudi Arabia: Polling platform                                      | Reflects a desire to enhance transparency and bring administration closer to citizens          |
| Education and                | Use of digitalisation in                                                                         | Remote learning during                                                                                                 | Confirms that crises                                                                           |

|                   |                                                                |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Services   | education and healthcare                                       | and COVID-19 in both countries (with differences in effectiveness)                                           | accelerate digital transition and reveal its potential                                                             |
| Shared Challenges | Bureaucratic and cultural resistance to digital transformation | Hesitance by employees to adopt digital solutions in Algeria and Saudi Arabia (especially older generations) | Highlights that digitalisation is not just technological, but a transformation of institutional and social culture |

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher.

## 2.6. Analytical Summary:

Examining the Algerian and Saudi experiences in e-governance and government communication reveals significant similarities that reflect a shared recognition of the necessity of digital transformation in the Arab world, despite differences in implementation levels. Algeria's "Digital Algeria 2030" strategy represents an ambitious effort to modernise public administration and expand e-services, intersecting with Saudi Vision 2030, which places digitalisation at the core of economic and societal development. Both countries emphasise expanding digital infrastructure: Algeria has invested in enhancing its internet networks, whereas Saudi Arabia has made substantial investments in 5G networks and data centers.

On the other hand, similarities emerge in efforts to develop legal and cybersecurity frameworks that protect data and foster trust. Algeria has enacted gradual reforms in digital laws, whereas Saudi Arabia has established an advanced system in this field. With respect to government communication, both countries aim to transition from traditional to digital discourse, although Saudi Arabia has made greater strides in terms of interactivity and transparency. Citizen engagement remains a common priority, with Algeria initiating modest steps via limited portals, whereas Saudi Arabia offers extensive platforms for digital consultations and surveys. These commonalities suggest that similar overarching directions guide digital transformation in Algeria

and Saudi Arabia, although differences in pace and effectiveness stem from their unique economic and institutional contexts.

### 3.6. Differences between the Saudi and Algerian Experiences

**Table 2:**

*Differences between the Algerian and Saudi Experiences in E-Governance and Government Communication*

| Axis                         | Algerian Experience                                                                                           | Saudi Experience                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Framework          | The Digital Algeria 2030 strategy is ambitious, but it faces challenges in implementation and coordination.   | Comprehensive national vision (Vision 2030) supported by clear implementation programmes and precise performance indicators.  |
| Institutions and Structures  | Multiple actors and scattered initiatives, with the absence of a strong central executive body.               | Establishment of the Digital Government Authority as a central body that sets standards and strictly monitors implementation. |
| Digital Services             | Fragmented portals and digital projects often lack comprehensive integration and widespread citizen adoption. | Unified platforms such as Absher and Tawakkalna are providing integrated, user-friendly services with high adoption rates.    |
| Digital Infrastructure       | Gradual network improvements, but a significant digital divide between major cities and rural/interior areas. | Massive investments in 5G networks, data centres, and cloud solutions.                                                        |
| Legal and Security Framework | Ongoing legal development efforts are yet to require faster updates and a broader scope.                      | Advanced data governance systems, privacy protection, and strong cybersecurity measures.                                      |
| Government Communication     | Predominantly traditional communication with partial digital                                                  | Cohesive, proactive, and interactive digital communication enhances public                                                    |

|                 |                                |         |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | attempts                       | needing | faster  | trust and demonstrates state efficiency.                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                 | development and interactivity. |         |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| E-Participation | Relatively                     | limited | citizen | Effective mechanisms to involve engagement and weak inclusion of citizens through social platforms, citizens as active participants in consultative services, and digital digital decision-making. surveys. |

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher.

#### **4.6. Comparative Analytical Reading of the Algerian and Saudi Experiences in E-Governance and Government Communication**

The comparison between the two experiences highlights the strategic framework as the cornerstone of digital transformation. Algeria's reliance on the ambitious "Digital Algeria 2030" strategy has faced implementation obstacles related to slow coordination among actors and fragmented efforts. This led to many digital initiatives stagnating or losing effectiveness, as seen with some government portals that failed to achieve broad adoption. In contrast, Saudi Arabia benefited from Vision 2030 as a comprehensive national framework, supported by clear implementation programs and precise performance indicators that enabled strict monitoring of goal achievement. The success of platforms such as Absher, with over 26 million users, exemplifies the strong link between strategic planning and tangible results.

Institutionally, Algeria suffers from multiple actors with overlapping responsibilities, resulting in the absence of a strong central authority to regulate digital policies and oversee implementation. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, established the Digital Government Authority as a pivotal body that sets standards and ensures harmony among various projects. This has reduced duplication and enhanced coordination, reflected in faster completion rates and the capacity to respond effectively to challenges.

In the area of digital services, Algeria's fragmented projects and portals have yet to achieve a level of integration or ease of use that would encourage widespread adoption among citizens. For example, the public services portal has faced weak reach and reliability. Conversely, Saudi

Arabia's unified platforms, such as Tawakkalna and Absher, offer integrated services spanning multiple sectors, thereby significantly increasing digital adoption rates among citizens and residents.

With respect to digital infrastructure, Algeria is following a gradual improvement path in its communication networks; however, it still confronts a notable digital divide between major cities and interior or rural areas, which limits equitable digital access. Saudi Arabia has made massive investments in 5G networks, data centres, and cloud solutions, positioning itself at the forefront of international rankings for internet speed and the quality of digital services.

With respect to the legal and security framework, Algeria is making efforts to develop legislation related to digital governance; however, it often lags behind the rapid pace of technological change, creating a gap between digital reality and regulatory laws. In contrast, Saudi Arabia has established an advanced system for data governance and privacy protection, alongside strong cybersecurity measures such as the National Cybersecurity Authority, which has bolstered trust among investors and users alike.

In government communication, Algerian discourse remains predominantly traditional with partial integration of digital communication tools but lacks speed and interactivity. For example, digital communication during the COVID-19 pandemic fell short of public expectations. Conversely, Saudi Arabia adopted a cohesive and proactive digital discourse manifested through campaigns on platforms such as Twitter and Snapchat, which enhanced public trust in the state and was reflected in higher compliance with health guidelines.

Finally, in e-participation, Algeria still records limited citizen involvement in shaping digital decisions, mostly confined to narrow or paper-based consultative mechanisms. Moreover, Saudi Arabia developed effective citizen engagement mechanisms through dedicated digital platforms for consultations and surveys, enabling direct community inclusion in decision-making and strengthening transparency.

## **5.6. Analytical Summary**

The analytical findings reveal that the Saudi experience represents a mature and integrated model in the Arab world, where strategic vision, institutional structures, infrastructure, legal frameworks, interactive digital government communication, and active citizen participation converge effectively.

In contrast, the Algerian experience reflects a transitional phase characterised by ambitious goals but facing challenges in coordination, speed, and effectiveness. Algeria requires a stronger political will to unify efforts and activate digitalisation as an indispensable strategic choice.

Consequently, the comparison highlights that Algeria currently holds a strategic opportunity to benefit from the Saudi model, not through literal replication but rather by adapting its successful practices to Algeria's specific context, thereby ensuring accelerated digital transformation and enhanced citizen trust in state institutions.

#### **4.6. General Study Findings**

The comparative study highlights significant differences in the level of digital transformation and e-governance between Algeria and Saudi Arabia, reflecting distinct strategies, policies, and resources allocated by each country. Saudi Arabia's government has relied on developing advanced digital infrastructure, including integrated government platforms and linking digital services with clear performance indicators. It has also established a robust legislative and political framework that supports digital sustainability and encourages community engagement. This investment has translated into higher citizen satisfaction and improved administrative performance, as evidenced by Saudi Arabia's elevated ranking in the United Nations' E-Government Development Index, indicating effective management of digital programs.

In contrast, Algeria faces multiple challenges, primarily related to weak digital infrastructure, shortages of qualified human resources to manage digital services, and gaps in e-governance legislation and policies. Although some digital initiatives have been launched in specific areas, their impact on enhancing government performance remains limited, and citizen participation on digital platforms is still weak, reducing the effectiveness of digital transformation and limiting societal interaction with government services. Nonetheless, the Algerian experience offers an

opportunity to learn from the Saudi model by developing digital infrastructure, enhancing human capacity, and broadly activating digital legislation and policies. Success in e-governance requires integration among infrastructure, legal frameworks, human resources, and community participation to ensure service sustainability and elevated efficiency.

## **7. Study recommendations:**

### **1.7. For the Algerian Experience:**

- Investment in digital infrastructure to ensure the continuity and quality of electronic services.
- A clear legislative and regulatory framework that supports digital transformation and governs e-governance mechanisms should be established.
- The qualification of digital human resources should be strengthened through specialised training programmes in digital platform management and cybersecurity.
- Community awareness efforts should be increased to encourage citizens to utilise government electronic services and increase digital engagement.
- The Saudi model benefits from exchanging expertise and experiences in digital policy-making.

### **2.7. For the Saudi Experience:**

- Continue investing in emerging technologies (artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain) to increase the effectiveness of government services.
- Expand mechanisms for digital transparency and accountability to ensure greater trust among citizens.
- Encourage interactive community participation through electronic platforms to deepen the role of citizens as partners in decision-making.
- Focus on regional integration by transferring expertise to other Arab countries, thereby enhancing cooperation in e-governance.

### **3.7. Joint General Recommendations:**

- Integrated digital strategies linking infrastructure, legislation, human resources, and community participation should be adopted.
- Digital performance indicators are regularly measured to track progress and pinpoint areas for improvement.
- Digital transformation is considered a key lever for achieving transparency, efficiency, and sustainable development in the Arab world.

## **8. Conclusion:**

A comparative study of the experiences of Algerian and Saudi people in e-governance and government communication reveals that digital transformation is no longer a complementary option but rather a strategic imperative that determines a state's ability to achieve administrative efficiency, enhance transparency, and establish trust with its citizens. The Saudi experience demonstrates that a comprehensive national vision such as Vision 2030, supported by strong executive institutions and tools for measurement and accountability, can significantly accelerate progress toward an integrated digital government capable of improving the quality of government communication. In contrast, the Algerian experience reflects a different context, where the strategic ambition embodied in "Digital Algeria 2030" has yet to materialise into tangible outcomes with the same momentum owing to institutional and structural challenges related to digital infrastructure, sectoral coordination, and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The key lesson drawn is that the success of digital transformation depends not only on technology provision or strategy announcements but also fundamentally on the state's capacity to manage government communication proactively and interactively, transforming digital platforms from mere service channels into spaces for communication, accountability, and public opinion formation. Therefore, the future of e-governance in the Arab world, particularly in Algeria, remains contingent on investments in human capital, digital trust, and sound institutional governance, while benefiting from successful Arab experiences, chief among them Saudi Arabia's model to build an authentic local framework responsive to national contextual specifics and aligned with the dynamics of global transformation.

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