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Challenges of E-Government in Enhancing the Efficiency of Public Administration and Safeguarding Citizens' Public Rights: A Comparative Study of Iran and the United Kingdom

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The United Kingdom discussion also requires substantially more engagement with primary legal and institutional materials. The paragraph beginning "The United Kingdom presents a different institutional setting" refers to common service standards, data protection, equality, and administrative review without identifying the relevant statutes, regulators, standards, or oversight mechanisms. The authors should analyse the roles of the Government Digital Service, the Information Commissioner, parliamentary committees, ombudsman institutions, administrative tribunals, and judicial review. The discussion should also identify the legal relevance of the Data Protection Act, the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Equality Act, freedom-of-information legislation, and public-sector accessibility requirements. Because the manuscript presents the United Kingdom as a comparatively developed model, the legal basis of that assessment must be demonstrated rather than assumed.

The section on complaint, review, and remedy requires a more detailed comparative analysis of procedural law. The paragraph beginning "The ability to appeal and obtain effective remedy is a decisive test of digital administration" correctly identifies human reconsideration, access to evidence, and correction as essential safeguards, but it does not explain how these safeguards operate in either jurisdiction. The authors should examine who has standing to challenge a digital decision, whether internal review must be exhausted, how the burden of proving an algorithmic or data error is allocated, whether claimants can obtain system records, and what remedies are available. They should distinguish correction of data, reconsideration of the decision, suspension of enforcement, annulment, compensation, and systemic injunctive relief. The analysis should also address whether courts and tribunals possess sufficient technical expertise and whether independent regulatory review can supplement individual litigation.

The conclusion repeats several propositions from the comparative analysis without sufficiently prioritising the findings. For example, the sentence “Efficiency should not be measured only by speed, cost reduction, transaction volume, or the number of services placed online” restates an argument already developed extensively in the conceptual section. The conclusion should instead identify the three or four most significant comparative findings and directly connect each finding to a corresponding reform proposal. The authors could distinguish between common challenges, Iran-specific structural deficiencies, United Kingdom-specific advanced risks, and transferable institutional lessons. This would make the conclusion more analytical and less repetitive. Each recommendation should be traceable to evidence presented in the body of the article rather than appearing as a broad statement of desirable policy.

The conclusion introduces a detailed risk-based approach to automation, stating that “low-risk systems used for scheduling, information retrieval, or routine communication may require limited safeguards,” while systems affecting legal status or essential services require stronger controls. This is potentially one of the manuscript’s most original contributions, but it appears too late and is not developed in the analytical framework. The authors should move this risk-based classification into the conceptual section, define the criteria for determining risk, and apply it systematically to the comparative analysis. Relevant criteria might include the severity of legal consequences, degree of automation, sensitivity of data, scale of affected population, reversibility of harm, and availability of human review. The conclusion could then summarise the model rather than introducing it for the first time.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The comparative section would benefit from a more symmetrical structure. At present, the manuscript often describes a challenge in Iran and then provides a shorter, more general observation about the United Kingdom. For example, the paragraph on interoperability explains Iranian fragmentation in detail but refers more briefly to “legacy systems” and institutional caution in the United Kingdom. The authors should apply an identical analytical sequence to each jurisdiction: governing rule, responsible institution, principal administrative practice, documented challenge, available remedy, and observed consequence. A comparative matrix could organise the analysis under common variables such as interoperability, data protection, digital inclusion, automated decision-making, human assistance, cybersecurity, and administrative review. Symmetry would reduce the risk of comparing Iranian implementation problems with British normative standards rather than comparing equivalent legal and institutional realities.

The first two paragraphs of the comparative challenges section discuss fragmented systems and repeated submission of information, but no concrete administrative example is provided. The sentence “Citizens then face multiple digital entry points and may be required to provide the same information repeatedly” should be supported by at least one carefully selected case from each jurisdiction. Suitable cases might involve social benefits, taxation, licensing, municipal services, healthcare, or digital identity. Each case should identify the institutions involved, the information flow, the source of fragmentation, and the resulting consequences for efficiency and rights. Case-based analysis would prevent the article from remaining at a high level of abstraction and would allow the proposed rights-based framework to be tested against actual administrative processes.

The discussion of digital exclusion contains plausible claims but requires empirical grounding. The paragraph stating that “geographic inequalities in connectivity, differences in household resources, and uneven digital literacy may particularly affect rural residents, older persons, low-income households, and marginalised groups” should be supported by official statistics, governmental reports, or credible empirical studies. The same applies to the claim that older citizens, homeless persons, migrants, and persons with disabilities face difficulties in the United Kingdom. The authors should distinguish among infrastructure exclusion, affordability exclusion, skills exclusion, disability-related exclusion, linguistic exclusion, and administrative-complexity exclusion. These forms of exclusion require different remedies. Without empirical differentiation, the recommendation to maintain alternative channels remains normatively sensible but insufficiently tailored to the actual sources of inequality in each jurisdiction.

The paragraphs on algorithmic discrimination remain too abstract and should identify concrete mechanisms through which discriminatory outcomes arise. The sentence "correlations with location, income, employment history, language, or family circumstances may indirectly disadvantage particular groups" should be connected to specific administrative uses such as fraud detection, welfare eligibility, immigration risk assessment, allocation of inspections, or prioritisation of public services. The authors should distinguish bias originating in training data, proxy variables, model design, institutional policy, and human reliance on automated recommendations. They should also clarify the legal standard by which discrimination is assessed, including whether the concern is direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, unequal impact, or arbitrary classification. This doctrinal and technical differentiation is necessary if the article is to move beyond general ethical concerns and provide a legally usable framework.

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2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.