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Systematic Review

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Assessment and Policy Implications for Sustainable Quality Education (SDG 4) Across Arab Countries

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ABSTRACT
This study evaluates progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education) across 22 Arab countries and examines disparities in educational performance using evidence from Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the United Nations (UN). A quantitative and comparative approach was adopted using secondary data extracted from VNR reports. SDG 4 scores were analysed using descriptive statistics, country rankings, average score calculations, performance-category distributions, and disparity gap analysis. The results reveal a moderate regional level of performance, with an average SDG 4 score of 2.82 out of 5 across the 22 countries. Qatar recorded the highest score **(**5), while Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine recorded the lowest score (1), resulting in a disparity gap of 4 points. The findings further show that 40.9% of the countries achieved moderate progress, 22.7% demonstrated high progress, 4.5% achieved very high progress, while 13.6% and 18.2% fell within the low- and very-low-progress categories, respectively, highlighting substantial variation in educational progress across the Arab region. The study provides a simple and replicable framework for assessing SDG 4 progress using official UN VNR data and offers evidence-based insights that can support educational policy development, targeted interventions, and regional cooperation towards achieving Quality Education by 2030.

Keywords: Quality Education; Voluntary National Reviews; United Nations; Sustainable Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION
The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The framework consists of 17 interconnected goals, 169 targets and 231 unique indicators, providing a global blueprint for promoting economic prosperity, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The SDGs aim to address major global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, health, education and sustainable economic growth, while ensuring that no one is left behind (United Nations, 2026a).

SDG 4 Quality Education seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (United Nations, 2026b).The goal encompasses a broad range of educational dimensions, including universal access to free primary and secondary education, quality early childhood development, affordable technical and higher education, skills development for employment, gender equality in education, literacy and numeracy, education for sustainable development, inclusive learning environments and the availability of qualified teachers. SDG 4 recognises education as a fundamental human right and a critical driver of social and economic development (Fathelrahman and AlBreiki, 2025).

For Arab countries, SDG 4 is particularly important because education plays a central role in addressing youth unemployment, economic diversification, technological advancement and sustainable development. While many Arab countries have achieved significant improvements in school enrolment and educational infrastructure, challenges remain in relation to learning outcomes, educational quality, digital skills, gender disparities, inclusion of vulnerable groups and alignment between education systems and labour market

needs. Furthermore, disparities in educational performance across the region highlight the need for evidence-based policies and targeted investments. Strengthening educational quality and accessibility is therefore essential for enhancing human capital, fostering innovation and supporting the achievement of broader sustainable development objectives across the Arab world (Allen *et al*., 2017; Abdalla *et al*., 2024). The current research measures two research objectives (RQ).

RQ1: To measure and compare the performance of Arab countries in achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education) by calculating a composite educational quality score based on selected SDG 4 indicators.

RQ2: To assess the disparities in educational progress across Arab countries by analysing variations in access, equity, learning outcomes, and educational infrastructure indicators and identifying the highest- and lowest-performing countries.

Quality education is recognised as a fundamental human right and a critical enabler of sustainable development. As articulated in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda, ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education for all is essential for reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, fostering economic growth, improving health outcomes and strengthening social cohesion. Education serves as a catalyst for achieving many of the other SDGs, making progress in this sector a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development worldwide (Badran and Badran, 2022).

Despite significant international commitments, progress towards achieving SDG 4 remains slower than required. According to *The SDGs Report 2026*, global educational attainment has improved only modestly since 2015, while learning outcomes continue to present major challenges. Between 2015 and 2024, the global primary school completion rate increased from 85% to 88%, lower secondary completion rose from 74% to 78%, and upper secondary completion increased from 53% to 60%. Nevertheless, educational inequalities persist, particularly in developing and low-income regions. In 2023, approximately 272 million children and young people remained out of school worldwide, representing a 3% increase compared with 2015. Furthermore, an estimated 754 million adults were illiterate in 2024, with women accounting for 63% of this population (Ahmed and Naim, 2026a).

Learning quality remains an equally pressing concern. In 2019, only 58% of children achieved minimum proficiency in reading and 44% achieved minimum proficiency in mathematics by the end of primary education. Evidence also suggests a decline in learning outcomes following the COVID-19 pandemic, with lower-secondary students experiencing significant reductions in mathematics and reading proficiency. At the same time, disparities in access to educational resources remain widespread. Many schools, particularly in least developed countries, continue to lack basic infrastructure, including electricity, sanitation facilities, digital technologies and disability-inclusive learning environments. These challenges have been compounded by the digital divide, which limits equitable access to educational opportunities and the acquisition of essential digital skills (Biygautane, 2025).

The Arab region has made notable investments in educational expansion, higher education development and digital transformation initiatives. However, substantial disparities remain between countries regarding educational access, quality, learning outcomes, gender equality and technological readiness. Previous studies have examined SDG monitoring frameworks (Allen *et al*., 2017), educational governance in the Arab region (Morgan, 2017), higher education quality and SDG progress in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Fathelrahman and AlBreiki, 2025), and the role of universities in advancing sustainable development (Abdalla *et al*., 2024). Nevertheless, comprehensive assessments that systematically evaluate progress towards SDG 4 across Arab countries remain limited. Existing studies often focus on individual countries, specific educational sectors or isolated indicators, providing insufficient evidence for understanding regional patterns and policy effectiveness.

Against this backdrop, measuring educational progress through robust indicators is essential for identifying strengths, weaknesses and policy priorities across the Arab world. Reliable assessment frameworks can support governments, educational institutions and development organisations in monitoring performance, allocating resources effectively and designing evidence-based interventions. Furthermore, emerging technologies, data analytics and digital transformation strategies offer new opportunities to strengthen educational systems and accelerate progress towards SDG 4 (See Table 1).

Table 1: Key Challenges Affecting SDG 4 Achievement

Challenge	Implications for Arab Countries
Learning poverty and low proficiency levels	Reduced educational quality and workforce readiness
Gender disparities	Unequal access to educational and economic opportunities
Digital divide	Uneven access to online learning and digital skills
Inadequate educational infrastructure	Limited inclusion of disadvantaged and disabled learners
Regional inequalities	Wide variations in educational outcomes across countries
Teacher shortages and capacity gaps	Constraints on learning quality and educational innovation
Post-pandemic learning losses	Increased need for recovery and resilience strategies

Source: *Adapted from The SDGs Report 2026 (United Nations, 2026a).*

This study aims to measure progress in quality education across Arab countries by analysing key SDG 4 indicators and assessing variations in educational performance across the region. By providing evidence-based insights into current achievements and remaining challenges, the research seeks to contribute to policy discussions on improving educational quality, reducing inequalities and strengthening the role of education in achieving sustainable development. The findings are expected to offer practical policy implications for governments, educational institutions and regional organisations working towards the achievement of SDG 4 and the broader 2030 Agenda (See Table 2).

Table 2: Global SDG 4 Progress Indicators

Indicator	2015	Latest Available	Change
Primary school completion rate	85%	88% (2024)	+3 percentage points
Lower secondary completion rate	74%	78% (2024)	+4 percentage points
Upper secondary completion rate	53%	60% (2024)	+7 percentage points
Out-of-school children and youth	264 million	272 million (2023)	+3%
Adults lacking literacy skills	N/A	754 million (2024)	Persistent challenge
Female share of illiterate adults	N/A	63% (2024)	Significant gender disparity
Reading proficiency at end of primary school	58% (2019)	Limited improvement	Below target
Mathematics proficiency at end of primary school	44% (2019)	Limited improvement	Below target

Source: *Adapted from The SDGs Report 2026 (United Nations, 2026a).*

SDG 4 comprises a comprehensive set of targets aimed at ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education for all by 2030. These targets extend beyond access to primary and secondary education and encompass early childhood development, affordable technical and higher education, skills development for employment and entrepreneurship, gender equality, literacy and numeracy, education for sustainable development, safe and inclusive learning environments, international scholarship opportunities and the provision of qualified teachers. Collectively, these targets recognise that educational quality is multidimensional and requires coordinated efforts across access, learning outcomes, equity, infrastructure,

workforce development and lifelong learning to support sustainable development and social progress (United Nations, 2026b).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing studies have examined SDG monitoring and indicator frameworks in the Arab region (Allen *et al*., 2017; Al-Salim *et al*., 2022), the contribution of Arab universities to sustainable development (Abdalla *et al*., 2024), progress towards SDGs in Gulf countries (Biygautane, 2025; Fathelrahman and AlBreiki, 2025), and the role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in advancing sustainable development and economic transformation (Ahmed and Naim, 2026a; Ahmed and Naim, 2026b; Naim *et al*., 2026b).

However, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the development of an integrated, data-driven framework that systematically evaluates the quality of education (SDG 4) across Arab countries while incorporating emerging technologies such as AI, digital analytics, and evidence-based policy mechanisms. Current research tends to address educational quality, SDG performance, or technological innovation separately, with limited attention given to how these dimensions interact to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 in the Arab region. Consequently, further research is needed to develop comprehensive assessment models that combine educational quality indicators, digital transformation capabilities, and SDG monitoring systems to support evidence-based decision-making and regional policy development. Research gap for existing studies is explained in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Research Gap

Study	Focus Area	Key Contribution	Identified Gap
Allen *et al*. (2017)	SDG indicators in Arab region	Assessed SDG progress using indicator-based approaches	Limited focus on education quality and digital transformation
Morgan (2017)	Educational governance in Arab region	Critiqued regional approaches to educational quality	Did not link educational quality with SDG monitoring frameworks
Al-Salim *et al*. (2022)	SDG data quality	Evaluated quality of SDG statistical reporting	Focused on reporting quality rather than education outcomes
Badran and Badran (2022)	Science and technology indicators	Analysed research and innovation performance in Arab countries	No direct assessment of SDG 4 achievement
Abdalla *et al*. (2024)	Universities and SDGs	Examined universities' contribution to SDG implementation	Limited analysis of national education quality systems
Biygautane (2025)	SDG progress in Saudi Arabia	Evaluated national SDG achievements	Country-specific focus with limited regional comparison

Fathelrahman and AlBreiki (2025)	Higher education quality in GCC	Reviewed progress towards SDG-related educational goals	Restricted to GCC higher education context
Ahmed and Naim (2026a)	AI for SDG implementation	Explored AI applications for accelerating SDGs	Did not specifically address SDG 4 quality assessment but relevant for overall SDG performance.
Ahmed and Naim (2026b)	AI and sustainable business	Examined AI-driven transformation strategies	Limited application to education but relevant for SDG measurement
Naim *et al*. (2026a)	ICT and sustainable development	Investigated ICT for resilient infrastructure and industrialisation	Did not develop educational quality assessment frameworks
Research Gap	SDG 4 in Arab countries	Need for an integrated framework combining educational quality indicators, AI-enabled analytics, digital transformation, and SDG monitoring systems	Limited research examining these dimensions collectively at a regional level

Source: *Compiled by author*

RESEARCH METHODS

Quantitative research methods are applied to measure progress towards SDG 4 (Quality Education) across Arab countries. The research utilises secondary data obtained from international databases and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted by Arab countries to the UN. The methodology combines indicator-based assessment, composite index construction, country ranking and comparative analysis to evaluate educational performance and identify disparities across the region.

The study relies on secondary data collected from the UN SDGs Database and the most recent VNRs submitted by Arab countries to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The VNRs provide country-specific evidence regarding educational achievements, challenges, policy initiatives and progress towards SDG 4 implementation.

The study covers 22 Arab countries that have submitted VNRs and for which sufficient SDG 4 indicator data are available. The analysis focuses on the most recent reporting period available between 2018 to 2025. The analysis identified key educational priorities, policy reforms, digital transformation initiatives, gender equality measures, teacher development programmes and challenges reported under SDG 4.

Each VNR was reviewed against five assessment dimensions:

- Access to Education
- Educational Quality and Learning Outcomes
- Equity and Inclusion
- Digital Transformation and Innovation
- Teacher Capacity and Educational Resources

A VNR Policy Commitment Score ranging from 0 to 100 was assigned to each country based on the extent of reported progress, policy implementation and evidence provided in the VNRs. This qualitative scoring will support interpretation of the quantitative findings. The assessment framework is based on key SDG 4 indicators grouped into five dimensions (See Table 4).

Table 4: SDG 4 Assessment Framework

Dimension	Indicators
Access to Education	Primary enrolment rate, secondary enrolment rate and completion rates.
Educational Quality	Literacy rate, reading proficiency and mathematics proficiency.
Equity and Inclusion	Gender parity index and participation of vulnerable groups.
Higher Education and Skills	Tertiary enrolment rate and vocational education participation.
Educational Resources	Teacher-student ratio, internet access in schools and school infrastructure.

Source: *Developed by author*

As the indicators are measured using different units and scales, all indicators are converted into standardised scores ranging from 0 to 100 using the Min-Max Normalisation method.

For positive indicators:
[Score =]
Where:
X = actual country value
Xmin = lowest observed value
Xmax = highest observed value

A score of 100 represents the best-performing country, while 0 represents the lowest-performing country. Following standardisation, an average score will be calculated for each dimension as explained in Table 4.

Dimension Score [DS =]
Where:
DS = Dimension Score
n = Number of indicators within the dimension

The overall Education Performance Index (EPI) for each country is then be calculated as the arithmetic mean of the five-dimension scores.

Education Performance Index [EPI =]
Where:
AE = Access to Education Score
EQ = Educational Quality Score
EI = Equity and Inclusion Score
HS = Higher Education and Skills Score
ER = Educational Resources Score
The EPI score will range from 0 to 100.

All countries are classified according to their overall EPI score (See Table 5).

Table 5: Performance Categories

EPI Score	Category
80–100	High Performance
60–79	Moderate Performance
40–59	Emerging Performance
Below 40	Low Performance

Source: *Scores are assigned by author*

This classification enables comparison of educational progress across Arab countries and facilitates identification of best-performing and underperforming nations.

Descriptive statistical techniques are employed to analyse the data. Mean scores, standard deviations, rankings and percentage differences are calculated for each country and dimension. Regional averages are also being computed to establish benchmarks for comparison.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study is based on secondary data obtained from publicly available sources, from UN databases and VNRs submitted by Arab countries to the UN. No human participants were involved, and no personal, confidential or sensitive data were collected. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for this study. Secondary data can be accessed on the below given links:
https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/ : https://hlpf.un.org/countries

RESULTS

The findings of the assessment of SDG 4 (Quality Education) across Arab countries are based on evidence extracted from VNRs submitted to the UN. The analysis focuses on measuring overall progress towards SDG 4 and identifying disparities in educational performance across the Arab region. The analysis was conducted in four stages (See Table 6).

- Collection of SDG 4 scores from Arab countries' VNR submissions.
- Calculation of the regional average score.
- Ranking of countries according to their SDG 4 scores.
- Gap analysis to assess disparities between countries.

Table 6: Analytical Process for four Stages

Stage	Analysis Activity	Output
1	Extract SDG 4 scores from VNRs	Country dataset
2	Calculate average score	Regional performance level
3	Rank countries by score	Country comparison
4	Calculate score gap	Educational disparity assessment

Source: *Analysed by author*

The RQ1 measures and compares the performance of Arab countries in achieving SDG 4. The average SDG 4 score was calculated using the arithmetic mean formula and refer to Table 7 for VNR data and Figure 1 for graphical representation. Figure 2 presents country wise year of submission for VNR reports to UN

[{X} =]
Where:
({X}) = Average SDG 4 score

(X) = Sum of country scores
(N) = Number of countries

Table 7: Scores for 22 Arab Countries as per their VNR Analysis

Country	SDG 4	Year
Qatar	5	2025
KSA	4	2026
Oman	4	2024
Iraq	3	2025
Libya	2	2024
Sudan	2	2025
UAE	4	2026
Bahrain	4	2026
Comoros	3	2023
Egypt	3	2026
Djibouti	3	2022
Jordan	3	2023
Kuwait	3	2023
Mauritania	3	2024
Somalia	1	2022
Syria	1	2024
Tunisia	4	2026
Yemen	1	2024
Algeria	3	2026
Morocco	3	2020
Lebanon	2	2018
Palestine	1	2018

Source: *Adapted from United Nations, 2026b and analysed by author*

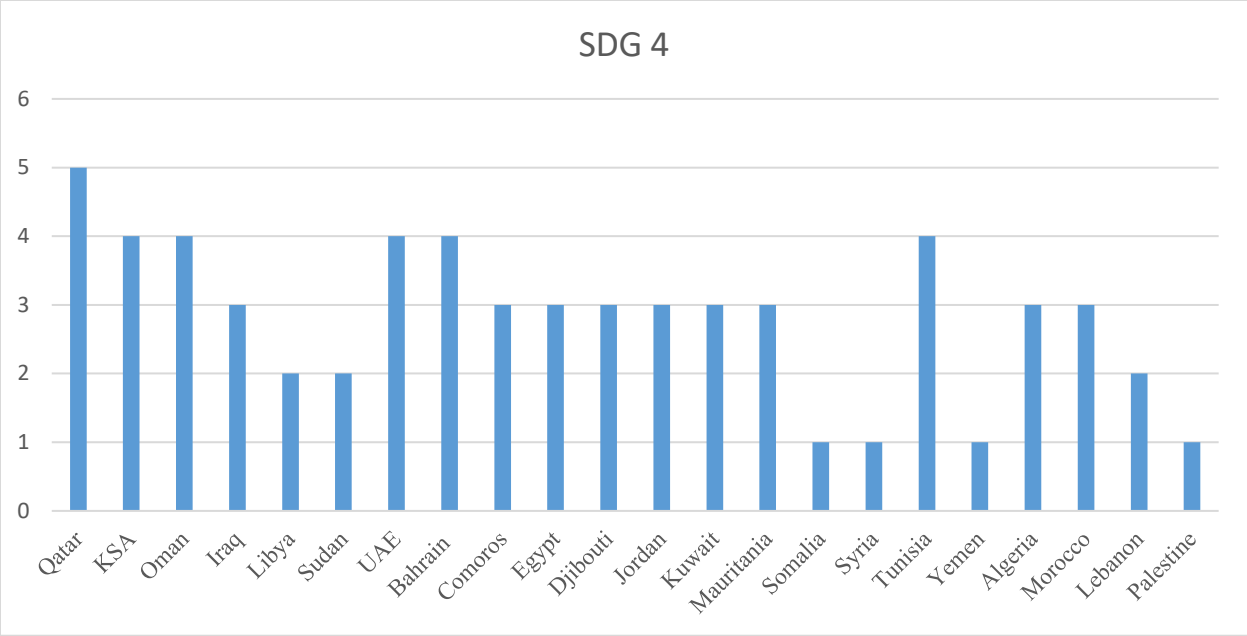


Figure 1: Scores for 22 Arab Countries as per their VNR Analysis

The total score obtained from all countries is:
[X = 62]

The number of countries is:
[N = 22]

Therefore, the average regional score is:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{X}{N} = \frac{62}{22} = 2.82$$

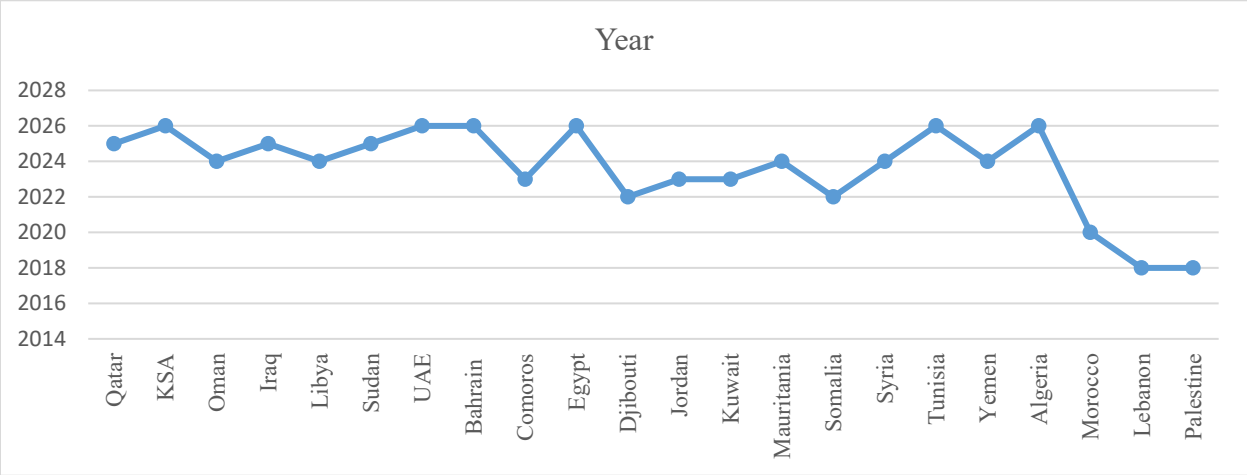


Figure 2: Country wise Year of submission for VNR reports to UN

The average regional score of 2.82 out of 5 indicates that Arab countries have achieved a moderate level of progress towards SDG 4**.** The ranking analysis shows that Qatar achieved the highest score (5)**.** Five countries—Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Tunisia—achieved a score of 4.

Nine countries achieved a score of 3, while three countries recorded a score of 2, and four countries recorded a score of 1, indicating low or very low levels of progress. Overall, the results demonstrate considerable variation in SDG 4 performance across the Arab countries, with the regional average remaining below the midpoint of the 5-point scale. (See Table 8).

Table 8: Arab Countries Performance

Performance Level	Score	Countries
Very High Progress	5	Qatar
High Progress	4	Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Tunisia
Moderate Progress	3	Iraq, Comoros, Egypt, Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco
Low Progress	2	Libya, Sudan, Lebanon
Very Low Progress	1	Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Palestine

Source: *Analysed by author*

The results indicate that nine of the 22 Arab countries (40.9%) fall within the moderate-performance category**,** suggesting that progress towards SDG 4 remains uneven across the region. Although a number of countries demonstrate high or very high levels of progress, several countries remain in the low and very low performance categories.

RQ2 examined disparities in educational progress among Arab countries. Following the methodology, the disparity gap was calculated using the formula:

Disparity Gap = Highest Country Score − Lowest Country Score
The highest score recorded was:
Highest = 5 (Qatar)
The lowest score recorded was:
Lowest = 1 (Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine)
Therefore:
Disparity Gap = 5 − 1
Disparity Gap = 4

The resulting disparity gap of 4 points demonstrates substantial variation in SDG 4 performance across the Arab countries included in the analysis. The difference between the highest and lowest scores indicates that educational progress is not uniform across the region, with countries distributed across all five performance levels.

Percentage Distribution Analysis
To further assess disparities, the 22 countries were grouped according to their SDG 4 performance levels (see Table 9). Qatar was the only country in the very high progress category, while five countries achieved high progress. The largest group consisted of nine countries with moderate progress. Three countries were classified as having low progress, while four countries recorded very low progress.

Table 9: Distribution of Arab Countries by Performance Category

Category	**Number of Countries**	**Percentage**
Very High Progress	1	4.5%
High Progress	5	22.7%
Moderate Progress	9	40.9%
Low Progress	3	13.6%
Very Low Progress	4	18.2%

Total	22	100.0%

The distribution shows that 40.9% of the countries are classified as having moderate progress, representing the largest performance category. A further 22.7% are classified as having high progress, while 4.5% demonstrate very high progress. In contrast, 13.6% of the countries fall into the low-progress category and 18.2% into the very-low-progress category. Overall, 31.8% of the countries are in the low or very low progress categories**,** highlighting considerable disparities in educational progress across the Arab region (see figure 3).

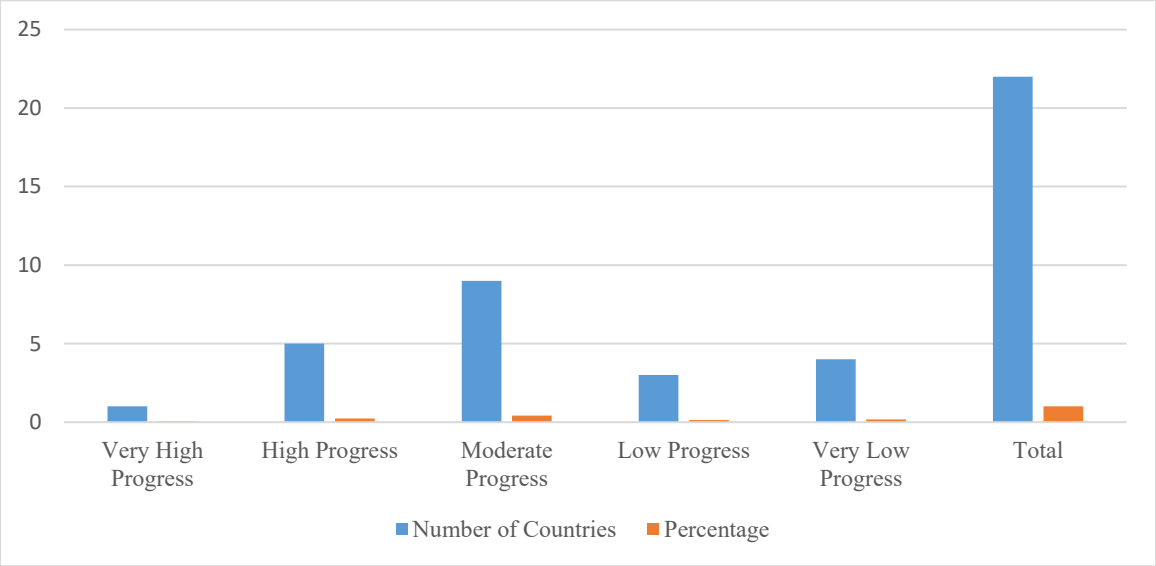


Figure 3: Distribution of Arab Countries by Performance Category

These findings are consistent with the overall regional average of 2.82 out of 5, which is below the midpoint of the scale. The results therefore demonstrate considerable variation in SDG 4 performance, ranging from a score of 5 in Qatar to a score of 1 in Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine.

The analysis shows substantial differences in SDG 4 achievement across the Arab countries included in the study. Qatar recorded the highest score of 5, while Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Tunisia achieved scores of 4. These results indicate relatively higher levels of progress in SDG 4 among these countries compared with countries that recorded lower scores. However, the findings should be interpreted in relation to the specific indicators and evidence reported in the respective Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), rather than attributing differences solely to educational investment, infrastructure or policy effectiveness.

In contrast, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Palestine recorded the lowest score of 1, while Libya, Sudan and Lebanon recorded scores of 2. These lower scores indicate comparatively limited progress in the SDG 4 measures assessed in this study. The differences may be considered in the broader context of the economic, institutional and political circumstances affecting education systems in individual countries, although the present analysis does not establish causal relationships between these circumstances and SDG 4 scores.

The regional average score of 2.82 out of 5 indicates that the 22 countries, taken together, demonstrate a level of progress below the midpoint of the five-point scale. The four-point disparity gap**,** from the highest score of 5 to the lowest score of 1, further demonstrates considerable variation in SDG 4 performance across the Arab countries. The distribution of scores also highlights this variation: 1 country (4.5%) achieved very

high progress, 5 countries (22.7%) achieved high progress, 9 countries (40.9%) achieved moderate progress, 3 countries (13.6%) achieved low progress, and 4 countries (18.2%) achieved very low progress. Overall, the findings demonstrate that progress towards SDG 4 is uneven across the Arab region. While some countries have achieved relatively high levels of progress, a substantial proportion remain in the moderate, low or very low categories. This variation highlights the importance of context-specific approaches to improving educational outcomes and advancing progress towards SDG 4 by 2030.
The analysis of SDG 4 across the 22 Arab countries included in this study reveals a regional average score of 2.82 out of 5**,** indicating a level of progress below the midpoint of the assessment scale. Qatar emerged as the highest-scoring country with a score of 5, followed by Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Tunisia, which each recorded a score of 4. Nine countries—Iraq, Comoros, Egypt, Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco—achieved a score of 3 and therefore constituted the largest performance group. Libya, Sudan and Lebanon recorded scores of 2, while Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Palestine recorded scores of 1.

The disparity analysis identified a four-point gap between the highest score of 5 and the lowest score of 1, demonstrating considerable variation in SDG 4 performance across the Arab countries. The percentage distribution further illustrates this variation, with 4.5% of countries classified as very high progress, 22.7% as high progress, 40.9% as moderate progress, 13.6% as low progress and 18.2% as very low progress. Thus, 31.8% of the countries were classified within the low or very low progress categories**.**

These findings suggest that although several Arab countries have demonstrated relatively strong progress in the areas reflected in their VNR evidence, significant differences remain across the region. The results support the need for context-specific policy interventions addressing educational quality, teacher development, digital learning, inclusion and educational infrastructure, particularly where progress remains limited. Greater regional cooperation, knowledge-sharing and exchange of effective educational practices may also contribute to accelerating progress towards SDG 4 by 2030.

POLICY IMPLICATION

The results suggest that future policy efforts should focus on strengthening the dimensions of SDG 4 in which lower-performing countries continue to experience challenges. Priority areas may include improving educational quality and learning outcomes, strengthening teacher preparation and professional development, expanding digital learning opportunities, improving educational infrastructure, and promoting inclusive and equitable access to education.

The substantial variation in scores also indicates the importance of developing context-specific strategies rather than applying a uniform regional approach. Countries with lower scores may benefit from targeted investment and institutional support, while countries demonstrating higher levels of progress can contribute to regional knowledge-sharing and the exchange of educational practices. Regional cooperation could therefore play an important role in supporting capacity development and accelerating progress towards SDG 4 by 2030.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Author declare that no funding is received for this research work.

COMPETING INTEREST

Author declare no competing interest for this research work.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed progress towards SDG 4 (Quality Education) across 22 Arab countries using evidence from Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the United Nations. The findings reveal a regional average score of 2.82 out of 5, indicating that overall progress remains below the midpoint of the assessment scale. At the same time, considerable differences exist between countries, with scores ranging from 5 in Qatar to 1 in Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Palestine.

The distribution of scores demonstrates that the largest group of countries, comprising nine countries (40.9%), achieved a moderate score of 3. Five countries (22.7%) achieved a score of 4, while Qatar was the only country (4.5%) to achieve the highest score of 5. In contrast, three countries (13.6%) recorded a score of 2 and four countries (18.2%) recorded a score of 1. Overall, 31.8% of the countries were classified as having low or very low progress according to the assessment scale used in this study.

The four-point disparity gap between the highest and lowest scores highlights the considerable variation in educational progress across the Arab region. While some countries demonstrate relatively high levels of progress in the areas captured by the assessment, others continue to face substantial challenges. These differences should be understood within the diverse economic, institutional and political contexts of individual Arab countries.

The findings therefore highlight the importance of targeted and context-sensitive policy interventions to accelerate progress towards SDG 4. Key areas for continued attention include educational quality, teacher development, digital transformation, inclusion, equitable access and educational infrastructure. Strengthening regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing may also provide opportunities for countries to exchange effective approaches and build institutional capacity.

In conclusion, the evidence indicates that progress towards SDG 4 across the Arab countries is uneven, with an overall regional score of 2.82 out of 5 and a disparity gap of four points. Sustained policy attention, appropriate investment and context-specific interventions will be important for addressing existing inequalities and accelerating progress towards the achievement of quality, inclusive and equitable education by 2030.

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