

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES REVIEW AND READINESS FOR ADOPTING SMART CITIES IN KUWAIT

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ABSTRACT

The trend towards smart cities is a growing phenomenon among governments worldwide, driven by the need to keep pace with the rapidly evolving technological landscape and the increasing demand for improved social services from citizens. In metropolitan areas across the globe, policymakers are investing heavily in technologies that enable the transformation of traditional cities into smart cities. To better understand the technical challenges facing smart city initiatives in Kuwait, a research study was conducted that analyzed more than 100 papers in an attempt to identify the technical challenges that could potentially hinder the successful implementation of smart city projects in Kuwait. The experiment was carried out through a focus group session that was held with six experts in ICT. During the session, the experts rated the readiness of each of the identified technical challenges, providing valuable insights. The outcome indicated that the level of readiness for smart city initiatives in Kuwait needs to be increased were the top challenges that were identified (i) Blockchain, (ii) AI, and (iii) Cybersecurity. The study suggested that this could be achieved through a comprehensive and well-defined national ICT scale strategic vision. The study suggested that smart cities' initiatives could be achieved through a comprehensive and well-defined national ICT scale strategic vision. The findings of this study can be used to inform future policy decisions and guide the development of smart city projects in Kuwait.

Keywords: *Smart Cities, Technology Challenge, Digital Transformation, IoT, Blockchain, Cybersecurity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Policymakers globally are observing a growing trend towards the adoption of smart cities in order to stay current with technological developments and meet the needs of social services by utilizing technological advancements in various fields, which can also help conserve natural resources [1], [2]. Smart cities are designed to integrate the latest technology, including the Internet of Things (IoT) devices, sensors, and modern information and communication technologies, in order to solve governance challenges, increase efficiencies, and empower residents. Smart cities offer a digital-friendly atmosphere and encourage learning, leading to a sustainable environment and improved well-being [3]. In addition, smart cities focus on the needs of individuals, allowing them to adapt to changing

economic, cultural, and social conditions [4], [5] and achieve intelligence and efficiency in the use of resources to enhance the quality of life [6], [7], [8].

The trend towards smart cities is evident as policymakers in metropolitan regions across the globe are rapidly investing in these technologies to transform their cities into smart cities. Smart cities can be newly built with smart technology from the beginning or traditional cities that are gradually transformed through a set of transformation mechanisms [9]. These mechanisms can include upgrading infrastructure, implementing smart city solutions, and implementing policies to promote sustainable development.

According to [10], technology spending on smart city initiatives worldwide is forecast to more than double between 2018 and 2023, increasing from

81 billion U.S. dollars in 2018 to 189.5 billion in 2023. This increase in spending is a clear indication of the growing trend towards smart cities and the importance placed on the development of these cities by governments worldwide. However, smart city projects do fail and could face some obstacles that lead to failure project [11], [12].

As part of Kuwait Vision 2035, one initiative of the Kuwaiti government is to build a 'smart city' from scratch located in South Saad Al Abdullah city that will eventually be home to 400,000 people which will be managed by an artificial intelligence (AI) system [13]. However, transforming an established city into a smart city requires the availability of some dimensions, technology, vision, strategy, and finance. These dimensions are crucial for the successful implementation of smart city solutions and for ensuring that the city is able to meet the needs of its residents.

The aim of this research is to focus on the Technology Dimension of smart cities initiatives by reviewing the technical dimension's challenges and investigating the applicability of found challenges for adopting smart cities in Kuwait. The research will involve a thorough review of the literature to identify the technical challenges and an experiment will be carried out by forming a focus group session for a problem-solving activity [15] to rate each challenge. Six ICT experts in the field were selected, holding a minimum of a bachelor's or graduate degree in computer science and experience ranging from 20 to 33 years of experience in Kuwait. Three of them work as high-ranking managers in government entities involved in the field of e-Government, Smart-Government, Network, Fintech, and regulating local IT policies. The other three experts are from academia majoring in IT security, IoT, and software engineering. This diversity of expertise and experience in the field will provide a well-rounded perspective on the technical challenges and readiness for adoption in Kuwait.

R1: What are the technical challenges that exist in the literature?

R2: What is the level of readiness level for addressing each technical challenge in the adaptation of smart cities in Kuwait?

This research aims to comprehensively examine the technical challenges associated with the implementation of smart cities in Kuwait. To

accomplish this, the research will begin by conducting a thorough review of the literature to identify the technical challenges that have been previously identified in existing research. After identifying these challenges, an experiment will be carried out by forming a focus group session for a problem-solving activity [15]. This focus group session will allow for a more in-depth examination of the identified challenges and will provide valuable insights into the readiness for addressing these obstacles in the implementation of smart cities in Kuwait.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Smart cities are complex entities that encompass various dimensions, including government, socioeconomic, and environmental aspects [16], each with unique dynamics and a level of context sensitivity [17]. Information and communication technology serves as the foundation for smart city initiatives [18]. The technology dimension of smart cities includes various factors such as telecommunications [19], artificial intelligence [20],[21], sensors [22], cloud computing [23], smartphones, tablets, RFID technology [24], NFC technology, wearable devices, and Global Positioning System devices [25], [26]. To execute a smart city project, it is necessary to have an effective Internet of Things (IoT) system [27], [28], whether it includes smart facilities [29], facilities management, or Building management [30], and/or smart health care. The standardization of deployed devices, the level of communication, the type of data accessed, and the applications used to process information must be taken into account [31].

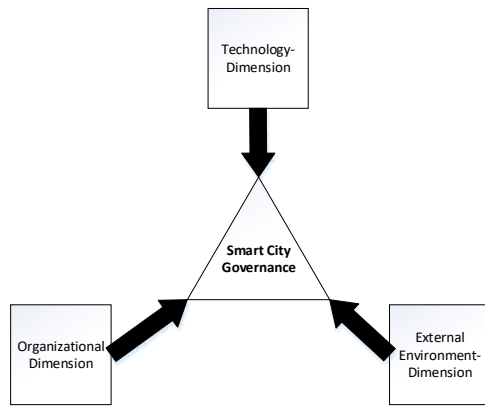


Figure 1: Smart Cities Dimensions (adopted from [17]).

A literature review was conducted in two steps. The first step involved examining more than 100 papers from reputable journals using the keyword of "smart cities" through searching databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar during the period of 2016–2022. The second step was reviewing papers produced in the first step that related to technology dimension challenges. A thorough examination of technology-related challenges produced 17 challenges [32], [33], [34], [35], [28], [36],[27], [26], [37], [25], [38],[39],[40]; [41],[40],[42],[43],[44],[45],[46],[47],[29],[48],[49].

Table 1: Technology Challenges in adopting Smart Cities adopted from [47]

	Challenge	Description	References
C1	IoT Management	a city could rely on a central technological hub to control its core infrastructure which could raise challenges. Already, many cities have been paying large amounts when subjected to ransomware attacks. Hackers will continue to attack IoT devices by either taking control of the device, stealing information, or disrupting the service it is offering. technology-related risks cover networking and transport issues, security issues, heterogeneity issues, denial of service, and IoT big data management.	[32]; [33]; [34]; [35]; [28];[36]; [27]; [26]; [37]; [25];[38]; [39]; [41];[42]; [43];[44];[45]; [46]; [47];[29]; [48]
C2	Big Data Integration	Due to the dynamic and evolving nature of smart cities, it is always a challenge to design and deploy Big Data systems. Contentious characteristics of Big Data, its associated benefits, cost, the accuracy of the information extracted affects the performance of services of smart cities. The key focus of relevant studies includes infrastructure management, security management, finance, urban transits, perceptions, urban tree management, smart banking and bank loan prediction. The key actions such as rational planning of city infrastructures, establishing and improving long-acting mechanisms and the effective performance of city managerial functions for integrating big data in smart Cities	[50]; [40]; [51];[52]; [53]; [54]; [55]; [56];[47]
C3	Blockchain Management	Smart home, cybersecurity and privacy risk. The decentralized nature, open access, transparency and deterministic approach of blockchains make it a mandatory technology for sustainable smart cities. It can address the core challenges associated with the resilient environment, interoperable and flexible systems, decision support systems, behavior monitoring, energy sources and distribution, intelligent infrastructure, scalability, smart healthcare and secure infrastructure. Similarly, list key advantages of blockchain in smart cities: managing cryptocurrencies, smart contracts, public services, record and rights management, logistics and decentralized applications (DApps) for smart tourism.	[57];[14];[58]; [47]; [48]

C4	Cyber Security Management	More technology creates more risks. Smart cities with thousands (and, someday, millions) of interconnected devices offer hackers plenty of targets to attack, any of which could permit access to the network as a whole. And once inside that network, hackers could disable key pieces of civil society everything from police dispatch to water sanitation and cause overwhelming chaos.	[59]; [57]; [60]; [61];[62]; [63]; [47]; [64]; [48]
C5	GIS And Remote Sensing Implementation	Remote Sensing Data, compounded by the velocity and variety of data from connected devices (e.g., Internet of things devices, such as smart watches, cars, etc.), pose several new technical challenges for traditional High-Performance Computing (HPC) platforms, such as clusters and supercomputers, which have been widely used in the past for data processing, analysis, and knowledge discovery.	[25];[65]; [26];[66]; [45]; [67];[68]; [69]; [70];[47]
C6	UAVs Management	there is currently no way to seamlessly integrate UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicle) into smart cities, applications may require gathering and processing a tremendous amount of data, which could be challenging given the resource-constrained nature of these flying units and may necessitate offloading some of the processing. Moreover, for some of the applications, high-precision positioning and navigation of the UAVs is crucial, which may require solving complex UAV routing problems.	[71]; [72]; [45]; [47]
C7	Digital Platforms Management	Smart community, e-Commerce, Building design management In business enterprise terms, a digital platform can be thought of as the sum total of a place for exchanges of information, goods, or services to occur between producers and consumers well as the community that interacts with said platform. It's imperative to understand that the community itself is an essential piece of the digital platform—without that community, the digital platform has very little inherent value. We interact with digital platforms on a constant basis thanks to the success of the digital platform approach. Digital platforms take a lot of different forms depending on the business model they employ and the specific purposes they seek to serve. Examples of successful digital platforms are: -Social media platforms -Knowledge platforms -Media-sharing platforms -Service-oriented platforms	[57];[73];[37]; [74];[60]; [30]; [49]; [47]

C8	Fintech Adoption	Financial computations, Supply chain, Security, Tax control, Mobile banking	[75];[76]; [77]; [78];[79]; [80]; [81]; [47]
C9	AI Management	certain systems powered by AI in smart cities may be expensive to incorporate or may need to comply with several regulations before implementation, making them ‘high-risk’ AI applications.	[28];[36]; [27];[82]; [24]; [20];[83]; [22]; [46]; [84]; [85]; [86];[78]; [47];[21];[48]
C10	Cyber physical Components Management	handling massive data production, new technologies will transform how huge input of data handled and keep showing, in the case of CPS. Besides this thriving volume, the mixing diverse data from different sources will create the need for applications focusing on query, integration, analysis, high-performance computing devices, and methodologies for data reduction	[87]; [88];[47]
C11	Digital Information Management	Urban regeneration, Urban Resilience, Business, Cyber security City Information Management (CIM) is an output tool for smart city planning and management, which assists in achieving the sustainable development of urban infrastructure, and promotes smart cities to achieve the goals of stable global economic development, sustainable environmental development, and improvement of people’s quality of life. The influx of knowledge-based talents brings strong innovation momentum to the society and the ability to face the challenges of urban development;	[87]; [88];[47]
C12	Crowd Density Management	IoT network, Disaster response, Urban mobility, Crowd flows	[89]; [90]; [91];[47]; [92]
C13	Wireless Sensors Management	Cyber security, performance, and Wireless sensor networks are sensor network technologies, environmental monitoring, atmospheric monitoring, process monitoring, mater sensing, sensing applications, etc.	[34];[93]; [94]; [84]; [22]; [95];[29]; [47];[21]
C14	Next-Generation internet Adoption Management	adoption management, IPv4 to IPv6, Web 2.0 to Web 3.0 costly & complicated. Cloud to Decentralized Cloud, etc.	[47]; [94]; [45]
C15	Technology Optimization	Engineering structure monitoring, Smart phone Connectivity, Frequency of technology enhancements	[96]; [97]; [47]
C16	Fog Computing Management	Health management, Location management, decentralized infrastructure.	[98];[99]; [100]; [101]; [102];[23];[47] [23]
C17	Virtual Reality AR Adoption	Pedestrian behavior monitoring, Property management	[103];[104]; [105]; [106]; [97]; [107]; [108]; [109]; [110]; [66]; [111]; [112]; [113]; [114]; [115];[116]; [117]; [118]; [9];[47]

The following section details a projects, resulting in the omission of the environmental measurement technique and an example of the factor. methodology used by participants in conducting the experiment to address question two.

3. **EXPERIMENT**

The diagram in Figure 2 was presented to the participants to evaluate the readiness of each challenge listed in Table 1.

[119] created a measurement scale for evaluating organizations in smart cities projects, but this research does not cover that scale. [120] developed a different measurement scale for evaluating the performance of smart cities projects, which includes four factors: people, governance, technology infrastructure, and environment. However, this research focuses on measuring the readiness of Kuwait and not on evaluating specific

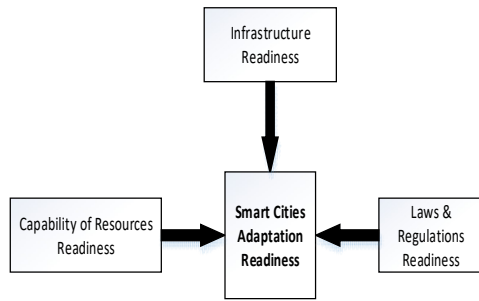


Figure 2: Adaptation Of Smart Cities Measuring Scale Adopted From [120].

The evaluation of Kuwait's readiness for smart cities projects was an important step in determining the feasibility and potential success of these projects in the country. The three key factors - Infrastructure, Laws & Regulations, and Capability of Resources - were chosen as they are crucial to the implementation and sustainability of smart cities projects.

Infrastructure is vital for the smooth functioning of smart cities projects, as it includes the necessary technology and environment required for the projects to operate efficiently. Laws & Regulations are also crucial, as they provide a framework for the operation and management of smart cities projects, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Capability of Resources is important as it determines the ability of local resources to execute smart cities projects, including manpower, funding, and technology.

The evaluation was conducted using a qualitative approach, with participants rating each challenge on a scale of High, Med, or Low. This approach allowed for a subjective assessment of the readiness of Kuwait for smart cities projects, based on the participants' perceptions and experiences. The focus group session served as a platform for participants to discuss and justify their ratings, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for smart cities projects in Kuwait.

The results and discussion of this evaluation will provide valuable information for policymakers, stakeholders, and investors in determining the feasibility and potential success of smart cities projects in Kuwait. It will also serve as a useful tool for identifying areas that need improvement and developing strategies to address any challenges identified. Overall, the evaluation will play a crucial role in supporting the development and implementation of smart cities projects in Kuwait, helping to create a more sustainable and livable

future for the country's citizens. The results and discussion of this evaluation will be presented in the next section.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Table 2 (listed at the end of the paper) shows the measurement of each participant of High, Medium, Low on all measurements were C3-Blockchain (C3), AI Management (C9), and Cyber Security (C10). None of the 17 challenges Readiness was rated High.

Table 2 revealed that while some challenges received a full agreement rating, others received a partial agreement. However, not one challenge received a high rating, indicating that Kuwait may not have sufficient readiness for smart cities projects.

Table 3: Number of Low measurements of full agreement

Infrastructure Readiness	Capability of Resources Readiness	Laws & Regulations Readiness
6	7	12

According to Table 3, the readiness of infrastructure in Kuwait received the lowest rating of Low. This is despite the fact that Kuwait ranks 6th in the world for 5G telecom availability and 2nd among Arab states for 5G speeds [121]. On the other hand, the readiness of laws and regulations in Kuwait received the highest rating due to the lack of updates to the law of electronic transactions since 2014.

The Internet of Things (IoT) received partial agreement from participants due to the availability of 5G Telecom in Kuwait. The country is ranked as number six worldwide in terms of 5G availability, which can be used partially to support IoT. However, for Big Data and AI, participants have agreed that the concept of Big Data does not exist in the local environment, whether in the public or private sector or in academia.

Blockchain was considered a highly important challenge by the participants, as it is being used in neighboring countries. However, it is not currently being utilized in Kuwait. Cybersecurity was identified as one of the most important challenges that could face smart cities projects in Kuwait. While some initiatives have been implemented regarding

laws and regulations, such as the Central Bank of Kuwait introducing a Cybersecurity Framework for local organizations, the oil sector has regulations covering aspects of cybersecurity, but the government sector is not yet mature in this area.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing challenge received low ratings in terms of laws and regulations, as compared to infrastructure and capability of resources. This is due to the lack of availability of a GIS major in local universities offering bachelor's degrees. However, this challenge is more mature in the oil sector. For Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) management, the participants did not consider this challenge as important as other challenges because it is dependent on Big Data and IoT. Some cities are using Local Area Networks (LANs) and Wide Area Networks (WANs) to connect traffic lights in order to control traffic conjunctions instead of using UAVs, indicating that a successful smart city could be achieved without this challenge.

Digital Platforms Management received partial infrastructure availability, but laws and regulations need to be developed. The participants argued that the Financial Technology (Fintech) Adaptation has medium infrastructure, capability, and laws. The concept of Fintech has received a great deal of attention from local banks, led by the Central Bank. For Crowd Density Management in Kuwait, there has been a significant investment in deploying systems to support traffic control. However, there are some factors regarding laws and regulations, where the responsibility is dispersed among many government entities.

Wireless Sensors Management received medium ratings in terms of infrastructure, as Kuwait has invested in Microwave networks and Satellite communications. However, capabilities and laws were rated as low. Currently, a new initiative has been introduced to install Digital Electricity Meters in all areas of Kuwait based on 4G technology. This process is promising, but faces many risks in the area of laws and capability. The participants rated Next Generation Internet Adaptation as low, as the transformation of IPv4 to IPv6 has not yet been executed, which could lead to security issues.

Technology optimization in Kuwait received low ratings, as there is a significant investment in government spending in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), but the return on investment is minimal compared to the private sector. The participants agreed that the Fog Computing

challenge had a full agreement from them that the local level for adopting Cloud computing is not utilized to an acceptable level.

At the end of the session, the participants agreed that before initiating smart city projects, the country needs to complete transformation initiatives and projects towards digital transformation, before eventually reaching a smart city.

5. CONCLUSION

Smart cities are striving to boost efficiency, reduce the time needed to complete tasks, cut costs, and promote sustainability in society. However, there are many obstacles in establishing new smart cities or transforming existing cities into smart cities. This study reviewed more than 100 papers and presented 17 different challenges in the technology dimension of smart cities project to evaluate Kuwait's readiness for these challenges. Six experts in ICT evaluated each challenge as Low, Medium, or High based on these factors (i) regulations, (ii) resource availability, and (iii) infrastructure readiness.

The research results indicated that the top challenges in Kuwait are Blockchain, AI, and Cybersecurity. None of the challenges were rated as High in readiness, with most rated as Low. Further, the experts noted that some of these challenges are not used in traditional ICT projects implemented by local government agencies, and some are recent trends such as Fog Computing, Big Data, and Blockchain.

The experts agreed that the current level of readiness in the local government will not lead to a successful smart city project. This could be due to the absence of a clear national strategy with well-defined goals, action plans, and KPIs backed by top-level government officials. A national strategy could enhance resource capabilities through education, training, and knowledge transfer and also improve infrastructure and regulations. However, reaching an appropriate level of readiness requires a national-scale ecosystem with clear policies for adopting these new trends. Full digital transformation is a crucial factor for a successful smart city project as an interim stage. Moreover, for a successful smart city project, full government transformation with proper management and sponsorship at the national level across various stakeholders and dozens of projects must occur simultaneously.

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Table 2 Participants Readiness Measurements

NO	Readiness Measurement	PAR1	PAR2	PAR3	PAR4	PAR5	PAR6	Agreements
C1	Infrastructure Readiness	L	M	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C2	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	M	M	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C3	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C4	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	M	L	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
C5	Infrastructure Readiness	M	M	M	M	M	M	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	M	L	L	L	M	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C6	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C7	Infrastructure Readiness	M	L	M	L	M	L	Partial Agreement

	Capability of Resources Readiness	M	L	M	L	L	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	M	L	M	L	L	L	Partial Agreement
C8	Infrastructure Readiness	M	M	M	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	M	M	M	M	M	M	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	M	M	M	M	M	L	Partial Agreement
C9	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C10	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C11	Infrastructure Readiness	L	M	L	L	M	M	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	M	L	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C12	Infrastructure Readiness	M	L	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	M	L	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C13	Infrastructure Readiness	M	M	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C14	Infrastructure Readiness	L	L	M	M	L	M	Partial Agreement

	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	M	L	M	Partial Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C15	Infrastructure Readiness	M	M	M	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C16	Infrastructure Readiness	L	M	M	L	L	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
C17	Infrastructure Readiness	L	M	L	L	M	L	Partial Agreement
	Capability of Resources Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement
	Laws & Regulations Readiness	L	L	L	L	L	L	Full Agreement