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A Case Study of exploring Arabic video games industry, the Cultural Dynamics between violence and bankruptcy

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Abstract:

This research explores the video game design in the Arabic region, examining its evolution, current status, and future prospects. With the growing global interest in video games and the increasing influence of Arabic culture on the world stage, understanding the dynamics of game development in this region is of paramount importance. The study investigates the cultural, social, and economic factors shaping game design practices, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by developers. Furthermore, it examines the impact of Arabic language, history, and cultural heritage on game narratives, aesthetics, and mechanics. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, and industry reports, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the unique characteristics of video game design in the Arabic region and its significance in the broader context of global game development.

As the global video game industry continues to expand, there is a growing interest in understanding the nuances of game design within specific cultural contexts. This research delves into the realm of video game design in the Arabic region, aiming to uncover the intricate interplay between cultural elements and game development practices. Through a content analysis, and industry surveys, this study explores how cultural heritage, social norms, and linguistic diversity influence the conceptualization, production, and reception of video games in the Arabic-speaking world, here.

I would like to talk about the negative side about the industry which is not limited to the weakness of the industry in general, but also to the poverty of ideas discussed in previous works,

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

Undoubtedly, the positive aspects will be addressed, but with proposals that benefit the development of the major industry in the future.

Keywords: Arabic, Video Game, War, Ideas, Society, Industry

Introduction:

With a quick look, you will find that most of the video games that were designed in the Arab world, which were not difficult to count, had one common denominator in them, which is that most of them contained war or violence themes.¹

In addition to contributing to academic discourse on game studies and cultural studies, the findings of this research have practical implications for game developers, publishers, and policymakers seeking to engage with the Arabic gaming market. by recognizing and respecting the cultural sensitivities and creative aspirations of Arab players, game designers can create more authentic, inclusive, and impactful gaming experiences that resonate with diverse audiences worldwide.²

Arabic video games have seen significant growth in recent years, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage and technological advancement. Developers in the Arab world are increasingly creating games that not only entertain but also incorporate elements of Arabic language, history, and traditions. This burgeoning industry has given rise to unique titles that appeal to both local and international audiences, offering a fresh perspective on storytelling and gameplay. The rise of indie developers and support from regional organizations have further fueled this growth, making Arabic video games a vibrant and influential part of the global gaming landscape, design has a unique and evolving history that reflects the cultural, social, and technological landscape of the Arabic-speaking world. While the industry may not have had the same level of prominence as its Western counterparts in the early days of gaming, it has seen significant growth and innovation in recent years.³

By examining a diverse range of games developed in and for the Arabic market, this research seeks to identify recurring themes, motifs, and storytelling techniques that resonate with Arab players. Moreover, it investigates the role of local game development communities, educational institutions, and government policies in fostering a conducive environment for game design innovation and entrepreneurship. Through in-depth case studies of successful game titles as well as overlooked gems, this research aims to shed light on the untapped potential of the Arabic gaming industry and its capacity to produce culturally rich and globally relevant gaming experiences.⁴

¹ Halter, E. (2006).

² Sisler, V. (2006b).

³ Shaheen, J. G. (2001).

⁴ Marashi, I. (2001).

Print ISSN <u>2735-4334</u>

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN 2735-4342

As technology continues to advance and global connectivity expands, the future looks promising for Arabic game developers to make their mark on the world stage while celebrating their rich cultural heritage, in summary, Arabic video game design has undergone a remarkable evolution from its humble beginnings to becoming an increasingly vibrant and diverse industry.¹

The Search problem:

The lack of sources and references, as well as scientific research that deals with the manufacture of Arabic video games, is one of the most important features of this research, as the lack of studies did not give room to talk about the type of games that were actually manufactured in the past, and accordingly the previous situation was monitored and linked to the plans. The upcoming ones will be addressed in the research in an attempt to direct the industry to new directions other than those that were previously consumed, in addition to focusing on the fact that the industry may deal with other types other than the popular war and violence games in general.

The importance of the Research:

When talking about Arabic video games in general, which may include several important areas, including the positive aspects as well as the negative aspects of video games, as well as the previous types and directing the course of the industry in the future to other, more diverse, purposeful types, as it is known about video games. It is intended for lots of activity and movement more than for various mental and intellectual aspects, and therefore directing attention to these points may help those searching for other distinct ideas in obtaining a source that explains to them the nature of the previous types and the extent of their success or failure alike in the past, and thus, avoiding losses for those seeking development or investment in that field, which has achieved many profits in the current and previous periods, and is still in a state of development and establishment, which means the availability of great opportunities to break into the field and achieve gains from it, in addition to material gains, but they go beyond this for qualitative, social and cultural gains through several main axes that will be discussed in detail during the research.

Research Hypothesis:

Considering that the Arabic video games industry is still in advanced stages theoretically if it is compared to the global level, and with a quick review, as most of the famous works fall under the category of war, violence and adventure games, and therefore the search will be completed for

¹ Barnett, M. (1998).

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

other types that may have been broken this rule and dealing with other, more diverse types, and this will be revealed at the end of the research.

Research topics:

The findings of this research have practical implications for game developers, publishers, and policymakers seeking to engage with the Arabic gaming market. In addition to contributing to academic discourse on game studies and cultural studies, by recognizing and respecting the cultural sensitivities and creative aspirations of Arab players, game designers can create more authentic, inclusive, and impactful gaming experiences that resonate with diverse audiences worldwide.

Exploring topics related to old video game design can offer valuable insights into the evolution of the gaming industry and its impact on culture, technology and society, some potential topics the research could consider are:

- 1. **Evolution of Game Mechanics:** Analyze how game mechanics have evolved over time, from early arcade games like Pong and Space Invaders to more complex gameplay systems seen in modern games.
- 2. **Technological Advancements:** Investigate the technological advancements that have shaped old video game design, such as improvements in graphics, sound, input devices, and storage media.
- 3. **Cultural Influences in Retro Gaming:** Examine how cultural trends and influences from different time periods are reflected in old video game design, including themes, characters, and narrative tropes.
- 4. **Impact of Hardware Limitations:** Explore how hardware limitations of older gaming platforms influenced game design decisions, such as sprite-based graphics, limited color palettes, and memory constraints.
- 5. **Genre Evolution:** Trace the evolution of different video game genres over time, from early platformers and shooters to role-playing games (RPGs), adventure games, and beyond.
- 6. **Legacy of Classic Games:** Investigate the enduring legacy of classic video games and their influence on contemporary game design, fan communities, and pop culture references.

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

- 7. **Design Principles in Retro Games:** Analyze the design principles employed in old video games, such as level design, difficulty progression, reward systems, and player feedback mechanisms.
- 8. Accessibility and Inclusivity: Explore the accessibility and inclusivity aspects of old video game design, including representation of diverse characters, accessibility features, and barriers to entry for different player demographics.
- 9. **Cultural Context of Retro Games:** Examine how the cultural and socio-economic context of the time period influenced the development and reception of old video games, including regional differences in game design and distribution.
- 10. **Preservation and Retro Gaming Communities:** Investigate efforts to preserve and archive old video games, as well as the thriving retro gaming communities that celebrate and continue to play classic titles on original hardware or through emulation.

These topics offer a starting point for delving into the rich history and significance of old video game design. And when researching about Arabic video games design, we consider exploring the following topics further refine these topics or explore additional avenues of inquiry within the realm of retro gaming, such as:

1. Cultural Adaptation:

Investigate how video games can be culturally adapted to resonate with Arabic-speaking players.

Explore aspects such as character names, dialogues, and visual elements that align with Arab culture and traditions.

2. Localization Challenges:

Dive into the challenges faced during the localization process.

Discuss technical issues related to Arabic script rendering, font compatibility, and right-to-left text direction.

Examine linguistic challenges, including translating gaming terminology, slang, and idiomatic expressions into Arabic.

3. User Experience (UX):

Analyze how game mechanics, interfaces, and controls impact the overall user experience.

Consider the preferences of Arab gamers and how game design choices affect their enjoyment.

Online ICCN

Print ISSN		Unline ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.	<u>2735-4342</u>

4. **Narrative and Storytelling:**

Explore storytelling techniques in Arabic video games.

Investigate how narratives are crafted, character development, and plot structures.

5. **Representation and Diversity:**

Discuss the representation of Arab culture, history, and mythology in video games.

Evaluate the portrayal of Arab characters and their roles within game narratives.

6. **Game Mechanics and Gameplay:**

Study game mechanics unique to Arabic video games.

Investigate gameplay elements that resonate with Arab players.

7. Educational and Serious Games:

Explore the potential of Arabic video games for educational purposes.

Investigate serious games addressing social issues, cultural heritage, or language learning.

Research Beginnings:

Despite the small number of companies producing Arabic electronic games, by searching for them you will find many common elements among them, the first of which is the persistent attempts to produce an Arabic game inspired by Arab history, whether modern or ancient, or with religious themes such as Islamic historical invasions, Then the use of historical names, for example.

But to reach the last result, which was monitored in 2020, we must use a historical overview of the first attempts to create the Arab electronic game, through the entry of the technical intermediary, represented by the computer, into all regions of the Arab world.¹

Several attempts have emerged to develop local Arab games, some of which have met with success and others with failure. The Arab world has become one of the new target markets for international video games. Video game culture is widespread in the Arab world among children and youth. Video games in the Arab world have always been the subject of severe criticism, the most common of which is violence. Therefore, some religious institutions tend to issue religious fatwas prohibiting them or prohibiting some of them for reasons related to whether pornography or other reasons.

¹ Ohmann, R. (1996).

Online ISSN

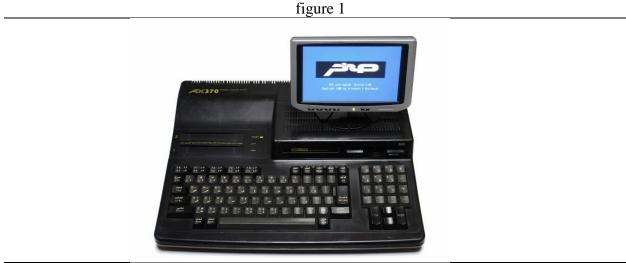
Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

Some Arab countries also ban several games because they are linked to violence and murders, while some companies block obscene scenes as well as blood in accordance with the laws of Arab countries (in versions directed to the Arab region). On the other hand, some governments are encouraging the video game industry as an important source of income and with rising profits recently.¹

Video game culture arrived early in the Arab world in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century and spread in markets like similar regions such as Japan, the United States, and Europe. As a result, requests for the Arabic interface for games began to increase, which prompted the International Company - a Kuwaiti company - to begin producing the "Sakhr computer" in 1981(figure 1), which was originally based on the Japanese "MSX computer". The company tried to change the basic computer language to Arabic and began translating applications into it. But most of these applications were not video games due to the widespread prevalence of piracy, so no company then risked investing in the region. ²



A photo for "Sakhr Computer"

It is worth noting here that the programs were nothing but developed or Arabized versions of foreign versions, specifically Japanese. In this sense, it is clear that the industry was not independent, but was affiliated with other parties, and the technology itself was not available or known, which means it is impossible to produce an independent Arabic electronic game,

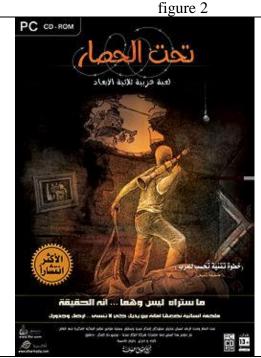
¹ Roumani, R. (2006).

² Middle East Company News Wire. (2005).

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.	<u>2735-4342</u>

so the succession in the following stages was the most important stage once there was space for Arabic speakers to become familiar with the languages used in creating an electronic game.

In the end, it was up to independent game developers to grow the industry, some simple games began to appear, for example "War 73" in 1999, which tells the story of the October War. And "Stone Throwers" in 2001, whose events revolve around the Palestinian Intifada; Both games were 2D arcade games. In September 2000, the game "Under the Ashes" (figure 2) was shown at the Damascus International Fair, which takes place in the shadow of the Arab-Israeli conflict and is considered the first commercial game in the Arab world. The game was released in 2002 and achieved amazing success with sales of more than 100,000 copies. This success made "Afkar Media" one of the first independent companies developing video games in the Middle East. After the amazing success of the game, the company released a second part entitled "Under Siege" in 2004. The company was not satisfied with that and continued its journey to produce the game "Quraish" in 2008, which tells about the Prophet's conquests. "Afkar Media" produced a game entitled "The Road to Jerusalem" in 2009.¹



Poster of the Syrian Video Game "Under the Ashes" which was established by "Afkar Media" at 2000

¹ Shaw, A. (2010).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN 2735-4342

Up to this point, we can say that Arab video games have not moved away from simulating stories with a modern national character. They either derive their story from a historical story with dramatic additions to form a fully-fledged game, or they are a type of exploitation of current events such as the Palestinian issue, for example.¹

In 2002, "3D Technologies" produced "Zoya", but the game failed and did not achieve its goals, as it sold only approximately 100 copies. "Afkar Media" tried to fix this situation by reproducing the game, and this time its sales reached only about a thousand copies. After this game, "3D Technologies" closed down. In 2003, an Emirati company called "Imaginations" produced a fantasy game called "The Legend of the Zord" on the computer platform, a game inspired by Arab history, especially the tales of "One Thousand and One Nights ~ Arabian Nights". The company tried to continue its career by producing another game called "Wadi Bashir," a racing game with Middle Eastern influences, but announced its closure in 2005.²

A stage that relied on personal effort and self-financing, while major businessmen stayed away from investing in this field due to its relative ambiguity at that period, in addition to the users' habit of purchasing from the international market, which was easy to reach the Arab market. Therefore, there was no Incentives to risk money.

In 2003, Lebanese developers produced the game "Special Forces", which depicted Hezbollah's operations against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.³ From that point, the developers began establishing their own studio and called it "Might 3D", and then they began working on the second part of it, entitled "Special Forces 2 - The Story of the True Promise", which was released on August 16, 2007. The second version was about Hezbollah's operations in the 2006 Lebanon War. At the same time In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jordanian company "Turath" produced a game called "Jenin: Path of Heroe" in 2003 (figure 3), which told about the Battle of Jenin, but the company sold only about 4,000 to 8,000 copies. After that, the company returned to producing a game called "Wild Racing" in 2008, which was an animal racing game. Its performance was not satisfactory and since then the company stopped delving into the field of video games.⁴

¹ Addelman, R. (2006).

² Halter, E. (2006).

³ The Economist. (2003).

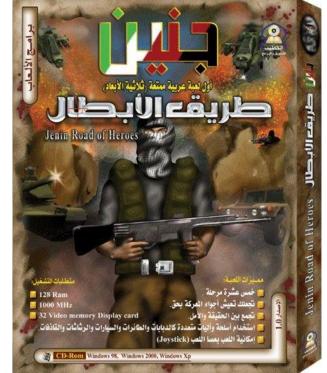
⁴ Jarrah, S., Haider, A. & Al-Salman, S. (2023).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN 2735-4342

figure 3



Poster of the Jordanian Video Game "Under the Ashes" which was established by "Turath" at 2003

Arab attempts to produce games continued. The Jordanian company "Kirkat" began producing video games and released a strategy game entitled "Masters of the Desert" (figure 4) in 2006, which is a city-building game in an Arab desert style. But it seemed that making video games for the computer platform was not generating enough profit at the time, so the company turned to the market of mobile phone games, portable platforms, and traditional games. The company continued its journey and released a puzzle game in 2008 called "Tariq's Treasure", and also released the Musician game, a melodies game that allows players to play the oud.¹

¹ Kerr, A. (2000).

Print ISSN 2735-4334 **Online ISSN**

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

figure **4**



a photo from "Masters of the Desert" video game which established by the Jordanian company "Kirkat" at 2006

2006, "Lion of Fallujah" was released, a game about the American occupation of Iraq.¹

In 2007, the Egyptian company "Khayal" produced the game "Bouha" (figure 5), which was adapted from an Egyptian film of the same name, This is considered one of the most famous models in which it can be said that it was an exploitation of the success of an artistic work that the public had for use in other artistic works such as electronic games, but due to the lack of sufficient commercial advertising and also the unofficialness of the work, meaning that it was released only in an entertaining manner via the Internet, Therefore, it did not reach a large number of users, nor could it achieve profits through which it would be possible to invest in new electronic businesses and then increase the size of the circle of work and users with investors, and this did not happen at that time.

¹ Al-Batineh, M. (2021).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

Online ISSN





a photo from "Bouha" video game which established by the Egyptian company "Khayal" at 2007

At this stage, we can notice that users have become able to carry out some of the actions that come to their mind with the utmost ease and in a quick time. For example, the game adapted from the movie was released quickly after the movie's release as an investment in the success of the movie and the character's popularity, and this is the same method that was adopted. The world is investing in the successes of films by issuing products related to the famous film to achieve more sales, but unlike the Arab world, which is not linked to property rights contracts between producing companies and game makers, but games were issued on a limited, non-commercial level in the first place. ¹

This stage heralded the ease and speed of issuing video games coinciding with famous events, works of art, and so on, but the future was not consistent with the ambitions or opinions that embraced those hope,

In 2008, the Syrian "Joy Box" Company was founded and targeted traditional games. It produced several simple games and sold them to "Al Majd TV". "Maktoob" a famous services platform at this time, began distributing several Arabized browser games, including "War of Kings" in 2008, "Damoria" in 2009, and "Stardoll" as well in the same year. This wave of Arabization continued and was not limited to Maktoob only.

¹ Žižek, S. (2002).

Print ISSN	
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN

2735-4342

The Emirati company "Tahadi" began Arabizing many games, including the "Legends of Power" game in 2009, "Ragnarok" Online, and "Crazy Cart" in 2009. In 2009, the Emirati company "Game Power 7" launched the game the Korean game "The Hope of Peoples".¹

Companies did not stop their attempts to establish a foothold in the market. The Emirati company "Tahadi" Arabized the game "Heroes of Gaia" in 2010 (figure 6), and "Falafel Games" also produced the game "Knights of Glory" a browser game that tells about Islamic conquests in 2011 on the browser, and in 2013 the company tried to expand its reach. Upon its arrival, the company launched a version of the game on the iPhone platform. Most of these games were exclusive to the PC platform as well as the browser, because it is the most widespread platform in the Arab world and also because of its affordable price. Despite the popularity of the PlayStation platform in the region, it was not a target for developers at the time..²



The interface of "Heroes of Gaia" which established by the Emirati Company "Tahadi" at 2010

Until this moment, it can be noted that all games represent violent confrontations, wars, and adventurous heroes, despite their shift and development towards strategic games, which also depend on planning and not only on direct confrontations and wars, but the idea of wars and confrontations remains predominant. In most ideas, with their different forms and orientations.³

¹ Shaheen, J. (2000).

² Al-Rawi, A. (2016).

³ Nieborg, D. B. (2006).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

Online ISSN

The aspirations of Arab developers began to increase in the 2010s, and the game "Al-Rikaz: In the Trail of Ibn Battuta" was released in 2013 on PlayStation 3, Steam, and other platforms, but it received low ratings from critics. Despite the game's failure, the developer produced another game called "Badia" which achieved success and landed it on the PC Gamer Show, even though it was still under development. "Kirkat" Studio began working on its game "Palace of Legends" in 2006, and the game continued under development until it was eventually released in 2018 for mobile phones. In an attempt to raise the spirit of competition in the market, the Egyptian studio "Rambling Games Studio" began working on a major game entitled "Knights of Light" (figure 7) which tells about the Battle of Al-Qadisiyah, as it features high-quality graphics, and also requires a large space to run it. The game was then released on February 29, 2020 in early access on Steam but received harsh criticism due to numerous technical issues as well as its price; Which made the developer issue corrective updates for some of the game's technical problems, as well as reduce its price.¹



The interface of "Knights of Light" which established by the Egyptian studio "Rambling Games Studio" at 2020

Here we notice the large distance between the last two productions, which amounts to ten years, but by following the events that took place during this period from 2010 to 2020, we can find out logical reasons and excuses for that delay, noting that the world has released many games and updates. Whether on applications, programming languages, and even the equipment used in the video games themselves, in addition to the opening of many studios dedicated to making games,

¹ Osypenko, A. (2024).

Online ISSN

Print ISSN		
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

the development of the old studios has actually changed itself, and here we know and notice that the gap has appeared and begun to widen due to external circumstances.¹

One of the biggest challenges facing Arab developers is drawing inspiration from Islamic history and Islamic conquests, as the fear of Islamophobia prompted the Egyptian developer Rampling Studios not to begin developing its future game Knights of Light - which tells about the Islamic conquest of Iraq, especially the Battle of Al-Qadisiyah - except after the approval of PlayStation developer Sony. On the theme of the game and the presence of the flags bearing the two certificates, But at the same time, auxiliary media have appeared in the electronic game industry that facilitate the design and publishing process, as well as the demand and expansion of the market for everything new, and this is the hope of providing the opportunity for more upcoming Arabic-speaking works, in addition to the lessons and auxiliary materials that have become Available to everyone on the Internet.²Here's a brief overview of the historical trajectory of Arabic video game design:

1. Early Years (1980s-1990s): The introduction of video games to the Arabic-speaking world largely paralleled global trends. Early gaming experiences were often imported from Western markets and primarily featured popular titles translated into Arabic. These games were typically played on platforms such as the Atari, Commodore 64, and later, home consoles like the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and Sega Mega Drive.³

2. Localization and Cultural Adaptation: As the popularity of video games grew in the Arabic-speaking world, there was a demand for localized content that resonated with Arab players. This led to the localization of popular games into Arabic, including translation of text, dubbing of audio, and adaptation of content to align with cultural sensitivities and values.⁴

3. Emergence of Arabic Video Developers (2000s-2010s): With the rise of digital distribution platforms and accessible game development tools, the Arabic gaming scene saw the emergence of Arabic Video developers creating original content. These developers explored themes and narratives inspired by Arabic culture, history, and mythology, offering a fresh perspective in an industry dominated by Western-centric titles.⁵

¹ OVI E-Sports. (2023).

² Associated Press. (1995).

³ Appadurai, A. (1996).

⁴ McKenzie, W. (2006)

⁵ Barron, M. (2004)

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN

<u>2735-4342</u>

4. Mobile Gaming Revolution: The widespread adoption of smartphones and mobile devices had a profound impact on the Arabic gaming market. Mobile gaming became increasingly popular due to its accessibility, affordability, and suitability for gaming on the go. Arabic developers capitalized on this trend by creating a wide range of mobile games catering to diverse tastes and demographics.¹

5. Government Support and Industry Growth: Recognizing the economic and cultural potential of the gaming industry, several Arab countries began to invest in the development of local game studios and infrastructure. Government initiatives, such as funding programs, incubators, and gaming events, helped foster a supportive ecosystem for Arabic game developers to thrive.²

6. Global Recognition and Influence: Arabic video game design has gained international recognition in recent years, with several titles receiving acclaim at industry events and festivals. Games like "Qalb" (Heart) and "Salam" have garnered attention for their innovative gameplay mechanics, artistic expression, and cultural significance, showcasing the talent and creativity of Arabic developers on the global stage.³

7. Challenges and Opportunities: Despite the progress made, Arabic video game design still faces challenges such as limited access to funding, technical expertise, and market infrastructure. However, there are also significant opportunities for growth, particularly in emerging markets, e-sports, educational gaming, and virtual reality (VR) experiences that leverage Arabic language and culture.⁴

This also prompts us to point out some other companies that specialize in making video games at the level of the Arab world, The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region which has seen significant growth in the gaming industry, and several initiatives are supporting indie game development.⁵ Here are some notable efforts, we mention some of them as examples which were not mentioned previously in the research:

1 - Sharjah Youth Centre (SHJYC):

• The SHJYC, based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), operates indie publisher 71-Bit Games.

¹ Ashcraft, B. (2006).

² Richardson, J.E. (2004)

³ Nieborg, D. (2006)

⁴ Bryant, E. (2024).

⁵ Ahmed, E. (2021).

Online ICCN

Print ISSN		Unline ISSN
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

- This government-backed program provides exposure, guidance, and funding to young developers.
- Instead of royalties, developers share their knowledge through talks, seminars, and workshops, fostering a supportive community.¹

2 - National Gaming and Esports Strategy (NGES) in Saudi Arabia:

- In September 2022, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince announced the NGES, a 10-year investment plan for gaming and esports.
- The strategy aims to develop the entire gaming value chain, including indie game development.²

3 – Jordan Gaming Lab and PG Connects Jordan:

• Supported by the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, Jordan hosts events like PG Connects Jordan, fostering game development success stories like Babil Games, Tamatem, and Maysalward.³

4 - Local Developers Driving Innovation Across MENA:

- The MENA region boasts talented game developers. For instance, Beirut-based "Groovy Antoid" focuses on creating quirky games with cute, colorful characters.
- Solo developers like Ahmad Yassin, founder of FishyTushy Studios, contribute to the indie scene in the UAE with games like "Shadow Dreams" and innovative approaches.
- Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have become hotspots for gaming.
- Approximately 65 million gamers in these countries generated \$1.76 billion in 2021, with projections of 86 million gamers and a \$3.14 billion opportunity by 2025.

These initiatives demonstrate the region's commitment to nurturing indie talent and fostering a vibrant gaming ecosystem.⁴

¹ West, J. (2024).

²

³

⁴ Abdel-Latif, O. (2001).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 - 60.

Online ISSN

<u>2735-4342</u>

Negative aspects of Video games:

When deciding to focus attention on the fact that most of these Arab games contain adventures of war and violence, it was necessary to point out that video games have negative effects, and therefore it was necessary to direct the research to the importance of producing other useful works, as there is a very dangerous and negative role for children as a result of playing video games¹, and therefore, since the research is trying to address all of these aspects, it is necessary for the research to also focus on the negative health aspects, as impact of gaming on mental health can vary based on factors such as game type, duration of play, and individual susceptibility. Let's explore some insights related to Arabic gaming and its effects:

1. Physical Health Risks:

- **Repetitive Stress Injuries:** Gamers, including those in the Arabic gaming community, are prone to repetitive stress injuries. Conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome, gamer's thumb, and tennis elbow can result from excessive gaming.
- **Vision Problems:** Prolonged screen time can strain the eyes, leading to issues like digital eye strain and computer vision syndrome.²

2. Sleep Deprivation and Circadian Rhythm Disruptions:

• Gamers often find themselves immersed in virtual worlds, losing track of time and staying up late into the night. leading to difficulties in falling asleep and reduced sleep quality. Over time, lack of adequate sleep can weaken the immune system, impair cognitive function, and increase the risk of various health issues such as obesity and heart disease.³

3. Mental Health Implications:

• **Depression and Anxiety:** While some studies suggest that gaming can have cognitive benefits, excessive gaming has been associated with depression and anxiety. However, more research is needed to establish the strength of these connections.

¹ Machin, D. and U. Suleiman (2006).

² Manning, P. (2006).

³ Taylor, T. L. (2006).

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.	<u>2735-4342</u>

- Addiction: Gaming disorder, characterized by compulsive gaming and impaired control over gaming behavior, can impact mental health. It often leads to neglect of other essential activities and responsibilities.¹
- Social Isolation: While gaming can provide a virtual community, excessive gaming may lead to social withdrawal and loneliness.²

4. Quality of Life and Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL):

• A study using the Gaming Addiction Scale (GAS) found that gaming addiction negatively affects health-related quality of life in adults. This impact extends beyond mental health to physical health and overall well-being.³

5. Mixed Research Findings:

- Most of researched find that Video Games carry a major negative side that one must be careful of it, A recent study from the University of Oxford found no causal link between gaming and poor mental health. However, this research emphasizes that harm may occur if a gamer cannot stop playing, suggesting that moderation is essential.⁴
- Research on Arabic video games has shown a growing interest and development within the gaming industry. These games often incorporate cultural themes, narratives, and language that resonate with Arab audiences. They serve not only as entertainment but also as a means of preserving and promoting Arabic culture and language. Additionally, studies indicate that Arabic-speaking gamers are a significant market segment with distinct preferences and behaviors, influencing game design and localization strategies. Overall, Arabic video games represent a burgeoning sector poised to cater to a diverse and expanding audience both within the Middle East and globally.⁵

¹ Galloway, A. (2004).

² Turkle, S. (1997).

³ Granic, I., Lobel, A., & Engels, R. C. M. E. (2014).

⁴ Yee, N. (2001).

⁵ Roumani, R. (2006).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN

<u>2735-4342</u>

Conclusion:

After the previous study and inventory of most of the data on video games that appeared with the beginning of the emergence of the Arabic-speaking computer, it was noted that the focus is on war and fighting games more, and very few intelligence games were included, even games for entertainment as found across the world. There are multiple sections on any site that provides gaming services, and here it must be noted that attention can be given to this aspect. In addition to the large and important entertainment aspect of electronic games, they may be an element that helps in learning many other skills, and this is what we aspire to in the future of Arabic video games industry.¹

The Arab industry was limited to individual projects in the first place, where a programmer has sufficient technical experience to make a simple game, which is a type that falls under the types of games that are supervised by only one maker, while emerging companies that tried to gather a team of specialists to distribute roles among them in the process of game industry, none of them received public or governmental support to reach levels comparable to the global content that has existed for many years.

In addition, the Arab consumer found it difficult to accept the idea of purchasing an unlicensed Arabic game or dealing with full commercial treatment, and therefore his constant preference was to download ready-made games over the Internet, while global video games are widely available for free download over the Internet, not to mention The Arab companies themselves released the games for free out of a desire to market themselves only without the plan of the next steps that would enable them to capitalize on the successes.

This is from the economic point of view, but from the technical point of view, the matter has a lot to do with the economic aspect, as the lack of profitability of most of the Arab games presented did not help any of their makers to develop themselves and keep pace with the open global market, and perhaps in the near future there will be attempts to avoid this and continue in the industry regularly engages with new emerging companies that were previously mentioned across the research

As for the mental aspect, the previous trend is very similar to the upcoming plans in the industry, and this is the goal of the research to direct investors, makers and programmers to the possibility of creating different types of types of action and violence for which Arab games are famous, and that is through Internationally successful models that were not limited to action types only, but rather to many types, each of which has its own audience.

¹ Turow, J. (1997).

Online ISSN

Print ISSN <u>2735-4334</u>

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

Knowing that the industry must develop faster than it is now, because it falls under the new technologies that compete with each other to provide the best version of itself over short periods of time, in order to be able to obtain the largest share of the global market that does not care about the idea of the country of game makers. As much as its attractiveness and popularity, This requires several factors that have been mentioned and will be emphasized in the recommendations section to achieve the best results.

These hypotheses can serve as starting points for further research and exploration. Each topic offers unique opportunities to contribute to the understanding of Arabic gaming and its impact on players and developers.

Arabic gaming is making a notable impact . Not only enhances cultural identity but also fosters a sense of pride and engagement among players. creating Arabic games presents opportunities to tap into a burgeoning market and cater to specific regional preferences

It is necessary pointing to that there are many features that distinguish the region from others, and their importance lies in some essential points:

<u>1 - Market Size and Growth:</u>

- The MENA-3 (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt) gaming market has quickly emerged as a key growth region for the global video game industry.¹
- In 2021, MENA-3 gamers reached 65.32 million, and this number is projected to rise to 85.76 million by 2025.²
- The region's gaming revenue was \$1.76 billion in 2021, expected to increase to \$3.14 billion by 2025 at a 5-year CAGR of 13.8%.³

<u>2 - Country-Specific Insights:</u>

- Saudi Arabia: Known as the gaming powerhouse of Arabic-speaking nations in MENA, Saudi Arabia balances its large population size with high spending power, resulting in the highest gaming revenue.⁴
- United Arab Emirates (UAE): Representative of smaller Gulf states, the UAE has a predominantly expatriated population. Arabic is the official language, but the gaming community is diverse.⁵

¹ Semmerling, T. J. (2006).

² tamatem.co Editor. (2023).

³ PYMNTS. (2022).

⁴ Karim, H. (2006).

⁵ Juul, J. (2001).

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

Egypt: An emerging games market, Egypt boasts an active and competitive gaming community. It is MENA-3's largest market by gamers.¹

3 - Demographics and Cultural Influence:

- Nearly half of the MENA population is under 25 years old, and many have grown up as digital natives with gaming playing a significant role in their entertainment.
- Arabic-speaking gamers in the region seek culturally relevant content that resonates with their experiences and traditions.²

4 - Government Support and Policies:

- Governments in the region are supportive of the video game sector.
- Saudi Arabia and the UAE have introduced policies to encourage game localization, local • game development, new studios, and hosting major esports tournaments.³

5 - Community Engagement and Esports:

- The MENA gaming community actively participates in esports events, tournaments, and online gaming platforms.
- The region's esports scene is growing, attracting both players and spectators.⁴ •

In summary, the MENA gaming community is dynamic, diverse, and poised for continued growth. Its unique blend of cultural influences and technological advancements contributes to a thriving gaming ecosystem.

In addition, it is necessary to clarify that there are many obstacles that Arab Games video makers may face, due to several different elements that we will try to summarize below:

1 - Usability Heuristics for Arabic Mobile Games:

Researchers have developed a set of Arabic Mobile Game Heuristics specifically adapted for evaluating usability in Arabic mobile games. These heuristics address the unique challenges faced by developers targeting the Arabic-speaking market. by comparing the outcomes of evaluating two Arabic mobile games using these heuristics, they found that evaluators could identify additional usability issues and more severe problems than when using other existing heuristic lists.⁵

¹ Hafez, K. (2000).

² Friedman, T. (1999).

³ Everett, A. (2005).

⁴ Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S. and T. Buch (2006).

⁵ Dahlberg, L. (2005).

Online ISSN

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

2 - Issues in Arabic Video Game Localization:

A descriptive study explored the challenges faced during the localization of Arabic video games. The research collected data from online interviews, blogs, specialized websites, and discussion forums. It highlighted the opinions of localization practitioners, game critics, and players regarding the localization process for specific games.¹

<u>3 - Digital Game-Based Learning in Arabic Contexts:</u>

Investigating the potential of digital game-based learning to enhance teaching and learning in Arabic-speaking regions could be a valuable research area. Understanding how games can be effectively integrated into educational settings and their impact on student outcomes would be relevant.²

4 - Cross-Generational Study of Video Gaming in the Arab World:

A comprehensive study examining video game preferences, habits, and experiences across different age groups in the Arab region could yield valuable insights. Factors such as game genres, social aspects, and cultural influences could be explored.³

5 - Strategies of Localizing Video games into Arabic:

Research on the localization strategies used for popular video games like PUBG and Free Fire when translating them into Arabic could provide valuable insights. Investigating linguistic, cultural, and technical challenges in this context would be relevant for both developers and players.⁴

At the End, Arabic video games industry offers numerous benefits, including cultural preservation, economic growth through job creation and market expansion, and fostering creativity and innovation in game development. By catering to regional preferences and narratives, Arabic games not only entertain but also educate and empower players, contributing to a richer gaming landscape globally. This sector continues to evolve, presenting promising opportunities for both local and international developers to collaborate and thrive in a dynamic and culturally diverse market, it emerging as a powerful cultural and economic force, blending traditional storytelling with modern technology to captivate a global audience. It offers a platform for cultural expression, promotes regional talent, and fuels innovation in game design and development. As it continues to expand, the Arabic gaming industry is poised to shape the future of interactive entertainment, bridging cultures and enriching the gaming landscape worldwide.

¹ Cringley, R. X. (2006).

² Douglas, N. (2000).

³ Bogost, I. (2006)

⁴ Blumer, J. (1996).

Online ISSN

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

2735-4342

The Arabic video games industry stands as a dynamic force for cultural expression, economic growth, and technological innovation. By celebrating and preserving Arabic culture through interactive storytelling, it not only entertains a global audience but also empowers local developers and fosters a sense of identity among players. This thriving sector is poised to continue expanding, offering both creative opportunities and economic advantages for developers and players alike.

The Arabic video games market represents a vibrant frontier for cultural enrichment and economic opportunity. By embracing local narratives and preferences, it not only entertains a diverse audience but also promotes regional creativity and innovation. As this sector continues to grow, it promises to bridge cultures, empower developers, and captivate players worldwide, showcasing the rich potential of Arabic gaming on a global scale.

Therefore, we demand a focus on the industry as a huge investment in culture and material, and not only from an entertainment aspect, as is known about video games.

Finding:

Cultural differences significantly influence game design in the Arab world, shaping both the content and mechanics of video games, cultural considerations play a pivotal role in shaping game design for the Arab world. Developers who embrace cultural nuances create more authentic and engaging gaming experiences, and that's why the research suggest such points:

<u>1 - Content Representation:</u>

• Arab Characters and Settings: Localized games often feature Arab protagonists, historical figures, and iconic locations. This representation promotes Arab culture and makes players feel more connected to the gaming world3.Storytelling: Arab storytelling traditions influence game narratives. Themes related to history, mythology, and family resonate with Arab players.¹

2 - Visual Design and Art Style:

- Aesthetics: Arab art, calligraphy, and geometric patterns inspire visual elements in games. Developers incorporate Arabic motifs, architecture, and landscapes.
- **Color Symbolism**: Colors hold cultural significance. For example, green represents Islam and fertility, while red signifies courage and strength.²

3 - Game Mechanics and User Experience:

• **Reading Direction**: Arabic reads from right to left. Game interfaces must accommodate this, placing buttons and menus accordingly.

¹ Agence France Presse. (2002).

² Ahmad, M. (2004).

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

• Social Interaction: Arab culture emphasizes hospitality and community. Multiplayer features and cooperative gameplay align with these values.¹

<u>4 - Avoiding Stereotypes and Misrepresentations:</u>

- **Religious Sensitivity**: Developers must be cautious when portraying religious symbols, practices, and rituals.
- **Gender Roles**: Arab societies have diverse views on gender. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes and offer inclusive character options.²

<u>5 - Marketing Strategies:</u>

- **Ramadan and Eid**: Timing game releases during Ramadan or Eid can enhance marketing efforts. These festive seasons are significant for Arab gamers.
- Local Events and Festivals: Promoting games during local events fosters community engagement.³

<u>6 - The Call for More Research:</u>

- The existing gaps in Arabic video game localization studies need to be addressed.
- Further research should not only identify linguistic, cultural, and technical issues but also contribute to a body of literature that enhances the gaming experience for Arab gamers4.
- In summary, video game localization in Arabic is a fascinating area that combines language, culture, and technical considerations. As the gaming industry continues to grow, understanding and improving localization practices will be crucial.⁴

7 - Localization and Culturalization:

- It is an interesting and evolving field, the truth of the matter lies in the fact that Arabization is required in every industry in a manner that is compatible with the place and society from which the work originates, as well as the market to be focused on when promoting the game.
- Since the foreign market has the largest percentage and dominates most parts of the industry, the Arab market is considered a modern market that must be exploited instead of giving way to other foreign types that differ in character and customs and may promote ideas outside our Arab and Eastern society.⁵

¹ Marchand, R. (1985).

² Lee, P. S. N. (1991).

³ Kerr, A., & Flynn, R. (2003).

⁴ Ginete, A. M. G. (2006).

⁵ Consalvo, M. (2007).

Online ISSN

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

<u>2735-4342</u>

<u>8 - Challenges and Opportunities:</u>

- **Limited Resources:** Arabic Video developers face funding and infrastructure challenges but bring unique perspectives to game design.
- **Growing Interest:** Research on Arab games is increasing, shedding light on this dynamic and culturally rich gaming landscape.¹

All of these points must be taken into consideration and shared with Arab decision-makers, investors, programmers, or even foreigners who wish to create works that address the Arab consumer or user, as the Arab cultural and heritage base is full of interesting elements that can be used in producing original works of art. This is if solutions are available for all the other difficulties mentioned previously.

Investing in Arabic video games presents a compelling opportunity in a rapidly growing market. As the industry gains momentum, fueled by a burgeoning young population with a strong affinity for gaming, there's a significant potential for returns. Arabic games not only cater to a culturally diverse audience but also tap into a market segment eager for content that resonates with their heritage and experiences. Moreover, investing in Arabic video games supports local talent and promotes cultural preservation through interactive storytelling. With increasing accessibility to digital platforms and growing interest in gaming across the Middle East and North Africa, investing in this sector can yield both financial rewards and contribute positively to regional development and cultural exchange.

Strategies of Localizing Video games into Arabic:

- A study investigated the localization strategies used for popular video games like PUBG and Free Fire when translating them into Arabic.²
- The data were extracted from interfaces and in-game captions of these games.
- The analysis revealed that localizers often used transposition (changing the grammatical category of a word) and literal translation strategies.
- They also aimed to adapt the text to suit the target-language culture as much as possible.
- These findings are valuable for translators, localizers, and trainers, helping them enhance their video game localization skills.³

¹ Sender, K. (2004).

² Reichmuth, P. and S. Werning (2006).

³ Middle East Company News Wire. (2004).

 Print ISSN

 2735-4334
 VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 - 60.

Online ISSN

<u>2735-4342</u>

Technical and Linguistic Issues in Arabic Video Game Localization:

- **Technical Issues:** Related to the Arabic script, video game variables, and subtitling conventions.
- Linguistic Issues: Arabic video game terminology, acronyms, translation of proper names, and NPCs' titles into Arabic.¹
- **Localization:** Adapting games to the linguistic and cultural context of the target audience. For Arabic-speaking gamers, this involves translating in-game text, menus, and dialogues into Arabic.
- **Culturalization:** Goes beyond localization by considering cultural norms, values, and sensitivities. It ensures that game elements align with Arab culture and avoid potential offense.

Financial Issues to Localize Arabic Video Game:

• Financial issues in Arabic video game localization can be complex and challenging. These stem primarily from the need to adapt games to a diverse linguistic and cultural landscape across Arabic-speaking countries. Firstly, the Arabic language itself presents difficulties due to its various dialects and script variations, necessitating careful localization efforts to ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance. Additionally, the cost of hiring proficient translators and cultural consultants familiar with gaming terminology in Arabic can be high. Moreover, navigating regional regulations and legal frameworks, as well as addressing technical challenges, investing in thorough localization is crucial for maximizing market penetration and ensuring a positive user experience, underscoring the importance of strategic financial planning and investment in Arabic video game localization efforts.²

¹ Kraidy, M. (2005).

² Apperley, T. H. (2006).

Print ISSN 2735-4334

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN

<u>2735-4342</u>

Recommendation:

Arabic video games can increasingly capture global attention by integrating rich cultural narratives and innovative gameplay. These games often explore themes rooted in Arab history, mythology, and daily life, offering players unique and immersive experiences. Concepts range from historical adventures set in ancient civilizations to modern-day stories highlighting social issues. Educational games teaching Arabic language and culture are also popular, along with fantasy and science fiction titles inspired by regional folklore. The growing interest and investment in this sector are fostering a creative environment where developers can produce distinctive and culturally resonant games for a diverse audience.

During the research, some ideas emerged that may be a modification of some ideas that exist in other languages and have not yet been exploited at the level of the Arab world, the interactive games not only teach language but also foster cultural appreciation and curiosity. By incorporating elements of history, geography, and tradition, these games make learning Arabic culture an exciting adventure, we can suggest some ideas of them including the following:

1 - Alif Baa Taa Game:

An interactive game introducing the Arabic alphabet to preschoolers.

- A handwriting workbook specifically designed for children learning Arabic.
- Teaches proper letter formation and helps learners practice writing the Arabic alphabet.
- Useful for beginners and those refining their handwriting skills.

Features:

- Interactive lessons.
- Engaging activities.
- Visual and auditory learning components.
- Builds a strong foundation in letter recognition and pronunciation

2 - Sisters Arabic Educational Games:

Offers free online educational games to help learners of all ages improve their Arabic language skills.

Features:

- <u>Qur'an Recitation and Memorization</u>: Highly qualified female Qur'an teachers assist learners in understanding and reciting the Qur'an.
- <u>Arabic Language Learning:</u> Access a rich database of Arabic books, worksheets, videos, games, and courses to enhance your language proficiency.

Print ISSN	
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2024, 22 – 60.

Online ISSN

2735-4342

3 - Arabic Memory Game:

Create a memory game using Arabic vocabulary. Match pairs of words or images related to Arabic culture, history, or famous landmarks.

4 - Storytelling Karaoke:

Combine storytelling with music. Encourage kids to create their own stories about historical events, famous figures, or cultural traditions. They can then perform their stories as karaoke-style presentations.

5 - Arabic Alphabet Karaoke:

Sing the Arabic alphabet to familiar tunes. Kids can learn letter names and sounds while having fun.

<u>6 - Arabic Cultural Treasure Hunt:</u>

Organize a treasure hunt where clues lead to significant Arabic cultural artifacts, historical sites, or famous personalities. Kids learn while solving puzzles and exploring.

7 - Arabic Calligraphy Workshop:

Teach kids the art of Arabic calligraphy. They can practice writing their names or favorite Arabic phrases in beautiful script.

8 - Riwaq Al Quran:

- Integrates Arabic language learning with cultural exploration.
- It offers interactive games, such as the Arabic Alphabet Treasure Hunt, where children find hidden Arabic letters while following clues. Additionally, Arabic Letter Puzzles and Arabic Alphabet Bingo engage visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles.
- Cultural Significance: By immersing children in Arabic language activities infused with cultural elements, Riwaq Al Quran fosters a genuine love for the language and its rich heritage.

9 - Magnetic Arabic Letters & Words:

- A magnetic build-a-word toolbox filled with Arabic letters.
- Helps learners practice letter recognition and word formation using magnetic pieces.
- Ideal for hands-on learning and interactive play.

<u>10 - Arabic Alphabet & Numbers Wooden Puzzle:</u>

• A wooden puzzle set featuring Arabic letters and numbers.

Online ICCN

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

- Encourages learners to complete the puzzle by placing the wooden letters in their correct positions.
- Enhances fine motor skills and reinforces letter knowledge.

<u>11 - Kalimat Word-Building Game:</u>

- Designed for ages 6-10.
- Expands vocabulary by creating sentences using Arabic words.
- Encourages language exploration and sentence construction

<u>12 - Arab Video games with Local Characteristics:</u>

While globally popular games like Call of Duty and Halo have their place in the Arab gaming world, there is also demand for games that authentically represent local culture and context.

These games aim to bridge the gap between entertainment and cultural preservation, allowing players to engage with their heritage while enjoying gaming experiences.

<u>13 - Arabic Alphabet Puzzle:</u>

This hands-on puzzle allows children to physically assemble Arabic letters, helping them recognize and retain the shapes and forms of each letter.

Benefits: Tactile learning experience, foundational skills in Arabic language.

14 - Arabic Hangman:

A word-guessing game with an educational twist. Players guess Arabic words by suggesting letters, learning new vocabulary and practicing spelling1.

<u>15 - Arabic Spelling Bee:</u>

Challenges kids to spell Arabic words correctly within a time limit. Covers topics like animals, fruits, and colors.

<u>17 - Ibn Battuta Adventure Box:</u>

Inspired by the famous Arab explorer Ibn Battuta, this game takes players on a virtual journey across historical and cultural landmarks. It fosters an appreciation for Arab history and geography.

<u> 18 – Takamul:</u>

An educational game that integrates science, technology, and Arabic language. It encourages critical thinking and problem-solving while promoting cultural awareness.

All these games combine entertainment with education, teaching arabic culture and history through games making the learning process enjoyable and effective.

Print ISSN		Online ISSN
2735-4334	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

In addition to that, supporting Arabic Video game developers working on Arabic-inspired games is a wonderful initiative, and that's how we can contribute and show our support:

1 - Spread the Word:

- Share information about these games on social media platforms, gaming forums, and relevant communities.
- Use hashtags related to Arabic Video games, Arabic culture, and game development to increase visibility.

2 - Attend Game Events and Conventions:

- Attend local or international gaming events, conferences, and conventions.
- Engage with Arabic Video developers, play their games, and provide feedback.

3 - Financial Support:

- Purchase games directly from Arabic Video developers or through platforms like Steam, itch.io, or Arabic Video game marketplaces.
- Consider supporting crowdfunding campaigns for upcoming Arabic-inspired games.

4 - Review and Rate Games:

- Leave positive reviews and ratings on platforms like Steam, Google Play, or the App Store.
- Honest feedback helps Arabic Video developers improve their games and attract more players.

5 - Collaborate and Network:

- Connect with Arabic Video developers on social media or professional platforms like LinkedIn.
- Offer your skills (such as localization, marketing, or testing) to help them improve their games.

6 - Participate in Beta Testing:

- Join beta testing programs for Arabic Video games.
- Provide valuable feedback on gameplay, bugs, and user experience.

7 - Support Crowdfunding Campaigns:

- Back Arabic Video game projects on platforms like Kickstarter or Patreon.
- Even small contributions can make a difference.

Opling ISSN

Print ISSN		Online 155N
<u>2735-4334</u>	VOLUME 7 , ISSUE 1 , 2024 , 22 – 60 .	<u>2735-4342</u>

8 - Promote Diversity and Inclusion:

- Encourage Arabic Video developers to create diverse characters and narratives.
- Advocate for authentic representation of Arab culture and history in games.

9 - Attend Developer Workshops and Webinars:

- Learn about game development, coding, design, and marketing.
- Share your knowledge and experiences with others.

10 - Be Patient and Encouraging:

- Game development is a challenging process, especially for Arabic Video developers.
- Show patience, understanding, and encouragement as they work on their projects.
- We Should remember that every little bit of support counts, by championing Arabic Video game developers, we contribute to a vibrant and diverse gaming landscape.

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