How Ageism shapes the digital divide among older persons in Qatar
Insights for the diverse ageing population in Africa

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Agenda

• About Mada Center, Qatar

• Context

• Key Findings

• Ageism and Technology

• Insights for the African Context

• Questions-discussion
Mada – Assistive Technology Center Qatar is a private institution for public benefit, which was founded in 2010 as an initiative that aims at promoting digital inclusion and building a technology-based community that meets the needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly in Qatar.
International conventions

**Sustainable Development Goals 2030**

Goal #4: Quality Education
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal #10: Reduced Inequality
- Reduce inequality by empowering and promoting inclusion of all.

Goal #11: Sustainable Cities & Communities
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

**Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Article 9: Accessibility
- Enable PWDs to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Ensure access to Information & Communication technology by PWDs.


**Sustainable Development Goals 2030**: [https://sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)
International conventions

Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

The Mada Innovation Program (an ICT Accessibility Ecosystem) is designed to encourage innovators to create Arabic solutions for Persons with Disability and Elderly, thus increasing its availability within the region through a combination of grant programs.

What’s Mada Innovation Program?

Supporting older persons and their caregivers’ digital inclusion in Qatari and Arab Families

OSRA5-0415-20006
Team

Supporting older persons and their caregivers’ digital inclusion in Qatari and Arab Families

Dena Al-Thani, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Director of Interdisciplinary Programs
Hamad bin Khalifa University

Hajer Chalghoumi, Ph.D.
Research Associate/Coordinator
School of Psychology
University of Ottawa

Achraf Othman, Ph.D.
Head of ICT Accessibility Innovation and Research, Mada Center, Qatar

Suzanne H. Hammad, Ph.D.
Sociologist, Research Consultant, Evaluator

Funding entities:

Participating institutes and institutions
Research questions

1. What are the opportunities for ICT to support daily activity participation and social inclusion of older persons and their caregivers?

2. What are the challenges, concerns, and enablers for ICT access and use to meet these opportunities?
Motivation

Research on Older Persons’ Access and Use of Technology in the Arab Region: Critical Overview and Future Directions

- The search was conducted in 11 scientific databases and search engines covering empirical studies in English and Arabic between January 2016 and June 2021.

- The most accessed and used technologies by older persons in the region were smartphones and social media applications for communication and information sharing.

- Major challenges found were functional limitations and usability, functionality, and accessibility.

- The study highlighted the scarcity of research on the subject in the Arab region and the need for more research on older persons and their caregivers in the context of the Arab world.

- Culturally appropriate need-based and adapted technologies are recommended.

**Motivation**

**Addressing the Digital Gap for the Older Persons and their caregivers in the State of Qatar: A Stakeholders’ Perspective**

- In the coming decades, the Arab world is expected to experience an increase in the older population in Qatar.

- Access and use of ICT by older persons and their caregivers have not been widely discussed.

- The findings showed the importance of existing efforts, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extent of technology acceptance.

- The study highlighted the extent of partnership between different institutes when providing services, raising awareness, and supporting technology acceptance.

Research Methodology

Recruitment
Via a regional health institution
Location: Doha, Qatar
Dates: January-July 2021

Sample
Maximum variation sample
20 older persons (65+) / 20 caregivers

Instrument
Semi-structured phone interviews
Hybrid thematic analysis using NVivo 10
Research focus

Main topics

- The use of technology
- Factors affecting the use of technology
- Recommendations
**Demographics**

**Older Persons**

- **45%** have a secondary education level or less.
- **60%** are between 60 and 69 years old.
- **55%** are female.
- **90%** live with their families. Only 1 is living alone.

**Caregivers**

- **80%** have a secondary education level or less.
- **85%** are between 60 and 69 years old.
- **90%** are female.
- **45%** spent 6 hours or more daily in caregiving (With the help of domestic).
Research findings: Most used devices

1. Smart Phones
2. TV
3. GPS Technologies
4. Tablets
Research findings: Frequent usage

- Voice and text messaging
- E-services, mainly governmental
- Social Media (WhatsApp)
- Searching and browsing
- Religious use
Factors Affecting Technology Access and Use

Privacy Concerns
2 dimensions – their own privacy and the one of their family.

Literacy and Digital Literacy
A low level of literacy increases the complexity of the technologies and diminishes older adults’ self-efficacy.

Accessibility and Usability
UNIVERSAL necessary but nonsufficient

Religious Beliefs
The technology used to practice religion VS technologies was rejected due to conflict with religious beliefs.

Ageing
- Ageing is perceived differently: Aging as a process that brings changes in abilities VS aging as a “disability”.
- Self-directed ageism is a major barrier.
Stereotyping of Older Adults and Ageing

**STEREOTYPE**
E.g. Older adults are technophobic

**AGEISM**

**PREJUDICE**
E.g. They cannot learn how to use new technologies

**DISCRIMINATION**
e.g. Technologies designed with caregivers in mind as end-users

**REACTION/CONSEQUENCE**
E.g. Decrease in their technology self-efficacy
## Culture in an ageist society

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<tr>
<th>Conservative society</th>
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<tr>
<td>Culture of ‘aib’ in relation to age-related diseases</td>
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<td>Stigma found to delayed help-seeking in mental and cognitive health</td>
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<td>Social shame and guilt for not fulfilling social expectations as a caregiver of aged members in the family</td>
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<td>Stigma of being seen in public allowing their elder to use assistive technology</td>
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<td>The special religious status of older persons</td>
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Identify needs

Need for redefining aging: Aging is a process that brings changes in abilities, rather than a disability

Need for an inclusive and interdisciplinary perspective

EMBRYOGENESIS  GROWTH  SENESCENCE

↑ FRAILTY

3rd AGE (65+)
4th AGE (80+)
Lesson learned
AgeTech Transfer and Research in MENA contexts

Ageism VS Technology: Friend Or Foe

• Get ready to deconstruct your conscious and unconscious Bias.
• Get ready to learn (NOT teach) with openness, humility, and respect.

Western Research Methods Are Not Universally Suitable

• Collaborate with social scientists and local research facilitators.
• Cross-gender communication is a real challenge.
• Linguistic translation is NOT enough.
Lesson learned
AgeTech Transfer and Research in MENA contexts

Your Solution May Not Be The Answer

• Ageism (institutional and self-directed) acts like a self-fulfilling prophecy and impede older adults' engagement in technology

Show R.E.S.P.E.C.T

• Accessibility VS Usability UNIVERSALLY needed but nonsufficient
• Treat others the way THEY want to be treated.
• Add cultural competency to the set of soft skills.
Conclusion - Transferring to the African Context

- More than 3000 ethnic groups (2021 Census).

- Ethnocultural minority seniors = the fastest-growing segment of this population.

- Most AgeTech solutions treat them as a homogeneous group.

- The variety of needs, concerns, and experiences of ethnocultural minority seniors NEED to be recognized.

Thank you!

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