The Practice of Youth Empowerment in Qatar: Design, Implementation and Outcomes for State Capacity Building

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Dedicated to the youth of the Arab Spring

ABSTRACT

Following the tremulous events of the Arab Spring, Gulf states became unnerved by the prospects of instability triggered by disenfranchised youthful populations. This triggered the need to further develop and implement youth empowerment programmes and policies to engage the youth and to prevent a similar challenge to the political status quo in the Gulf. In Qatar, the state has invested substantially in a variety of youth empowerment programmes and policies which were intended to align the interests of the youth with those of the state. This dissertation aimed at studying and evaluating the outcomes of youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar through the lens of Lukes' concept of power and by applying Discourse Analysis. The research focused on three contextual constraints to build the theoretical framework, namely social, economic and political constraints. The field research involved conducting 69 semi-structured interviews with Qatari youth, senior officials and activists. Thereafter, it undertook a thematic analysis of those semi-structured interviews. A central conclusion of the research is that while youth empowerment is promoted as an instrument of change and transformation for the youth, it often fails to transform generational power relations because youth empowerment is often deployed as a tool of state power that serve and reinforce power relations. However, this does not preclude the possibility of developing youth empowerment programmes that are inclusive for the youth and which provide them with opportunities to express their voice, but which are not necessarily incompatible with the goals of the state. Such inclusive programmes can be developed by focusing on capacity building, encouraging youth engagement in civic life as well as in political dialogue and public affairs. The thesis contributes to the youth empowerment literature by building on the specialist field of inquiry related to youth challenges in cases of extreme economic rentierism and affluence, especially apathy, disenfranchisement, and marginalisation. The study also evaluates the role of youth empowerment programmes as tools

of normalizing standards and expectations of good citizenship and analyses their underlying power relations in an attempt to assist in the future potential design of a more inclusive and youth-centric empowerment policies.

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Declarations

I certify that the work presented in the dissertation is my own unless referenced.

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the University's research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or an enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background & Motivation

During the events of the Arab Spring in 2011, millions of demonstrators throughout the Arab world took to the streets demanding freedom, transparency, representative governance and an end to the type of crony capitalism and corruption that plagued their lives (Sadiki, 2015). At the heart of their grievances was the overwhelming climate of fear, endemic poverty and repression by unrepresentative regimes. Much of the political upheaval was instigated and spearheaded by youth, which in turn undermarked the dimension of social and political activism in youth empowerment (Tufte and Wildermuth, 2013). This was particularly interesting for me as a young adult to witness and acknowledge as '*youth*' became the fuse through which millions of people were energized to gather in cities across the Middle East (Abbott et al, 2017). Cairo, Algiers, Tripoli, Damascus and Beirut were beaming with dynamism and protests. Newspapers, television shows, social media and academic scholars all began highlighting the power of 'youth' for the future of the region. That led to serious, deep introspection on my part in regards to the meaning and concept of youth empowerment, the sincerity of state-led initiatives and challenges that could suffocate those youthful voices yearning for change. In the years that followed, I grew more interested in youth issues, specifically youth empowerment. I earnestly began to research this phenomenon and noticed the expansiveness of definitions of not only youth empowerment, but even who constituted 'youth.' I realized that I had a daunting research task ahead of me. Specifically, I had three primary motivations that compelled me to research and explore the phenomenon of youth empowerment in Qatar. First, to understand the reasons behind youth dissatisfaction in Qatar; second, to understand the overall lack of knowledge on the design, implementation and

outcomes of youth empowerment; and third, the emerging trend of the state and its institutions viewing youth in a negative light.

From the onset, the confusion on researching youth empowerment left me bewildered, and I was not alone. In response to the Arab Spring in 2011, several countries, including my own Qatar, launched 'youth-centric' policies/programmes (Al-Qatari, 2012). 'Youth' became the nouveau buzzword that no one wanted to stop using, even if for the purposes of meaningless rhetoric. Yet, at the same time, the 'youth' were excluded from initiatives that involved them. I personally participated in an independent Qatari youth initiative known as the *Youth Foundation*. Several young Qataris bonded together to honestly and openly challenge some of the problematic aspects of Qatari society, especially those pertaining to youth participation in civil society and their absence from collaborating with policymakers on matters directly impacting them. Also, our activities involved gathering and analysing data pertaining to the needs of Qatari youth. Like many other young Qataris, while exploring the situation of youth in Qatar, I became exasperated. The ineptness of government initiatives, and those entrusted with responsibility of carrying forward the government's vision concerning youth, even though well-intentioned, was disheartening. On the one hand, the developments of the Arab Spring had energized youthful society (Sadiki, 2015), and motivated peoples across the region. I was also driven by that motivation to be positively involved in constructing a better future for my society.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, my enthusiasm, request for participation/involvement and motivations – as for many others, were seen as threatening to the status quo and shunned. The first blow to my naivete was when Qatari youth, both men and women, involved in the *Youth Foundation* submitted a draft proposal to the Ministry of Interior. This report was an honest assessment of the challenges Qatari youth face, and possible ways forward. It was written in an inclusive manner that asked for collaboration between youth and the state. It made

no demands. In response, each of the signatories of the earnest draft youth proposal received explicit warnings from government officials. Each of us were informed that we might have committed a grave error at a sensitive political time, and that our initiative could get us in serious trouble with the authorities. I was terrified, in slight disbelief, and unsure of what to make of the seemingly ominous turn of events.

Such an ominous scenario would not have been surprising at a time when Arab governments were desperately fighting the fires of the Arab Spring (Sadiki, 2015). I thought that in other parts of the broader Arab world it was unsurprising that governments often looked with suspicion at any collective initiatives organized by various groups, especially the youth. However, this was not supposed to be the case in Qatar whose political leadership enjoys overwhelming popular support at the grassroots level and is organic. Still, I was worried and, soon thereafter, I received a phone call from the office of the Ministry of Interior. To my relief, rather than being interrogated or reprimanded as the stereotype in literature and film often portrays, I was applauded by the Minister of Interior who commended our efforts and engaged us in a vigorous discussion of the draft proposal initiative and its future potentials. Even more surprisingly, the Minister advocated our *Youth Foundation* project and instructed the allocation of all necessary resources to transform the project into a national campaign. His aspiration was to highlight the findings of our project and to motivate other youth groups and organizations to become more involved in their own society and, thereby, unlock their potentials. This experience was a turning point in my life as I realized that among the top-leadership in Qatar, there was earnestness concerning youth empowerment that, at times, could be sabotaged by mid-ranking individuals, who out of ignorance and fear do not want to challenge the status quo. This also played a major role in motivating me to explore the potentials and pitfalls of youth empowerment as a vital means to transform my society.

Second, another vital lesson that I learned from that experience with the *Youth Foundation* was that without research and analysis on youth empowerment, governments in countries such as Qatar are unlikely to find solutions to motivate the youth and address their frustrations. In other words, the lack of expertise and knowledge on 'youth empowerment' and the lack of communication between youth groups and the state contributes to the antagonistic rapport between the state and youth (Ulrichson, 2014). This also explains why state-led youth initiatives have often failed or lagged behind: while such initiatives may have been designed with the best of intentions, they were often planned and implemented without actually involving the youth or incorporating their perspectives. State-led initiatives, therefore, are not only paternalistic in nature, but they often reflect the failure of state officials to understand the needs of the youth. On the other hand, an important factor that led to the unprecedented success of the *Youth Foundation* project was that it was initiated, designed, and actualised by youth, with the full and open support from the top political leadership and relevant state agencies. Even by the admission of government officials, it was the first time that the youth were so intimately involved in a state-led youth empowerment project.

In addition, the lack of rigorous research on youth and youth empowerment by the state that explores the conditions, needs and expectations of the youth is harming the country. This is probably an illustration of the hitherto dominant assumption among many people in Qatar that any problem/challenge could be resolved by simply throwing money at it. This shallow understanding was based on the assumption that oil wealth would continue for many years and that the problems of the youth, or anything else, only needed financial resources. This assumption, however, seems to have proven destructive and is also unsustainable not just for Qatar, but for the region at large. The eruption of the Arab Spring, which in essence was an outcry of dissatisfaction and anger by disenfranchised youth and other groups, was not solely about finances, but dignity (Sadiki, 2015). The eruption of popular discontent, including by

youth across the Arab region, raised red flags throughout the GCC region as it became clear that without real strategies to engage the youth, it was only a matter of time before social and political disturbances affected the Gulf region. This requires adequate research devoted to youth matters and support for youth across the political spectrum.

In reference to the success of the *Youth Foundation* project, it is important to acknowledge that it was a result of the full support received by the political leadership of the country at the highest levels. This is critically important to acknowledge and emphasize, since that support came in the form of endorsement as well as providing access to all necessary financial, material, institutional, human and other resources. This cannot be overstated since without that support the initiative would have floundered or never got any recognition. Arguably, any new initiative by any demographic would naturally challenge the distribution of power (Lukes, 2005) and that requires the wielders of power to allow for new spaces to emerge and, at a minimum, not present obstacles in the path of newcomers. Ansell (2014) concurs, arguing that those in positions of power must be involved in the empowerment of others.

Furthermore, the success of the *Youth Foundation* project was eye-opening in the sense that it contradicted the prevailing stereotype across the Middle East that portrays the state as uninterested or entirely antagonistic towards encouraging youth empowerment. Still, even with such a positive experience, this does not absolve government of their responsibility for the poor quality of youth empowerment initiatives. Granted, it could be argued in a cynical way that the support the *Youth Foundation* received was a consequence of the state simply being eager to appease youth, keeping the youth engaged in various initiatives to prevent them from harbouring negative sentiments toward the state and its institutions. Regardless of the motivation, my genuine concern was whether my government, or others in the region, had the appropriate knowledge, experience, or skill-set to effectively address the issue of youth empowerment in the first place. I strongly believed that they did not, and it was this conviction

that constituted the single most important driving force that led me to choose this subject for research, along with the belief that youth empowerment is essential for unlocking the potentials of the youth in my country – Qatar, as well as securing its future.

Third, another motivating factor that drove my interest into this field of research was the manner in which youth in the Arab region, and more specifically in the Gulf countries, are increasingly being perceived as a menace, rather than a reassurance (Sukarieh, 2017). The fact that youth constitute a substantial percentage of Arab societies, with over 50% of the population below the age of 16 in the Gulf countries (Al-Jaber & Al-Sayed, 2013) is an important indicator for what the future will be. This youthful population reflects the great potential of these countries to attain long term growth, development, dynamic progress and productivity. In local parlance, youth are considered an important asset, and officials throughout the Gulf region repeatedly reiterate the clichéd phrases which foreshadow the ability of youth to carry their countries into glorious futures. In reality, however, the youth constitute a complex issue, if not a burden in the eyes of many decision-makers. In the oil-rich Gulf region, and for most Arab countries, youth are both praised, but also increasingly denigrated. First of all, while the youth constitute a high percentage of local populations, they remain virtually excluded from political and critical decision-making processes on all levels. Secondly, the institutions and various political and social frameworks that exist in these states do not enable the youth to participate in planning, deciding or implementing plans that pertain to the future of their countries. Rather, the main concern of most governments in the region is with the classic priorities of providing the youth with access to education in addition to creating opportunities for economic activity namely through the creation of jobs (Sukarieh, 2017). As such, while the youth are praised as the future assets of nations, in practice, they are perceived as a major liability for most states in the region, or at least, as an unpredictable component that

needs to be under control. All this seems to be connected to the imposing demands and state commitment to the principles of neoliberalism.

Lastly, while the modern Khaleeji states have flourished and embraced modernization on many levels within a very short period of time as a result of the oil bonanza in the 1970s and 1980s, the fact is that the burden of future development and progress will fall squarely upon the youth. Portraying the youth in a negative light is bound to impact the future of state/youth relations, as those sentiments may be reciprocated. Awareness of this problematic issue lies at the core of the social conscience in the region, as this is reflected in the local proverb which states, "The last camel carries the heaviest weight." This proverb is inspired by the ancient nomadic lives of Khaleeji tribes where upon the arrival of a caravan at resting stations, attendants immediately took care of the last camels to arrive because of their awareness that these camels arrived last as a result of carrying the heaviest weights. In a similar fashion, today's youth in the Gulf are the latest to arrive, and they also have to bear the heaviest burdens as the effects of the oil boom come to an end. The only difference between the past and the present, however, is that the modern states in the Gulf have not created the sufficient institutions and frameworks that enable their youth to have a voice in their societies or with regards to their future.

The purpose of this dissertation is to raise and answer research questions pertaining to the issue of youth empowerment in Qatar. More specifically, the objective of this study is to identify the processes and practices that lie behind the production of Qatar's youth empowerment programmes, and to identify and analyse the impact of these policies and programmes on the youth. The study also aims at identifying ways and means to improve youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar and to make them more relevant to the youth.

1.2 A Socio-Political Background

The political system of government in Qatar is an absolute hereditary monarchy. As such, the ruling Emir is the ultimate executive authority, assisted by consultants and aids. In practice, most of the executive power is exercised by the cabinet which is selected by the Emir, and which is assisted by a centralised administrative bureaucracy. On the other hand, the absolute nature of the monarchy is ameliorated by the close proximity that Qatar's rulers have traditionally maintained with tribal leaders, social dignitaries and merchants, in addition to community and religious leaders and figures. Overall, however, Qatar's system of government provides no institutions or opportunities for political representation. This is particularly relevant to the youth of Qatar who represent a substantial cohort, as their needs and affairs are addressed by state bureaucracies in what can be designated as a paternalistic manner.

Qatar does not have an official definition for the term youth. However, official publications such as Expanding the Capacity of Qatari Youth refers to the youth as individuals aged 15 to 24. This cohort alone represents about 12% of the population. At the same time, the average age in Qatar is 32.3 years, which indicates a very youthful society. As far as this dissertation is concerned, however, youth are defined as individuals who fall within the ages of 15 to 35. This is in line with the definition of youth in a variety of contexts, and it is relevant to the issue of youth empowerment. For example, in this context, the African Union defines youth in a similar way in its Africa Youth Charter.

The use of an expansive definition of youth in this dissertation is further justified by the fact that in general, an individual is considered as young until the mid-thirties. In fact, given the conservative nature of society in Qatar, much of the power within families is centralised in the hands of fathers and the elderly. Younger individuals, especially males, are allowed significant freedom when it comes to certain activities such as traveling, studying, spending, and entertainment, but much less so in matters such as marriage, career choices, and any other

choices that may in any way reflect on the image, reputation and standing of the family. Women, on the other hand, tend to face much substantial restrictions even with respect to social activities such as gathering, social interaction, and or even expressing their views in public.

It is also worth mentioning that the youth in Qatar face several challenges as far as youth and cultural spaces are concerned. For example, they enjoy numerous opportunities to engage in leisure activities that are individualistic or unorganised in nature. Such activities may involve sports, attending organised events, leisurely travel and many others. On the other hand, the opportunities for organised activities are very limited. To illustrate, organising clubs are often subject to restrictions, especially if they are organised outside the official mandate of the state. This is particularly the case with any type of organised activities or entities that may involve political dialogue or that may open a path for political discourse. On the other hand, the state openly encourages organised activities that are sanctioned by state bureaucracies.

From a practical perspective, therefore, it is easy for young Qataris to organise and finance a safari or an adventure across the world, whether on motorcycles or bicycles, and enjoy recognition and media coverage as well as state support. However, an attempt to organise a reading club with an inclination to discuss politically controversial issues that may have to do with democracy, political participation and the involvement, engagement and participation of the youth in public affairs, is likely to be frowned upon and perhaps even blocked. In fact, the majority of collective and organised youth activities are often initiated, promoted and organised by different bureaucracies and administrations, offering young Qataris no choice except to participate or to refrain from participation. Ironically, examples discussed in this dissertation will show, sometimes the youth are barely invited as attendees to events that are supposed to be for the youth in the first place. This reflects a paternalistic confiscation of the voices of the youth and of their right to express themselves through organising their own events that reflect their needs, expectations and aspirations.

On the one hand, young Qataris appreciate the opportunities for career training, skill acquisition and capacity building, all which are provided, financed and organised by the state. On the other hand, what many Qatari youths really want is to explore and realise their own potentials, whether on the individual or the collective levels. Many want to be able to have a say about society and the future, about the way things are managed in their country, about the political, economic, social and ethical issues that they face on a daily basis. Others want to be able to make a positive change in their society, whether on a small or a large scale. Instead, the majority are frustrated by a socioeconomic structure where they are expected to follow a plan that carries them to a career path and where their contribution to society is by doing what is expected of them to do, that is, study, work, get married, have children, and let the state do its work.

It is also worth pointing out that one of the major challenges facing the youth in Qatar today is the effect of the educational system. While Qatar has invested in state-of-the-art educational facilities, the national educational system suffers a major weakness, namely the first is the content of the curriculum. This weakness particularly pertains to the area of humanities where the emphasis is almost entirely on traditional methods that discourage rather than encourage critical thinking. As a result, while students may excel in scientific studies, vital skills such as critical thinking and analysis are largely absent, leaving students to struggle on their own to develop these skills as they mature.

It is worth mentioning that it is common for Qatari youths making demands and complaining about limited opportunities for attaining personal growth, they are often confronted with phrases that imply astonishment at the thought that they should have anything to complain about. This happens in Qatar when the elderly express phrases such as “What are you deprived of? What else could you even possibly think of desiring?” Similar phrases are also expressed by GCC nationals and Arab citizens who are appalled by the thought that Qatari

youths could be suffering since the state has offered them everything. In fact, this has even become the subject of stereotyping, and even when I was a student at university, I heard jokes such as the Qatari who went to therapy and was relieved of sitting for his finals because of mental illness resulting from the fact that his father refused to buy him a third Lamborghini.

Such stereotypes are in fact used widely and in a sweeping manner by the elderly and within conservative circles in Qatar to ridicule and muffle any youthful voices demanding real empowerment that enables them to realise their potential, and to accomplish what they truly want to accomplish, not what society and the state expect them to. It is true that Qatar is relatively wealthier than its neighbors, but this does not mean that there are not many Qataris who do not struggle economically. Moreover, wealth is often concentrated in and controlled by the elderly who are typically conservative and apprehensive about any new ideas that do not fit the norms and traditions of society. This is why, as mentioned earlier in this section, it is much easier for the youth to raise tens of thousands of dollars for a safari adventure that generates nothing other than fun, entertainment, good memories and some great photos, than to license and finance the expenses of a cultural club that promotes real dialogue and discussions of political and social change.

This does not imply that Qatari youth simply want to have open dialogue about political and social change. Rather, what they really want is the freedom to pursue whatever interests they desire, rather than those that only fit the standards, requirements and expectations of the elderly and of bureaucrats.

1.3 The Question of Youth Empowerment in Qatar

Qatar is confronting a significant challenge with the heightened levels of frustration among its nascent youth population. The Qatari government wishes to respond to these unfavourable sentiments by empowering youth and providing them with the necessary skills to contribute to the economic and socio-cultural development of their society (Al-Qatari, 2012).

It is doing so by investing in youth-centric businesses, launching several youth empowerment programs/policies and offering educational/training courses to youth free of charge. Yet, aside from that, there is still considerable ambiguity on whether the state and its officials, have a clear understanding of what youth empowerment means. The Qatari state often declares that it wishes to increase youth participation and connectivity, and to develop their capacities to improve youth satisfaction. However, there seems to be little understanding among government officials and a lack of vision on how to realize those objectives. At issue, and a major driving motivation for my research was the recognition that a large majority of youth in Qatar are disappointed with youth empowerment programmes/policies. Moreover, there is a lack of qualified expertise in this field in Qatar and youth are increasingly being seen in a negative light.

Furthermore, this thesis is an attempt to explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, through the lens of power (Lukes, 2005), and to understand the reasons contributing to youth dissatisfaction, apathy and resentment. More specifically, in his attempt to develop a concept of power, Lukes (2005) argues that understanding power requires going beyond the lens of conflict. In other words, power and the exercise of power can be identified, mapped, and understood even when there is explicit conflict, even when there is latent conflict, or even when there seems to be no conflict at all. In other words, according Lukes (2005), the exercise of power can occur at the level where the interests of certain actors take precedent over or influence the interests of others, and at their expense, even if this is not exercised in a direct manner.

After a careful analysis, it was substantiated that the practice of youth empowerment utilizes a rhetoric of change, but does not transform generational power relations between the state and youth. Instead, it reinforces power structures that undermine youth agency, which is leading to heightening levels of frustration and indifference. In other words, youth

empowerment policies/programmes fail to transform generational power relations because they are deployed as tools of state power that serve to reinforce existing power relations. In Qatar, the state is fully aware of its power over the population, specifically through the rentier economic model through which the state redistributes wealth and maintains the stability of the political system. This control, however, comes socio-cultural and economic costs as it makes the population dependent on the state for jobs and incomes, and at the same time, propagates apathy on relevant issues. In this respect, many of the Qatari youth empowerment policies/programmes are in reality attempts to divert youth towards state-sanctioned norms that it believes contribute to the stability of the political system. The primary stakeholder – wielding absolute power, is the state and these youth empowerment policies/programmes are meant to protect the political system, not necessarily the youth in whose name these programmes are launched. Consequently, youth empowerment programmes in Qatar are unlikely to achieve their stated goals since their real goal is maintaining the stability and sustainability of the political system rather than empowering the youth and enabling them to overcome the social, political and economic barriers that impact their agency.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that youth empowerment programmes in Qatar, as currently implemented, do not match with the stated goals of youth empowerment policies, and are only incidentally related to the empowerment of the youth. These programmes, often launched under the banner of youth empowerment, may provide youth with training and certain skill-sets, but only to normalise them into what government officials believe will be a stable, organized, and productive society within a stable political system. Hence, these programmes are unlikely to be relevant to the youth and their needs since they are designed from the perspective of the state without necessarily taking the interests/thoughts of the youth into consideration. This partially explains low enrolment and participation, and contributes to explaining why youth continue to feel disenfranchised. More importantly, the real causes of

apathy and disenfranchisement among the youth are related to their exclusion from matters pertaining to them, paternalism of the state that disempowers them, and aspects of the rentier system which does not recognise merit as a basis for economic, political or social rewards for individuals. This makes youth empowerment programmes self-defeating since it remains pointless for young individuals to acquire and develop skills or new knowledge if there is no reward for effort or merit, but only for loyalty and the strength of family connections and nepotism.

1.4 Research Strategy, Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Qatar is struggling with the problem of dissatisfaction among its burgeoning youth population. The government wishes to empower youth to provide them with the necessary skills to contribute to the economic and socio-cultural development of society. It is doing so through a variety of youth empowerment programs/policies. Yet, there is little indication that there is a clear idea on what youth empowerment really means or on how successful their youth empowerment policy initiatives are. On the one hand, the Qatari state wants to increase youth participation, connectivity and develop their capacities in order to improve youth satisfaction. On the other hand, there seems to be little understanding on what steps need to be taken to achieve that target. At issue, and a major driving motivation for my research, was the recognition that a large majority of youth in Qatar are dissatisfied with Qatari youth empowerment programmes/policies.

To start, the concepts of "empowerment" and "youth empowerment" are central to this study. It is fundamentally important to understand the use of both these terms in the context in which they are operationalized. Only then are we in a position to deconstruct and explore their meanings in a particular situation. For that reason, prior to any real research on the concept of youth empowerment, I asked 'what is youth empowerment?' How could I understand this

concept in the context of Qatar? My precursory thoughts led me to link it to a number of theoretical foundations. For example, Jennings et al (2006), refer to multiple youth empowerment models, a select few of which I further explore in this thesis. Some of these models such as the Adolescent Empowerment Cycle model developed by Chinman and Linney (1998) are based on psychological theories of development. The Youth Development and Empowerment Program Model developed by Kim et al. (1998) relates to youth empowerment in the context of substance abuse while the Transactional Partnering Model developed by Cargo (2003) focuses on the relationship between adults and youth as a dimension of youth empowerment to achieve outcomes of social change. In addition to this, the Empowerment Education Model developed by Wallerstein, Sanchez-Merki & Valarde (2005) combines theories of critical social process with protection-motivation behaviour change theory, while Jennings et al. (2006) more recently developed the Critical Youth Empowerment Model which proposes that youth empowerment should result in meaningful participation and engagement while highlighting equitable power-sharing between adults and youth.

For all its popularity, the concept of youth empowerment has not gone without criticism. Ansell (2014) for example, points out to several problematic issues with the concept itself and with its research approaches. These criticisms include the mutability of the concept, the fact that it is overly focused on individual transformation rather than on the wider social level, the one-dimensionality of the concept, and the difficulty of operationalising the concept. Ansell (2014) further argues and suggests the adoption of an alternative relational approach that takes into consideration the dynamic nature of power relations and their transformation while encompassing multiple levels. In other words, there can be no understanding of youth empowerment if it ignores the role and necessity of transforming power relations. In this context, Lukes' (2005) concept of power and the manner in which power shapes youth

empowerment design, implementation and outcomes would be essential for any analysis of youth empowerment.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this research is intended to enable an exploration of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar by scrutinizing youth empowerment programmes/policies and select documentary sources. The documentary sources include official documents, texts and speeches. Moreover, it is evident that a single definition of youth empowerment is not possible considering the variation of its use. Nevertheless, to explain and understand the practice of 'youth empowerment' in Qatar, I use Lukes' (2005) concept of power which is essentially concerned with the flow of power and with how different actors influence each other through the exercise of power in the presence or the absence of conflict. More specifically, the concept deals with how individuals and groups outside the realm of decision-making, such as the youth in this case, can exercise influence and power onto the existing power structures. Then, methodologically, I utilize thematic analysis and discourse analysis. More specifically, Lukes' (2005) theory of power serves to direct attention to particular influences on the way power shapes the discourse of youth empowerment in Qatar. It is also useful to frame the analysis by focusing attention on how power flows through youth empowerment programmes/policies affecting definitions, the process and outcome. Together, along with the three Qatari contextual constraints: social constraints, economic constraints, and political constraints, a theoretical framework is established. This makes it possible to explain the design, processes and outcomes of Qatar's youth empowerment policies/initiatives.

To start with, the theoretical framework for this thesis uses Lukes' concept of power, which explores the nature, scope and magnitude of power, especially since it has a direct impact on how all stakeholders respond to youth empowerment. More specifically, Lukes' conceptualisation is utilised in two important ways; first, to explain youth empowerment

programmes in Qatar as means by which the state exercises power to both integrate youth into society and prevent any potential conflict; and secondly, to share insights into how Qatari youth express their voices, exercise power and react/resist power structures. Rowlands (1997) elaborates that power analysis goes beyond the context of conflict to include non-conflictual situations and systems and where power is not necessarily a zero-sum game. In addition, my conceptualization on power includes insights from Ansell (1999) with respect to how the exercise of power shapes/informs and transforms the dimensions of youth empowerment. Lukes' theory of power is relevant because it helps frame the analysis by focusing attention on how power flows through youth empowerment programmes/policies vis-à-vis the stakeholders. This flow/shift of power has a direct bearing on definitions, policies and outcomes. In fact, the use/abuse of power is a stream of analysis that is intricately embedded in any discussion on 'youth empowerment.'

Furthermore, the study of power includes consideration of the contextual constraints that are necessary to understand the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and to develop a framework to explore its design, process and outcomes. These contextual constraints exist as a consequence of power relations and can be labelled as the following: (1) *social constraints* such as tribalism; (2) *economic constraints of* being in a rentier economy where affluence leads to apathy, and (3) *political constraints* where youth are limited in their ability to engage with the political system, or decision-makers, and remain independently active. In this context, Freire (1970) proposed disfranchised groups have the power to resist, react and pursue change. Hence, empowerment is perceived as a process that enables individuals to emancipate themselves from structures of power that prohibit/limit their ability to contribute to the social, economic and political conditions around them.

Overall, this study aims at exploring the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar by reviewing youth empowerment programs/policies and documentary sources. It is also

concerned with presenting relevant insights applicable to the broader Middle East region, both in the GCC and other regions. At this point, it is important to ask: What is it that exploring youth empowerment in the context of Qatar reveals that would not be understood if it were studied in a different context? All in all, understanding 'youth empowerment' in the context of Qatar enhances the literature and adds a contextual Khaleeji dimension, albeit specific to Qatar, that has relevance for the wider GCC, but also shares important lessons for the practice of youth empowerment anywhere. This, hitherto, has not been done and, consequently, opens new opportunities for learning, leading to a different way of thinking. Importantly, one may ask how these contextual aspects lead to a different way of thinking about youth empowerment per se. What understanding will they contribute to that is not otherwise understood? In response, it is important to point out that many of the social, economic and political constraints facing the youth are unique to Khaleeji societies, exposing unique problems towards the actualisation of youth empowerment, and this directly relates to the way power impacts the entire sphere of manoeuvrability. Yet, the way power shapes possibilities or denies them altogether is an important lesson that has relevance for the field of youth empowerment. Hence, lessons learned may also be applied to different settings and will advance knowledge in the field of youth empowerment, especially in contexts where youth empowerment is led by state institutions, highlighting that youth empowerment is often merely a reflection of those with the power to constitute their choices over others.

More specifically, the outcomes of this dissertation will hopefully contribute to the study of youth empowerment in several ways. First, it is the first study of its kind applied to youth empowerment in Qatar, and broadly applicable in the GCC region, where youth constitute a majority of the population. Second, the exploration of youth empowerment policies in Qatar adds new insights into the field because of the contextual uniqueness. This is aptly understood when considering most youth empowerment studies contend with countries

fighting poverty and socio-economic limitations alongside the limited availability of resources. However, in Qatar, the challenges facing youth, include an overreliance on a rentier economy, prevailing affluence, and, ironically, limited scope of personal growth – social impact and participatory civil society.

1.4.2 Methodology and Data Collection

This study explores the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar using a qualitative methodological research approach that is interpretivist and based on the retroductive approach, with case study design and case binding. First, retroduction is especially advantageous when using semi-structured interviews since it acknowledges a variation of perceptions of reality, all in relation to the social situations/issues pertaining to the unique cultural values, practices and contextual constraints in a specific area. Secondly, the case study approach is justified by the specificity of the research and the fact that it is not comparative in nature. Similarly, since the purpose of the study is to solely focus on youth empowerment in Qatar and the uniqueness of the Qatari context, and not move towards a comparative analysis, the use of the case study design is justified. Third, the unique contextual constraints that impact the understanding and practice of youth empowerment, the lack of clearly stipulated and agreed-upon definitions and ambiguity between the manifestation of power, the phenomenon and the context, further justify case binding.

With respect to data sources, this research study is based on 69 semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 Qatari government officials and 52 youths, alongside reviews of select official government documents, speeches and texts. The methods used for data collection are also presented along with data sources.

This study primarily relies on thematic analysis, using the reflexive approach. Altogether, this multi-faceted research methodological approach matches the purpose of

understanding the ways people bring meaning to their environment, including allowing space for varying definitions and understandings of youth and youth empowerment.

The two data sets, namely the 69 semi-structured interviews and documentary sources provide a wealth of information on the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. The semi-structured interview style was welcomed by the participants. By making participants feel comfortable in an unstructured, partly-informal setting, it allowed the interviewees to freely speak about their understandings, perceptions and aspirations about youth empowerment – both positive and negative. For instance, as further discussed in the subsequent chapters, several interviewees pointed out that youth empowerment programmes are not necessarily about youth empowerment in as much as they are about capacity and skill-building. Their purpose, therefore, is intended to develop youth capabilities for professional purposes, to serve the needs of state institutions and meet developmental national planning needs. As such, these state programmes may possibly be focusing on specific aspects of youth empowerment, namely the organisational dimension, while missing the individual and community dimensions as defined by Peterson and Zimmerman (2004).

Second, it was possible with the analysis of documentary sources to classify the obstacles and challenges to youth empowerment in Qatar as contextual constraints which originate both as a result of the socio-cultural milieu and the state/government officials. This is in line with the view that socio-cultural obstacles include the values, traditions, attitudes and perceptions that prevail in society which are embedded in discourse (Fairclough, 2010). More specifically, this includes moral judgement and social shaming, cultural resistance to change, lack of motivation due to affluence, a disconnect between youth and the state.

1.5 Originality & Significance

Global interest in youth empowerment is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the 1990s, most studies on youth empowerment focused on the context of schools, family and social issues

such as protecting the youth from drugs and poverty. However, in the 2010s, researchers shifted their attention to highlighting the significant potentials of youth empowerment in the context of developing countries and their ability to participate in initiatives such as combating and eradicating poverty. In other contexts, youth empowerment has been associated with political participation and increased involvement and engagement of young adults in solving issues of high relevance to their communities (Ekpiken & Ukpabio, 2015). Following the Arab Spring in which the youth played a critical role in forming and mobilising the public opinion, interest in youth empowerment has renewed.

However, the study of youth empowerment in the Middle East, including Qatar, remains almost non-existent, with very rare exceptions such as Melikian's (1982) account of the development of a young Qatari in a turbulent and rapidly modernizing world. Accordingly, this study will contribute to the field of study in two ways. First, it will explore the current status, practices, potentials, expectations and trends relevant to youth empowerment programs in Qatar. This will provide an extensive mapping of youth empowerment in its development phase in Qatar. This approach will be useful for academics, policymakers and youth empowerment experts, as well as others who may be interested in this area. Secondly, it will contribute to a new framework to enhance youth empowerment in Qatar. The study will also shed light on the challenges and difficulties facing the concepts and implementation of youth empowerment in the context of a rentier economy in which the youth may enjoy affluence and access to resources, but generally exhibit very low levels of motivation, involvement and engagement.

1.6 Organisation of Thesis

This study is organised in 7 chapters. Chapter 2 is a conceptual inquiry into youth empowerment: a literature review. It is a review of major concepts in the field of youth empowerment and describes how people articulate and interpret them. It includes an analysis

of the definitions, origins, and development of the concept of youth empowerment. Also, this section isolates the 'gap' in youth empowerment research and proceeds to set the groundwork for defining it in subsequent chapters.

Next, chapter 3 deals with the methodology used to explore and analyse youth empowerment policies/programmes in the context of Qatar. The chapter explains my research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and design. In other words, it explains how I decided to go about and explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, and why those chosen research methods best answer my specific research questions. Moreover, the chapter also explains how I collected, organized and analysed the data on youth empowerment in Qatar. The data was collected in two ways: semi-structured interviews and the documentary sources that are reflected in youth empowerment programmes/policies, select official documents, texts and speeches. The information gathered from the data is triangulated, deconstructed and analysed using discourse analysis and thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

Chapter 4 provides a historical overview of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar following independence. As will be seen, the introduction of youth policies in Qatar was something that was realized soon after independence, but its mandate has never explicitly been outlined nor effectively operationalized. This chapter will focus on the rapid structural and political transformations that took place during the period 1994 to 2012 and analyses the impact of those changes on youth empowerment policies. It is important to note, a major power/paradigm shift occurred during this time-frame which catapulted Qatar into a new era under the extraordinary leadership of the Father-Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Not only was the rapid transformation exacerbating socio-cultural fears, but this era led to a plethora of initiatives that impacted youth and youth empowerment policies/programmes. Selected policies/programmes are deconstructed and analysed that sufficiently shed light on

the challenges to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and relay the chronic issues that plague their design, implementation and outcomes. Third, this chapter will elaborate on youth empowerment policies/programmes and important developments that took place during the 2009-2012 era. During this important era, the Qatari leadership began to comprehend the seriousness of problems that had plagued the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

In chapter 5, I study the major policies/programmes and events that shape the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar during 2012 to 2020, yet it goes even further. It does so by introducing *discourse analysis* to probe the question of power and discourse as they are reflected in youth empowerment policies, programmes and key official documents/speeches. I chose to utilize discourse analysis to explore those hidden, deeper meanings, narrative underpinnings and notions of dominance implicitly embedded in words and language construction (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In the context of this study, what that means is that it allows me to deconstruct the meanings behind the words, as a representation of language and power (Fairclough, 1992).

Next, chapter 6 employs thematic analysis to identify persistent themes/commonalities across the 69 semi-structured interviews, of government officials and youth activists, that I undertook during my field research in Qatar. By using thematic analysis, I am able to identify, organize, and offer insights into the patterns of meaning and themes across my dataset. This chapter extricates those themes that emerged across the entirety of the dataset. Afterwards, it explores those themes in relation to Lukes (2005) concept of power and explains how the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar fails to transform generational power relations as it is largely disempowering. In addition, this chapter includes an analysis of the role and power of the Qatari state on the design, implementation and outcomes of youth empowerment, as well as the internal power struggles between rival ideological trajectories. In fact, the

intersectionality of power, the state and themes that emerge from our dataset on the practice of youth empowerment policies/programmes reveal several interesting insights.

Finally, chapter 7, the conclusion, summarises the findings of this study, explores theoretical implications and utility, and reflects on the potential ways by which youth empowerment programmes in Qatar can be improved to make them more useful and relevant for Qatari youth.

2 Literature Review

After many months of therapy, the psychiatrist congratulated his patient and assured him that he was no longer a grain. A few minutes later, the patient returns in panic, crying in horror that there was a chicken at the entrance of the building. "But remember, you're no longer a grain!" assured the doctor. To which the patient replied, "I know, but the chicken doesn't know that!"

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the serious issues involved in understanding the concept of empowerment. Subsequently, those findings are applied towards considering and studying youth empowerment. First, different theoretical perspectives on empowerment are explored, deconstructed, and discussed. Furthermore, some of the key issues and challenges involved in understanding the concept are explained by exploring the narrower specialist field of youth empowerment. Moreover, it investigates how these divergent perspectives contribute to the development of contradictory views on youth empowerment.

Second, this chapter explores the relationship of power to youth empowerment designs, conceptualizations and programmes/policies undertaken by the state. To accomplish that, I study and scrutinise Steven Lukes' concept of power, given that any discussion on youth empowerment must include a discussion about how power shapes, inhibits, guides or promotes interactions between stakeholders, impacting the entire design, concept and possibility of youth empowerment. Moreover, I discuss the theoretical relationship between youth empowerment and the concepts of power in society and the state, especially the means by which youth empowerment is employed and exploited by the state to promote and implement objectives related to expanding and maintaining political power over society and individuals.

Third, I research and analyse the relationship between neoliberalism, the state and youth empowerment. This is because one aspect of contemporary state interventions into youth empowerment strategies/policies is to facilitate neoliberalism.

Fourth, this section elucidates a select number of youth empowerment models and explains their utility. In other words, this chapter considers the applicability of various youth empowerment models and then singles out the comprehensive youth empowerment model (Martinez et al. 2010). It is the most appropriate one to broadly apply as a yardstick in the case study of Qatar because of its comprehensiveness, expansive approach to youth empowerment and acknowledgement of contextual variables. However, despite its utility and usefulness, the comprehensive youth empowerment model is insufficient because understanding the complexity of youth empowerment in Qatar needs to take other variables into consideration, such as the unique contextual constraints of Qatar and the nature of power flow between stakeholders.

It is essential to recognise that understanding youth empowerment is not a one-size-fits-all process and that it is empirically inaccurate to argue that youth empowerment means the same thing in different contexts. In fact, its meaning may transform across generations within a same society. Therefore, it is essential that the concept of youth empowerment, as it is being used by stakeholders, be carefully scrutinized in order to uncover the embedded assumptions about what empowerment actually means to each participant. When engaging youth or any marginalised segment of society, best practices exist that can facilitate or improve their engagement or collaboration. However, when researching youth empowerment, it is important for our analysis to recognise who is facilitating or enabling youth targeted policies, which is unlikely to occur without analysing power dynamics.

Ultimately, this chapter prepares the groundwork for how this thesis proceeds. It reviews the literature on empowerment and applies it to youth, further developing, contextualising and enhancing that specialist field of inquiry through a case study of Qatar. It also explains how youth empowerment policies in Qatar might serve as remedies to the problems of extreme rentierism, where affluence—rather than poverty—has contributed to the

apathy, disenfranchisement and marginalisation of youth. Or youth empowerment initiatives may be a response to the pressures of global neoliberalism, which pressures countries to implement youth empowerment policies. Next, this chapter examines and explains the question of power and how it operates to impact the design, capacities and outcomes of youth empowerment. By doing so, it discusses the theoretical relationship between youth empowerment and the concepts of power in society and the state, especially the means by which youth empowerment is employed and exploited by the state to promote and implement objectives related to expanding and maintaining political power over society and individuals. Also, it critically explains youth empowerment models and offers recommendations about and insights on how capacities and outcomes to existing youth empowerment policies in Qatar could be enhanced, which are likely to be applicable in similar contexts in the Gulf region. Accordingly, in addition to evaluating the efficacy and outcomes of these programmes, this chapter is concerned with how they may be used and exploited by political systems to impose certain forms of control on youth rather than to contribute to youth empowerment.

2.2 Definition: What Is Empowerment?

Any discussion of youth empowerment must begin with the following question: what is empowerment? In several academic fields of social sciences—among educationists, policymakers and even journalists—empowerment has become a buzzword of sorts. Zimmerman (2000) writes that 'empowerment theory connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment, and suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision making in order to improve their lives, organisations, and communities'. While straightforward enough, there are several aspects of this definition that require closer examination. For instance, what does connecting an individual with the larger socio-political environment mean?

Rappaport (1981, 1984) defines empowerment as including not only the individual level but also the organisational and community levels. Basically, he expands the definition of empowerment to constitute three basic variables: (1) control, (2) critical awareness and (3) participation (Rappaport, 1981,1984). He argues that empowerment is a process or a mechanism by which subjects gain mastery of their lives, whether they are individuals, organisations or communities. Supporting this notion, the Cornell Empowerment Group (1989) defines empowerment as 'an intentional, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources' (in Zimmerman, 2000, p. 43). Peterson and Zimmerman (2004, p. 129) add to this by offering an integrated approach that includes various levels of analysis. They define empowerment as 'an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations and communities gain greater control, efficacy and social justice'. Likewise, Adams (1996, p. 5), acknowledges that any definition of empowerment must include 'the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their goals'. While this provides some clarity about what we mean when we understand empowerment, closer scrutiny continues to raise all kinds of questions. What are the means to empowerment? Who/what enables participation? Is empowerment value-neutral? What about challenges to self-expression and resistance to empowerment by those who possess power? Is the outcomes of empowerment resisted by those who would prefer to protect their privilege? How can one circumvent or resolve that resistance?

To start, based on the aforementioned definitions by Rappaport (1981), Zimmerman and Warschausky (1989), Zimmerman (2000) and Peterson and Zimmerman (2004), the outcome of empowerment is to achieve certain set targets, skills and capacities. However, another essential dimension cannot be ignored—namely, those with the ability/capacity to

support other groups/individuals in need of empowerment, or, at least, not become obstacles to those seeking empowerment. This means that empowerment entails access to opportunities that is often facilitated and that also includes a growing sense of control. One of the aims of empowerment would be for groups/individuals to develop critical awareness and/or to engage in participatory behaviours. It also implies developing the ability to compete for resources and to influence policies. For this reason, empowerment—whether at the individual or community/group level—refers to the ability to advance one's interests, to organise and form coalitions, to create pluralistic leadership and to develop participatory skills of citizens or a particular demographic in society—i.e. youth. Consequently, as is discernible, there are several important facets to consider when researching and understanding the concept of empowerment. First, the vagueness of the concept. Second, its theoretical association to support/facilitate marginalised groups in society. Third, its theoretical linkage to a certain moral authority. Fourth, its purported depoliticisation. Fifth, its practical association to neoliberalism. Together, these aspects shed light on both the theoretical and practical complexities of researching and understanding the concept of empowerment.

To begin, Ansell (2014) points to the 'vagueness' in the concept of empowerment, describing that one of the challenges to defining empowerment lies in the fact that it is imprecise and inconsistent because it may bear different meanings to different users as well as to different audiences. Moreover, while this flexibility may have contributed to the popularity of the concept, it may also have created difficulty in its theoretical development, definition and utilisation/application in a specific context. Likewise, Bodur and Franceschet (2002) also point out the wide variety of empowerment definitions and strategies. This variation is the result of the political, historical and cultural contexts in which empowerment occurs. For example, in its early beginnings, empowerment was more focused on empowering underprivileged communities and minorities in order to enable them to pursue their rights against oppressive

structures and systems. Today, on the other hand, the focus is more on enabling the underprivileged to transform their conditions by exploring and cultivating new potentials away from conflict-based situations, possibly through economic empowerment. Thus, the definition of empowerment is, invariably, more than self-fulfilment because it occurs in a specific contextual reality.

Concurring, Cornish (2006) notes that a response to the vagueness of the concept of empowerment would be to ground it by the context in which it occurs and the understanding that lies therein of the way stakeholders respond to empowerment initiatives. Naturally, this has led to variations in the meanings and implications of the concept of empowerment. In addition, this implies that empowerment means different things to different groups and that its outcomes vary across different regions, cultures and circumstances. Take, for instance, the idea of empowerment in relation to female clothing. For traditional, conservative Muslims, covering one's body is a form of empowerment—removing sexual objectification. One simple example is the ongoing debate regarding the full-length female body covering clothing item, which is called a *burqa*. Some perceive it to be a symbol of their empowerment and of their freedom to express their religious or cultural identity as well as a form of protection against male sexual objectification. Others view it as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression, convinced that many Muslim women who insist on wearing it are doing so out of twisted support for patriarchy. Ironically, laws are being passed in Europe to ban the burqa—that is, to force Muslim women not to wear that particular item of clothing. Many such decisions are made in the name of liberating women and empowering them (Gal-Or, 2011). This suggests that conflicting definitions of empowerment may rest on social and cultural values, which can problematise any study and application of the term transnationally. This is especially true when there is no consensus within a society or when there is resistance to the attempts to develop a consensus about the concept of empowerment.

Second, there is a certain romanticised notion of freedom, equality and social justice that is intrinsically linked to the concept of empowerment. This is evidenced in repeated references that call for enabling weak/marginalised individuals/communities—which is considered to be central to any definition of empowerment (Solomon, 1976). This type of enabling is closely associated with the idea of facilitating underrepresented, powerless and/or oppressed individuals/communities to assume control of their destiny—e.g. youth. Solomon (1976, p. 6) defines empowerment as 'a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatised social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles'. Keywords or concepts that should be highlighted in his definition are 'process', 'skills', and 'influence' as well the notion of 'assistance'. For Solomon (1976), empowerment occurs through the support from those who are in a position to do offer it. Oxaal and Baaden (1997) concur that empowerment is widely associated with developing the abilities of the weak to allow them to become stronger and to improve their conditions without necessarily having to resort to conflict to accomplish this. In this sense, empowerment is not about domination but about achieving the existing and potential capabilities of individuals and groups, offering them more and better access as well as the power to make a change (Rowlands, 1997). Similarly, Mechanic (1991, in Zimmerman, 2000, p. 43) describes empowerment as 'a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes'. The process of learning is often facilitated by others, which means that any actualisation of empowerment must consider the social parameters from which it operates. Here, a crucial question is: Who is doing the facilitating?

Third, according to Cornwall and Brock (2005), due to its association with supporting marginalised groups, the concept of empowerment enjoys an undoubted moral authority—to the extent that it bestows legitimacy upon the efforts of those involved in it. Closely related to

the idea of supporting marginalised groups, the concept of empowerment is couched in the language of rights and securing the moral high ground. It is difficult and often risky to confront social norms and values without fallout. The idea of moral authority, in and of itself, also contains within it contradictory/conflictual ideas. On the one hand, it presupposes a dichotomy between what is and what is not preferable—i.e. group X deserves to be empowered. On the other hand, those who disagree may be confronted with the stigma of immorality—i.e. how can you *not* support group X in their quest for empowerment? What this means is that some sort of internal mechanism must exist by which one group or individual is deemed to be worthy of empowerment and another not to be worthy of it. These issues have a tremendous impact on the outcomes of empowerment efforts in any social setting. The next section of this chapter points out that recognising this component in empowerment research is essential, and explores the role of power in empowerment outcomes.

Fourth, alongside its presumed moral authority, the concept of empowerment—at least theoretically—claims to be depoliticised. Interestingly, the coupling of moral authority and depoliticisation seems to indicate an attempt to sway empowerment away from confrontation/conflict with respect to accessing state resources or power (McEwen and Bek, 2006). This could possibly be one of the factors that has contributed to the wide adoption of the concept of empowerment. Understanding empowerment may also be influenced by the perception that the marginalisation of groups is a result of oppressive power relations (Ansell, 2014), suggesting that oppression can be address and marginalisation can be eliminated only by addressing and altering power relations. However, apart from this, it is difficult to reach an agreement about the concept of empowerment or the implications of its outcomes. For example, McEwen and Bek (2006) argue that empowerment appears to be depoliticised because it is centred on empowering the powerless without undermining the existing political order. At the same time, it is highly susceptible to being highly politicised because it can be

utilised by the existing social order to attain political goals in a seemingly innocent manner. This is perhaps best illustrated by Cruikshank (1993) who applies Foucault's concept of governmentality to empowerment and concludes that, while empowerment may be a means for ameliorating the condition of the helpless, it may also be a means by which certain groups are taught, trained and motivated to behave in self-controlled ways as expected by those in authority. Ansell (2014), likewise, points out that—through empowerment—individuals and groups can be transformed to become active and engaged subjects who behave in the ways desired by society or the social order. In other words, empowerment masquerades as being apolitical when, in practice, it actually represents and advocates deep-seated values of a certain social order.

Fifth, the association of empowerment with political/cultural agendas, such as neoliberalism, is in direct contradiction with its claim of being apolitical. Looking closely and building on the idea that youth empowerment definitions/policies contain implicit assumptions about values, McEwen and Bek (2006) explain that a shift in empowerment studies has occurred—from understanding empowerment as a tool of activism, often against organised or structural oppression, to accepting it as a fundamental component of the global neoliberal agenda. This is an important and often underappreciated aspect of empowerment studies/research—the growing relationship between empowerment activities and certain values, that is, the neoliberal ethos. Therefore, it is not surprising that so many governments in the world are now embracing empowerment programmes more than ever before.

Along these lines, Ansell et al. (2012) argue that empowerment policies can, in fact, be a means through which neoliberalism functions as the dominant ideology of the elite, imposed through state structures. And, as elites control the state and its instruments of power, domination is thus propagated in subtle ways as illustrated in youth empowerment policies. One example is any youth empowerment policy itself, serving as a manifestation of the

technology of power by obtaining knowledge, data and statistics through various means of targeted population surveillance. Through various technologies of power, a neoliberal state can indirectly control a targeted population by making them a governable population. In other words, the state utilises technologies of power—in the name of enacting empowerment policies—in order to control target populations, while claiming to be empowering them. This, undoubtedly, makes the so-called empowerment policies counterproductive. For example, the definitions of what constitutes being a healthy, responsible citizen—or even a responsible human being—are all meant to set the standards of normalisation within a society. These standards are absorbed and implemented by individuals, without intervention by the state, resulting in self-control of individuals and groups without the intrusive state involvement (Ansell et al, 2012).

Another important aspect to consider when studying empowerment is the potential means of control through transnational governmentality. According to Li (2009), this constitutes various global structures, networks and organisations that are driven by the neoliberal ideology. In addition, it includes all other transnational organisations that emphasise empowerment as a mechanism through which problems and solutions are carefully defined for communities, without ostensibly challenging the existing power structure. In this context, progress is defined, measured and evaluated from neoliberal perspectives. In other words, the process of progress is achieved through empowerment mechanisms that are designed and promoted by these transnational structures, which claim to largely be free of the political agenda stigma, especially when associated with poverty reduction and developmental policies. While these claims may be made, the empirical evidence provided by Ansell et al. (2012) is clear—these transnational structures are not value-neutral and attempt to impose definitions, designs and concepts on societies. For instance, attitudes towards youth, even the definition of what a ‘youth’ is, are culturally informed. In particular, youth empowerment is often seen as

both a threat and a benefit, depending on the prevalent socio-cultural conditions in the society under investigation. In Qatar, by and large, youth are seen as the 'rightful inheritors of the future', and a considerable amount of rhetoric by state officials exists that acknowledges this definition.

This brings us to our primary research questions: What processes and practices lie behind the production of Qatar's youth empowerment programmes? What is the impact of those policies/programmes on youth in Qatar? What are the implications of this research for the design of youth empowerment policies/programmes in the context of Qatar? What does understanding the practice of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar reveal about youth empowerment more widely? To answer those questions, an exploration of what constitutes youth empowerment and how it is perceived in the broader socio-cultural context is crucial. However, prior to beginning that discussion, we need to look at how power operates or how power is perceived, identified, practised and appreciated between stakeholders. This is always alluded to when discussing the vital component of facilitation and capacity building in any empowerment analysis and is appropriately explained/analysed in the following section.

2.3 Definitions and Dynamics of Power

In order to explore how power operates through youth empowerment programmes, it is first important to grapple with the extremely difficult task of pinning down the definition, meaning and impact of power. In Power: A Radical View (1974), Steven Lukes maps three major divergent topographical classifications of power: one-, two- and three-dimensional approaches. The one-dimensional approach, also described as the classic approach to power, is illustrated in the works of Polsby and Dahl, which were prevalent during the 1950s and 1960s. Polsby (1964), for example, states that one can conceive of 'power', 'influence' and 'control' as serviceable synonyms. They enable the 'capacity of one actor to do something affecting another actor, which changes the probable pattern of specified future events. This can be

envisaged most easily in a decision-making situation' (Lukes, 1974, pp. 17–18). According to this view, power is about the ability of one actor to influence or persuade others so that his or her decisions or behaviours prevail—whether they be policy choices, decisions or behaviours. To a great extent, Lukes (1974) argues, this is an approach that perceives power through conflict. Thus, in this approach, power operates in the favour of one actor over the wills and preferences of others.

The two-dimensional approach to power was developed by Bachrach and Baratz (1970). This approach, according to Lukes (1974), includes not only the contexts of manipulation and authority but also relates to coercion as well. However, this approach is also primarily based on a conflictual situation between actors and stakeholders, implying a framework or setting in which the choices, decisions, or preferences of one actor prevail over those of others. Responding to this approach, Lukes (1974) suggests it is important to go beyond the context of *power as conflict*. Without doing that, empowerment would simply be an act of intervention that gives more power to one actor or to a set of actors to pursue conflict against others, which would, in reality, make it no different from power in its classic one-dimensional form. Ansell (1999) concurs, suggesting that empowerment may thus be perceived as a process that goes beyond power as a classic construct to involve enabling the disenfranchised to learn how to develop their efficacy, their abilities and their use of available means and opportunities to better their conditions and lot.

Third, this brings us to appreciate the dynamic nature of power, compelling a better understanding of empowerment. Lukes (1974) describes a three-dimensional approach to power that is dynamic. Specifically, the three-dimensional view of power involves a comprehensive critique of the behavioural focus of both one- and two-dimensional views of power. Luke's critiques them as too "individualistic", which does not permit for "consideration of the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the

operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals' decisions" (Lukes, 1974, p.28). Moreover, as Lukes continues, this "can occur in the absence of actual, observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted – though there remains an implicit reference to potential conflict," (Lukes, 1974, p.28). This potential, even if not actualised, is present in potentiality, through what he describes as "latent conflict," which consists in a contradiction between the "interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude," (Lukes, 1974, p.28). Overall, the three-dimensional view of power includes the following: (a) It is a critique of behaviouralism; (b) a focus on decision-making and control over the political agenda – which does not necessarily occur through decisions; (c) includes issues and potential issues; (d) observable (overt and covert), and latent conflict; (e) subjective and real interests.

Lukes (2005)—publishing a second edition of his book—challenged some of his own assumptions about power. Nevertheless, Lukes' theory of power asserts that "*A* exercises power over B... by influencing, shaping or determining his [sic] very wants" (2005, p. 27). He argues that what may appear as agreeable compliance to authority may essentially be the outcome of shrewd manoeuvring/manipulating or 'shaping' of people's beliefs, values and 'interests.' That manufacturing of compliance may often lead people to support positions that disempower them. He admits that his account of power is incomplete and merely assesses the concept from one particular angle. He writes, 'it focuses entirely on the exercise of power and, for another, it deals only with asymmetric power—the power of some over others—and, moreover, with only a sub-type of this, namely, the securing of compliance to domination' (Lukes, 2005, p. 64). Morriss (2006) disagrees with Lukes' (2005) emphasis on power as the ability to affect people, insisting that it affects outcomes. However, Morriss's (2006) criticism tends to be too focused on power in structures which in reality is difficult to analyse or assess, especially since structures are meaningless on their own and without consideration of human input and influence. After all, the potency of any structure lies in the individuals who comprise

it and in the commitment to those agreed-upon rules and regulations that are evidently outlined in it. This, in turn, places limitations on group/individuals. Hence, Morriss' separation of different outcomes of power may conceptually be reasonable but practically impossible—since they rely on one another.

Another point of contention of disagreement between Lukes (2005) and Morriss (2006) is the exercise of power. For Lukes (2005), his more recent position is that 'power is a dispositional concept, identifying an ability or a capacity, which may or may not be exercised' (p. 109). Morriss (2006), on the other hand, critiques this position, claiming that power, when not exercised cannot be described as such. Yet, even if power is not exercised, it is still relevant and potentially present. Therefore, examining the exercise of power does not diminish the three-dimensional view of power. Moreover, as Lukes acknowledges, power is dispositional, and the power of a capacity or ability that may or may not be exercised is still relevant and has an effect on people. Hence, power is always exercised—in other words, it has an impact even when not explicitly utilised. This is so because the awareness of power also impacts and has an effect on the minds of stakeholders.

Gaventa (2006) provides an alternative account of power which is also based on three dimensions. He discusses it through the analogy of a Rubik's cube of power, which refers to three dimensions of power—namely, (1) levels: global, national, local; (2) spaces: closed, invited, claimed/created; and (3) forms: visible, hidden, invisible. Each of the items in each of the three dimensions can be rotated like a Rubik's cube, according to changing situations and circumstances, revealing that there are numerous possible manifestations of power between the variables. The thought of power or of someone else having power—even if not exercised—still impacts people/society in general. For instance, the thought of being in the presence of royalty may often elicit responses to that perception of power. It is through this conceptualisation of power, which flows/shifts through stakeholders, that youth empowerment

must be understood. This comprehensive definition of power allows us to appreciate the manner in which power shapes the entire discourse of empowerment. What this means is that 'power' is the decisive factor that addresses what would constitute the definition of empowerment, addressing vagueness: power is the factor that facilitates/prevents individuals or groups from being empowered; power is the ability to project moral authority; power is the ability to project the political neutrality or non-politicism of the concept of empowerment. Lastly, it is through the vagaries of power that values are projected into the concept of empowerment and then supported through local, regional and international structures.

2.4 Youth Empowerment, Power and the State

In the previous sections, five major considerations associated with the research on the concept of empowerment are explained. To reiterate, these include the vagueness of the concept, its theoretical association to supporting/facilitating marginalised groups in society, its theoretical linkage to a certain moral authority, its purported depoliticisation and its practical association to neoliberalism.

Each of these challenges occurs at the individual/community/political level and is also applicable to specific groups in communities or societies, such as youth. It has also been explained that the role of those with the ability/capacity to institute their choices is essential for any practical attempt at understanding empowerment. Then, the subsequent section of the chapter explored the intricate relationship between power and empowerment, revealing that the definition, design and implementation of any form of empowerment are essentially impacted by power. This section is explicitly about using theories of power to theorise how states might use/relate to empowerment programmes directed at youth.

This section also explores the intersectionality between youth empowerment, theories of power and the state. This intersectionality raises important questions on definitions of youth

empowerment, how youth are perceived in a particular socio-cultural milieu, the illusion of youth empowerment and the state's role in manufacturing youth. To put it briefly, this is illustrated by an evaluation of youth policies in Malawi and Lesotho by Ansell et al. (2012, p. 54), who conclude that youth empowerment policies 'clearly reflect the aspiration of national governments and their 'development partners' to control youth (for the nation) as much as to assist them, and to produce neoliberal subjects to serve national and international economies'.

To begin, research on youth empowerment suffers from several set-backs at the theoretical level. While it is recognised that youth are an important part of society, the ways and means of enabling/facilitating their capacities are not agreed upon. In fact, there is not even a clear-cut agreement on who is defined as a 'youth'. The United Nations defines 'youth' as 'persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States'. In Qatari society, based on a well-known Islamic prophetic saying, youths are described as persons between 13 and 40 year of age. This is not the case in the United States, where 'youth' are often considered to be persons 18 to 24 years of age. For this reason, it is important to recognise that even definitions of youth, cross-culturally, are not agreed upon. Moreover, as Ansell (1999) articulates, the exact definition of youth by states is an act of power. In other words, defining youth is a political act. Nevertheless, aside from differing definitions of 'youth', it is generally agreed, as Zimmerman (2000) emphasises, that facilitating youth to be empowered and become active and productive community members is important. However, while Zimmerman's insight is well-established, Camino (2005) argues that there is hardly any substantive evidence for the effectiveness of youth empowerment strategies.

Similarly, an important issue to consider when researching and understanding youth empowerment is that it promises youth a certain level of 'power' or control. Along with that, it also tells youth that they have the ability to grasp opportunities, which allow them to make the best of their lives. Furlong and Cartmel (2006) question this approach suggesting that

discourses on youth empowerment may create a false reality for youth because they are led to believe that they have the ability, as individuals, to make choices and capitalise on opportunities to control their lives, without awareness of their limitations therein. Hence, young people end up believing that they are facing self-realisation challenges, whereas these challenges are functioning at a macro state level. Very much like Gaventa's Rubik's cube analogy and the way in which power impacts outcomes, youth may falsely misunderstand their capacities. Accordingly, when the youth fail, they end up blaming themselves even though their failure was inevitable (Furlong and Cartmel, 2006, p. 114). Ironically, this means that—instead of empowering youth—state policies, such as many neoliberal youth policies, seem to create an illusion of youth empowerment. When this illusion collapses, the youth are then blamed for the outcomes over which they had no control in the first place.

The declared purpose of youth empowerment is to enable the youth to achieve self-realisation and positively transform their lives but this does not occur in a vacuum. Here, it is important to consider the role of power and the state apparatus. As Ansell et al. (2012) argue, empowerment programmes appear to be designed in accordance with how the state perceives the targeted community or group. For example, in the context of youth policies, if the youth are perceived to be problematic, then youth policies are designed with an emphasis on issues such as unemployment, drug abuse and delinquency, whereas if the youth are perceived to be a resource, then the emphasis of these policies is shifted to education, training and participation. In either case, it is the needs of the state and the existing power structures that are served by affecting the ways of thinking and behaviour of the targeted population, whereas the central interests of the targeted community itself are not (Mizen, 2003; Ngai et al., 2001).

Small (2004), alternatively, takes a less charitable view of youth, suggesting that this group has always constituted a challenge for states. This is not surprising because youth, as previously mentioned, can be perceived as a volatile age group, going through a transition

period. Alldred (1999) further points out that the very bodies of young people are a source of resistance, making young people a problem that needs to be addressed. Throughout the history of the modern state, Small (2004) argues, youth policies in modern European states have passed through three stages. In the first stage, states were primarily concerned with the containment of the youth—that is, with keeping them off the streets in order to prevent their involvement in delinquent and other risky behaviours. In the second stage, governments began focusing on fostering healthy youth development and capacity building with the aim of occupying the youth with healthy and positive development activities, specifically through active community participation. This stage, too, was characterised by a desire to keep the youth under control by keeping them occupied with community service activities. Third, Small (2004) points out that the focus of governments subsequently shifted to youth empowerment as a potential mechanism through which the youth are not only kept off the streets and involved in community service but can also become positive and active agents of transformation by contributing to their communities and by being actors in achieving progress in their own lives.

However, the current shift of states to parrot a discourse based on youth empowerment does not necessarily imply that youth are, indeed, empowered—or that they stand a better chance in pursuing their lives, dreams and potentials in the way they might want. In part, this is attributed to the fact that, within the empowerment discourse, the burden of achieving outcomes while navigating uncertainties is shifted to the youth—those in need of facilitation/support—whereas the challenges remain the same, if not worse, albeit under new names and terminologies (Furlong, 2016). Similarly, Jeffrey (2008) points out that one of the paradoxes of youth empowerment policies is their strong use the concepts of freedom and equality—such as those that have made education accessible as a tool of empowerment for the youth. Consequently, this has resulted in a significant increase in educated but unemployed youth—not only in developing countries but also in developed economies (Jeffrey, 2008, p.

740). The reason for this discrepancy is the disconnect between the rhetoric of empowerment—access to education—and limited employment opportunities.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) argue that, although such traditional barriers and structures seem to be obscured by new changes/policies in socio-political and economic systems, the traditional structures and barriers of social inequality remain intact and are, often, protected by state authorities. For example, in the neoliberal world, class may no longer be perceived as an obstacle for the social advancement and progress of youth, particularly with increased access to higher education and employment. However, France and Haddon (2014) argue that class remains highly relevant, especially when it refers to how individuals see themselves in relation to others and how they understand their social situations. Gender, for example, is one of the numerous classed concepts through which individuals understand the world, relate to it and act upon to access resources and opportunities. However, this structure is also a source of the obstacles and challenges they face—not as individuals but as members of a particular social class. Hence, while the classic meanings associated with social class have changed, the classification structures for marginalised groups, such as youth or women, still remain.

The role that state power plays in manufacturing youth empowerment to suit their preferences is best illustrated through state youth education policies. Many countries tout these policies as the solution for eliminating structural barriers and offering youth access to job markets—hence, to economic security—thus claiming they are essential for youth empowerment. According to Furlong and Cartmel (1997), transitions from school to work have become ‘more protracted, routes have increased in complexity and sequences of events have changed’ (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, p. 3). At the same time, new opportunities are limited for young people; hence, the risk of marginalisation is increased. According to Batchelor et al. (2020), one example of such marginalisation lies in the fact that young people might have access to more jobs but these are usually not stable jobs and they are time-constrained, implying

that young people have an increasing lack of control over their study and work schedules, which, in turn, means they have less time and ability to engage in leisurely social practices—hence, they have a lower quality of life. Therefore, even if a labour market offers more jobs to educated and qualified young people, if this market contains new restrictions such as lack of control over schedules or job security, then, as Furlong (2012, p. 9) argues, the ability of young people to exercise agency is also restricted.

2.5 The Neoliberal State and Youth Empowerment

When researching youth empowerment, power and state relations, it is important to maintain focus on the values that a particular state aims to project. In this context, it is important to discuss the neoliberal-globalisation nexus. Globalisation is often perceived as a driving engine for neoliberalism. In fact, it is through globalisation that neoliberalism and its ideological values and practices have been normalised worldwide, even in countries that do not necessarily endorse democratic values. Loo (2011) argues that this nexus between globalisation and neoliberalism has become a force that is responsible for undermining societies through perilous economic policies and the imposition of government by security rather than democracy. As globalisation contributes to imposing neoliberal policies all over the world, states are successfully imposing restrictive policies that are in effect taking away the freedoms of societies at the economic, social and political levels, and both at the individual and the collective level. This is particularly the case as states increasingly pass new policies that are aimed at integrating their neoliberal structures on a global level. This is very much the case in Qatar where policies targeting the youth are primarily intended to facilitate the integration of Qatar into the global economy. The question, however, is whether the perceived socio-economic vision of Qatar as the state sees it reflects the needs, demands and aspirations of Qatari youth, or whether it is simply an imposed vision which requires the mobilisation, indoctrination of Qataris to make them fulfill and achieve this vision.

Hence, when considering the intersection of youth empowerment, power and state, the neoliberal state becomes particularly problematic. According to Wyn and Woodman (2006), the neoliberal state puts forward policies that target youth empowerment programmes meant only for implementation during youth transitional periods occurring between schooling and unemployment. This approach tends to 'narrow the focus of youth studies or even to intellectually marginalise it, through a dependence on economic models of youth' (Wyn and Woodman, 2006, p. 495). Indeed, by focusing on state-level educational policies that prioritise the needs of the labour market and job creation, the state has basically defined the path for youth—a path of transition from school to work—while ignoring any other possible needs of youth (Mizen, 2004). Mizen (2003) elaborates on the disempowering outcomes of such educational policies on youth, based on the impact of the Labour education policies in the UK in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These policies aimed to take hundreds of thousands of unemployed young people off social benefits and to get them into the labour market. This effectively meant investing in the education and training of youth in order to achieve economic success. Even the curriculum was shifted towards meeting the so-called 'industrial needs' (Mizen, 2003, p. 459). While this policy was successful in improving the qualifications and employability of more young people than ever, it also justified employment security reduction, while unemployment rates among more qualified youth remained high. This market-centred view taken by youth policies consequently led to a deeper problem of youth exclusion, which also resulted in higher levels of youth disempowerment through such exclusion. Moreover, since these outcomes are seen to be successfully delivering more qualified and employable youth, this implies that youth exclusion and employment are the results of youth's own failures (Mizen, 2003, p. 468). In reality, due to the policies, higher numbers of youth are falling through the cracks and raising the level of marginalisation.

Wyn (2015) goes further to claim that the nexus between the state, youth and a neoliberal policy that affects education and employment has become problematic. He asserts that acquiring the former does not necessarily lead to or guarantee the latter. 'An "epistemological fallacy" creates the impression that because some groups of young people do gain eventual labour market security from educational credentials, therefore all young people would achieve such security and prosperity if they were able to be coerced or coaxed into completing post-secondary education' (Wyn, 2015, p. 49). The impact of neoliberalism is not limited to the design of education policies and their link to employment but, as Wyn (2007) argues, the content of educational curricula has also been shifted to meet the demands of such policies. Thus, in Australia, for example, the state adopts educational curricula based on meeting 'economistic policy imperatives that see young people primarily in terms of their capacities to attain labour market skills that will ensure Australia's international competitiveness. However, health and well-being are marginalised in current policy frameworks (Wyn, 2007, p. 35).

Therefore, what neoliberal educational and economic policies achieve, in the name of youth empowerment policies, is the empowerment of the state rather than of the youth. By prioritising economic goals and perspectives, the state effectively limits its responsibility towards the youth, mainly by focusing on education that might lead to employment for some but does not guarantee employment for all (not even for the majority). Furthermore, by asserting surveillance and control over youth through institutions in which they learn and spend time, it further alienates youth and thereby contributes to their disempowerment (Wyn and Woodman, 2006; Mizen, 2004).

Another important aspect of neoliberalism, state and power lies in their projected universalism. This means that neoliberalism is among the numerous cultural exports of many 'Western' countries to the Global South. In the name of youth empowerment, various Western-

based civil society and human rights organisations operate in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, educating and training young people on these very ideas (Nixon, 2011). Culturally such mobilisation is seen as threatening to the monarchical form of rule present in the GCC states, both in its agenda and in the values that these groups project in the name of youth empowerment. In Western contexts, these activities may seem harmless but, as was evidenced during the Arab Spring, many of such youth organisations have been essential in promoting opposition to the authoritarian regimes such as in Egypt, Syria and Libya. Also, contradictorily, it may be the case that GCC states accommodate/accept these agenda-driven neoliberal civil society organisations, perhaps under pressure, and put in place policies to implement their youth empowerment programmes. However, in practice and implementation, the GCC states themselves may resist them. Nonetheless, the ability of foreign countries or entities to manipulate youth empowerment for subversive activities is problematic and is an important point to consider when researching the concept of youth empowerment, especially in the broader Middle East or GCC context. Even if these particular societies had already developed and acquired critical awareness and the desire to rise against their authoritarian regimes, such uprisings would not have been possible to such a wide extent without the training and support provided by foreign organisations in the name of empowerment.

What this suggests is that, while it is possible for states to empower people through knowledge and material resources, it is also possible for states to exploit them—both inside their own countries and in other countries. It is easily possible for the processes of youth empowerment in Qatar, for instance, to be utilised to manipulate those who are purportedly being empowered. As previously highlighted, there is a possibility for some states to undermine other governments by providing material resources and other means of empowerment to the youth in those countries that with the purpose of inciting or encouraging them to rise against those who are in power (Nixon, 2011). Furthermore, foreign organisations/countries also

attempt to imprint their own value-systems and definitions of youth empowerment. Whether youth empowerment is manipulated by local government officials and the state in order to control its own people or whether such manipulation is conducted from outside of the country by foreign actors, both realities necessitate a better understanding of the role of power in shaping these narratives. The power to project definitions and meanings and to allow, restrict or deny space is fundamental when exploring youth empowerment in any context.

Still, although youth empowerment programmes are often used as political instruments, this does not necessarily imply that the implemented policies would deliver the intended results. While the process of policymaking and programme design may be controlled by the state, this does not guarantee that the outcome would be as the state expects. The intersection of youth empowerment, the state and power is murky. In this respect, Lukes (2005, p. 58) argues that 'the attribution of power is at the same time an attribution of (partial or total) responsibility for certain consequences. The point, in other words, of locating power is to fix responsibility for consequences held to flow from the action, or inaction, of certain specifiable agents.' The problem with this view, however, is the assumption that power can always be located and that responsibility can always be assigned or that specific agents or actors are, indeed, responsible for specific outcomes. As Hayward (2018) argues, the outcomes of policies or decisions are not necessarily the products of the actions of specific actors. Furthermore, many decision-making processes involve complex negotiations, compromises by various actors and various types of interferences that may result in accidental or unintended outcomes. For such outcomes, no specific actor can specifically be blamed or held accountable.

In the study of youth empowerment, it may be tempting to identify specific actors and institutions, namely the state, and blame them for the alienation, disenfranchisement and marginalisation of youth in a certain country or society. In reality, such a condition of youth could actually be a result of failed, conflicting, ineffective, short-sighted, underfunded or

poorly implemented policies rather than of a deliberate exercise of state power in a way that intends to alienate and marginalise youth. This angle is very relevant in the case of Qatar because youth empowerment programmes have not been designed by one specific department but by a number of different authorities, and the design process has not only been influenced by the directives and expectations of political leadership but also by the conservative social system, tribal traditions, and family values. This does not even account for the fact that the very participants in the designed programmes themselves might have unintended impacts on the outcomes of those programmes—whether by refusing to participate or by participating and expressing demands and needs that were not taken into consideration during the programme design process, which my research explores.

This is in line with Hathaway's (2016) argument that power is not confined only to political and formal institutions and that informal actors can also exercise power to determine policies and outcomes even if they are not part of the official or formal system. This is particularly relevant in the study of youth empowerment because many of the restrictions on youth development and emancipation are not necessarily imposed by the state. In Qatar, for example, tribes, families and traditions exercise different forms of power over the youth. Visible mechanisms may relate to social and tribal gatherings, marriage arrangements and organised rituals and celebrations. Hidden mechanisms may relate to the ability of tribal and familial connections within the system to secure prestigious and high-paying jobs for certain individuals as well as to provide access to exclusive opportunities in the system. Invisible influence, on the other hand, may refer to the ability of the family or tribe to assert its social superiority, legacy or prestige and influence within society, offering its youth better opportunities and access, while the youth outside its circle of influence are deprived of such benefits.

In this context, it is relevant to refer to Foucault's work, specifically his concept of biopower which involves the understanding of power in the relations of human beings with life in general, and this includes those relations that involve biology, society, culture, values, technology and the like (Foucault, 1982; 2000). According to Foucault, human beings exercise power to survive and to expand their existence, mainly by negotiating for power. However, while Foucault perceived biopower from a positive perspective as power that can be harnessed to achieve positive outcomes for the individual, this notion also includes the manner in which the state utilises its capabilities and sources of power to target the population and bring it under control, mainly by exercising power over the life aspects that matter to society, whether on the individual or on the collective level. This is in line with Foucault's general take on power, which he sees as pervasive and found everywhere such that it is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault, 1998, p.63). Foucault's take on power, is problematic when it comes to the analysis of youth empowerment. For example, his rejection of the notion that power can be agency or a structure goes against the realities on the ground in a country such as Qatar, where state institutions wield substantial power, but also against the fact that much of this power is disciplinary and coercive in nature. In addition to this, Foucault's theoretical perspective on power is both too complex and at times inconsistent as it overly emphasises the importance of power technologies within the biopower concept.

2.6 Youth Empowerment and Power

Another important aspect of studying youth empowerment is its potential impact/outcome on power redistribution. Kesby (2007) refers to participatory power effects where he refers to two understandings. The first is the conventional understanding of participation where power is perceived as a commodity that is redistributed through participation among participants. The second is a post-structural approach that understands

power as an effect that is created in a context as a result of the interaction and interplay between communicative and material resources.

Essentially, researching youth empowerment implies that any process and outcome of empowerment, with its strategies and practices, is bound to influence specific structures of that society, including the state. Sharp et al. (2000) argues that any form of empowerment is both inconsistent and incoherent because of the nature of power dynamics in a given society, where it is not uncommon for groups in a social order to support certain ideas, structures, or processes within it, while rejecting and resisting others propagated by the same social order. In other words, the processes of attaining and resisting power in a socio-political context are not divided along clear lines that separate distinctive camps that support or oppose the social order and its components. Yet, as new individuals/groups emerge, they challenge and compete for space in the ongoing social order. Here, any new impetus for youth empowerment is bound to affect several other stakeholders in a society.

In fact, Pease (2002) goes even further to contemplate the idea that any form of empowerment could be employed to achieve the opposite of what those who initially deploy it claim its goals to be. Hence, it is possible to argue that power redistribution does not necessarily entail a change in power but merely a shuffling of it—even in ways that could further entrench established power. Instead of empowering marginalised segments of society and providing them with means to achieve self-realisation at both individual and collective levels, it may merely aim at perpetuating current power relations. Hence, what appears to be a process of empowerment is, in reality, a form of containment or a form of manipulation that merely aims at serving the interests of those in power.

According to Foucault (1980), among the achievements of the modern European state is the ability to inculcate a disciplinary tendency, or a form of self-control, which has enabled

individuals to be less reliant on direct forms of social control. Hence, it is possible to infer that the state, through its various apparatuses—including preferred educational curricula/pedagogies—inculcates that empowerment is the responsibility of the individual under the banner of self-control. This is best illustrated by the ability of the state to persuade its citizens that they would enjoy a sense of empowerment if they meet certain standards of behaviour. As a result, instead of having the state directly impose its power onto its citizens, empowerment is used to subtly nudge citizens to act in accordance to state expectations. All this, according to Pease (2002, p. 138) makes empowerment nothing but a 'subtle refinement of domination, masked by the respectability of a liberatory discourse'. In other words, while empowerment may be promoted and touted as a means of liberation, it may actually be used as an indirect mechanism of oppression.

Youth empowerment and the consequent power redistribution through the process of self-transformation and, potentially, self-determination, may be non-confrontational as long as existing power structures are not threatened (Rai, 2002)—although that is highly unlikely. However, even if self-transformation is achieved, this does not necessarily imply that the practical condition of youth would change nor that the existing power structures and relations responsible for their lack of agency would simply cease to exist. If empowerment is intended to enable individuals to break free from the structures of domination that control their lives, then this would essentially result in structural changes within the entire socio-political order. Without a transformation in the power structures that are responsible for the powerlessness of individuals and groups, it is doubtful that empowerment would lead to change (Desai, 2002; Ansell, 2014). Hence, any power redistribution would likely be seen as threatening by at least some members/groups in a society.

Another problematic aspect of power redistribution is that power is not necessarily found in structures or in specific locations within systems. As Pease (2002) points out, power

in today's world is characterised by expansiveness which means that power is no longer directly imposed through traditional means of control, such as controlling territory. Now, the notion of power includes such diverse aspects as technologies of power and biopower—that is, the power over life. This value-based approach to control partially obfuscates the role of the state in directly controlling subjects and mitigating the impact of power redistribution. Moreover, it shifts the burden to the subjects themselves by delegating the processes of self-regulation and self-control to them through subtle mechanisms, such as empowerment (Dean, 2010; Ansell et al., 2012). Thus, while empowerment may be perceived as a process by which individuals free themselves of the dominant power relations responsible for their current situation, with the intention to change their circumstances in order to achieve their goals (Ansell, 2014), empowerment may be criticised for actually making individuals pursue goals that are consistent with those of the dominant power and under its indirect control. This is particularly important to consider in the case study of Qatar and is elaborated upon in the subsequent chapter, investigating how power functions as a means to co-opt rather than empower.

2.7 Youth Empowerment Models

This section draws on the previous sections—which analysed the concepts of empowerment, youth, state and, most importantly, power and its redistributive relations between and consequences for stakeholders—and focuses on carefully interpreting youth empowerment models. Specifically, this section explains how the following six models of youth empowerment each understand empowerment and formulate corresponding discourses. These six models are: (1) Adolescent Empowerment Cycle, (2) Youth Development and Improvement, (3) Transactional Partnering, (4) Empowerment Education, (5) Critical Youth Empowerment and (6) Comprehensive Youth Empowerment. These models emphasise the provision of youth with access to resources and opportunities in order to achieve self-

determination as well as the means to attain positive changes in their conditions. Nevertheless, the models do not provide a complete blueprint on how youth empowerment is achieved. At best, they offer guidelines for some of the major issues that youth in any society may be facing. Yet, the models do reveal the embedded assumptions, variant directions and conflicting discourses that shape youth empowerment strategies. In other words, while we do not need these models in order to analyse and critique the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, it is useful. Especially for pointing to some of the areas in which empowerment programmes may intervene in power relations and in shaping young people's lives. Of course, these models are normative, and I recognise the politics behind them and the effects of their discourse. Therefore, while they are not objective measures of empowerment and they are not scales against which to measure / match programmes, they offer glimpses of how those embedded discourses impact youth. The following section critiques these six major youth empowerment models based on the theoretical findings of the preceding sections, thereby helping me to compare and contrast those models against discourses embedded in the practice of youth empowerment in the Qatari context.

First, the Adolescent Empowerment Cycle (AEC) model was developed by psychologists Chinman and Linney (1998) and applied in high schools in the United States. It starts with the assumption that empowerment is essential for youth in order to prevent them from falling into the traps of rolelessness and instability. Grounded in psychological theories, this model proposes that youth can be empowered by building their self-esteem and developing the skills needed to achieve positive social bonding. One of basic mechanisms of this model includes the involvement of adolescents in meaningful social activities that enrich their lives, add meanings to their existence and contribute to their communities. Another fundamental mechanism is the creation of opportunities through which adolescents can develop skills that are relevant and useful for life enrichment and for assuming meaningful and useful roles in

society. The third mechanism requires continuous positive reinforcement and recognition from adults in order to create the motivation necessary for youth to continue through the process.

However, while this model aims to empower youth, it also aims to protect youth from instability and rolelessness by ensuring that they remain under control rather than out of control. To a great extent, this is still in line with the view that young people are problematic as a result of the transformations and changes taking place in their bodies (Alldred, 1999). In a way, this model is based on perceiving youth as a group at risk rather than as a group with substantial potentials and capabilities. In Qatar, on the other hand, the perception of youth, as a group, is not negative. By and large, they are not seen as a problem source. Hence, this model is not appropriate for understanding and evaluating the youth empowerment issues in the Qatari context. In addition, the AEC model is primarily concerned with adolescents, whereas youth empowerment programmes in Qatar target both adolescents who are in their late teens and young individuals in their twenties. Another issue is that the AEC model, instead of actually empowering youth, primarily focuses on keeping youth under control. This is done by ensuring that young people stay focused on developing and using their potentials to fit into acceptable social and political norms and boundaries—which, ironically, could arguably qualify as a process of disempowerment. Furthermore, this model also does not specify the meaning of youth empowerment—it offers a neoliberal perspective to youth empowerment that views them as a risk demographic instead.

Second, the Youth Development and Improvement model is primarily concerned with the need to empower youth in order to protect them from instability. It was originally developed by psychologists Kim et al. (1998). This model encourages the development of programmes that enable adolescents to overcome problems that are primarily associated with drug abuse. This model is also grounded in psychological theories and its main purpose is to create empowerment programmes that protect the youth from substance abuse while providing them

with alternatives to achieve progress. The primary tenet of this model is that the youth constitute a resource that can be garnered through participation in meaningful programmes and community service projects. It is also through these community service projects that youth can access resources, develop knowledge and acquiring skills/capacities that would enable them to engage with their communities. Among the main setbacks of this model for this study is that substance abuse is not a cause of major concern among Qatari youth—hence, it is not applicable. Moreover, it is rather vague regarding the exact nature of youth empowerment other than in relation to substance abuse avoidance.

Moreover, the Youth Development and Improvement model proposes that adults also play an acute role in youth empowerment and specifically creates adult–youth leadership partnerships, where adults act as guides, facilitators, mentors and trainers to their youthful counterparts. Thus, this model not only helps the youth develop skills and find ways to use them to change their lives and the lives of their communities but it also focuses on building leadership among the youth in addition to developing their future career potentials. It represents a collaborative method of youth empowerment that focuses on peer support. In a country like Qatar, where peer support outside the family is viewed with scepticism, sometimes even unfavourably, this model would not be easily implemented.

The model is progressive in two ways. First, it perceives youth as an asset and, second, it focuses on developing skills among the youth. Nonetheless, this model ultimately aims towards prevention and protection—that is, towards keeping youth under control by influencing and guiding them to follow models of behaviour that are perceived to be acceptable and correct, as illustrated by adults and as sanctioned by society. In this sense, the model represents limited empowerment and could even easily be perceived as a means by which youth are moulded to fit into the world of adults by mimicking their thinking and behaviour.

Next, the Transactional Partnering model, developed by Cargo et al. (2003), advocates youth empowerment through the development of partnership mechanisms between adults and youth, where empowerment outcomes are achieved through youth interaction with adults. The primary requirement for this model is for adults to create an environment that welcomes youth and facilitates their abilities to develop relevant knowledge and skills. This corresponds to the research in youth empowerment that explains empowerment's close association to freedom, equality and social justice, especially when targeting marginalised groups that need support. In this model, adults act as teachers and mentors, as well as role models, guiding the youth and sharing their issues with them that pertain to quality of life. The model also emphasises the interrelatedness of individual and collective outcomes so that youth not only work on achieving self-autonomy, self-determination and self-esteem but that they also address these outcomes at the collective level within their communities. Ultimately, the goal of this model is to enable youth to learn from adults, to acquire the competencies and skills necessary to make changes and then to reflect on their own issues related to quality of life when they evaluate the outcomes of their actions. Again, the issue with this model relates to a lack of clarity regarding what youth empowerment exactly entails, its purpose remaining elusive.

Despite the progressive nature of this model, it is essentially based on the assumption that knowledge, skills and experiences of youth must be formulated through their interaction with adults. In other words, adults are the source of knowledge and are responsible for formulating the experiences and worldviews of youth. A potential issue this raises is the possible abuse of empowerment in order to disempower or control. As much as the model advocates empowerment, it still maintains a dependent relationship, where youth depend on adults, without endorsing the possibility that youth might have their own view of the world that may or may not be in line with the predominant view. In this model, there is also vagueness regarding what youth empowerment means. While it does recognize the need for facilitation in

order for empowerment to occur, it does not explain what, if any, role youth play in contributing to the design and outcome of empowerment.

Fourth, the Empowerment Education model, which was developed by Wallerstein et al. (2005), differs from other youth empowerment models in important ways. Namely, by not being grounded in theories of psychology. Instead, it is based on the concept of emancipation developed by Paolo Freire (1970), which is primarily concerned with achieving liberation and empowerment through educational processes. Rather than focus solely on an individual, this model encompasses the entire educational process, aiming to teach an individual the skills of being a free and critical thinker. In addition, it emphasizes that a citizen should learn and acquire skills that lead to empowerment outcomes. Fundamental skills, such as listening, dialogue engagement, critical reflection and motivation for active action, are among the tenets of this model. Furthermore, according to this model, the purpose of empowered youth education is to support and motivate youth to pursue social action and change, to emancipate youth and to assist them in developing a link between individual empowerment and community organisation. Hence, the outcomes of empowerment are not limited to individual and collective levels alone but also include political outcomes at both individual and community levels.

The main problem with this model, however, is that it assumes that educational systems are equipped with the human resources needed to achieve its goals. As revolutionary as this model may be, it is not very realistic merely because educational systems are under so much strain and pressure, suffering on many levels, to the point that they may not be able to provide youth with the environment necessary to contribute to their free growth and emancipation. Not to mention that educational systems are often designed and exploited as means of control by states or dominant social elites. Overall, this model recognises that no such concept of youth empowerment should be entertained because that would amount to indoctrination. It recognises that youth are marginalised but does not acknowledge the potential of resistance to youth

empowerment by established powerful stakeholders nor does it acknowledge the role played by the state in educational curricula. This poses serious challenges to its applicability in state-centric societies such as Qatar.

Fifth, the Critical Youth Empowerment model, developed by Jennings et al. (2006), does not oppose the basic tenets of existing models that are based on psychological and social theories. Additionally, it argues that the ultimate purpose of empowerment should be to transform youth into discerning citizens through the process of building stronger, emancipated and more equitable communities. Regardless of the programmes or the nature of activities in which youth are involved, Jennings et al. (2006) identify several key dimensions that must be present in order for effective outcomes of youth empowerment to be achieved. In addition to creating a welcoming and safe environment for youth, as well as a platform for meaningful participation and engagement, the involvement of youth and adults must be equitable rather than one in which adults are perceived to be superior. Furthermore, the nature of engagement must enable youth to participate in critical reflection in both interpersonal as well as socio-political processes. The participation of youth in empowerment programmes must reflect the integration of individual and community empowerment issues and goals, while, at the same time, enabling the youth to address the socio-political dimensions of their actions and to sense that they are capable of achieving a change in the existing conditions at both individual and collective levels.

This model is relatively more open in its acceptance of youth rationality and freedom of choice, partly because it creates a safe environment for youth and partly because it insists on an equitable standing for youth vis-à-vis adults. However, from a technical perspective, it is not clear how this model can be implemented in the Qatari context, especially given the equitable relationship between youth and adults it assumes. In a conservative society like Qatar, many adults might not be comfortable with such engagement terms. In this instance, there also

does not seem to be clear idea of what youth empowerment means and there is confusion regarding how youth empowerment policies could be depoliticised from state interference.

2.7.1 The Comprehensive Youth Empowerment Model

In contrast to the previously discussed models, a more comprehensive model is proposed by Martinez et al. (2017). It emphasises three major concepts—namely, power, participation, and education. This model identifies various youth empowerment dimensions that are frequently evaluated and analysed in youth empowerment studies, including wellbeing, relational, educational, political, transformative and emancipative ones. Each of these dimensions is based on or influenced by works of different theorists, thinkers and practitioners. Collectively, this model addresses some of the major shortcomings of the other five models.

The Comprehensive Youth Empowerment model aims to analyse youth empowerment by critically evaluating and assessing the dimensions of personal growth, education, politics, transformation and emancipation. This multidimensional approach is comprehensive and addresses various dimensions of youth empowerment at the personal level for individuals and at the social, economic and political levels for groups. It also includes those dimensions of an individual's life that are impacted by the rentier economic model. Accordingly, it makes it possible to understand whether youth empowerment programmes are ameliorating the negative effects of rentierism or not. Moreover, policies and programmes are not evaluated only according to the knowledge or skills acquired by an individual but also according to how this acquisition of knowledge or skills could affect the ability of a participant to take more initiative in her or his life. Thus, this model makes it possible to evaluate the extent to which youth empowerment programmes in Qatar are actually empowering youth and whether they are contributing to transformative changes at social and political levels in the long term.

First, the *Personal Growth Dimension*, based on Jennings et al. (2006), sees youth empowerment as those processes and programmes that intend to enable young people to acquire the skills and capabilities necessary to achieve personal growth in life and accomplish their dreams. Second, the *Educational Dimension* relates to empowerment through education, specifically through learning new competencies and skills, developing social and political awareness and enabling young people to influence the world in which they live. Analysis in this dimension is informed and influenced by Freire's (1970) work on critical thought and the role of education. Third, the *Political Dimension*, based on Lukes (1974, 2005), relates to the extent to which empowerment policies and processes create an environment that enables youth to access decision-making processes and influence policymaking in a system for the purpose of achieving change. Fourth and fifth, the *Transformational* and *Emancipative Dimensions* (also in Jennings et al., 2009) refer to the ability to use critical reflection to carry out meaningful action—hence, to acquire the ability to change a system, influence institutions and even transform values in a society. In other words, as Freire (1970) proposed, disfranchised groups have the power to resist, react to and pursue change. In this context, empowerment is perceived as a process that enables individuals to pursue emancipation from oppression and to express themselves, acting as free agents of change for the social, economic and political conditions around them. While not complete, this multidimensional model for youth empowerment can be adjusted for the context it is applied to. However, that gap, is specifically what contextual constraints are evident in Qatar that would necessitate inclusion in order for us to better understand and appreciate youth empowerment policies in Qatar.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is based on Lukes' concept of power, which explores the nature, scope and magnitude of power. This is especially relevant since it speaks to how all stakeholders – both government officials and youth, respond to the practice of youth

empowerment. More specifically, Luke's conceptualization is used in two important ways; first, to explain youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar as means by which the state exercises power to both integrate youth into a society and prevent any potential conflict; and secondly, to share insights into how Qatari youth develop their voices, exercise power and react/resist power structures. Rowlands (1997) elaborates that power analysis goes beyond the context of conflict to include non-conflictual situations and systems and where power is not necessarily a zero-sum game. In addition, my conceptualization of power includes insights from Ansell (1999) with respect to how the exercise of power shapes/informs and transforms the dimensions of youth empowerment. Interestingly, as Foucault (1980) argues, power is exercised even by those who may be considered disenfranchised or marginalized and the scope of youth power in Qatar contains *latent conflict* as Lukes (2005) discusses. Lukes' theory of power is relevant because it helps frame the analysis by focusing attention on how power flows through youth empowerment programmes/policies vis-à-vis stakeholders. This flow/shift of power has a direct bearing on definitions, policies and outcomes.

Furthermore, the study of power includes consideration of the contextual constraints that are necessary to understand the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and develop a framework through which to explore its design, process and outcomes. Those contextual constraints exist as a consequence of power relations and can be labelled as the following: (1) *social constraints* such as tribalism; (2) *economic constraints of* being in a rentier economy where affluence leads to apathy, and (3) *political constraints* where youth and government officials exist and manoeuvre according to pre-defined spaces. As a result, they are restricted in how they engage with the political system. Here, Freire (1970) proposed disfranchised groups have the power to resist, react and pursue change. In this context, empowerment is perceived as a process that enables individuals to emancipate themselves from structures of

power that prohibit/limit their ability to contribute to the social, economic and political conditions around them.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the serious issues involved in understanding the concept of empowerment. After exploring, deconstructing and analysing different theoretical perspectives on empowerment, it concludes that there are several critical facets to be considered when researching and understanding the concept of empowerment. First, the vagueness of the concept; second, its theoretical association to supporting/facilitating marginalised groups in society; third, its theoretical linkage to a certain moral authority; fourth, its purported depoliticization; and fifth, its practical association to neoliberalism. Each of these challenges occurs at the individual/community/political level and is also applicable to specific groups *in* communities or societies, such as youth. The chapter also concludes that the role played by those who have the ability/capacity to institute their choices—or those with power—is essential for any practical attempt at understanding empowerment.

Next, this chapter has specifically looked at the roles that power and stakeholders play in defining and designing youth empowerment policies and their outcomes. It was found that the roles of the state and those with the ability/capacity to facilitate or prevent empowerment are crucial. This is often an underdiscussed aspect in empowerment studies—the role played by the remainder of society in facilitating or hindering empowerment processes. Hence, the essential relationship between power and empowerment reveals that it impacts the very definition, design and implementation—if at all—of any form of empowerment. As new individuals/groups emerge in society, such as youth, they confront state institutions and those who have the ability/capacity to empower for their own space. However, there is often resistance to such an attempt at power redistribution. To put it briefly, as evidenced by the evaluation of youth policies in Malawi and Lesotho by Ansell et al. (2012, p. 54), youth

empowerment policies 'clearly reflect the aspiration of national governments and their "development partners" to control youth (for the nation) as much as to assist them, and to produce neoliberal subjects to serve national and international economies'. In other words, power—in the form of the state—ultimately dictates what empowerment is allowed to be and what it entails for whichever demographic it chooses.

The fact that power plays a role in the entire process of understanding youth empowerment is without question. This is an ongoing theme throughout this thesis. It may, perhaps, be naïve to assume that youth empowerment alone can solve the problem of powerlessness among marginalised individuals and groups when existing power relations in a social order that promotes 'empowerment' are among the root causes of marginalisation in the first place (Ansell, 2014). At the same time, it is unlikely for those in power to simply give it up for the sole purpose of improving the conditions of the powerless. However, as Murdoch and Ward (1997) point out, this could probably explain the popularity of the concept of empowerment among neoliberals and others who are in a dominant position. This makes youth empowerment and power redistribution a veneer for governmentality through which a state can maintain control.

Next, the relationship between power, state and youth reveals that there is often no agreement on basic definitions when it comes to transnational research on 'youth'. Furthermore, youth empowerment policies only give the illusion of power, whereas, in practice, this illusion is misleading. In fact, the discourse on self-realisation is often whimsical, ignoring the realities of power and privilege in any society. Finally, and most importantly, youth empowerment policies pretend to be apolitical but, in reality, support neoliberalism. This means that the policies claim to be value neutral and apolitical but are not.

Furthermore, the final section of this chapter, has analysed six models of youth empowerment that are widely utilised. After analysing these models, it was concluded that they are all insufficient to be used as a tool for assessing, understanding or even defining youth empowerment in the Qatari context. All six models avoid defining what it is, precisely, that they wish to achieve through their youth empowerment strategies—thereby contributing to the assertion that they are vague. Second, the models make a clear assumption that empowerment is a morally positive thing but provide no clear mechanism for achieving youth empowerment across socio-cultural boundaries. Third, all models are, in fact, representative of a neoliberal value-system and their suggestions often reflect that. And, while the Comprehensive Youth Empowerment model does allow researchers to have the flexibility to input their own important data, such as the contextual constraints that impact the very definition and outcomes of youth empowerment in a specific setting, it cannot be theoretically applied.

Finally, the next chapter on methodology, is informed by my theoretical framework and outlines the research methods that will be utilized to investigate the discourses and youth empowerment strategies/programmes in Qatar.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what methodology is used to explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar by scrutinizing youth empowerment programmes/policies. To reiterate, I ask the following research questions: (1) What processes and practices lie behind the production of Qatar's youth empowerment programmes? (2) What is the impact of those policies/programmes on youth in Qatar? (3) What are the implications of this research for the design of youth empowerment policies/programmes in the context of Qatar? (4) What does the understanding of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar reveal about youth empowerment more widely? To effectively address those research questions, this chapter explains what techniques and research methods were used to collect, study and explain the data produced on youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar.

To begin with, I employ the theoretical frame of Lukes' concept of power to understand the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. The ways in which power, the state and the contextual constraints impact the conceptualisation, definitions, design and outcomes of youth empowerment is important to explore. The methodological tools I use are thematic analysis and document analysis that relies on two sets of data: semi-structured interviews and documentary sources. The documentary sources are select official documents, government speeches and youth empowerment policies. By utilising thematic analysis for the semi-structured interviews and document analysis for the official government documents, text and speeches, I was able, among other things, to delve into participant definitions of youth empowerment and their imagined outcomes. This allowed me to acquire a fairly comprehensive understanding of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and, thereby, respond to each of my research questions.

This chapter commences by outlining my research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and design. I provide a detailed explanation of my two data sets, data collection research methods and procedures, which is divided into two parts. First, it includes an explanatory account of the rationale for selecting the interviewees. This section explains how I decided who to interview and briefly discusses who they are. Also, it describes how I contacted the interviewees, how I conducted the interviews, and the method of recording their responses. Second, I explain how I chose the selected documentary sources, texts, speech and official documents. Also, I explain what they are, and how they effectively reveal the discourse and practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Lastly, this chapter explains how I analysed my data using thematic analysis for semi-structured interviews and document analysis for the documentary sources.

3.2 Research Philosophy

A few years ago, while attending a seminar on food safety, the presenter – a renowned scientist, gave an exciting account on the common myths of food safety that plagued consumer behaviour and industrial practices. Among the attendants were a number of experienced chefs and executives from the hospitality and food service enterprises. It was evident that many of the attendees were uncomfortable with the assertions and recommendations made by the presenting scientist. Toward the end, one visibly frustrated guest jumped out of her seat and burst at the scientist: “How do you even know that any of this is true?” Taking a pause, the scientist calmly smiled back and replied, “Regardless of what you and I may think, and regardless of what your or my many years of experience may say, bacteria do not lie.” Everyone laughed, and there was a long round of applause. Now, as I explain my research design and methodology, I recall this experience in order to share the rationale behind my methodological approach.

The assertion that “bacteria do not lie”, refers to the positivist, epistemological approach to the scientific method of inquiry. It is this fact-based approach that made the

renowned presenter confident about her findings, even when starkly opposing much of the prevailing conventional logic among experts in the industry. Based on the scientific method, the scientist argued a clear and verifiable outcome could be ascertained, leading to unquestionable conclusions, such as the presence or absence of harmful bacteria that could potentially affect human health. Despite the protestations of the learned onlookers, scientific facts enabled her to stand her scientific ground, and to reiterate her conclusions. While such claims may be made in physics or biology, in the field of social sciences, such a positivist approach is problematic. Research and analysis are not as straightforward as when dealing with the presence of harmful bacteria or when observing phenomena under a microscope. Granted, a scientist, in a controlled environment, may be able to observe a colony of microorganisms. However, this is hardly possible when dealing with complex intersectionality, motivations and behaviours related to human beings. Especially in multifaceted social contexts, the variety, unpredictability and, at times, irrationality of human behaviour, may lead to several wayward outcomes. Although anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and other social scientists have considerably enhanced the understanding of human motivations and behaviour, it is likely that the existing relevant knowledge has barely scratched the surface. Hence, when researching a topic such as youth empowerment in Qatar, there are no agreed, singular or clear-cut answers on either definitions or shared processes for desired outcomes. However, there is an objective reality forming causal relationships that may be accounted for.

Consequently, the research philosophy of this study aspires to observe, document, understand and the reality of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar from the perspectives of stakeholders and subjects involved, namely Qatari government officials and youth. It must also be acknowledged that those in positions of authority often use their power to affect youth empowerment policies and Qatari youth as well. In this respect, two important questions are raised: what constitutes acceptable knowledge, or what is the epistemological framing in this field of study? And what is the ontological nature of reality in relation to the

researcher? According to Saunders et.al. (2009), these questions aid the development of a research philosophy because it reflects the researcher's assumptions on how he or she perceives the world. In this study, I was able to effectively embed myself in the nature of reality in Qatar given my language and communication fluency. That includes both verbal and non-verbal, idioms, nuances and gestures, not to mention the culture, religion and worldview of the participants, but especially of the youth. Still, it is necessary to build an intimate account their worldview, and to dispassionately reflect on the expressed thoughts of the interviewees on the definition and meaning of youth empowerment. To reiterate, in the natural sciences, the assertion that "bacteria do not lie" reflects a positivist methodology, where the researcher works only with objective and scientific realities. These ostensibly hard facts cannot be questioned as they are claimed to be objectively identified, measured and documented. This epistemological framing, and identifying what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study, is not easily applicable to human behaviour, especially at the collective social level. The number of red blood cells, the volume of oxygen that enters the lungs, and the composition of chemicals in bodily fluids may all be quantifiable units. However, once human thoughts, motivations, attitudes and behaviour are involved, measurement becomes extremely difficult.

In fact, researchers may even find it very challenging to maintain objectivity while dealing with social phenomena, or to separate their personal experiences from those they are observing. This is not to say that human behaviour cannot be expressed in the form of measurable hard data that presents an objective reality. A typical example can be found in the statistical evaluations of football teams and players before a match, where analysts assign scores to almost every aspect of a player's and a team's capabilities, even to the point of predicting results. However, such predictions are at best odds and expectations that may or may not match the actual performance and results. Given the complexity of the subject of study, therefore, I chose to pursue an interpretivist research philosophy.

Since this research is concerned with youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar, many of the questions I ask are of a philosophical nature that relate to how participants see the world and its reality. This includes allowing those under investigation to share their deepest, inner-most thoughts on youth empowerment and inquiring from them how it can be identified, measured and evaluated. As plausible as the position "bacteria do not lie" may sound, the fact is that this is a positivist assumption, not to mention that the world does not constitute bacteria alone. In nature, there are numerous creatures that practice and manifest deceptive and misleading behaviour for various reasons. An alternative way of looking at things is to claim that certain organisms, such as bacteria, tend to exhibit certain predictable behaviours under certain circumstances. This position is in line with what Philipps (1987, p.205) refers to as philosophic realism, namely the view that "entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them" (quoted in Maxwell, 2012, p.5). This may be considered a realist ontological approach to understanding empirical phenomena. Yet, as acknowledged earlier, the constructivist perceptions that people have of reality differ and vary, and this must be accounted for. Hence, my research method chose to incorporate both a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology.

3.2.1 Critical Realism

Given the nature of the subject of study and the challenges to the perception of reality when studying this subject, I opted to employ an interpretivist research philosophy that combines two approaches, namely a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology, namely the philosophy of critical realism. According to Olsen (2009, pp.7-8) realist ontology requires questioning causal relationships and mechanisms rather than taking them for granted, and aims at explaining a phenomenon in its current context and as part of a current situation rather than on the basis of the past or previous trends. This is especially important in the context of Qatari society, which has dramatically changed in the past decade. From its independence in 1970, and the major construction boom in the 2000s, Qatar's rapid transformation has affected youth

empowerment policies, goals, and implications. Acknowledging this causal relationship is essential, and the world exists as it is regardless of what the researcher thinks. However, critical realists do not accept one positivist perception of the phenomenon. This is where constructivist epistemology proposes that our knowledge is the result of our making or construction (Maxwell, 2012).

When combining a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology, I was no longer bound by one version of the truth. Ultimately, there is the causal reality that is observed, but in the end, this observation is interpreted and understood according to how the researcher or the subject sees the world. Hence, explanations can and will be challenged. The implication for utilizing this approach is significant. It enables me to look at specific data, from a variety of perspectives, that are often influenced by multiple disciplines and experiences. More importantly, this critical realist philosophical approach is highly relevant and useful in social sciences because, as Maxwell and Mittapalli (2011) argue, it liberates researchers of a priori theories and enables them to develop a better understanding of experiences within the context of the study. As Archer et al (2016) put it, critical realism offers an alternative to "scientistic forms of positivism concerned with regularities, regression-based variables models, and the quest for law-like forms; and also the strong interpretivist or postmodern turn which denied explanation in favour of interpretation, with a focus on hermeneutics and description at the cost of causation."

The critical realist stance employed in this thesis is therefore justified when considering the fact that researchers have their subjective positions, belief systems and the motivations. By acknowledging the inescapability of personal experience and an emotional involvement in the subject of the study, it was impractical for me to separate these factors from my personal involvement in the research. This is particularly pronounced since I had a personal interest and motivation to alter a particular policy or to contribute to a change in the manner in which the relevant policies and programmes are implemented, in order to achieve more favourable

outcomes. Overall, a critical realist research perspective offers the ability of identifying realities as they are observed as well as the flexibility of providing various possible interpretations and explanations based on personal experience and perceptions (Maxwell, 2012, p.5).

3.3 Research Approach: Retroduction Research Approach

Researchers often have to choose between two traditional methods when designing a research approach to a study, namely a deductive or an inductive approach. According to Saunders et al (2009), a deductive process is adequate when a researcher is interested in testing a theory, with the process moving from a generalised to more particular conclusion. However, a deductive process requires testing hypotheses based on measured variables and meticulously explaining causal relationships between variables. These processes are adequate with the scientific methods of positivism and objectivism, but may not be so in social science research. In addition, and as far my thesis is concerned, the scarcity of data, the high relevance of context to the area of study, and the difficulty of testing hypotheses and theories in an objective manner, and the difficulty of coming up with robust hypotheses to test, given the openness of concepts like empowerment, are serious. This made me avoid the choice of a deductive approach.

Alternatively, the inductive research approach starts from the particular then progresses towards the general with the aim of developing a theory. For Saunders et.al. (2009), this approach is commonly used in social sciences because it enables social scientists to explain the phenomenon at hand, and then to expand with the purpose of generalising in order to establish the foundations of a theory. Additionally, it is also an adequate approach because it corresponds with the qualitative nature of data that is often collected in studies conducted by social scientists (Saunders et.al, 2009). However, the research objective of this study is neither to deduce a particular understanding of youth empowerment nor to inductively develop a theoretical framework.

Researchers adopting a critical realist research philosophy resort to an unconventional approach that differs from both the traditional approaches of deduction and induction. According to Olsen (2009) this alternative, which will be used in this research, is the retroduction research approach. Rather than moving from the general to the particular as with deduction, or from the particular to the general as with induction, retroduction approach differs in focus. In retroduction, as Hartig (2001) explains, the researcher moves from what is experienced toward the knowledge of reality as it is. Thus, for example, when identifying certain patterns of behaviour in a specific situation, the researcher would be less concerned with building a theory on the basis of identifiable patterns or deducing a generalisation that would fit those findings. Instead, the researcher aims at questioning the factors that contribute to these patterns a priori, and, therefore, reaches several possible explanations. This is especially advantageous when using semi-structured interviews and coupled with the critical realist approach that acknowledges a variation of perceptions of reality, all in relation to the social situations/issues pertaining to the unique cultural values, practices and contextual constraints.

Similarly, before addressing the research strategy and design, it is essential for the researcher to further identify and clarify the concept under study. As explained in the literature review, the meaning and concept of empowerment is contested. This is an essential aspect, specifically given the various meanings and definitions of empowerment. This research conceptualises empowerment as a process that according to Ansell (1999) goes beyond the context of the constructs of power and conflict, although it does not necessarily exclude them. Empowerment, in this sense, is possibilities. It is about the mechanisms, means, and policies through which the youth in the context of Qatar can be motivated or facilitated to access and act onto their resources. This empowers youth to become agents of change in their social, economic and political environments. For that reason, retroduction-based inquiry and critical realism are the most appropriate research approaches in this study.

3.4 Research Strategy & Design

The purpose of my research strategy and design is more exploratory, rather than definitive. This research aims to explore the definitions, meaning and types of youth empowerment programmes implemented in Qatar, explaining who has designed and administered them, and to analyse the impacts of those policies/programmes on youth. The next step is to study and explain the types of youth empowerment policies/programmes applicable in the Qatari context and the justification of such application. This will include an analysis of how power instructs, informs and, even, inhibits youth agency. The research contributes to the field by highlighting the importance of contextual constraints in understanding the values, design and implementation of youth empowerment strategies, explaining what is possible in the context of Qatar, especially when youth empowerment policies/programmes are driven by the state. In other words, the purpose of the study is to understand and explain the nature and outcomes of youth empowerment programmes in Qatar and to evaluate the outcomes of these programmes. Finally, in developing the research strategy or design, I had to decide on the best available means to achieve the outcomes of the research, that is, the path that will be taken to reach a better understanding to the research questions in mind.

Developing a robust research strategy and design, must take into consideration several factors relevant to the topic of research, i.e. youth empowerment, and context. To start, the topic of youth empowerment in Qatar, is challenging, especially given the scarcity of literature available on the subject. There is also a lack of agreed-upon definitions of 'youth' and 'youth empowerment' among the interviewees. This absence of clarity results in a lack of clearly defined outcomes/policies, which hinders the efforts of policymakers and researchers. Exploring this is part of my research objective. Moreover, even a precursory glance at youth empowerment models reveals that many are not conducive to a Qatari socio-cultural context. This is especially true considering the rapid transformation of Qatari society over the last 20

years, that has altered social constructs/values, complicating the contested nature of youth empowerment. Lastly, it is important to understand the impact of power and the state on the design, implementation and outcome of youth empowerment programmes. Given these constraints, my motivation is to study the conceptualisation/practice of youth empowerment – its design, policies and outcomes in Qatar. Therefore, the more appropriate strategy for this type of focalised research is the case study.

3.4.1 The Case Study

As Baxter and Jack (2008) point out, the case study is an appropriate strategy when the researcher is faced by certain circumstances and constraints. First, the case study approach is adequate when the researcher has limited control, if any, over subject behaviour relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Secondly, this strategy is effective when the researcher is mainly concerned with questions such as "how" and "why", and where the motivation of the researcher is to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon and its underlying issues. Thirdly, the case study is highly recommended when contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon. Fourth, Yin (2003) suggests the case study as a research strategy when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear. Altogether, these justifications encourage the use of the case study design given the uniqueness of youth empowerment in Qatar, the limited control over interviewees or participants/subjects under investigation, the unique contextual constraints that impact the phenomenon of youth empowerment, the lack of agreed-upon definitions and the ambiguity between the manifestation of power, the phenomenon and the context.

In reflecting on the subject of study, all these conditions apply. For example, there is no interest in or capacity to control or manipulate the behaviours of subjects relevant to the phenomenon of youth empowerment in Qatar. Rather, the purpose is oriented toward observing, understanding, analysing, and explaining the phenomenon. Following careful exploration, it would be possible to offer insights, recommend changes and propose new

policies/action plans relevant to the phenomenon. Furthermore, this research is oriented toward answering "how" and "why" questions in relation to the phenomenon of youth empowerment in Qatar. Among the questions that are related to my specific research questions, and that further motivate this study are as follows:

- How is youth empowerment understood by policymakers, and youth, in Qatar?
- How does the unique contextual constraints in Qatar impact the phenomenon of youth empowerment?
- How have youth empowerment policies/programmes been operationalised in the context of Qatar, and why?
- Why are youth empowerment programmes implemented in certain ways but not in others? Who makes those choices?
- How has the impact of those youth empowerment policies/programmes affected youth in Qatar?

In fact, one of the major motivations of this study is not only to understand how/why past and current youth empowerment policies/programmes operate the way they do in Qatar, but also to understand how they could be tailored to achieve the desirable outcome of youth receptivity and responsiveness to the political system and civil society. This, as Yin (2003), explains, also raises the extent to which the contextual constraints are relevant and blur the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context. While youth empowerment policies from other societies/contexts may be adopted by official Qatari authorities, the issue itself is subject to numerous contextual influences. For example, youth in one country are likely to face challenges, obstacles, and opportunities that are unique in nature or specific to the country under investigation. Similarly, as reiterated, the definitions, questions and outcomes pertaining to youth empowerment are likely to vary and to be dictated not only by unique socioeconomic circumstances, but also by numerous cultural and contextual constraints. Given the unique

characteristics of Qatari society, even in relation to other societies in the Gulf region, researchers of youth empowerment cannot ignore the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts in which the subject is studied.

3.4.2 Case Binding & Scope

The type of case study adopted by the researcher is determined by the researcher's interest and motivations, and not only by the subject of study. For instance, in this study, given my personal involvement in youth empowerment programmes and professional interest in this area, the motivation is profound and practical. Consequently, this study focuses on the specific case study at hand, rather than at studying a case study that would be representative of the phenomenon of youth empowerment. In other words, my interest, as the researcher, is to study the specific case of youth empowerment in the specific Qatari context as opposed to studying youth empowerment in general or in other countries. Under such circumstances, as Stake (1995) points out, the researcher's motivation is not driven by the general aspects of youth empowerment, or by the extent to which it is representative. Rather, my research motivation is driven by the intrinsic aspects of the specific case study at hand, namely in Qatar. Hence, it is essential to define the binding boundaries of the case.

Case binding refers to the boundaries that the researcher intends to apply to the case study. While it is possible to build a case study without formally defined boundaries, adopting specific boundaries is often helpful to prevent the building process from losing focus. A researcher may set the case binding according to several criteria such as time and space (Creswell, 2003) or time and activity (Stake, 1995). Alternatively, the case boundaries may be set according to the context of the case study itself (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As far as this research is concerned, the case binding will be bound by the study of youth empowerment policies in Qatar. However, the analysis of the case will take into consideration similar programmes that were implemented in other countries as well with the purpose of deriving theoretical and empirical insights.

Overall, the scope of the case study is determined by the research questions that I am interested in answering, and which also set the general binding of the case study and the manner in which it is developed. To reiterate, the four research questions that will be answered by this case study are: (1) What processes and practices lie behind the production of Qatar's youth empowerment programmes? (2) What is the impact of those policies/programmes on youth in Qatar? (3) What are the implications of this research for the design of youth empowerment policies/programmes in the context of Qatar? (4) What does understanding the practice of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar reveal about youth empowerment more widely?

3.4.3 Interviews, Data Collection & Analysis

The data collection process began in late November 2017 and continued until March 2018. During this interval, the field research undertaken included 69 semi-structured interviews. Of the 69 interviewees, 17 were senior officials and policymakers in the government of Qatar, and 52 youth. The sample included 34 youth aged between 18 and 24 years, and 18 aged between 25 and 35. In addition, 26 of the youth interviewees were female, accounting for 50% of the sample. While a few interviews were conveniently conducted in London, the vast majority were conducted at various locations in Qatar, mainly at work offices, headquarters or study areas of the interviewees. All interviewees gave informed consent and were asked to sign documents attesting to this. Moreover, all interviewees were provided with the interview questions beforehand, but allowed to freely contribute information as they chose.

Among the 17 senior government officials and policymakers, all were intimately connected to youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar. Among them, 11 were currently in government, and 6 had semi-retired, but continued to serve in various consultancy capacities. This is often the case in Qatar with respected government officials. Rather than completely disappear from public official life, they are kept on as advisors and consultants, thereby continuing to contribute to the discussions in their respective fields. Nonetheless, I chose these high-ranking government officials for their own personal decision-making powers,

role in designing/administering youth empowerment policies or proximity to power wielders. Moreover, every individual currently or formerly was involved in the design or implementation of various youth empowerment programmes/policies and had reputations that substantiated them as players in the field.

Contacting the 17 government officials was unsurprisingly quite difficult. In fact, if it were not for my familiarity with several influential Qatari personalities, in all likelihood it would quite frankly not even be doable. In Qatar there are legitimate, and serious, security concerns. As a result of its precarious environment, it is secretive, and understandably so. Typically, government officials would simply not entertain the idea of having someone do interviews, let alone recorded interviews. The Qatari state does not allow free access to just anyone, no matter what the purported reasonings. Yet, I was in a privileged position as a respected, vocal youth who had been active in several youth empowerment programs and initiatives. Moreover, familiarity with several influential stakeholders, who had a certain level of trust in me, enabled me to reach out to targeted government officials. Certainly, there were several instances where my interview request was flatly denied. However, as I approached all meetings through trusted intermediaries who were friends or, at times, relatives of the decision-makers, then that mitigated any apprehensions that they had. In Qatar, meeting with government officials concerning their work is fraught with fears and apprehensions that the information shared could be potentially used against the individuals. To mitigate that, I allowed all government officials to review their transcripts and asked them if any of the information was too sensitive to reveal. No one chose to redact any part of their transcript.

I used the semi-structured interview as the data-collecting instrument, which proved most valuable in conducting this study for two main reasons. First, it was very flexible and allowed for additional probing whenever necessary or possible, especially when coming across issues or questions that were not previously considered (King et al, 2018, p. 71). This allowed interviewees the necessary flexibility to express their unique experiences that proved were

useful to raise additional questions on youth empowerment. Secondly, this instrument also made it possible to steer the interview in new directions that were relevant to the topic whenever an opportunity was presented to gain more insights from the interviewees and their experiences. Yet, the interviews themselves were very candid, warm and friendly. Overall, I decided to meet the government officials in a non-threatening and casual manner, which made the government officials much more comfortable. The interviews either took place over coffee/tea at their work, or in a jointly agreed location, but the most important factor that I was looking for was a level of privacy and comfort for the interviewees.

While the interview process was successful, it still faced significant constraints and obstacles. As mentioned, it was very difficult to get senior officials to accept to be interviewed, and a few either refused the idea upfront or cancelled after having expressed their initial approval. Second, many youths simply expressed their lack of interest in being interviewed. Several declined stating that their future job prospects would be affected if anyone took offense to their comments or suggestions. They displayed a clear and apparent fearfulness of how speaking their mind would negatively impact their future. Third, transcription and translation turned out to be a very painful and frustrating process, especially when dealing with interviews that were conducted in Arabic, and when interviewees used local dialects and idioms that proved difficult to translate. Fourth, the process was also very stressful since many interviewees agreed to meet during their holidays, which restricted the availability or readiness of potential interviewees. This was because some felt that it was inappropriate to discuss their work-related matters during office hours. Despite these limitations, the number of interviews conducted is significant and satisfactory in as far as exploring the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is concerned.

3.4.3.1 Two Sets of Semi-structured interviews

This study employed semi-structured interviews conducted in two separate stages. In the first stage, it targeted Qatari officials, authority figures and experts who were or are

associated/affiliated with youth empowerment programmes. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gather as much information as possible on the subject matter and to develop a broad, general understanding of the issue from the perspective of officials and youth. This multi-faceted approach allows me to explore the ideas of interviewees through their own phenomenological values, constructs and perceptions (King et al, 2018). It is questions of this sort that I considered when dealing with a complex subject of study such as youth empowerment, especially when the topic may lend itself to numerous explanations. The following questions constituted the backbone of the interviews:

- What is the meaning of youth and youth empowerment?
- What kinds of youth empowerment programmes have been implemented?
- What are the goals/purpose of these programmes?
- How are they justified?
- How are they financed?
- How are goals assessed?
- What has been achieved?
- What limitations have the previous or current programmes faced?[1]

The semi-structured interview was administered to a carefully selected group of Qatari officials with previous or current involvement in youth empowerment programmes and policies. In fact, the sample was specifically chosen for this purpose and included the offices of youth empowerment, and the ministries in charge within the government of Qatar. In this first phase, the objective was to conduct 17 interviews with Qatari officials. All interviewees were active at different levels of government, including former and current officials in charge of planning, designing and implementation of youth empowerment strategies. The purpose was

[1] See, Appendix 1A Interview Questions.

to collect as much data as possible from as many accessible officers or individuals in positions of authority as permissible with the purpose of acquiring a profound understanding of the official policy of the state and the policymakers involved as far as the experience of youth empowerment in Qatar is concerned.

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were administered to Qatari youths, including both male and female participants, including those who either had previously participated, or at the time of conducting the interviews enrolled, in youth empowerment programmes. The purpose was to collect data to create what Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to an ecology of human development or what King et al (2018) describes as a profound intersectionality in which the participant reviews the structures they exist in and their own impact therein. The sample constituted of 52 individuals, 26 males and 26 females.

3.4.3.2 Significant Observations

The data-collecting stage involved making observations and taking notes. Many of these included impressions of incidents and phenomena that were previously taken for granted by the researcher. Collectively, it became apparent that the most significant observation was the socio-cultural realities and values that shape both the understanding, design and outcomes of youth empowerment. This could be related to contextual constraints that include the religious, socio-cultural and economic realities that impact the phenomenon of youth empowerment. Some of these observations are listed below:

- Contextual Constraints
- Most interviewees were very conservative and polite in their answers. For example, when giving responses in which they were critical of a policy or of officials, they hid the criticism under layers of generalisations. This can only be understood when embedded in the nuances and idioms of the local culture. For example, when several interviewees criticised the youth ministry and its youth

empowerment activities, they were keen not to say what exactly they were criticizing, or to direct blame at any person or issue in particular.

- None of the interviewees wanted to make specific, written and attestable remarks, which was understandable.
- A clear aversion towards sounding too negative, with a majority of the interviewees refusing to directly express their frustrations. Instead, they coated their answers with positive expectations about the future. This relates to cultural values and to the tendency to avoid confrontation and conflict. Additionally, it would have been contrary to the tendency of Qataris to respect figures of authority.
- One of the interesting aspects of Qatari youth is that they, at once, resist the contextual constraints (socio-cultural norms, values, gender roles) that limit their participation and then reinforce them at the same time.
- The expression of the essential role of religion, tradition and family in shaping youth policies but without explaining how.
- All of the Qatari officials expressed a certain sense of responsibility and guardianship for youth.
- Female interviewees were far more outspoken about the challenges that faced their efforts to achieve goals, in addition to an expressed sense of pride of what they have accomplished or what they intend to accomplish.

3.4.3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, in qualitative research, is the among the main approaches to analyse data., it is “a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 77). As such, it has not been as appreciated as phenomenology, and grounded theory, even though it provides essential skills for conducting research due to its systematic approach. More precisely, by using thematic analysis, I

systematically deconstructed the 69 semi-structured interviews to locate patterns, codes and recurrent themes. And, it also provides a framework from which to facilitate the analysis of the data. To be clear, I had hard qualitative data in the form of the 69 semi-structured interviews that required analysis. Thematic analysis enabled me to identify themes in the data, label, organize and, finally, analyse them. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, thematic analysis is a powerful tool for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set.

Furthermore, by using thematic analysis, I was able to have a bird's eye view of the totality of my data. Consequently, I noticed the emergence of certain patterns, repetition of certain codes, recurring themes and shared signposts among the interviewees, that stood out like mountains across a barren plain. The vast amount of data that I collected needed to methodically documented and then I could reasonably infer the major streams of thought that emanated from the interviewees. That included perceptions of both government officials and youth towards the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, especially in relation to youth empowerment programmes/policies. Braun et al (2018) identify key concepts, different orientations and divergent practices in the field of thematic analysis. They classify three broad approaches in the field of thematic analysis, describing them as either a "coding reliability" approach, a "codebook" approach, and a "reflexive" approach. Each approach contains important distinctive conceptualizations of how to describe a 'theme' or a 'code.' In this study, I chose to use the reflexive approach.

In reflexive thematic analysis, as Braun et al (2019, p. 848) elaborate, themes are "conceptualized as meaning-based patterns, evident in explicit (semantic) or conceptual (latent) ways, and as the output of coding – themes result from considerable analytic work on the part of the researcher to explore and develop an understanding of patterned meaning across the dataset." This approach works best for my research study which wishes to avoid the bucket theme approach that places all similar sounding themes into a single basket irrespective of

whether or not shared-meaning exists across participants. To best understand the perspectives of each interviewee and, thereafter, systematically organize and identify them, it is pertinent that the perceptions and meanings of participants be explored and then classified.

3.4.3.4 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis transformed the world of applied linguistics and discourse analysis by methodically, and systematically, approaching the relationships between language, social structures and power. Its impact was felt throughout the entirety of the social sciences. Most notably, Fairclough's Language and Power (1984) and Discourse and Social Change (1992) changed the paradigmatic social analysis of language. Wood & Kroger (2000), while recognizing Fairclough's influence, conjecture that discourse analysis originated in J. L. Austin's (1962) book 'How To Do Things With Words,' in which he articulated his *theory of speech act*. That theory stipulated that language and speech constitute action and created structures of power and ideology. For that reason, I chose to use discourse analysis to explore those hidden, deeper meanings not only in the semi-structured interviews, but primarily in the documentary sources. Discourse analysis enables me to explore those narrative underpinnings of words and language construction (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In the context of this study, what that means is that it assists in analysing the semi-structured interviews and documentary sources published by the Qatari government.

Fairclough (2010, 23) writes that discourse analysis "has these three basic properties: it is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary." Its relational since the study of words and discourse is the study of a relations that create mental structures. At the data collection level, it helps us understand those interconnections. Also, it can employ a variety of sources such as interviews as well as published and unpublished texts. At the analytical level, as Wood & Kroger (2000) and Fairclough (2010) point out, it aims at explaining the action and what is being said and done through the discourse, and how the social, political, or other functions are carried out through the structure and organisation of the discourse. This is especially relevant

for deconstructing the documentary sources. It allowed me to analyse certain aspects of discourse such as organisation, structure, context, cultural aspects, as well as political and social references or meanings. This enabled me to draw a deeper understanding of what is being said or conveyed, and this often implies meanings that go beyond the empirical.

For the purposes of this study, the documentary sources, that is, the written texts, official documents and related printed materials, have been analysed using discourse analysis. All the documentary sources are from official government sources that are in charge of youth empowerment policy design and implementation. These are generally in the form of pamphlets, booklets, policy papers, and evaluation materials that either published for internal governmental circulation or public access. Discourse analysis will focus on a number of levels of analysis with respect to these documents. For example, it will evaluate the style and nature of language used in these documents, the clarity of statements and data, and the extent to which the style is used to define clear outcomes as opposed to general and vague statements. This analysis will also be triangulated with the findings of the interviews with government officials and youth.

In dealing with the issue of empowerment and the understanding of the complex relations of power, the discourse analysis used in this study will be at the macro-level. This means that rather than focusing on the text and context alone, the analysis will focus on how social structures, hierarchy, power relations and other processes tend to shape the text as seen at the micro-level as well as the context or the meso-level of the text. This will also require special attention to what Foucault refers to as discursive formations, subject position, and enunciative modalities. According to Foucault (1969), enunciative modalities or the verbal performances that are made by subjects; these are determined by the position of the subjects in relation to each other and in accordance with the power that is associated with their positions, all of which result in discursive formations, that is, the spoken or written statements along with the meanings and power relations that are embedded in them. Hence, from a practical

perspective, discourse analysis is intended to explain why subjects say what they say, why they use specific words and linguistic tools, how and why meanings are embedded in such texts, and how they define, reinforce and implement power relations between the different subjects. This is particularly useful when analysing the texts and speeches of government officials and bureaucrats who tend to attempt to construct reality using the discursive formations associated with their offices and authority, and in turn, try to convey and impose this reality onto others, specifically the youth who are at the receiving end. Ultimately, the purpose of discourse analysis in this dissertation is to deconstruct the discourse and reveal how the construction of reality takes place and its ultimate purposes.

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are an important part of any research undertaking being intricately connected to concepts of fairness, justice and a certain standard of behaviour that is meant to protect both the researcher and the subject/participant (Iphofen, 2020, 740). In fact, research ethics are also referred to as 'codes' of behaviour or 'research integrity.' Ultimately, research ethics provide a measurable target that a researcher should aspire for.

Researchers in qualitative research must particularly aware of ethical issues and considerations since they tend to be closer to participants and to interact with them more, which could impact the participant or the data collected. For example, Richards & Schwartz (2002) point out that in qualitative research, participants may be subject to distress and anxiety, especially if they are providing data that may be of a sensitive nature or opinions. Hence, it is the ethical duty of the researcher to ameliorate such distress and anxiety by taking the necessary measures that make participants comfortable and confident that their data will not be misused or misrepresented. Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2002) also stress the importance of ethical principles in qualitative research such as respect for participants, preventing any harm that may be caused as a result of their participation in the study, and avoiding the exploitation of their participation in any way that may be unethical or that may involve a misrepresentation of what

they reported. Moreover, Richards & Schwartz (2002) further assert the importance of privacy and anonymity of participants, especially the need to protect them from being identified whether by self or by others, especially when the subject of the study is controversial or can result in harm or unwanted outcomes for the participants.

In addition, research ethics include the notion of informed consent and confidentiality. In other words, it is of utmost important that the identity and safety of the interviewees be protected. All 69 interviewees gave informed consent and were asked to sign documents attesting to this. All that has been carefully documented. Moreover, all interviewees and I had a clear discussion on confidentiality

Likewise, from the standpoint of a youth in Qatar, my exploration of the practice of youth empowerment has the potential to be impacted my personal preferences/biases and experiences. This is especially true during the semi-structured interviews. So, I was very careful during the interview process to ensure that the questions I asked were not leading the interviewees into specific directions. Even unconsciously, if not careful and not paying due care and attention to the minutest details, I may inadvertently affect the judgment of the interviewees by body language, my words and subtle suggestions which would taint the research quality. Also, I wanted to ensure the comfort of the participants, allowing them to speak freely and not guiding or shaping their answers through interruptions of subtle acknowledgements of the points they raise. Moreover, as many of the interviewees were not familiar with the academic field of youth empowerment, I had to be very careful in not inadvertently imposing meaning or nudging them in directions that they would otherwise not move towards. For that reason, I did very little talking, avoiding it as much as possible, in order to ensure the ethicality of my research and to maintain a certain standard.

In addition, I had to contend with the ethicality of providing all interviewees a transcript of their recording and had to have them pass it before usage. This also posed ethical questions since any information that may be important to share, might have been redacted by them for a

variety of reasons. Nonetheless, no one among the interviewees asked to have any of the interview recordings edited.

3.5 Conclusion

The primary objective of this chapter was to explain my research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and design. In other words, this chapter explains how I decided to explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, and why those chosen research methods would best answer my specific research questions. Moreover, in this chapter, I explained how I collected, organized and analysed the data on youth empowerment in Qatar. Those data were collected in two ways: semi-structured interviews and the documentary sources that are reflected in youth empowerment programmes/policies, select official documents, texts and speeches. The information gathered from the data was triangulated, deconstructed and analysed using discourse analysis and thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

To specify, I explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar using a qualitative methodological research approach that is interpretivist and uses the retroductive approach, with case study design. First, retroduction is especially advantageous when using semi-structured interviews, and coupled with critical realism approach, since it acknowledges a variation of perceptions of reality, all in relation to the social situations/issues pertaining to the unique cultural values, practices and contextual constraints in a specific area. Secondly, due to the specificity of my research, and considering it was not done for comparative purposes, this justified the case study approach with case binding. Similarly, since the purpose of the study was to solely focus on youth empowerment in Qatar and the uniqueness of the Qatari context, and not move towards a comparative analysis, the use of the case study design was justified. Third, the limited control over interviewees or participants/subjects under investigation, the unique contextual constraints that impact the understanding and practice of youth empowerment, the lack of clearly stipulated and agreed-upon definitions and ambiguity

between the manifestation of power, the phenomenon and the context, further justified case binding. Together, this constituted my research strategy and design.

Coming to my key data source, this research study included 69 semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 Qatari government officials and 52 youths. Also, it reviewed select official government documents, speeches and texts. This chapter also provided a detailed explanation of the methods used for data collection, including explaining the logic of using semi-structured interviews and the rationale for using select documentary sources, that is, official documents, texts and speeches. It was explained that the documentary sources are all from official government institutions and can reliably be claimed to represent the aspirations of the Qatari government's policy on youth empowerment.

Furthermore, and to reiterate, to effectively understand and explain the data from the 69 semi-structured interviews, this study primarily relied on thematic analysis, using the reflexive approach. Altogether, this multi-faceted research methodological approach matches the purpose of understanding the ways people bring meaning to their environment, including allowing space for varying definitions and understandings of youth and youth empowerment. Given this variation, I had to employ an interpretivist research philosophy that combined two very different approaches: namely, a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. This made it possible to consider causal linkages, while recognising the divergence of perceptions when exploring the phenomenon of youth empowerment in Qatar.

Coming to my two data sets, the 69 semi-structured interviews and documentary sources, it is my conviction that they both provide a wealth of information on the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. First, the semi-structured interview style was welcome by the participants who tend to fear authority – connecting it to rigidity. By making participants feel comfortable in a unstructured, partly-informal setting, it allowed the interviewees to freely speak about their understandings, perceptions and aspirations about youth empowerment – both positive and negative. For instance, as further discussed in the subsequent chapters, several

interviewees pointed out that youth empowerment programmes are not necessarily about youth empowerment in as much as they are about capacity and skill-building. Their purpose, therefore, is intended to develop youth capabilities for professional purposes, to serve the needs of state institutions and meet developmental national planning needs. As such, these state programmes may possibly be focusing on specific aspects of youth empowerment, namely the organisational dimension, while missing the individual and community dimensions as defined by Peterson and Zimmerman (2004).

Second, by using documentary analysis to explore the documentary sources, it was possible to classify the obstacles and challenges to youth empowerment in Qatar as contextual constraints which originate both as a result of the socio-cultural milieu and the state/government officials. This is relevant since socio-cultural obstacles include the values, traditions, attitudes and perceptions that prevail in society which are embedded in discourse (Fairclough, 2010). More specifically, that includes moral judgement and social shaming, cultural resistance to change, lack of motivation due to affluence, no state programmes meant to educate people on definitions of youth empowerment, and a disconnect between youth and the state.

4 Understanding the Context & Practice of Youth Empowerment in Qatar

4.1 Introduction:

On September 3, 1971, Qatar gained its independence from Britain to become one of the smallest countries in the Arab Peninsula (Rahman, 2005). It has a current population of 2.7 million, of whom Qataris constitute merely 12%. Moreover, Qatar is among the wealthiest countries in the world with a 2015 GDP per capita estimated at $74,660 (Qatar: Selected Issues, 2015). That financial muscle gives it considerable weight, and despite several geo-political challenges, Qatar remains a significant global player (Kamrava, 2011). As a stable polity, political power is concentrated in a monarchical system led by the ruling Al-Thani family. However, it has distinctive layers of representative governance, municipal elections and an inclusivist power-sharing arrangement with several leading tribes.

Despite the rapid progress since independence, Qatar still faces numerous challenges to state development, nation building and modernisation initiatives, especially when confronted by a burgeoning and demanding young demographic. Qatar has a very youthful populace with nearly 60% of the population under 30 (About Qatar, 2018; Youth Facts, 2019). This raises several important issues for my thesis which focuses on exploring the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and deconstructing its youth empowerment strategies, and policymaking. This chapter provides the necessary historical/contextual background to Qatar's past empowerment policies and programmes, and the contemporary situation is discussed in the subsequent chapters.

First, this chapter provides a historical overview of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar following independence. The state introduced youth policies in shortly after independence, but the mandate of these policies were never explicitly outlined or

effectively operationalised. Secondly, this chapter focuses on the rapid structural and political transformations that took place during the period 1994 to 2008. During this period, a major power/paradigm shift occurred which catapulted Qatar into a new era under the leadership of the Father-Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The rapid transformation exacerbated socio-cultural concerns, but this was also an era that witnessed a plethora of initiatives that impacted youth and youth empowerment policies/programmes. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to list them all, not least due to time constraints. Instead, I select a few of these key policies/programmes for analysis, such as the development of the Qatar Leadership Academy, Reach Out to Asia (ROTA), and the 2008 release of Qatar's National Vision 2030.

In reality, this is nowhere near the totality of youth empowerment policies/programmes or institutions that launched youth empowerment programmes. Even at present, more youth initiatives continue to emerge, along with the formation of new institutions and administrative bodies that run them. Nonetheless, the selected policies/programmes are sufficient to shed light on the challenges facing youth empowerment in Qatar and to relay the chronic issues that plague their design, implementation and outcomes.

Third, this chapter elaborates on youth empowerment policies/programmes and important developments that took place during the 2009-2012 era. During this important period, the Qatari leadership began to comprehend the seriousness of problems that had plagued the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Hence, this section will focus on Qatar's first youth empowerment Conference in 2009 by ROTA, the establishment of Qatar Leadership Centre in 2010, and the impact of Arab Spring (2011) on youth empowerment. Lastly, this chapter will explore the neoliberal empowerment paradigm and Lukes (2005) concept of power to assess how it has impacted socio-cultural life in Qatar, the practice of youth empowerment, and, especially, in 'shifting perceptions' of youth.

4.2 Origins of Youth Empowerment Programmes/Policies in Qatar

To begin with, in 1972 - a year following its independence, the governing rulership of Qatar was under the short-lived control of Shaikh Ahmad bin Ali. However, he preferred residency overseas and was, by all accounts, an absentee landlord (Fromherz, 2012). In reality, the de facto leader was Shaikh Khalifa. And, not long afterwards, he seized power while Sheikh Ahmad was on a hunting expedition in Iran. After capturing power, Shaikh Khalifa began implementing several reforms. As Fromherz (2012, p.78) writes, Shaikh Khalifa really set the country on a path towards development and "created the foundations of the modern state of Qatar." It was under his drive that the country's first official department devoted to youth - the *Youth Care Department*, was established in 1972. It was specifically tasked with the responsibility to develop youth-centric policies, and to offer clear guidelines and set targets. Yet, due to Sheikh Khalifa's micro-management style, hyper-centralism and unwillingness to share power, he increasingly alienated large segments of Qatari society. Moreover, his invasive and domineering leadership style was such that he insisted all major/minor decisions of any consequence should pass by his office for approval (Fromherz, 2012, 79). This in turn stifled innovative initiatives and prevented the implementation of any significant youth policies during that period.

Yet, the Youth Care Department did produce a handful of documents, brochures and pamphlets calling for entrusting the youth with higher levels of responsibility, empowering them to be a more active, engaged citizenry and guiding them along the lines of their faith and culture (Ahmad, November 29, 2017). However, aside from broad supportive statements of youth, there is no indication that the Qatari government undertook any systematic analysis of youth perceptions, aspirations or motivations in Qatar. Moreover, there is no recorded evidence that a task force or action plan was commenced to actualise stated objectives. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to locate evidence that any meetings, seminars and lectures were organised to conceptualise and/or implement any plans to 'ensure youth are capable of facing the challenges

of the future' (Ahmad, December 13, 2017). Other than vague, nebulous and hazy descriptions of the importance of youth, there was no clearly apparent vision for which it worked. This inconsequential state of affairs is noticeable when scouring through official documents on youth policies in Qatar during this initial growth period following independence.

In 1976, the *Youth Care Department* was incorporated into a division under the Department of Culture, Heritage and Arts in the Ministry of Information. Then, in 1977, the entire department was moved to the newly formed Ministry of Pedagogy, Education & Culture. Here, what is interesting to note, is that with this shift, youth affairs were largely lumped together with the management of public libraries, museums and archaeological affairs (Ahmad, December 19, 2017). Moreover, the directives of censorship were further developed, expanded and implemented by the Ministry of Pedagogy, Education and Culture. This reasonably implies that government officials viewed youth affairs along with censorship in way of control, monitoring and, if necessary, suppression. As is evident, during this chaotic state of affairs, there was no work undertaken of real consequence on youth-related matters. The conflictual, perplexing movement of youth affairs to several different organizational and institutional arrangements reflected poorly on Qatar policymaking.

This situation can be attributed to the small scale of government and bureaucracy following independence. In most nascent nation-states, the initial formative years reflect a transitional period in which bureaucracies need to emerge. However, it is worth reiterating the curious situation whereby one of the functions of the Ministry of Information, housed in the department responsible for youth affairs, was censorship. The layers of unrelated functions, and policy dithering, during this period reveal that there was no clear strategy for setting youth policies or addressing youth affairs. Still, in "1978 the press and publications department of the Qatari Ministry of Information distributed a collection of speeches by Sheikh Khalifa. The rule of Sheikh Khalifa, according to this official source, had singlehandedly brought about 'a renaissance of modern Qatar'" (Fromherz, 2012, 78). According to the Ministry of Information,

Sheikh Khalifa was almost exclusively responsible for Qatar's rapid transformation and would tirelessly work for its youth and future generations (Speeches and Statements of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, 1978).

Notwithstanding that, in yet another instance of the ambiguous strategic and policymaking, in 1979, the *Youth Care Department* was transformed into the *Higher Council for Youth*. At that time, the government began a rather timid campaign to invigorate youth policies and strategies. It did so by publishing new materials that highlighted the necessity of investing in youth capacities. However, as was the case with its predecessor, there was considerable rhetoric and an absence of substance. Also, naming the department 'Youth Care' seems to be placing youth as equivalent to children - in need of care and therefore inherently passive rather than having agency. Actually, the *High Council for Youth's* mandate was described as even less transparent and less focused, since it did not even pretend to acknowledge the need for an action-plan. It did, however, organise a few, poorly attended and haphazardly organised sporting events (Adham, December 19, 2017). Nonetheless, aside from that, there was no serious research or work undertaken by the department to address youth empowerment.

In 1990, the Qatari government undertook yet another review of its youth policies/strategies. The few sporting activities that were undertaken by the High Council for Youth, although poorly organised, received considerable positive feedback from society at large (Adham, December 19, 2017). Consequently, government officials decided that 'youth empowerment' policies/strategies be connected with sporting activities and athletics. Again, the *High Council for Youth* was restructured, by official decree, to become a new structure named the General Authority for Youth and Sports. At this point, what is clearly evidenced here is that 'youth' strategies/policies were confusing. The official government stance was mixing sporting, athletics, capacity building and moral guidance matters along with job creation. This proves important when overviewing the continued perplexing top-down manner

of youth empowerment strategies and policies in Qatar even now. Yet, what is even more interesting to explore is the monumental changes that took place in the practice of youth empowerment in the post-1994 era in Qatar.

Figure 1

Year	Ministry	Department Specialized with Youth Affairs
1972	N/A	Youth Care Department
1976	Ministry of Information	Department of Culture/Heritage/Arts - Youth Care Department
1977	Ministry of Pedagogy, Education & Culture	Department of Culture/Heritage/Arts - Youth Care Department
1979	Ministry of Pedagogy, Education & Culture	Department of Culture/Heritage/Arts -Higher Council for Youth
1990	Ministry of Culture and Sports	General Authority for Youth and Sports.
1994	Ministry of Culture and Sports	General Authority for Youth and Sports.

4.3 A New Dawn for the Practice of Youth Empowerment in Qatar: 1995-2008

In 1995, a major political transformation took place in Qatar. The Father-Emir, Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, took over the reins of government and power, and completely reinvigorated Qatar. Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa announced a new cabinet two weeks after taking power (Battaloglu, 2018). This is typical of what occurs with coercive power transfers and leadership changes; the entire power structure is replaced with new individuals. Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani was appointed as prime minister on October 29, 1996. This was followed by the unprecedented municipal elections on March 8, 1999. Several innovative, ground-breaking initiatives were undertaken both domestically and internationally. Sheikh Hamad and

his government established creative, out-of-the box ways of amplifying Qatar's global foot-print on the world stage. He was "able to sponsor and host Al-Jazeera, with broadcasts that soon reached over 35 million Arabic speakers... His wife Sheikha Mozah has been at the forefront of cultural and educational development with jaw-dropping educational and institutional initiatives such as Education City" (Fromherz, 2011, p.83). In fact, during this period Qatar was put on the map in ways that it had never been done before (Kamrava, 2011). From developing a new, world-class education city – inviting some of the top universities in the world to open campuses in Doha, powering the rise of a mass media conglomerate, to being a global player in using soft power for mediation and reconciliation, these were initiatives that pushed Doha to unprecedented prominence. It is, therefore, not surprising that considerable attention was given to youth empowerment policies/programmes and dozens of initiatives were launched during this period. To name a few, Qatar Leadership Academy, Reach Out to Asia, and Qatar National Vision 2030 stand out. Yet, all of these transformations and new initiatives were occurring within a specific socio-cultural, political and economic context. This was often overlooked while these massive transformations threatened to shake the foundations of Qatari society. Nevertheless, the ruling leadership in Qatar during this time was responsive and began to recognise the need to contextualize their policies in order for them to be effective, applicable and embraced by society at large.

4.3.1 Transformative Era: Contextual Constraints

Alongside discussing the developments in youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar during the specified time-frame 1995-2008, it is important to highlight a few developments that impacted youth. To start with, in 1995, along with a change in leadership, Qatar witnessed a relatively massive inflow of foreign workers, increasing the population from merely 0.7 million to 1.7 million in less than 9 years ("Reinforcing Potentials," 2012, p.3). The majority of new comers were youthful migrants who came to Qatar in search of jobs and to generate incomes. Although migrants were never intended to become permanent settlers in

Qatar, the demographic shift turned Qataris into a minority in their own country. This represented a major shock impacting the socio-cultural, economic and political context of Qatar. In fact, those contextual constraints exist as a consequence of power relations and can be labelled as the following: (1) *socio-cultural constraints* such as tribalism, traditions and conservatism; (2) *economic constraints* of being in a rentier economy where affluence leads to apathy, and (3) *political constraints* where youth and government officials exist and manoeuvre according to pre-defined spaces. As Lukes (2005) argues, the structures of power do not only compel certain choices but what they include, but also by what is not mentioned or excluded, and by non-decision making. In fact, Lukes (2005, p.26) describes this as what distinguishes two dimensional power from three dimensional power – the ability to assess power that cannot be directly measured and is not observable.

As a result of this rapid demographic shift, naturally, many Qataris felt concerned, even threatened, about the changes happening in their society. Within a short time, they had become a small minority in their own country and were uneasy. Especially when considering their socio-cultural, economic and political context and preservation of their traditions, values and lifestyles. Qatari society, as a traditional, faith-based society utilizes these social constraints to effect order, security and maintain the status quo. Hijazi (2008) argues that while the societies of the Gulf have witnessed enormous and rapid transformations, they remain profoundly traditional and patriarchal. For example, he illustrates that while the nuclear family has gradually replaced the extended family as the basic social unit, the impact of the extended family on the perceptions, values, and behaviours of the individual remains substantial. Secondly, the massive influx of foreigners in the name of development – many with high-paying jobs as well, impacted the economics of Qatari society, and was unsettling to a majority of Qataris who did not view the entirety of life through the prism of economics/financial transactions. Thirdly, the transformation of Qatar was reflected in its altering political landscape that blurred lines of manoeuvrability and emergence of civil society and municipal

elections. All this was touted as necessary in order for Qatar to develop and achieve its potential among the comity of nations. Yet, arguably, a majority, at least a significant minority, of Qataris remained unconvinced and troubled by this rapid social transformation.

4.3.2 Socio-Cultural, Political and Economic Fears

In response to these fears, the Qatari state was forced to allocate and provide more resources for culture, welfare and social security (Al-Marzouqi, 2010). That, in turn, led to massive spending, albeit in a haphazard and incoherent fashion, on youth programs. Moreover, consultants – the best that money could buy, came from all over the 'Western' world to offer their services. A by-product of this, unknown at the time, was role of neoliberalism and the English language in perpetuating new youth paradigms and perplexing educational strategies targeting youth. On the one hand, huge amounts of money were being spent due to the fears of Qatar's culture, society and traditions being swept away as it opened its borders to the outside world. On the other hand, the consequence of that spending was that it was exacerbating internal cultural conflict and internal incoherence due to the ill-thought through strategies employed by foreign consultants, even if well-meaning. The massive financial investments in the fields of education, sports, arts, culture, among other areas, often rationalized a particular perspective on youth that was neoliberal and conflicted with local axiology.

In line with the major transformations and changes happening in Qatari society, in 2000, the General Authority for Youth and Sports was integrated in the Olympic Committee. Shortly after, two new bodies were created to manage youth affairs, namely the Youth Centre Department (YCD) and the Youth Activities & Events Department (YAED), both which reported to the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage (Reinforcing Potentials, 2012, p.107). The YCD was established to support & monitor youth centres in Qatar. On the other hand, the YAED was established to support youth programs by distributing financial support, supervise activities of youth centres and organize youth festivals. Aside from the descriptive differences,

they both often engaged in identical activities that simply mirrored each other, taking instructions from official government officials. Through these departments, as well as other institutions/programmes, the government of Qatar continues to implement a number of youth empowerment initiatives, mainly aimed at motivating the youth to play a more active role in social-cultural, economic and even political development. Yet, it does so under strict guardianship. Again, more often than not, consultants were brought in to 'educate' locals in the English language. These programs were possibly determined by a number of challenges such as the high level of apathy of many young Qataris toward national issues. Another possibility was that the state was interested in attracting the new generations of Qataris to endorse its political, economic, and social views and to be more involved in processes of state building. Overall, the majority of people participating were not local Qatari youth.

A case in point is how Rand Corporation was invited in 2001 to submit proposals for primary and secondary educational reform in Qatar and published their report under the heading 'Education for a New Era' (Brewer et al., 2007). Rand's policies, particularly in regards to youth education, were developed without due diligence on how these policies would impact Qatar's conservative society and did not consider the socio-cultural context for which they were intended. As a result, these policies were a failure and were not able to capture the imagination of the people. Education is not a one-size-fits-all type of initiative, a highly relevant issue that will be further discussed in more detail in relevance to neoliberalism later in this chapter. Yet, there were clear successes as well. The upheaval in education was so substantial that it successfully eradicated illiteracy, and both school and college enrolment for women increased dramatically to match the rates of men and even exceed them eventually ("Reinforcing Potentials," 2012, p.3). Notwithstanding that, the irony is that the steps taken with the intent to protect Qatari society and culture were quintessentially challenging it, and exacerbating fears and concerns among the more conservative circles of society.

4.3.2.1 Qatar Leadership Academy

In 2005, the government established the Qatar Academy for Leadership (QLA). It was the brain-child of 'several advisors' which is usually a synonym for foreign consultants. Moreover, it was established with a special partnership with St. John's Northwest Military Academy from Wisconsin, USA. Officially, it opened its doors on August 28, 2005, with 48 cadets being greeted by presence of the Father-Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser. The government in Qatar seems to have spared no resources or efforts in its attempts to address the youth, especially as the concept of youth empowerment started to gain attention since the Father-Emir Shaikh Hamad took over. The project in itself had very progressive goals as it focused on diverse aspects of youth development and not only on future employment opportunities, specifically by naming the preparation of the youth for civic life as a priority. However, the project was plagued by the same problems and flaws that previous youth projects had suffered from. In particular, like previous institutions and projects, the academy was detached from the socio-cultural reality of young Qataris, and it neglected to obtain their input. Although it offered very advanced specialized training, computer literacy, and other skill-sets that were intended to develop young men and women into future leaders, there were no real prospects for them to utilize the skills they had learned.

First, QLA is an institution whose purpose is to reflect commitment to youth empowerment by attracting, nurturing, developing and preparing Qatari youth as young as 11 years of age for participation in civic life (Reinforcing Potentials, 2012, p.107). By the summer of 2007, "85 students were enrolled and the school received authorisation to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate Diploma. In May 2008, the first graduates finished the Academy, and in May 2009, the first IB Diplomas were awarded. In the spring of 2010, QLA was accepted as a candidate school for accreditation by the prestigious Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States and since then has hosted an

internationally recognised high school diploma program in addition to the IB Diploma" (QLA History, 2018). Yet, it has become, for all intents and purposes, an incubation institution for those seeking employment solely in the military and not directly related to youth empowerment overall.

Since QLA is extensively involved with the military, it is important to explore the type of education that is provided to young cadets, in what language and for what purpose. This is where we the neoliberal emphasis on job creation – primary focus on military employment, and English language instruction seems to be introduced. However, the limited future prospects for these leaders remained unchanged, offering either in the military, or a bureaucratic overpaid job in the government, or at best a high-salaried job in a state-owned enterprise. At the same time, opportunities for actual civic participation do not exist or are generally too constrictive needing several layers of bureaucratic approval for implementation. Accordingly, like many of the advanced schools and universities in Qatar, the Academy became another institute that rolled out overqualified graduates whose skills could not be put to practical use across a broad cross-section of society.

4.3.2.2 Reach Out to Asia

Launched in December 2005, the Qatari government established Reach Out To Asia (ROTA) under the leadership of Her Excellency Shaikha Mayassa Bint Hamad Al Thani. The focus of ROTA is to provide high quality education, focusing on primary and secondary education, in a safe learning environment. It is particularly interested in restoring education in conflict-zones in Asia, and around the world. According to its official statement, "ROTA envisions a world, where all young people have access to the education they need in order for them to realise their full potential and shape the development of their communities." (About ROTA, n.d.). Together with partners, volunteers, and local communities, it aims to ensure that people affected by crisis have continuous access to high-quality primary and secondary education. In Qatar, and more relevant to our focus on youth empowerment

policies/programmes, ROTA engages and inspires young people to play an active role in addressing educational and development challenges both at home and abroad.

Globally, ROTA has successfully spearheaded dozens of promising educational initiatives, through a subsidiary initiative called Education Above All, that has done outstanding charitable and educational work in several countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine and Syria (About EEA, 2019). Since its inception, ROTA has recruited and trained over 5,000 volunteers – most of whom are non-Qatari, and run operations not only in Qatar but also several countries in Asia. In addition to direct financial support from the state, it also enjoys substantial support from the corporate sector. Moreover, under its local subsidiary branch ROTAQ – which focuses on domestic youth empowerment programmes, it has organised numerous youth empowerment programmes/seminars which include the recruiting, training and preparation of hundreds of young volunteers for purported employment in the philanthropic field. In addition to this, ROTA has organised dozens of local and international conferences, seminars, and workshops that address youth empowerment issues. Many of these programmes have also focused on capacity building, leadership, self-fulfilment, procuring the state-of-the-art mechanisms and methods, and utilizing the best available resources. Yet, the domestic activities of ROTA are nowhere near as much as its global footprint. In fact, it could arguably be no more than 20% of its activity.

Ultimately, ROTA is a success story in its capacity building, and reach – especially globally, especially as a result of the direct involvement and oversight of Sheikha Mayassa whose involvement has ensured the success of the initiative. However, the important point to reiterate is that the majority of its volunteers and training sessions primarily benefit non-Qataris. This is a complex matter to raise, but nevertheless, important when it comes to youth empowerment strategies/policies which are geared for its citizenry. For it is only the citizenry that is able to fully participate in civic life. Therein is a significant challenge when the beneficiaries of the training and capacity-building are not the local population that is expected

to lead in the future or confront new challenges. Also, job placement, which is a stated goal for ROTA is difficult in the limited/non-existent purview of philanthropic activism in the private sector.

4.3.2.3 Qatar National Vision 2030

Perhaps no document is as important to understand, nor as pivotal, as the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) report that was released in July 2008. In its forward, by His Highness the Emir Shaikh Tamim, who was the Heir Apparent at that time, it clearly highlights the importance of a strategic vision that builds "a bridge between the present and the future…" for the "welfare of our children, and of our children yet to be born" (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008). In other words, it is a document primarily meant to consider the role youth will play in the maintenance and continuity of Qatar's prosperity. Furthermore, it is an ambitious document that outlines five major challenges: (1) Modernisation and the preservation of traditions; (2) the needs of this and future generations; (3) managed growth and uncontrolled expansion; (4) the size and the quality of the expatriate labour force and the selected path of development; (5) economic growth, social development and environmental management.

As is evident, the QNV 2030 clearly stipulates the importance of understanding the needs of the future generations. Yet, aside from that, the entire document almost entirely excludes any targeted and specific discussion on youth. In fact, the word 'youth' is mentioned once in the entire document, and that in the context of developing a "national network of formal and non-formal educational programs that equip Qatari children and youth with the skills and motivation to contribute to society" (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008). Other than that, there is no reference to 'youth' even though they supposedly are the means from which to actualize the strategic vision.

The lack of any serious discussion on 'youth' in the document is by all means noteworthy. Granted, the objectives outlined in QNV 2030 are impossible to meet without the

stewardship of future generations, namely the youth, more discussions on requisite measures to incorporate them would have been expected. In fact, the document recognises the necessity of engaging with its younger population, but given its centrality, 'youth' as an identifiable demographic probably required an entire section of its own. As a result of its absence, there is no discussion on how to engage with youth, how to connect generations with one another, or secure their employment future; nor is there any mention of the specific challenges that youth are facing and this includes the low enrolment rates, truancy, growing apathy and/or indifference (Stasz et al., 2007).

4.3.3 The Third-phase of Youth Empowerment policies/programmes (2009-2012)

Between 2009 and 2012, a number of significant developments took place that impacted the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. During this time, the economy faster than any country on the planet, recording a phenomenal growth of 19% in 2011 alone (Nagraj, 2012). Among others, this section will examine ROTA's First International Youth Empowerment Conference in 2009, the establishment of the much-touted and respected Qatar Leadership Centre in 2010 by His Highness Shaikh Tamim, and the immensely impacting Arab Spring in 2011. These examples do not represent the totality of youth empowerment programs/policies that were launched during this time-frame. However, they were specifically selected as they highlight the chronic nature of the structural, ideological and chaotic problems that confront the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Moreover, especially in regards to the Qatar Leadership Centre, it was through its success that the faults and weaknesses of the other policies/programmes were accentuated.

4.3.3.1 Empower 2009

In 2009, ROTA launched the first ever youth empowerment conference called 'Empower 2009,' that now takes place yearly. Empower 2009 was a 3-day conference, that

took place from May 7-9, 2009, at the Sheraton Hotel in Doha. It aimed to promote "personal leadership, service learning and global citizenship as part of its new strategy for its Qatar Program (ROTAQ)" (ROTA organizes Youth Conference, 2009). As the first of its kind, it had some noteworthy achievements.

However, over the course of three days, a series of lectures and workshop were delivered, mostly by international speakers, and entirely in the English language. Moreover, there was no thoughtful consideration of including local norms and traditions, including prayer breaks, in the conference. The main organiser of the event, a British consultant, had little knowledge of the Gulf region or its culture and traditions, which became quite apparent during the conference proceedings. Even more problematic was the fact that the majority of participants were not even Qatari nationals, but rather young expatriate residents. Ironically, the opening main event was a debate between teams from two schools on the idea of 'Qatarisation', a programme that is primarily concerned with designing and implementing policies/programmes around the needs of Qatari citizens (Mansour, 2009).

While the conference was successful in creating a platform for the exchange of ideas, concepts, projects and reflections, it did not offer an opportunity to redefine the youth of Qatar as core assets to the sustainable development of the country. One major reason was that Qatari youths attended the conference and participated as mere spectators. Within the framework of ROTA's Youth Development Program, "EMPOWER 2009" claimed to give youth the opportunity to take active part in the conference, by holding key roles, such as MCs, discussions facilitators, registration officers and note takers. However, young Qataris were not the immediate beneficiaries of the proceedings. Despite this obvious shortcoming, the Head of ROTA Qatar stated, that she was

> "so proud that ROTA is organising such a unique conference! It is the first of its kind in Qatar as it will be led and facilitated by our youth. A group of students, our Youth Advisory Board, was on our side from the beginning, sharing their views and ideas with ROTAQ, in order to make this conference a reality. We have a lot to learn from the

youth; all we need is to give them the opportunity" (ROTA organizes Youth Conference, 2009).

Lastly, as frequently seen in other youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar, three major problems recurred. First, the entire program was done in English, and as such was exclusionary to the majority of the people in the country. Second, the conference was mixed-gender which violated the established norms and traditions of Qatar's conservative society. Third, Qataris are not represented in the decision-making or the overall agenda setting of the conference.

4.3.3.2 Qatar Leadership Centre

As far as youth empowerment in Qatar is concerned, the Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC) stands out as a success story. Established in 2010 under the generous and direct initiative of His Highness, the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, its aim was to become a platform for leadership excellence. Among its main aspirations was to develop "high-level leadership and management skills and talents," among Qatari youth and executive professionals (About QLC, n.d.). Moreover, it had a clear mandate and vision, directly aligned with the four pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030, namely human development, social development, economic development and environmental development (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008). By doing so, QLC combines theoretical education with practical training in its various seminars, specialized advanced executive programs and capacity building. The centre enhances leadership and management skills of its Qatari women and men affiliates through its national leadership development and institutional programmes, all of which have been developed in cooperation with world-class academic partners from prestigious universities and institutes from around the world.

QLC qualifies as a success story because of the high participation rate and its successful training of more than 800 Qatari citizens. Moreover, the programmes and initiatives it offers

directly contribute to the development and empowerment of human capital in the country in accordance with the provisions of the National Development Strategy 2020. It provides essential leadership skill development programmes in a wide variety of professional areas, and also offers young and aspiring participants the ability to learn across disciplines. QLC has served hundreds of trainees and graduates, many of whom were sent overseas for advanced training and to acquire additional exposure in areas such as risk management, strategic planning, team-building, and policy development processes.

Moreover, most of its training programmes are conducted in Arabic and are open only to Qatari citizens, and the socio-cultural ethos of QLC reflects its local axiology. In this respect, QLC is unique compared to most of the other youth empowerment programmes in Qatar. Additionally, the success of QLC and its localized ways of holding workshops, seminars and training, have led many to compare, contrast and question the prevalent practices of youth empowerment. As a result, Qatar has now formulated a working model of developing capacities. The only serious drawback of QLC is that it does not primarily target youth – or those between the ages of 18-24. Rather, its target demographic are young professionals and/or graduates who are already employed in the public sector. Hence, while it is doing commendable and transparent work that is having a real, positive impact on developing capacities of young Qataris, the target is not primarily the 18-24 demographic.

4.4 The Arab Spring and Youth Empowerment

Another crucially important issue to consider when exploring the practice of youth empowerment during 2009-2012 is the eruption of the Arab Spring. In 2011, waves of unrest swept through several parts of the broader Middle East region (Dabashi, 2012), specifically Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The popular uprisings, however, did not just stop there. Dictators and unrepresentative leaders, throughout the entire Middle East were nervous about the mass expression of discontent across the region. In particular, Saudi Arabia

and the UAE were terrified by the uprisings (Mohammedi, 2020). In response, both countries openly condemned the uprisings and announced massive financial grants and loans to support their populations in the hopes to offset any chance of revolt. Qatar, on the other hand, witnessed no such turbulence. In fact, it openly supported the Arab Spring revolts, upsetting its authoritarian neighbours. Nonetheless, there was another issue, that came to the forefront due to the popular uprising, namely the issue of youth.

The issue of youth empowerment was catapulted into the spotlight during the Arab Spring. There was an overwhelming perception, even though untrue, that youth had initiated the massive protests that shook authoritarian leaders to the core. Abbott, Teti and Sapsford (2017) argue that while the Arab Spring involved popular uprisings, it was inaccurately portrayed as a romantic story of young people revolting against oppressive regimes and demanding democracy. Similarly, Sukarieh (2017) points out that although the youth were mere participants in the Arab Spring, they were inaccurately portrayed as the actual leaders. Even worse, youth were blamed for the outbreak of violence and the violent counterrevolutions that followed, possibly to conceal the role of political and militant groups in those counterrevolutions. In this respect, Sukarieh (2017) argues that blaming youth for the violence and counter-violence of the Arab Spring obscured who the real perpetrators of violence were. This also resulted in intensifying the negatively charged context in which the youth were pejoratively stereotyped. While Qatar, and other Gulf countries, did not suffer the immediate effects of the Arab Spring, the possibility that the youth could become potential agents of disruptive change did not go unnoticed. This particularly became true as the global narrative on youth played a central role in turning the youth into a visible threat to social, political and national security. For example, Sukarieh (2017) points out that the rise in negative stereotypes of the youth is attributed to neoliberalism which perceives the youth as a restless and who tend to revolt and resort to violence if they remain unemployed.

4.5 Systemic Failure

The enormous investments in youth, whether in education, sports and capacity development did not necessarily achieve the strategic goals of Qatar. While it did contribute to the launching of several youth empowerment policies/programmes, eradication of illiteracy, especially among women, it fell far short of establishing an ecosystem for youth empowerment. There are four primary factors (examined below) that can explain the systemic failure of the policies during the 1995-2012 time-frame: First, employment is not tied to capabilities or skill-sets. Second, the rentier economy produces a rentier mentality. Third, there is no clear vision with regards to the purpose and direction of youth empowerment. Fourth, there is no evidence to suggest that Qatari youth were approached in order to incorporate their goals and objectives, and to bring them along as stakeholders in youth empowerment policies/programmes. There is a fifth major reason that explains the systematic failure of youth empowerment policies in Qatar, namely, neoliberalism which is discussed in more detail in the next section.

First, one of the declared official goals in QNV 2030 is to educate Qatari youth, raise them in line with local values and traditions, and ensure employment opportunities for their future. In reality, young graduates expect to secure employment in the public sector irrespective of having achieved any distinction in their education, capabilities or productivity (Al-Marzourqi, 2010). Consequently, since employment is not tied to capacities or skill-set, the enormous investments in state-of-the-art educational institutions and programmes, has been partly squandered, since many feel their education does not matter. As a result, the number of Qatari students reaching university levels started to decline, particularly among males (Stasz et al., 2007). Ironically, while more females successfully enrolled in and graduated from universities, they faced even fewer incentives once they reached the job market. The options that women had were either to get jobs in the public sector, specifically teaching, office jobs in government bureaucracies, or employment in state-owned or state-funded enterprises, where their access to decision-making and senior posts remained poor or limited.

Second, it is worth mentioning that 90% of Qataris work in the public sector, of which 16% work in state-owned enterprises. Moreover, 68% of male youth and 48% of female youth work in government jobs ("Reinforcing Potentials," 2012, p.57). Hijazi (2008) also argues that the rentier economy has had profound impacts on societies in the Gulf, which is particularly seen among the youth. The rentier economy is simply an economy that is based on rents generated from a resource such as oil rather than on revenues generated by productive economic activities such as industry, agriculture, or services. As a result, a rent-dependent economy is likely to run a high risk of crowding out economically productive activities as wealth is distributed to the population on the basis of entitlement rather than merit, and mainly for the purpose of maintaining loyalty. In GCC regions such as Qatar, this results in low productivity and high levels of affluence and wealth. As a result of abundance, youth suffer the lack of motivation and incentives to participate and be involved in matters of social relevance. The typical life of the young individual in Qatar, therefore, is summed up in pursuing education and then landing a public sector job where productivity is low but salaries are high. As a result of this pattern that has prevailed for decades, Hijazi (2008) argues that the youth in the Gulf are raised in a culture in which accomplishment, achievement and productivity are absent as core values. In such a cultural context, it is not surprising that the youth in the Gulf are disinterested, unmotivated, and uninvolved in public life, which in turn contributes to the negative perceptions often associated with the youth.

Furthermore, the implications of the rentier economy in Gulf countries such as Qatar have long been cited in political economy literature. According to Beblawi (1987), a rentier economy is dominated by a small economic segment that generates revenues and creates wealth which is then distributed to the rest of society for consumption. In the case of Qatar, Hvidt (2013) explains that the rentier economy is based on a social contract, where energy revenues are the single largest source of wealth, controlled by the ruling family, and distributed by the state to social recipients. Based on this social contract, society receives a wide variety of social

and economic benefits and public sector jobs in return for loyalty. Luciani (1990) further adds that in a rentier economy, the state distributes wealth to society and in return, society is exempted from taxation. However, as Beblawi (1987) warns, the rentier social contract results in a rentier mentality in which reward is not related to work and productivity, and the recipients of wealth are involved in rent-seeking behaviour while the actual production is generated by migrants. Moreover, a rentier economy will also result in the absence of political demands by society as long as it continues to receive wealth distributions as the case is in Qatar (Ulrichsen, 2014).

Third, the limited achievement of youth educational goals, especially for men, is likely the result of a systematic failure due to lack of clear vision, coherently articulated and shared with youth for motivational purposes. In the absence of a clear vision, neoliberalism was introduced and impacted the design, implementation and outcomes of youth empowerment, which will be discussed in the following section. Nonetheless, as Hijazi (2008) highlights the poor motivational levels and lack of clear vision for youth in Qatar is further evidenced when examining the enormous investment in state-of-the-art institutions, facilities and programmes in sports. Despite the massive expenditure on a diverse array of sports, youth capacity building initiatives, participation and commitment remains very low. As a result, over 70% of high school students are overweight, and almost 45% are diagnosed with obesity ("Reinforcing potentials," 2012, p.3). Moreover, even for those participating in sports programs, Qatari youth are a small minority.

Likewise, continuous structural changes in bureaucracies that address youth issues reflect the lack of a consistent strategic vision for youth development and empowerment. And, this is evident from the fact that youth affairs have migrated across several departments with very different mandates and responsibility as illustrated in Figure 2 below. For example, the mandate has changed hands from education-focused bureaucracies to sports, heritage and arts ("Reinforcing Potentials," 2012, p.107). This reveals confusion, lack of focus, and perhaps

even lack of competence among senior officials in charge of addressing youth issues. This confusion, however, simply reflects the reality prevailing at the social level, particularly the confusion on whether or not the youth constitute a responsibility and a liability or an asset (Al-Qatari, 2012).

Figure 2

Year	Ministry	Department Specialized with Youth Affairs
1995	Ministry of Culture and Sports	General Authority for Youth and Sports.
2000	Ministry of Culture and Sports	Olympic Committee - General Authority for Youth and Sports.
2001	Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage	Youth Centre Department and the Youth Activities & Events Department,
2008	Ministry of Culture/Heritage/Art	Department of youth and sports
2014	Ministry of Youth & Sports	
2016	Ministry of Culture & Sports	Department of Sports Department of Heritage & Arts

Fourth, the entangled bureaucracies that were created for youth development and empowerment seem to reflect a number of problems and challenges that faced the state with respect to addressing youth issues. Most importantly, youth are not taken along as stakeholders nor is their opinion sought after. This reflects the absence of a coherent understanding or definition of factors that constitute the opportunities and challenges that face youth in Qatar. This may not be surprising since it also reflects the aforementioned problems such as the rentier mentality, the absent link of employment with merit or skill-set, and the lack of a clear vision of what strategic goals youth policies should achieve. This is also evident in the repeated restructuring and renaming of relevant administrations, at times highlighting terms such as youth and at others focusing on heritage and culture. Although the functions and goals of the departments and administrative structures in question may have remained unchanged, the

changes in their names and titles seem to reflect confusion over priorities and strategic directions. This only supports the claim that the discourse on youth and youth issues is highly ambiguous, confused and confusing.

Thus, considering the best efforts and intentions of the Qatari state, youth outcomes from education, sports and youth empowerment initiatives do not seem very positive. On the contrary, they reinforce the perception that Qatari youth are apathetic and lacking motivation to be significantly responsive to and involved in youth programmes that were specifically designed for their development and welfare. On the other hand, it would be misleading to evaluate these outcomes merely on the basis of comparing inputs and outputs alone. Other contextual factors have also played a substantial role in contributing to how development and youth empowerment were perceived and approached, and consequently, to the disappointing outcomes. Most importantly, as was previously mentioned, a serious issue impacting the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is neoliberalism.

4.6 Neoliberalism & Lukes' Concept of Power

This section explores the impact of neoliberalism on the practice and policies on youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar in light of Lukes' concept of power (2005). In fact, one of the most important reasons for the systematic failure of youth policies/programmes to serve the interests of the youth in Qatar is a result of neoliberalism. Therefore, this section focuses on Lukes' concept of power and the impact of power on the processes by which interests can be influenced, shaped or determined, especially when discussing how power impresses certain ideas over others, whether directly or subtly, on stakeholders. This section highlights three neoliberal impositions that impact the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar: 1. the centrality of job security and job placement; 2. the imposition of the English language and culture in youth empowerment programmes, which proves exclusionary, not as because of English language per se, but rather as a result of its use to propagate a particular

narrative that is important to acknowledge; and 3. shifting the perception of youth from a positive to a negative demographic through the introduction of subtle neoliberal concepts. Here, Lukes is particularly relevant, in the manner that explain how power shapes the discourse, includes/excludes certain peoples based on language receptivity and communicative skills, and sets the framework from which youth empowerment policies/programmes proceed. This, however, may not be the case, and there could be other explanatory variables responsible for shifting the perception of youth from a positive to a negative. Yet, there is a plausible, even if not definitive, argument that emphasis on entrepreneurship, business and profit, contribute to both a capitalist/consumerist mentality, that may be linked to negative youth perceptions.

In the book *Power: A Radical View* (Lukes, 2005, p.10), Lukes cites the ubiquity of neoliberal values, assumptions and policies – "a mega-instance of 'hegemony'" – as justification for the continued relevance of his theory (Pringle, 2017, p.6). However, as Pringle (2017) mentions, an exploration of the 'three- dimensional' power of neoliberalism has hardly been systematically undertaken. As Pringle (2017, p.6) writes the "rhetoric of neoliberalism remains prevalent as ever, and so too does the importance of understanding its many manifestations." As will be seen, its influence is global and impacts Qatari society in deep ways.

First, the process and practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is based on the notion of creating jobs in the future to meet market needs. This is directly associated with a neoliberal philosophy of designing society according to the needs of businesses and other major institutions in society (Sukarieh, 2017, p.75). This neoliberal approach is in turn influenced by and based on globalisation pressures and influences in the region, and on the state's response and choice to endorse globalisation by fully integrating Qatar into a global economy. As such, the future vision for Qatar perceives the country as a global hub for commerce, services and investment, and as such, the population is gradually directed to make choices in the areas of education and employment that are consistent with this vision. Thus, ironically, the youth are

free to choose whatever they want to do with their lives, as long as these choices are consistent and in line with the vision set by the state.

In fact, it is arguable that Qatari policymakers were influenced by the myriad of Western consultants who insisted that the major and primary concern for policymakers should be to focus on preparing the youth for the job market. Agreeing, Herrera (2017) adds that what the magic pill of neoliberalism prescribes is to perceive youth empowerment through the prism of entrepreneurship.

The problem with this approach is that it considers youth to be a transitionary period to adulthood, whereas real emphasis is on future adults. And, this approach does not acknowledge the fact that the youth have needs, concerns, dreams, and issues when they are actually in the youthful phase and long before they become adults. This approach is also attributable and deeply rooted in a neoliberal ethos (Arthur, 2010). Similarly, as Giroux (2014) argues, this defines and perceives youth through a market-based lens, often resulting in disenfranchisement and displacement of the youth. Likewise, Costa and Albuquerque (2016) reflect on the contradictions of neoliberal youth policies in Brazil, the youth are defined as agents of strategic development in the official rhetoric but effectively perceived and treated in the context of future production and consumption. Even in the UK, Arthur (2010) discusses the role of neoliberal predatory capitalism in undermining social programmes and viewing youth as a demographic that needs to be curtailed through employment strategies.

Therefore, if policymakers perceive the youth as a population in transition and focus their concerns on some distant future rather than the present, this negatively impacts youth motivation (Adams et al, 2019). As a result, it is unsurprising that the youth do not think much of this period of their lives and that they may even perceive themselves as lost or neglected without a real purpose or goal in life. The result is a vicious cycle in which the negative or unflattering perceptions and discourses of policymakers may feed the negative and unflattering

self-perceptions of the youth. Adams et al (2019) allude to this psychological impact of neoliberalism on youth which may lead to vicious cycle negative self-perception, criminality, social dysfunction, and demographic prejudice which further alienates the youth demographic.

Moreover, as the evidence clearly shows, job security is quite high in Qatar and, for all intents and purposes, is guaranteed for citizens. Thus, obviating the youth issue of job security for many Qataris. In this context, a pattern seems to exist between the inputs of youth-intended official policies/programmes and their outcomes. In education, state-of-the-art institutions and programmes were built, offering the best possible education to the youth, but at the same time, this education would be of little or no use in the context of Qatar. In other words, the policies/programmes did not respond to the specific challenges that were represented in the Qatari socio-cultural or economic context.

Secondly, the neoliberal agenda is actuated through the subtle imposition of its ethos – by language through narrative and discourse development, that in Qatar is primarily shared through the medium of English language instruction. This is perhaps not surprising given the state's choice to implement neoliberal ideology. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) language socialization influences the manner in which individuals are exposed to and influenced by ideas and ideology. In the global context that prevails today, English still remains the language of global economic, commercial, political and cultural communication and interaction across many regions, especially in the Middle East. Moreover, by receiving instruction in English, learners are much more likely to associate themselves with international institutions that promote and indoctrinate neoliberalism in other countries.

In other words, it is not the English language per se, but the associated messaging that focuses on entrepreneurship and profit, that contributes to consumerism and materialism, which connects it to neoliberalism. For that reason, as can be seen in QLA, ROTA, Qatar Development Bank, and, in fact, a vast majority youth empowerment programmes, seminars

and training sessions in Qatar take place in English and occur in mixed-gender settings. Courses, training and programmes delivered in the English language, prevented those with limited English-speaking capabilities from joining. Despite openness to Qatari and non-Qatari youths alike, the majority of Arabic-educated Qataris, who come from traditional, tight-knit family units, do not communicate in English. As a result, they were excluded merely by their limited foreign language proficiency, and conservative upbringing that frowned on mixed-gender gatherings. This is how Lukes (2005) explains that choosing a vernacular for expression and the manner in which education is framed, leads to inclusionary/exclusionary practices they are a representation of power. This leads to two developments: (a) Qataris are excluded since they are not as fluent in English as expat communities; (b) The beneficiaries of youth empowerment training, seminars and programs are not Qatari, hence the skill-set does not reach the people it needs to. The policies, institutions, programmes and structures that were intended to provide Qatari youth with the best possible inputs, were not reaching Qatari citizens. Or, even if it does, it is not reaching the Qataris that reflect the majority community in their society. It is not surprising, perhaps, that Qatari youth started to drop out of high school, avoid enrolment in university, and ignore institutions that promised to transform them into generations of highly skilled individuals who could achieve their potentials. The education system was not capturing their imagination and was alienating them.

Thirdly, another interesting consequence of the neoliberal agenda, is in the manner that it views youth as a burden, problem, something to be contained or wary of. This explains the existence of two contradictory discourses on youth in Qatar. The first, that perceives the youth as an essential moral, positive force for the future, which is an indigenous insight and rooted in local Qatari axiology. The second, that considers the youth as a serious problem and a potential threat to social and political stability. The rise of a negative, pessimistic and fearful characterization of youth may be attributable to a neoliberal ethos that perceives the youth as nothing more than a future resource, a view that is reinforced by the prevailing rentier economy.

Although the evidence supporting this proposition is circumstantial at best, there is a neoliberal securitisation discourse that might become attached to youth (Sahle, 2010). Likewise, Sukarieh (2017) argues, real interest in youth empowerment concepts and policies in the Arab region was triggered only toward the turn of the century. Reports by the World Bank expressed the need to address youth-related issues, but also with the series of Human Development reports published by the United Nations, which positioned youth issues and policies, and youth empowerment as priorities for these countries. This sudden international interest in youth empowerment in the Arab region, including Qatar, was attributed to two contextual factors. The first factor was the rapid demographic change in Arab countries, a change that resulted in what became known as a "youth bulge", where young people aged between 15 and 29 in the region constitute up to 28% of the total population, and where 60% of the population is aged under 30 (Youth facts, 2019). However, youth bulge has been criticised as a myth that is often used as an excuse to explain social unrest and upheaval when in reality, it is the failure of states to set up the adequate political, economic and social policies to accommodate the needs of their societies (Bonci & Cavatorta, 2021). The second factor was the widespread marginalization and exclusion of Arab youth almost at every level.

Interestingly, traditional Qatari society, traditions and norms do not view youth as a burden or with suspicion, but rather, as a vital and valuable demographic. In fact, there is no shortage of such clichés when it comes to glorifying the youth, with widely used expressions such as, "the youth are the hope of the future," "the youth are the bearers of the torch,", "the youth are the backbone of our society" and many others that reveal the perceived and celebrated value of the youth in society. This is traced to classical Islamic norms and traditions that glorify and equate youth with innocence, lack of corruption and dynamism (Hisham, December 14, 2017). Youth, in the Islamic normative perspective, are a blessing through which transformation may occur. Illustrations of this discourse are often heard at almost every event, speech, or launching of a youth-related project. Even now, for example, Aisha Al-Mahmoud,

the general director of the ministry of culture and sports used the phrase “the youth are the pillar of the future” at the Islamic Youth Forum in Doha in July 2019 (Al-Sharq, 2019).

Alternatively, the second discourse perceives youth in a negative perspective ranging from a problem, a liability, and perhaps even to a threat to security and stability of Qatar. The perception of youth as a threat is attributed to several factors, specifically the formation of a youth bulge, that is, the number of young people constitutes over 20% or 30% of the population as the case is in most Arab countries (Chaaban, 2008; Harb, 2014). Neoliberalism has viewed the youth positively, but only as a resource, valued for their economic potential rather than the wellbeing of young people themselves. In the heightened security context of Qatar, with already existing uncertainty and insecurity vis-a-vis its neighbours, both immediate and distant, this security association with youth is considerably impacting their image. The origins of such a pessimistic view seems to have emerged following the ‘modernization’ efforts that Qatar indulged in, and which introduced a neoliberal ethos towards understanding youth. Hijazi (2008) who studied the sociology and psychology of the youth in the Gulf region, points out the contradictory discourses on youth but does not explain it from a perspective of neoliberalism. Instead, he merely reflects on the confused social and psychosocial contexts in which the youth struggle to define their social roles. As such, he does not elaborate on the origins of that confused socio-cultural reality. Therefore, it is my contention that the introduction of the neoliberal ethos occurred through the English language, which then set the parameters for educational training, seminars and conferences. Alongside the heightened security situation, which Sahle (2010) connects to neoliberalism, this began to negatively impact on youth perceptions. Together, unknown to many Qataris, the policies employed were further antagonizing and alienating large segments of their own population.

Yet, this may seem to be stretching the impact of the English language and its connection to neoliberalism too much. Certainly, if anything, neoliberalism is likely to favour using Arabic over English as it is inclined to be utilitarian - if local language means greater

'efficiency' it will be favoured. However, the everyday use of the Arabic language is loaded with terminology that reinforcing God-consciousness, social justice and charity. It directly conflicts with a profit-centric, dehumanized neoliberal discourse. In this way, the breadth, history and heavily spiritual discourse in the Arabic language, as used in Qatar, would directly conflict with a neoliberal ethos.

The conflicted and contradictory discourses on the youth in Qatar probably reflect much deeper social and political issues that characterize Arab societies in general. Sukarieh (2017), however, warns that the discourse on the youth in the region has become even more intense and politically charged, especially after the events of the Arab Spring. As a result of the increasingly antagonistic evolution in the discourse, the blame on the youth has shifted from a worrisome demographic that needs job security to a source of threat to social and national security. Worse, even as potential propagators of violence and rebellion.

The emergence of this type of blame on youth, however, while emerging in Qatar, is not unique. Similar patterns have been observed in several parts of the world. For example, Scheper-Hughes (2017) refers to a similar pattern in Latin America where the discourse on the youth shifted from negative stereotypes of the youth to the outright blame of the youth for violence, crime and lawlessness in society. Arthur (2010) writes on the role of neoliberalism to undermine images of youth in the United Kingdom. Or, in Malawi and Lesotho as suggested by Ansell et al. (2012, p. 54) in which youth are seen as something potentially disruptive. Scheper-Hughes (2017, p.13) warns to this pattern as the emergence of "dangerous discourses," arguing that they are dangerous because such discourses position the youth as a convenient scapegoat that can be blamed for any social, political or economic ailments or problems while at the same time absolving and acquitting the actual culprits and the factors actually responsible for these problems.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter divided the Qatari state's promotion of youth empowerment into 3 phases: First, 1972 – 1994, which provides a historical overview of youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar following independence. As was elaborated, the introduction of youth policies in Qatar was something that was realized soon after independence, but its mandate or vision has never explicitly been outlined nor effectively operationalized. Secondly, phase two focused on the rapid structural and political transformations that took place in the period 1994 to 2008. During that time, a major transformation occurred that launched Qatar into a new era with the extraordinary leadership of the Father-Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Not only was that transformation exacerbating socio-cultural fears, but it led to a plethora of initiatives that impacted youth and youth empowerment policies/programmes. Some of those youth initiatives/policies that were analysed were Qatar Leadership Academy (2005), Reach Out To Asia (2005) and Qatar National Vision (2008). Thirdly, phase three of youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar highlighted important developments that took place between 2009-2012. During that time, ROTA's First Youth Empowerment Conference in 2009, Qatar Leadership Centre in 2010 and the Arab Spring (2011) were analysed in relation to their impact on the practice of youth empowerment. All these chosen policies/programmes were among the most important and impacting during the three time-frames under investigation. However, this is nowhere near the totality of youth empowerment policies/programmes or institutions that launched youth empowerment programmes, yet critiquing them sufficiently shares the problems/challenges plaguing the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

Following that, this chapter highlighted the reasons for the systematic failure of policies/programmes associated with the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar during the three respective phases (1972-2012). To reiterate, that systematic failure was attributed to 5 core reasons: (1) Employment is not tied to capabilities or skill-set; (2) The rentier economy

produces a rentier mentality; (3) There is lack of clear vision in regards to the purpose and direction of youth empowerment; (4) There is no evidence to suggest that Qatari youth were approached in order to ascertain their goals, objectives and bring them along as stakeholders in youth empowerment policies/programmes; (5) Neoliberalism, which shapes the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar in the following ways: (a) The centrality of job security and job placement, though from the private sector; (b) The imposition of the English language and culture in youth empowerment programmes, which proves exclusionary; (c) Shifting the perception of youth from a positive to a negative demographic through the introduction of subtle neoliberal concepts.

All in all, the ecosystem and practice of youth empowerment exists in an illusory world, separate from the socio-cultural context from which youth are expected to play a role through capacity development. It is as though youth in Qatar are asked to suspend their beliefs, practices and values, their religious, cultural and normative ethos, and then enter the world of 'youth empowerment' policies/programmes. In that world, very little that they have been taught or understood – not even the language they speak in - is relatable. When they enter that 'neoliberal' space, they transform – are compelled as Lukes (2005) would argue - or run away. Few, if any, resist.

Given this, the contradictions in the perceptions of youth by society and decision-makers, the continuous shifts in policies addressing youth affairs, and the ambiguity with which policymakers perceive youth-related issues, youth empowerment remains a problematic issue at the official level in Qatar. On the one hand, youth empowerment is still based on the classic perception that the needs of the youth are best served by providing them with all the necessary resources to assure their access to education and secure employment – a neoliberal emphasis equating youth empowerment to job placement. On the other hand, it is supplemented by another vague assumption that youth empowerment is attained through providing the youth with resources and capabilities to develop their leadership skills in such manner that they can

take initiative and realise their goals in life through entrepreneurship – another neoliberal ethos (Herrera, 2017). Both perspectives, however, are severely flawed in the Qatari context.

Moreover, within the context of a rentier economy, education is provided and employment is secured, but without actually providing the youth with incentives to pursue aspirations, innovate, or even be involved in achieving beyond expectations. As a result of guaranteed lifetime employment in financially rewarding public sector jobs, it is not surprising that young individuals end up with no motivation to pursue higher education or seek to go beyond their career paths. Likewise, there is little incentive for youth to further develop their capacities and capabilities when, at best, they are expected to be loyal subjects in a system that curtails out-of-the-box thinking, limits risk-taking, or dissuades any form of participation at the civic, economic and political levels.

5 Analysis of Youth Empowerment Practices in Qatar 2012-2020

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I continue with an exploration and analysis of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar from 2012 to 2020. During this period, there was an attempt to evaluate and rethink the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. It was becoming increasingly clear that the design, implementation and outcomes of youth empowerment policies/programmes were not achieving the desired results of youth satisfaction (Towards QNV 2030, 2012). Similarly, it was neither leading to adequate youth capacity building, sustainable development (Weber, 2013), or even the reduction of obesity-levels among Qatari youth (Al-Kuwari et al, 2016). In other words, there was a systematic failure of the official Qatari youth policy objectives. Hence, if the preceding phases of youth empowerment in Qatar were characterized by chaos, indecision and discontinuity, this current phase is one of re-evaluation of generational power relations. Yet, even though there is a widespread recognition that the policies/programmes are not achieving the desired results, there has not been a systematic, credible attempt to identify or understand the causes of this failure. Ironically, the strategies employed to address the shortcomings have only further complicated the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. There is an acknowledgment that the goals of youth engagement/participation, satisfaction and capacity building are not being met. This is attributed to the fact that youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar are promoted as instruments of change and transformation while in reality they fail to transform generational power relations. In fact, they are deployed as tools of state power that serve and reinforce existing power relations. Moreover, there is some indication that the state perceives youth empowerment as a process of managing, directing and controlling the youth as a volatile asset or perhaps as a liability.

This chapter explores the major policies/programmes and events that shape the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar during 2012 to 2020, yet it goes even further. It does so by introducing to probe the question of power and discourse as they are reflected in youth empowerment policies, programmes and key official documents/speeches. I chose to utilize documentary analysis to explore these meanings, narrative underpinnings and notions of dominance implicitly embedded in words and language construction (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In the context of this study, what that means is that it allows me to deconstruct the meanings behind the words, as a representation of language and power (Fairclough, 1992). To highlight that, first, this chapter will analyse an unflattering government report, sanctioned by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, but outsourced to McKinsey Consulting. That report harshly critiques the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and alludes to several structural failures (Towards QNV 2030, 2012). Strikingly, the report suggested that "50% of the Qatari youth are on the wrong direction to meet the aspirations of QNV 2030; the other 50% need targeted support to ensure that they remain on track" (Towards QNV 2030, 2012, p. 5). However, even while acknowledging the failures of past youth policies, this report still reflected a poor characterisation of youth empowerment practices in Qatar. Interestingly, the production and effects of its narrative are clearly disempowering. Second, this chapter analyses the abdication speech of the HH Father-Emir Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who relinquished political power to his young son. HH Emir Shaikh Tamim was empowered when he was in his early 30's, thereby setting a hitherto unknown precedent in the history of the Middle East (Nordland, 2013). And, it was a stark symbol of passing the reins of power over to the younger generation. After all, what better example was there of Qatar's commitment to youth empowerment by transfer of power?

Third, the following section is further divided into two distinct sub-parts. Part I may be described as the 're-evaluation power-relations phase' in which the Qatari government acknowledged that its policies were not achieving their desired outcomes, and therefore

attempted to reshuffle power relations, but this was largely cosmetic. In this sub-section, four main policies/speeches related to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar are deconstructed, which are: (i) the 2014 mission statement of the now defunct Ministry of Youth and Sports; (ii) the 2016 Qatar Youth Forum and the keynote speech by the Minister H.E. Mr. Saleh bin Ghanem Al Ali; (iii) the speech by HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim at the opening of The 45th Session of the Advisory Council; and, lastly (iv) the establishment of Al Wijdan Cultural Centre for Youth in 2017. Together, the production and effects of discourse in this phase reveal governmental-level concerns on the direction of youth empowerment policies/programmes, a rhetoric of transforming power relations, but ultimately – as Lukes (2005) describes, the state uses power to further reinforce existing power structures.

Part II explores the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar between 2018 to 2020 which may be described as the 're-shuffling power' phase. At this point, there is a clear governmental realisation that a different approach is needed, but there is uncertainty and even uneasiness with sharing power in order to transform stakeholder relations. Sharing power, in authoritarian societies, is understood as disempowering. What becomes clear is that, even though there is a recognition of increasing youth estrangement and apathy, the state refuses to decentralize its power. This assertion is validated by deconstructing three main policies/speeches related to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar between 2018-2020. First, that includes the 2018 mission statement of the current Ministry of Culture and Sports. Interestingly, the ministerial response to youth apathy ultimately resulted removing the word 'youth' from the ministry – a symbol of disempowerment. As if to blame youth for not responding positively to the government-led initiatives and consequently to deny youth access to power. Next, it analyses the pivotal 2019 speech by HH Emir Shaikh Tamim to the 48th Advisory Council. In that speech, HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim, even more firmly, tackled the growing scourge of youth entitlement and consumerism in Qatar. Here, the Emir Shaikh Tamim attempts to reassert his power and authority over youth by directly admonishing and cautioning

them. In fact, the advisory council speeches are often understood as ways in which the Emir underscores his influence/authority over people. Lastly, this section analyses the most recent attempt by the Qatari government of launching QSurvey 2020, a social media campaign that claimed to seek youth input. This campaign was promoted as a transformational initiative that sought youth input, and, by doing so, was presented as empowering them to participate in policymaking. However, as will be explained, this initiative was not about transforming generational power relations but entrenching them. The structure of the survey and the production and effects of its discourse will not amount to inclusion, ascertaining youth input and/or empowering them in any tangible way. Instead, it offered merely the illusion of power-sharing, while maintaining the status quo.

Given all these factors, the practice of youth empowerment is not leading to youth satisfaction, capacity building or youth/state connectivity. The reason is that youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar are not about transforming generational power relations in as much as they seek to entrench state power and control. Alongside those power relations, it becomes clear that the practice of youth empowerment is plagued by ambiguity, paternalism, a contestation between rival ideological trajectories, and no credible mechanism for seeking youth inputs and including them in a power-sharing arrangement. Also, there was a realisation that values matter, and more state intervention is necessary in order to educate youth and confront growing consumerism and apathy among them. However, while the state has power over youth, it does not develop such educational campaigns that target youth materialism, economic absenteeism or workplace truancy.

5.2 Ministry of Development Planning & Statistics – McKinsey & Co. 2012

Growing uneasiness with youth empowerment policies/programmes, and possibly concern to pre-empt any untoward expression of youth frustrations, led many Qatari

government officials to publicly complain about the failure of youth engagement. What was hitherto a clear sentiment expressed by several influential government officials and youth activists in hushed circles became more public. These hushed circles specifically constituted of disillusioned youth activists who were previously strong supporters of youth empowerment in previous years. The main source of disillusionment was the realisation that youth empowerment was primarily about state goals rather than youth needs and priorities, and that their being on board was mostly for symbolic purposes rather than for their active participation and contribution.

In response, the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics commissioned McKinsey & Company to undertake research on youth in Qatar. In 2012, their report was published and was entitled '*Towards Qatar's National Vision 2030: Youth Future First – Actions to Support the Development of the Qatari Youth.*' (Towards QNV 2030, 2012).

A global panel of so-called experts – none of whom were from the Gulf region, were experts in Islamic culture or spoke Arabic, were brought together. They were paid handsomely and produced a largely one-dimensional report, that acknowledged what for many was already evident: there was significant dissatisfaction among Qatari youth concerning youth empowerment policies/programmes. While it was a candid document that was critical of youth policies/programmes in Qatar, and highlighted several failures over the preceding decades, it had serious shortcomings of its own. The report reflected a paternalistic, disempowering idea of the need to nurture and guide the youth by replacing state control.

Lukes (2005) is relevant here, since the McKinsey report authors, while critical of state intervention in the practice of youth empowerment, seemed to be interested in replacing state power with their own. In a way, the production and effects of the report amounted to undermining state power, even traditional family/societal role models. Thus, while the report revealed deep structural shortcomings in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, it had

several of its own. Succinctly, those are: (1) a flawed methodology that uses unexplained attitudinal and behavioural segmentation of Qatari society; (2) confusing description of 'influencers' who should paternalistically 'guide' Qatari youth; (3) an inappropriate mandate for establishment of a National Youth Agenda in Qatar; and (4) an emphasis on a neoliberal ethos by focusing on the development of entrepreneurs. The report was published both in English and Arabic, and a more concise summary of findings was widely distributed in government circles, but was not made officially public.

First, and most importantly, the research methodology for the McKinsey report *Towards QNV 2030* was judgmental and unusual. Specifically, even with its extensive survey, case studies and interviews, its segmentation of Qatar youth population based on attitudinal differentiation was incoherent. It defines 4 '*segments*' of Qatari society by a pattern of attitudes and behaviours which distinguish them from others, labelling them as: (a) Motivated and Socially Conscious; (b) Motivated and Individualistic; (c) Connected and Apathetic; (d) Disenchanted and Unengaged (Towards QNV 2030, 2012). Yet, there was no clear, sound explanation or justification for describing Qatari segments in this manner. While using 'segmentation' is a perfectly viable methodological tool, it is important to recognise the sociological/psychological premises upon its use (Fonseca, 2011), After all, descriptive labels as noted above, such as 'motivated' and 'individualistic' or 'connected' are highly subjective and far from self-explanatory. Moreover, there were no benchmarks in the report against which the attitudinal or behavioural labels were compared or contrasted against. All in all, it seemed as if the purpose of this segmentation was classify the youth into segments that are easier to manage or influence from the perspective of the state.

Second, while the report Towards QNV 2030 recognises youth policies/programmes have been applied in a paternalistic, vertical top-down approach, without considering the perspectives, opinions and needs of the youth, it does the same. In other words, the report acknowledges that the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar requires radical transformation

of its power relations. Yet, it recommends the same top-down approach through the introduction of 'influencers,' who, presumably, would simply replace official state interventions. Contradictorily, the report's criticism of the paternalistic practice of Qatari youth policies/programmes and their own approach to policymakers is identical: namely, the 'influencers' have the right answers and solutions, which only requires proper implementation (*Towards QNV 2030*, 2012, p. 21-28).

The report criticises the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar for being out of touch with youth. However, their recommended policies are actually designed, developed and implemented by so-called foreign consultants with arguably little knowledge of Qatar's context, religion or history. For instance, when discussing the role of education and knowledge the report presents confusing information on how different segments of Qatari society respond to those terms. What becomes clear is that, in local axiology, there is a clear difference between institutional systems imparting education – often seen as unrepresentative of cultural norms - and knowledge emanating from indigenous learning ecosystems, from mosques, family etc. There was no accounting for this difference in perception, which consequently skews their data. This not only results in depriving the youth of their voice in youth-related policies, but it may also suggest that these policies may not be adequate for and attractive to them.

Perhaps then it is not surprising that most youth policies/programmes do not seem to capture of the imagination of youth. Nor do they succeed in motivating the youth to be more involved in the activities these policies create and offer. Relatedly, this leads to another realisation, that large segments of Qatari society, who are described as unattached, individualistic or apathetic, may not be. Rather, it is a natural response to the poor-quality of youth empowerment policies/programmes that do not reflect their value-system which impacts their participation. Accounting for socio-cultural contextual inputs, the basis of robust sociological analysis of a host population that results in effective coding their attitudinal and behavioural proclivities was ignored in this multi-million dollar report.

Thirdly, the report *Towards QNV 2030* argues for the creation of a National Youth Agenda and Qatari Service corps. How they propose on doing so, when policymakers simply do not have the knowledge or skills to address youth issues, is unclear. But why are they proposing this? That is unclear, but the result of such a policy is the wholesale introduction and adoption of bilingual education into Qatari society, with emphasis on increasing English fluency (*Towards QNV 2030*, p.32). Qatar is an Arabic-speaking, Muslim majority society, with a strong socio-cultural tradition and longstanding, deep local axiology (Rahman, 2005). Ignoring that, and attempting to supplant it with a foreign language that arguably advantages those fluent in English, and non-local normative values will not be the solution to youth empowerment policies/programmes becoming more effective. In fact, it will deepen the socio-cultural contestations and turn segments of society against one another by those who regard modernization as a betrayal of religion, family and traditions (Tamimi and Esposito, 2000).

Certainly, it is not the English language per se, but the use of the English language, and associated texts, that are problematic in that they attempt to reshape power and access to those who have English language fluency. Again, this seems to support the contention that the designers of the report, while censuring existing power relations, seem to be interested in replacing it with their own. Moreover, progress or developing an open, inclusive and welcoming society does not need increased fluency in English. After all, Germany, Japan, Brazil and several other countries are a case in point, in which a small fraction of the population are fluent in English.

Next, the suggestion of the necessity of a Qatari service corps again falsely assumes that large segments of Qatari society are apathetic to less privileged, and it represents a coerced town-down approach for developing a caring society. It does so with the outrageous assumption that the reason for a lack of engaging in volunteerism and youth empowerment activities is due to the absence of an ethic of empathy (*Towards QNV 2030*, p.33). Instead, the authors of the report failed to consider that perhaps it was both the messengers and the messages that

contributed to low participation levels. For instance, Zakat is a socio-cultural institution that is an integral part of orthodox, normative Muslim society, ongoing for the preceding 14 centuries (Moghul, 2017). Qatar is among the most generous countries on the planet, and each financially independent individual is duty-bound, as a part of their religious faith and socio-cultural heritage to give at least 2.5% of the yearly expendable income to those less fortunate and feeling with those disadvantaged. Would this not qualify as being based on sympathy and being connected to wider society or those less fortunate? In fact, both sympathy and empathy are engrained in the normative Islamic socio-cultural values, since the money that is given away to charity is cannot even considered '*my money*.' The 2.5% is the right of those less fortunate (Moghul, 2017).

Most importantly, the McKinsey report, in the discourse that it proffers, seems to be facilitating some key ideas associated with a neoliberal ethos. Throughout the text, terminology such as emphasis on entrepreneurship (*Towards QNV 2030*, p.29-33), and the need to encourage business acumen among youth is directly related to classic neoliberal narrative (Sukarieh, 2017). In addition, the report focuses on vocational training – directly relevant to job placement and neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007), as a solution to make youth empowerment policies/programmes more attractive for the youth. It is questionable as to why the report would emphasise such an issue when there are no job security problems for the youth in Qatar. While no clear answer exists, the likely consequence of emphasis on neoliberal policies is to produce a discourse and narrative that furthers materialism and consumerism. Harvey (2007, p.5) writes "for any way of thought to become dominant, a conceptual apparatus has to be advanced that appeals to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit." What this means is that the recommendations of the McKinsey report seem to be aiding and abetting this neoliberal discourse in society, which possibly contributes to taking power away from the state, into the hands of market fundamentalists.

5.2.1 The Father-Emir's 2013 Abdication Speech: Transfer of Power

On June 24th, 2013, the then Emir Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani stunned not only his own countrymen but the world when he delivered a brief abdication speech. He addressed his people, first by praising God, and then, specifically, addressing the youth of Qatar (Reuters, 2013). For him, who then immediately became referred to as the beloved 'Father-Emir,' it was clear instance of transforming power relations and handing it over to a younger generation (Telhami, 2013). In fact, in his abdication speech the Father-Emir stated the "time has come to open a new page in the journey of our nation that would have a new (youthful) generation carry the responsibilities with their innovative ideas and active energies" (Reuters, 2013). Then, as he continued, he said: "Our youth have proven that they possess the strength and determination, the spirit of modernity, and a deep awareness of the challenges and demands of the day and the ability to cope with every novelty and to genuinely contribute to modernity and innovation" (Reuters, 2013). These were the first, and clearest, statements at the highest official level in Qatar that emphasised the essential role of youth and wished to transform power relations.

Furthermore, as Telhami (2013) deciphers, the brevity of the Father-Emir's abdication speech, in contrast to the long-winded and tiring tradition of tooting one's own horn, was avoided. The Father-Emir could have listed dozens of accolades and milestones that Qatar achieved under his watch, but he simply refrained from doing so (Telhami, 2013). Instead, he was brief, and to the point in making it clear that power would go to the youth who needed to take their responsibility seriously. This unprecedented emphasis on youth in Qatar, however, was not isolated from local, regional and international contexts. On the local level for example, Qatari leaders and officials were already addressing the need for economic diversification away from oil and gas. On the regional level, the events of the Arab Spring in which the youth played a significant role (Sukarieh, 2017) forced officials across the region to take a closer look at the potentials of youth and the need to accommodate them, as well as on the dangers of failing to engage them (Thompson et al, 2018). Internationally, youth issues and youth empowerment

had already become an attractive subject for global organizations and within the development discourse. Overall, there was an overwhelming sense of change, and there was a clear commitment, from the highest political office in Qatar, to transform power relations and incorporate youth into policy-making decisions.

Lastly, there is another essential aspect of the Father-Emir abdication speech that hardly gets noticed or analysed. That is the constant references to religious verses, from the Qur'an and Prophetic sayings, and Qatar's Arab/Islamic identity. As a matter of fact, in every single paragraph God is invoked, whether directly or indirectly, and Qatari youth are reminded of their responsibility to God, their people and humanity. Unequivocally, the Father-Emir says 'although I am confident about your loyalty to your Arabic and Islamic heritage, I advise you to preserve our cultural values that stem from our religion as well as our Arab and human heritage…I advise you to stick to righteousness despite all changing conditions ...'' (Reuters, 2013). This messaging is essential, but most youth empowerment policies/programmes ignored the ethical component and rationalization of responsibilities. Instead, they have pursued an exploitative capitalist, neoliberal agenda that is in stark contrast to the concluding cautionary message from the Father-Emir. Thus, while the transformation of power relations was explicitly endorsed and supported at the highest political levels, implementation seems to have been blocked in practice by administrators and bureaucrats.

5.2.2 Decoding the Practice of Youth Empowerment (2014-2017)

Given the extensive resources allocated to youth empowerment programmes in Qatar and visible political support from the political leadership, it may seem that the implementation process would face few hindrances. In reality, however, numerous obstacles and resistance to power transformation complicates the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. The purpose of this section is to select public and official discourses and highlight that the practice of youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar claims to transform power relations, but only

further reinforces existing power structures. The following sections are further divided into two parts: Part I will include a review of the now-defunct 2014 Mission Statement of the Ministry of Youth, then it will critique the 2016 Qatar Youth Forum Ministerial speech by His Excellency Salah bin Ghanem, the speech by HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim at the opening of The 45th Session of the Advisory Council, and an in-depth analysis of the Al Wijdan Cultural Center; Part II will use discourse analysis to deconstruct the 2018 Mission Statement of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the 2019 speech by HH Emir Shaikh Tamim to the Advisory Council, and the most recent QSurvey youth social media campaign.

5.2.3 Ministry of Youth and Sports 'Mission Statement' (2014)

Across the Gulf region, youth affairs are generally managed by a specialised and dedicated ministry often known as the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Sukarieh, 2017). This was also the case in Qatar, but only for a brief period of less than two years between 2014-2016 – which is something we shall further explore later in this section. Nonetheless, the mission statement of the now-defunct 2014 Ministry of Youth and Sports stated that its purpose was to "elevate the condition of the youth, develop their capabilities, highlight their role in performing their duties, and raising the status of sports in the state to the level of prominence…" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). Clearly, the mission statement is claiming to aim to transform power relations and empower youth. Moreover, among its responsibilities is "licensing and supervising the entities and associations that specialise in youth affairs, and organizing the involvement of youth in local, Arab and international conferences, seminars, competitions, camps, trips and festivals…" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). Finally, it also aims to sponsor and develop "gifted and outstanding youths, in addition to participating in the organization of national and sports events and activities" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). Collectively, this rather long-winded mission statement outlines three varying and perplexing trajectories that only reinforce existing power structures, while claiming otherwise: (a) the functional purposes and roles of the ministry, particularly in

terms of organization of and participation in local, regional and international events, is at the behest of the state; (b) strategic purposes of the ministry, which reveals a confused and confusing juxtaposition of contradictory ideas, concepts and mandates is also state-led; and (c) the emotive and hyperbolic rhetoric for grandiose purposes and youth inclusion.

First, the 2014 mission statement loosely outlines its own state-led functional purposes, but juxtaposes with local and global aspirations. The begging question is what is the necessity, relevance or purpose for the state to insist that youth empowerment be connected to global youth affairs or conferences? That important question has rarely been asked. Yet, seen through the pervasive lenses of neoliberalism, there is often a tendency of 'borrowing' universalistic language and phraseology in order to gain legitimacy and transition societies away from the concept of social justice (Nafstad et al, 2009). Lessons can be learned from everywhere but the practice of youth empowerment, and resolving civil society/government contestations is not something readily transferable from elsewhere. Youth affairs are fundamentally a local phenomenon that needs careful review and analysis in the context within which it exists (Jennings et al, 2006). On the contrary, by studying the language used in the 2014 mission statement, there is an emphasis on regional and global initiatives, without explanation on what purpose that serves. Furthermore, emphasis on global initiatives will do nothing to transform power relations inside Qatar.

Second, the 2014 mission statement also lacks a clear vision or statement of purpose that pertains to the nature of youth policy that the ministry was committed to. Its main focus is on highlighting the quantity of participations and sporting events, without any reference to the developmental direction or philosophy that such programmes would take. Needless to mention, the ultimate priority of the ministry was focused on sports activities and institutions, and to some extent on cultural development. In this sense, the now-defunct 2014 Ministry of Youth and Sports acted more on supporting, financing and developing sports-focused activities. Again, this had nothing to do with transforming power relations or providing youth with

opportunities to participate and share in policy-making. Of course, it is perhaps not surprising given the popularity of certain sports, especially football and to a lesser extent, basketball in Qatar, that the state had focused on this. The state offered substantial financial support to football clubs, and the rise to prominence of several Qatari football clubs was accelerated as they successfully enlisted international players from Brazil, Argentina and a number of African countries. This progress, however, had no bearing on youth empowerment. Again, the beneficiaries of this financial investment were not largely Qatari youth, as their actual participation remained low and inconsequential. Granted, the financial investments brought world-class players to Qatar, but had little to no impact on the actual youth of the country. Seemingly, this type of activity has much more to do with brand Qatar, than transforming power relations, including youth in power sharing arrangements. In fact, it only further reinforced state supremacy in the practice of youth empowerment.

Third, the 2014 mission statement uses a careful selection of formal words and terms that frequently fall under the generic of official rhetoric. Terms such as ‘elevate,’ ‘raising the status of sports,’ ‘highlight’ and ‘prominence’ are keywords that reveal the grandiosity within which the practice of youth empowerment exists. Everything must be big, bold and bright, even if without substance. Flamboyance is often used as a substitute for depth and talk of transforming power relations is used as a cover to reinforce power. Moreover, these words are high in emotive content and resonate with people (Rocklage et al, 2018), but in actuality do little to concretize a systematic plan of action for the claimed objectives of youth inclusion and empowerment. This, too, reveals an ongoing challenge in the practice of youth empowerment, namely big talk, but little to show for it. In other ways, the branding of Qatar or aspiration for elevated branding seems to take precedence over thoughtful, vision-orientated direction towards increasing youth satisfaction and capacity building.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, the 2014 Ministry of Youth and Sports existed for barely two years only until mid-2016. After that time, it was dissolved and transformed into a

small department under the 2016 Ministry of Culture and Sports (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). During the approximately two years in which the Ministry of Youth and Sports existed, numerous youth-related events and initiatives were launched, suggesting significant political support, a substantial budget, and access to other resources. The 2016 restructuring into the Ministry of Culture and Sport was sudden, unexplained and bewildering. It seems that as soon as the actuality of transformational power relations was about to occur, the whole process was abruptly stalled. It practically turned youth affairs into a non-issue, by removing the term youth altogether from its description. The complete absence of the word youth is not simply a matter of semantics, but also a reflection of the new ideological, political and administrative realities within this ministry. One plausible explanation is that the state shifted to a narrower and more conservative perspective on youth affairs by focusing on culture and sports, not on transforming power relations. On the one hand, culture from the perspective of the ministry is mainly concerned with tribal traditions and arts such as tribal music, dance, and festivals. On the other hand, when discussing the role of youth in sports activities, their participation is physical, not at the organizational level. The management of sports events is entirely in the power of the state. It seems the state is not interested in transforming power relations, and while youth may be participating, the structures of power that are resisting power-sharing are intact, untouched and persisting.

5.2.4 Qatar Youth Forum 2016: The Minister's Speech

In early 2016, under the auspices of the newly formed Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Minister Salah bin Ghanem al-Ali and his team organized the Qatari Youth Forum (QYF 2016). The QYF 2016 event presented itself as a game-changer – by explicitly recognizing the mistakes of the past and having a clear vision for the future. Yet, while it arguably spoke of transforming youth/state power relations, it did not implement any policy that achieved that. Looking closely, the QYF 2016 event arranged several workshops over two days that touched on several issues that were considered important for youth in Qatar, without even consulting

youth. Moreover, at the forum, where I was present, the deletion of the word 'youth' from the newly formed ministry was palpably felt by several youth who openly expressed disapproval. And, this is indicative of the paradoxical challenge of the Qatari state in having to mobilize and empower the youth without upsetting the status quo.

In such cases, as Ansell (2014) explains, the solution would be to transform individuals and groups in a manner that does not challenge the prevailing social order. This may be what Qatari officials are struggling to achieve as they attempt to address the needs of the youth, but there is resistance to power-sharing. However, the management of change, and maintaining a semblance of the prevailing power structures, is a complicated balancing act. As Ansell (2014) further argues, empowerment involves altering power relations that may be oppressive or restrictive in ways that lead to marginalization. Therefore, even if one considers the practice of youth empowerment as apolitical in the sense that it only focuses on empowering the youth to achieve individual economic goals, it may easily become political in nature by the restructuring of power in a society. Both Lukes (2005) and McEwen and Bek (2006) concur and this was manifest during the QYF 2016 event, when senior officials embraced a rhetoric of youth empowerment, while simultaneously distancing the practice of youth empowerment from any real social or political change.

Most indicative of the challenges that confront the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, during the QYF 2016, was the keynote speech delivered by the Minister Saleh Bin Ghanem. Below is a translation of the statement he made on the official Qatari state policy concerning youth affairs:

> "We are betting on you (the youth) to accomplish Vision 2030 […] the big day is in 2030 when the music plays, and I am betting on the Qatari youth, because all indicators are there despite the small population of our country. I am betting on you to play the music, music that is derived from our culture and that is made to match the spirit of modernity, and to stun and impress the entire world" ("Qatar betting on the youth to achieve the developmental goals of Vision 2030", 2016).

Just from this small excerpt from the above ministerial speech, a number of issues are worth discussing, namely grandiosity, the shifting of responsibility, ambiguity, the balancing act of tradition and modernity, and employability. Altogether, the ministerial keynote speech revealed many of the same criticisms that were hitherto evident in exploring the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar from previous years: Big talk of transforming power relations and youth empowerment with little to not real impact on altering power structures. In the speech, predictably, was a focus on grandiloquent claims, lack of clarity on direction, recognition of the necessity to balance tradition and modernity without careful thought on how to accomplish that, subtle absolving of responsibility if things do not progress as claimed, and, lastly, a neoliberal focus on employability/job market.

Looking closely, first, the QYF 2016 ministerial speech uses emotive and grandiose language as a substitute for effective messaging. Also, the speech was written and delivered in English, using words, idioms and phrases that are frowned upon in local axiology. In a typical pompous style of communication, the speech overstated potentials and glorifies expected outcomes, that hardly match reality. Word choices in the ministerial speech such as 'stun' and 'impress the world' betray a distinct degree ostentatiousness. The irony, argues youth activist Majid, is that "we will be happy if we could just catch up with the rest of the world, and yet, his excellency thinks we can stun and impress the world," (Majid, Personal Interview, 2018). Majid's words may reflect bitterness attributed to the fact that he, and many others like him, feel neglected and left out of the planning processes undertaken by the Ministry on issues they believe affect them directly. However, the phrase "happy if we could just catch up with the rest of the world" also reflects a changing attitude among young Qataris. It is a form of resistance to the high-sounding discourse of self-glorification that has become popular in Qatar since the turn of the century. In the Khaleej, youth are raised with a sensibility of over-importance and privilege which is accentuated by an unrealistic and exaggerated sense of self, and influence in

global affairs. This current new generation of youth are sceptical of such hyperbolic, grandiose claims, and demand more realistic promises, plans and policies. The state employs grandiose language as a way to entrench its power and authority through awe and excitement, but leaves power structures untouched.

Second, the poor choice of selecting the word 'betting' is problematic in two ways: (1) its use is mentally associated with gambling – a major sin in Islam, and, therefore seen in a decadent, lowly way; (2) its usage in the speech shifts the obligation of success to the youth, rather than the government. The question is why was such a word used? Most likely, the speech was simply written by a staffer and passed to the minister without much thought to the depths of the meanings associating with the terminology. In fact, the minister uses the word "betting" in a supportive fashion (as in the state supports youth). And, if in a North American/British context, it would be understood solely as such. However, it does not have the same impact in a Qatari context. Not only is the terminology culturally insensitive, but it is further confounding when coupled with placing the onus of accomplishment on youth. This shifts the responsibility for youth empowerment on the youth themselves – of the powerless to become self-empowered. Thus, if the youth successfully achieve the desired outcomes and deliver as the Minister is 'betting', then their mission is successful.

However, if the bet fails, then the responsibility falls on the youth, not on the respective governmental department or corresponding minister. Reflecting humorously on this minister's speech, youth activist Majid said, "He (the Minister) invited us to inform us that he is betting on us to get his job done in matters that concern us. We should really thank him very much," (personal interview, 2018). Likewise, Ibrahim (Personal interview, 2018) expressed his frustration by stating, "I am all in for Vision 2030, and I support every aspect of it. But no one ever asked me my opinion, and then suddenly, I was told that I am responsible for making it happen. You know what, I am fine with that, but could you please tell me what tools you are placing in my hands to make it happen?"

Third, the ministerial speech at QYF 2016 was full of ambiguous and ambitious promises, lacking any specific mentioning of how the mission will be accomplished or who will be held accountable for success or failure. The speech included no discussion on the purposes or objectives of youth empowerment, and, at the same time, it indirectly addressed the needs/sentiments of different stakeholders by using subtle meanings and references embedded in symbols or hidden between the lines.

Fourth, the ministerial speech reflects an important internal challenge in Qatari society, which is the continuous effort to reconcile tradition and modernity. To illustrate, the perplexing ministerial choice of words when he refers to youth succeeding in playing "the music" that is derived from their 'traditions' but with the 'spirit of modernity', which 'stuns the world.' Again, this messaging was meant to target several conflictual stakeholders and purportedly coalesce them for ambitious purposes. There is a clear attempt to balance those conflicting power groups. To conservative elements in society, his message implied youth in Qatar should be connected to their traditions. In regards to the word "music," consider the opinion of youth activist Adham (Personal interview, 2018), who said "We are in an age and time when listening to any form of modern music is being questioned, whether it is religiously permissible or prohibited." Hence, using 'music' as a metaphor for success was perplexing and nonsensical for conservative segments of society. What youth activist Adham is referring to is how local axiology frowns on many forms of music and the word choice of the minister reflects how he is out of touch with the increasingly conservative ground reality. For that reason, there is an increased emphasis by the Ministry of Culture and Sports on traditional, folkloric arts and music, instead of westernized projects that promote modernism.

Similarly, hidden between and embedded within the carefully selected words of the Minister is messaging to both secular and religious stakeholders, and trying to balance between them. By linking 'music' to 'tradition,' the minister was attempting to appeal to both conservative and liberal stakeholders assuring audiences that modernity will reconcile both

legitimate concerns. Yet, as mentioned, this balancing act is complicated, and neither stakeholder may be entirely satisfied with the direction. Two important points are worth mentioning in assessing his discourse using Fairclough's second dimension of discursive practice (Fairclough, 1992, pp.72-73). According to Fairclough (1992), the discourse as a discursive practice involves placing the speech or text in a specific context which makes the text a coherent part of previous texts that reflect the ideology, thinking, or attitude of the speaker and the official institution that he represents. Moreover, this discursive practice attempts to balance between traditional, conservative elements in society, and liberal, secularized individuals who argue for the wholesale adoption of what are purported to be modern values. Coupland (1999, p.5) refers to this practice as the creation of otherness, that is, representing a certain group in a certain way to make them appear as the other which may be alien, out of line or even deviant. For both liberals and conservatives, this 'otherness' is accelerating which bodes problematic for civil society and social cohesion.

Fifth, the ministerial speech highlighted the potential of youth in Qatar – again arguing for transformation of power relations, yet filtered that potentiality in the form of economic productivity for the future. The fact is that different actors in the Qatari political system impact the practice of youth empowerment policies in different ways. As Hayward (2014) argues, when several and different actors are involved in policymaking, the outcome is not necessarily the result of the actions of one specific actor. Nevertheless, the ministerial speech alluded to 'employability' several times in this speech, which paralleled the prime focus of the workshops and seminars over the course of the QYF 2016 event. In other words, while the forum was held under the banner of youth empowerment and change, its main objectives were simply about future employability of young adults. This, as has been previously discussed, severely restricts the scope of youth empowerment to a neoliberal concern for the market (Sukarieh, 2017). Furthermore, the activities at the forum were not created, developed, or managed by the youth, but rather by government officials and bureaucrats. The goals and purposes were applauded as

youth-oriented, but in practice, they had specific neoliberal economic and social purposes that addressed the needs, interests and concerns of the state, but not necessarily the youth.

5.2.5 Qatar Youth Forum Workshops: Neoliberal Emphasis

The Qatar Youth Forum 2016 was promoted as a major event throughout the entire country. Organized by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, it was celebrated as a unique event that offered youth an opportunity to express themselves and be heard by relevant government authorities. In other words, it was being marketed as a ground-breaking initiative that would transform power relations between the state and youth. However, the emphasis of all workshops was almost exclusively on job placement and vocational training, not on youth empowerment. To be precise, the QYF 2016 event included a number of workshops that were advertised under headlines such as (1) "Explore Your Interests and Your Future Career"; (2) "Youth Legislations"; (3) "Who's In For Youth Initiatives?"; (4) "Qatari Youth and Working for the Media." The choice of words for the workshops cannot be separated from discourse of the minister, or the subtle nudging that the state is encouraging youth to follow. In fact, these selected titles seem to define the meanings and boundaries of youth empowerment in such ways that reinforce the power and authority of the state, and which impose certain expectations on what the youth can and should do with their potentials and other resources.

To begin, the first workshop was entitled "*Explore Your Interests and Your Future Career,*" and was merely an invitation to youth to choose from pre-selected available opportunities. Instead of exploring, the youth are invited to choose from a select list of limited options where they may possibly fit in. Likewise, even in the word choice for the title of the workshop, the verb "explore" is used in the imperative form, which instructs individuals and tells them what to do. Participants were informed on how to explore their interests, within confined space, and the boundaries of the exploration were educational paths and career goals. All this was merely reinforcing power structures and relations to the disadvantage of youth.

Similarly, the workshop entitled "*Who's in for Youth Initiatives?*" served as a method of recruiting youth to pre-determined initiatives that the youth had nothing to do with in terms of creation, design, planning or even implementation. Their role would only be to follow instructions at the execution level to achieve outcomes defined by much older, and out-of-touch officials. It is as if the ministry believes youth empowerment is achievable without the actual involvement and contribution of the youth. They only need youth to participate in their selected initiatives, so that success can be declared. These examples reflect a rather classic understanding of empowerment by the state as an actor to persuade and influence the youth in ways that aim at serving specific goals and objectives of the state but not necessarily the interests of the youth (Lukes, 1974).

Again, the workshop entitled "*Who's in for Youth Initiatives?*" merely spoke of "youth initiatives" to conceal state-sponsored initiatives such as joining training programmes whose main purpose was to improve entrepreneurship and business management skills of youth. The elegant visual display of available programmes was intended to recruit young people and get them to register in educational and training facilities outside the mainstream educational system regardless of their age or their professions, and whether they are in school or university. Again, irrespective of the workshop title, it was not about the interests of the youth, but rather the interests of the state and how it perceives the future of a society where citizens are highly qualified professionals and entrepreneurs. However, those who may have alternative needs or interests were generally ignored and excluded from the entire programme by default because their interests are not necessarily aligned with the bigger picture perceived by the state.

Overall, the entire QYF 2016 event reflected several contradictions between what was being said and what was being done. The forum was hailed as a major initiative and as an important step in the direction of including the youth in decision-making, without including them in the design, implementation or outcomes of any of the workshops. Moreover, there was no mechanism to include them in the future. Even though, the QYF 2016 forum was high on

the rhetoric of proclaiming the importance of youth and the spotlight will shift onto them, the opposite occurred. It was the Minister who was the centre of focus, he did the talking, and spoke in a reassuring, but authoritative and paternalistic way. This is very much in line with prevalent traditional social practices in Qatar. And, the entire forum, as expressed by the minister was simply about the state asserting its authority and informing youth that they were chosen to carry a specific load on their shoulders and were expected to deliver results, even though they did not have a say in the entire process nor tools required to accomplish the expectations. Similarly, it was the Minister who received the media attention and whose voice was heard almost the entire time, and it was the Minister who delivered the final word at the event. As a social practice, this falls within norms and traditions in Qatar where officials or leaders get all the attention, rather than shifting the spotlight onto others. Although the event itself was supposed to highlight a new era of state policies in which things were different, the social processes and the media images of the event and its discourses were within the boundaries of traditional practices.

5.2.6 HH Emir Shaikh Tamim's Speech

HH Emir Shaikh Tamim's speech on November 1, 2016, at the 45th Session of the Advisory Council, is important to discuss in regards to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. It substantiates that there was serious concern, at the governmental, official level, with the direction of youth mores in the country. In addition to outlining several economic strategies that the country is implementing following a downward spiral in oil and gas prices, the speech specifically admonishes Qatari on two issues, namely consumerism and employment absenteeism. These two issues had never been directly spoken of in such a brazen, unabashed manner as they were now. What they revealed was there was a clear awareness of rising hedonistic, consumerist lifestyle among youth, which is an affront to a spiritually centred ethical life. Also, something never hitherto acknowledged, was the phenomenon of

'*employment absenteeism'* among youth – which is basically young Qataris securing cushy jobs in several national ministries, and, even though collecting salaries, just not going to work.

First, in his speech His Highness the Emir Shaikh Tamim unequivocally stated that he was clearly concerned about an increasing consumerist tendency among youth:

> "Sometimes, dear brothers, when I see billboards on the streets that read: "Qatar deserves the best", I say it would be more correct to read: "Qatar deserves the best from its citizens". There are challenges that we should tackle, which are related to the motives and values of youths and the impact of the culture of consumption on these motives and values." (Emir Shaikh Tamim Speech, 45th Advisory Council, 2016)

In the above statement, it is clear that the Emir Shaikh Tamim has identified growing consumerism and materialism among the country's youth. Not only that, the speech was important in another way as well. It targeted the associated exceptionalism and sense of entitlement that is afflicting young society. As one drives throughout Doha – the capital of Qatar, there are several billboards written that laud 'Qatar deserves the best.' This statement is somewhat curious, and, in the context of local values and axiology, is inappropriate. According to normative Islamic values, and Arab custom, one must never assume what one deserves. Gratitude, and hope, but never expectation or entitlement. Hence, the Emir's reaction to it occur perfectly within the push/pull of modernity and competing values among youth and the official government's uneasiness with their future direction and role. For that reason, the Emir Shaikh Tamim chose to correct this statement by emphasizing 'Qatar deserves the best from its citizens.' And, this was primarily referring to its upcoming youthful generation.

Secondly, the importance of the Emir's speech to the 45th Advisory Council is ground-breaking in being the first official recognition of the problematic phenomenon of *employee absenteeism*. Perhaps few countries in the world experience such a serious dereliction of duty. In fact, employee absenteeism (Dalton & Enz, 1987) is a major cause of concern in public and private enterprises. In the context of Qatar, it is even more worrisome. What the Emir Shaikh

Tamim is alluding to is the economically devastating occurrence of thousands of Qataris being employed, in various capacities, but simply not going to work/or hardly going at all. Since job security is provided by the state, and there is no incentive or penalties associated with not showing up to work, there is a worrying trend of many simply not showing up. It has become of such importance that the Emir has openly called this out, and more and more is being done to remedy this unfortunate situation. In his speech, he clearly stated:

> "A public sector employee should not be inactive in discharging work requirements. A job is a right, but discharging the tasks of this job is a duty. The citizen's rights on our part include education, training and qualifying him for work, and it is his duty to do his work in the best way possible, accomplishing his tasks on time and as per the required accuracy and complete integrity. As a citizen he also bears an additional duty of advancing the work and being proud of it to realize its mission in serving the community and the state." (Emir Shaikh Tamim Speech, 45th Advisory Council, 2016)

Essentially, the context of HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim's speech was that Qatar's energy and oil market had suffered a considerable financial set-back, and the regional countries led by Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E had imposed a blockade. During this tense time, the Emir was particularly worried about the moral and ethical direction of youth in the country. Absenteeism was growing, as was a lack of concern about the direction of the country. For that reason, the Emir was reminding citizens of their duty and responsibility as citizens, since an increasing number were ignoring them. And this is what most clearly outlines the official government position towards youth per se. From that moment onwards, many new initiatives would be launched to remind Qatari youth of their moral and social responsibilities. The importance of hard work, social justice, honesty and integrity. This is what led to the development of the Al-Wijdan Cultural Centre, as will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.7 Al-Wijdan Cultural Centre (2017)

In 2017, as a result of several official statements expressing concern over the ethical direction of youth in Qatar, the government decided to establish the Al-Wijdan Cultural Centre (A-WCC). It was established by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and with the express

purpose to develop the moral and ethical ideals of Qatari youth, in line with their religion and culture (Sami, 2017). Rising rates of youth delinquency (Salem, 2007), youth apathy (Towards QNV 2030, 2012), youth truancy (Stasz et al, 2007) and poor-health (Al-Kuwari et al, 2016) were a major cause of anxiety for the government. As a consequence, the Qatari government established the Al-Wijdan Cultural Centre as a way to be able to intervene and influence youth away from consumerism, apathy, and toward a healthy, productive and morally responsible lifestyle. This was the state intervening and engaging in an educational campaign to transform power relations and engage youth. It did so by encouraging eight value orientations for youth that are relevant for the Qatari religious and socio-cultural context. The importance of value orientations was originally conceptualized by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), but at the heart of the newly formed A-WCC was the belief that values matter. Therefore, it encouraged youth to carefully reflect upon the value orientations that dealt with the following themes: human nature; human beings; science; time; employment duty; afterlife; diversity management; and, community responsibilities. Together, these value orientations were presented as ontological and epistemological questions that A-WCC intended to use to 'guide' youth. Of course, the direction was towards established Islamic practices and normative behaviour, in line with Qatar's religio-cultural legacy. Lukes's (2005) concept of power is relevant here in reference to the attempts of the sate to socially engineer its citizenry by shaping their thoughts and nudging them in a specific direction. This is unsurprising since societies typically attempt to recreate their ideals in some way, shape or form. What is important to recognise is why was this necessary? What compelled the government to take such a step? Was not the family unit capable of providing the necessary moral guidance? All these, and many unanswered questions remain, but what was clear was the state-led fear that Qatar is losing its children, as the common phrase is heard.

According to Lukes (2005), those in a position of authority are able to set the framework, which restricts the parameters of manoeuvrability. The value-orientation of Al-

Wijdan Centre does precisely that by basing their orientation choices on their culture, religion and language, which were further substantiated using verses from the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic tradition. As mentioned previously, there is nothing untoward about this. All Muslim majority societies utilize both the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions/example as normative, and everlasting embodiments of their ethical compass. Of course, the application of those ideals, and what they amount to in a particular context, is often debatable. Yet, the Qatari government very much views its youth in a paternalistic way, and presents these value orientations as a means of fashioning the new generation. Nonetheless, there are five main critiques of the discourse used by A-WCC. That includes the manner of presenting the value orientations, ambiguous discourse which is not age appropriate, paternalistic/stern messaging, inconsistency, and the limited outreach capacity.

First, the value-orientations of A-WCC are expressed in the form of questions. This is, perhaps, indicative of the wariness the authors had of accusations of imposing values, coerciveness and restricting agency. Rather than directly impose values, A-WCC subtly nudges people towards a particular faith-based, religious orientation. However, even while doing that, it is not clear. In the fear of coming across as insisting, it dithers. Perusing their website does not lucidly provide answers, explanations or even clear direction. It does, however, provoke thought on important questions on human nature, the purpose of the human being, the afterlife and touches on many of the official concerns relevant for Qatari youth, such as dereliction of duty and responsible citizenry. Still, the manner that the value orientations are presented is problematic, perhaps, so as to not offend those who do not share similar worldview. It does not outright castigate those who engage in employee absenteeism, but rather asks whether it is appropriate? One youth activist, who I had interviewed, and is associated with Al-Wijdan Centre, felt the value orientations were too domineering, and do not sufficiently explain why these subtle value orientations are beneficial. He said A-WCC does not offer explanations or rationalizations, but only claims: "to extract a series of values that our youth needs…if we can

apply these values through the media and mosques, we will achieve a society free of any flaws" (Interview Ghanem Suleti, 2018).

Second, the seminars, workshop and activities of A-WCC do not cater to a younger demographic within the age group of 15 to 23 years, but more likely to those who are early to mid-career in the 24-34 years category. Even, the language used reflects a heavily philosophical vernacular that is rarely used in modern days. For example, on the website there is an interesting, thoughtful discussion on the importance of time which states, "For a vast majority of the members of the *ummah* [the community of believers in Islam], time is a major burden that people plan to consume or get rid of: how do we spend an evening? How do we spend a vacation? How do we find an excuse to avoid showing up to work?" Understandably, the purpose of these queries is to emphasize the importance of productivity, and to respect time. Yet, the wording of the text assumes that time is viewed as a burden – to be consumed or spent, which is far from substantiated. Moreover, the text actually seems to be speaking to older adults. Or, more pointedly, to those individuals who have jobs and careers, as in the specific reference to employee absenteeism and vacation time. The reference to work, vacations and productivity makes the overall discourse ambiguous and unfocused.

Third, the overall quality of the discourse is paternalistic, often reflecting a disparaging tone when discussing any of the value orientations such as time, and admonishes those who waste it. This, indirectly, is hinting at the immorality of any activity that spoils time or that is meaningless or directionless, but does so in an accusatory fashion, using phrases like "Youth are wasting time." "Islam disapproves of idle behaviour." There is a sternness, and impatience, in the approach utilized by A-WCC for educating youth. Granted, the notion of instructing youth to respect their own time, and that of others, is commendable. However, the manner in which these values are instilled, including the language and methods are also important. Time spent on play, fun or excitement, need not automatically be associated with wastefulness, negativity and impiety. In fact, in traditional, conservative circles there may be a tendency to

view such activities through a narrow prism of improvidence. An unyielding, firm approach lacks maturity. And, well-established in youth psychology (Pickhardt, 2009), there is already a normal tendency for rebelliousness among youth that is worsened through elevated control. It will, in all likelihood, further entrench aversion to the messages and value orientations being propagated. Furthermore, according to the paternalistic discourse of A-WCC, youth are perceived as passive recipients, an age group that needs direction, and unable to make responsible decisions on their own. All in all, this is an utterly disempowering discourse, which often alienates youth and discourages them from participating in activities, projects and programmes initiated by the Ministry, even if they are branded as part of a national youth empowerment policy.

Fourth, the messaging and value orientations of A-WCC is inconsistent in its messaging of giving both positive and negative reinforcement. Take for instance how it demonstrates the importance of Qatari culture, tradition and religion in its outreach to younger generations. There is a tendency to both praise and complain. To talk about the 'youth being the leaders of the future,' but criticize their tendency to miss opportunities or ignore the future by focusing on the past. The messaging is at times incoherent, and does not maintain positivity and an encouraging tone. For instance, the introductory message on the A-WCC website complains about how "Islamic organizations [groups] are still engulfed by the same battles over discourse, using the same old rhetoric…proving that we are still stuck in the first century of Islam" (Values and Perceptions, 2017).There is absolutely nothing wrong with attempting to instil values in your community, yet to do so in a manner that contradicts the messaging you share shows inconsistency. As such, it becomes unpersuasive. It is absurd to teach non-violence through violence; To speak of respecting 'time' and constantly being late; to champion a rhetoric of youth voices, without allowing them to express themselves.

Fifth, there are legitimate doubts on the outreach capacities and effectiveness of A-WCC in spreading its message and value orientations. For example, A-WCC has held many

lectures/seminars on the dangers of consumerism, wastefulness and reckless driving. However, the majority of the participants to these events are largely non-Qatari. Moreover, while there is a credible online presence, the visitors to the A-WCC website is arguably quite low, especially when counting unique visitors to the site. In this way, the reach of the messaging is insufficient in impacting the practice of youth empowerment for Qataris.

The formation of A-WCC was done with the clear purpose of countering the perceived growing apathy, consumerism, moral laxity, and reckless, indifferent behaviour amongst Qatari youth. While, undoubtedly, the A-WCC may be well-intentioned, there is sufficient evidence to believe that the primary demographic of Qatari youth is not being effectively reached. This raises serious concerns over the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar and complicates the state's initiatives to address youth concerns. This becomes all the more difficult, when there are no mechanisms launched to ascertain genuine youth sentiments.

5.3 Decoding the Practice of Youth Empowerment (2018-2020)

This section deconstructs and analyses three select public and official discourses in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar between 2018 to 2020. First, the 2018 Mission Statement of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. Second, the 2019 speech by HH Emir Shaikh Tamim to the 48th Advisory Council. Third, the most recent attempt by the Qatari government to claim to want to ascertain youth sentiments by launching QSurvey – a social media campaign in December 2020. Together, these examples substantiate the findings of this study that the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar does not transform generational power relations, but only reinforces power structures. Lastly, the concluding section elucidates the anticipated trajectory of youth empowerment practices in Qatar.

5.3.1 Analysis of the 2018 Ministry of Culture and Sports Mission Statement

The 2018 'mission statement' of the Ministry of Culture and Sports is quite revealing and three important lessons are drawn from it. First, the word 'youth' was officially removed

from the title of the ministry and there was no explanation on why this was done. Arguably, strong possible reasons for its exclusion include the state's fearfulness of mentioning the word 'youth', and therefore being held liable for not meeting youth objectives. Yet, for the purposes of this thesis, the removal of the word 'youth' is most damaging to state-led claims of transforming generational power relations. Second, the mission statement primarily covers two separate and distinct areas, namely culture and sports, which is confusing, but also indicates the approach of conflating youth issues in these two broader focus areas. Third, it incorporates licensing and censorship among its responsibilities and mandate. This, as well, is indicative of the state's reversal of inclusion of youth, to shifting focus on containing, censuring or being wary of youth issues and demands. In total, there was some indication by a government official (Government Official Interview, 2018) that those who conceptualized the new Ministry of Culture and Sports had resigned to not being able to effectively tackle youth issues, and, as a result, just gave up and removed the word 'youth' altogether. Overall, the mission statement is problematic in several ways, and to highlight that, let's begin by taking a closer look at the first paragraph of the 2018 'mission statement.' It is as follows:

> "The Ministry of Culture and Sports is specialized in the managing the affairs of culture and heritage, in maintaining popular heritage and the national and Islamic traditions of heritage. Its mission is to promote this culture and to conduct relevant research and studies, to organise events, to celebrate national festivities, and to license the formation of arts groups. Its mission is also to establish and exercise ownership of and censorship over audio and visual broadcasting stations and institutions, and to license all kinds of publications, newspapers and different classes of artworks" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018).

First, most noticeably, the absence of the word 'youth' from the newly constituted Ministry of Culture and Sport, in both the title of the ministry, and the mission statement, is reflective of the intentions and new power dynamics emerging from the state. A mere passing reference to youth comes at the end of the Ministry's mission statement (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018), and only in a secondary manner. This reflects a subjugation and subordination of the 'youth' demographic to the seemingly more important focus on culture and sports. In

fact, the part of the mission statement that addresses youth is not even a separate paragraph, but rather an odd, out-of-place sentence which does not flow with the content of the preceding paragraph. The passing phrase, which best qualifies as a cliché, reads: "to elevate the status of the youth and develop their capabilities" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). It seems to have been just a last-minute addition. At a first glance, this may seem as a mistake. However, the word 'youth' has been deliberately deleted in what one may only extrapolate to conclude of its diminishing importance or frustration. Yet, the financial resources, time and commitment to youth empowerment in Qatar is unquestionable. Hence, it is highly unlikely that the issue of youth has become less important. This complexity is best understood in the manner the state uses the rhetoric of transforming power relations, investing in youth empowerment, but in practice reinforcing power structures that curb/contain youth agency. Therefore, it is only logical to assume that those who conceptualized and wrote the 2018 mission statement perhaps did not want to be held accountable for not meeting youth targets, and simply avoided mentioning youth as an essential component of their mandate. Hence, if youth are not mentioned, the ministry is not responsible for not meeting those targets directly related to them. No matter what the reasoning, it seems to indicate an exasperation in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Still, 'youth' as an identifiable, important demographic and their specific affairs are barely given any attention. The most revealing aspect of this is the hypocrisy of maintaining a rhetoric of elevating youth capacities, without transforming power relations.

Second, the mission statement outlines the primary function of the ministry as two-fold: culture, by managing heritage and promoting traditions, in line with Islamic traditions; and sports, namely sporting events and the sports management. Although not exactly explained, there is a rationalisation that culture is to be handed down, from one generation to the next, that is, to the upcoming youth or younger generations, especially given the prevailing assumption that sports are associated with the youth. This may explain the association of two separate areas of culture and sports together, with youth affairs as a subsidiary. However, the absence of the

word youth with no reasonable explanation probably affirms the emphasis of the ministry on sports.

Moreover, another important aspect to highlight in the mission statement is when it outright declares its primary aim is to preserve "culture and heritage, in maintaining popular heritage and the national and Islamic traditions of heritage. Its mission is to promote this culture and to conduct relevant research and studies, to organise events, to celebrate national festivities…" (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). In this, we have a clear instance of the mission statement reminding all stakeholders of the importance of Islamic traditions and their commitment to them. This, undoubtedly, is in reaction to accusations that much of what was being done in the educational field in the country, as well as under the rubrics of youth empowerment, was not reflecting Qatari values.

Third, the mission statement includes the responsibility of licensing and censoring. It states that among their duties is "exercise ownership of and censorship over audio and visual broadcasting stations and institutions, and to license all kinds of publications, newspapers and different classes of artworks," (Ministry of Culture & Sports, 2018). Curiously, licensing a publication, even of a digital nature, is extremely difficult and cumbersome in Qatar – several bureaucratic channels need to be approached for approval. However, it is the licensing of artworks that arguably reveals the actual intent of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, which is to control potentially offensive narratives and discourses. This is particularly true when it comes to censoring those youth initiatives that clash with local axiology, religion and Qatari traditions. For example, in February 2020, a Lebanese music group called Mashrou's Leila, was banned from performing at Northwestern University in Doha because its lead singer was openly homosexual ('Qatar event with Mashrou's Leila canceled amid furor', 2020). The ban was accompanied by an orchestrated digital campaign that lamented the state's support for those who mock the religion, traditions and culture of Qatar. Certainly, the Lebanese musical

group does not have a strong following in Doha, Qatar. If any, most Qataris, before the sensationalism surrounding the ban erupted, never heard of this band.

Given that homosexuality is a major taboo by conservative Islamic, legal and social standards, it is understandable why many Qataris would oppose such cultural impositions outside their normative frame of reference. Yet, censorship and licensing, is a slippery slope. Of course, there are moments in which those in positions of power need to hold people accountable so that there is a responsible use of an individual's ability to influence. Just recently, Twitter has blocked Donald Trump from using their social media application, due to the grave threat Twitter believed his followers posed to law and order in the US (Permanent Suspension of @realDonaldTrump, 2021). This is in line with Mill (1863) who wrote about the 'harm principle' and reprimanded those who tout unbridled free speech.

Still, the genuine and perplexing question remains – who decides? What are the limits of censorship and licensing? Stifling voices is almost always going to also stifle creativity and growth. Still, the band's promiscuousness and alleged substance abuse is frowned on in a conservative, faith-based society as Qatar. However, a small minority felt that their right to choose was being denied. But, the unquestionable majority of Qatari youth took the overall behaviour of the group, their lyrics and mannerisms as an insult to their values. Ironically, just years earlier, Qatar often welcomed various international bands art performers without ever raising the alarm on such threats to the values of youth and traditions of the country. Here, again, is another instance of there not being a clear, consistent policy on what is acceptable and what is not. What this all indicates is that the Qatari state, although it uses a language of transforming state-youth power relations, is uncomfortable with the decisions and choices that many youth may make, and therefore continues the charade while reinforcing their control.

Finally, what is clearly discernible is that there is an increasing fear by the state, which is largely unfounded, that 'youth' are lost. This rationalizes the state practice in youth

empowerment to restrict their agency. In other words, 'youth' are no longer respecting their local values and traditions, nor capable of making responsible choices, therefore the state must intervene and disempower. This follows the paternalistic tendency in society, and, as a result, youth input is seen with suspicion. If the youth are such a major and vital asset for the future of the nation as top leaders and officials repeatedly state, how does it follow that Ministry's role is primarily concerned with managing their affairs, or restricting their agency, rather than joining them in conversations over the future?

5.3.2 Speech of HH Emir Shaikh Tamim

The speech on May 11, 2019, at the 48th Session of the Advisory Council, is important to examine in regards to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. In it, yet again, there seems to be a rather firm rebuke indirectly pointing to youth for growing apathy, sense of entitlement and employee absenteeism. Specifically, deconstructing this speech reveals four important takeaways: (1) Using the word 'human being,' instead of 'youth' and reminding them of the importance of values and ethics; (2) A rebuke to the increasing sense of entitlement and privilege among youth; (3) A reminder that citizenship includes rights, duties and responsibilities; (4) Do not mistreat the residents, or those less fortunate. Interestingly, HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim's speech uses an indirect approach to address 'youth' and remind them of their ethical/moral responsibilities. In his speech, he stated:

> "We cannot achieve development and make our homeland join the ranks of the developed countries if we do not pay great attention to the human being, because he/she is the pillar of any development…rather by the ability of human beings to plan, build and maintain them, and by the schools that educate them and the universities from which they graduate, as well as the quality of education, culture and the prevailing values and ethics."

In the above statement, it is clear that HH the Emir is reminding his countrymen that the central figure in the Qatar's path to becoming a developed nation is the 'human being'. What is interesting in this statement is that while the word 'youth' is not specifically mentioned,

it is clearly referring to 'youth' since it points to those human beings coming from schools and the '*universities from which they graduate*.' In other words, this is a strong indication that the targeted audience are young graduates, male and female, from schools and universities. This indirect way of guiding and influencing a targeted audience, and get the message across, is done so as to not seem insulting or condescending. Moreover, it is a well-established mechanism in psychology and counselling referred to as non-directivity (Levitt, 2005). Also, the last part of the messaging in the above cited paragraph includes highlighting 'prevailing values and ethics.' This is in line with what has been highlighted in several polices/programmes that explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, namely, encouraging Qatari youth to centre their lives on a firm ethical/moral premise. And, by constantly referring to morals and ethics, it is reasonable to conclude that official government circles are concerned about this matter.

Secondly, and immediately following the mentioning of values and ethics, the Emir reminds the youth of the favours that the state has done for them. Then, it goes on to chide those youth who have growing sense of entitlement and privilege. Specifically, he said:

> "We feel contented and happy for the capability of the State to provide services and a decent standard of living. However, we cannot build a human being if a feeling pattern of being entitled to privileges is stabilized with endless expectations from the State without any deep sense of duty by the individual citizen towards the society and the homeland. He who does not give, does not appreciate what he obtains." (HH Emir Speech, 49th Advisory Council, 2019)

The above excerpt from the 49th Advisory Council speech clearly rebukes those youth who have "endless expectations from the State, without any deep sense of duty…" (HH Emir Speech, 49th Advisory Council, 2019). Importantly, this is an even stronger reprimand than in previous speeches, especially in the Emir's 2016 speech to the Advisory Council. In this instance, the Emir uses direct language that castigates those with '*endless expectations'* as unreasonable, and not genuinely committed to their well-being of their society and country. If

the past is any indication, then the practice of youth empowerment will be increasingly complex and problematic as youth put more burdens, expectations on the state.

Third, the Emir's speech clearly reminded all citizens, but especially youth, to carefully acknowledge and live up to their responsibilities and duties. In fact, after stating the generosity of the Qatari state to its people, he asserted that the country is owed hard-work, dedication and commitment. He states: "Citizenship includes rights not privileges. It doesn't only involve rights but also responsibilities and duties, foremost among them is to work sincerely and with precision, each in his position, as each position is important" (HH Emir Speech, 49th Advisory Council, 2019). In the above statement, it is essential to underline the Emir's messaging of working sincerely. What is important about this, is that it is associated to the ongoing concern of employee absenteeism which the Emir is describing as being insincere and immoral. This reminder of fulfilling workplace responsibilities is in obvious response to the lackadaisical attitude Qatari youth, amongst others, are alleged to have.

Fourth, the Emir continued and then cautioned the youth not to develop a sense of "superiority engendered by identity or unwarrantable transcendence towards others, because humility is a proof of self-confidence, and showing respect to others is a reflection of self-respect." This is, in all likelihood, a response to the growing accusations of differential/unfair treatment between citizens and residents, and the concern about the rise of xenophobia.

Looking closely, while some of the criticisms are well-founded, there are serious problems with laying the blame of rampant individualism, consumerism, indulgence and excess on youth. After all, the wealth in Qatari society, and its growing materialism, is impacting youth in complex ways – which they cannot be blamed for. Hence, this cannot solely be placed on youth, since they have not created the consumerist/indulgent tendencies/atmosphere in society, but are merely responding to them. Actually, there are

several academic studies that correlate wealth with apathy (Piff et al, 2011), which implies that this is problem is not unique to Qatar.

5.3.3 QSurvey

In December 2020, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, launched a new initiative, entitled QSurvey, which is an online social media campaign that claims to seek youth inputs on matters concerning them and Qatar's future. Basically, the social media campaign shares a link to an online questionnaire that calls on youth to participate in the creation of Qatar Youth Policy. Prior to answering the questions, the introductory, descriptive statement attached to it mentions the importance of seeking youth advice on developing a new policy/programmes, since they are the primary stakeholders. However, other than merely acknowledging youth as essential, no further contextual explanation exists. Yet, conceding the need to seek youth inputs is a step in the right direction. The survey, however, revealed a number of problematic areas in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

First, the introductory statement of the QSurvey 2020 questionnaire offers a brief explanation of it purpose. That is, to seek youth inputs in order to encourage them to participate in a project that is preparing "a national youth policy in the State of Qatar, which aims primarily to come up with a document supported by the state with all its institutions working to meet the needs of young people (youth)…" (QSurvey, 2020). Moreover, the introductory text goes on the mention how the intent of the government is to provide youth opportunities "to achieve their aspirations as citizens with rights and duties, and to ensure the improvement and development of youth on personal and practical levels" (QSurvey, 2020). Finally, the introductory text says that the proposed Qatar National Youth Policy will:

> "…reflect the desires/aspirations of youth, as well as their needs. It also expresses their ambitions and aspirations towards enhancing their role in the development and building of their country. Furthermore and given that young people are the real owners of the policy, it was necessary for us (the Ministry of Culture and Sports) to get to know the main issues that concern and distress them so that we can

give them special attention when preparing the national youth policy. We hope that you (youth in Qatar) will participate with us in choosing the six most important issues that you see, from your point of view and perspective, that are most influential in the process of empowering young people and enhancing their role in society."

Following the introductory statement, participants were presented with 14 statements from which they were supposed to select the six which they considered most important. The statements are listed below:

1. Labour, work, employment, entrepreneurship and the private sector.
2. Youth, means of communication and information technology.
3. Drugs and steroids and their negative effects, methods of control and treatment.
4. Juvenile delinquency and the role of the family and state institutions in the proper upbringing.
5. Youth activities in their spare time and the role of the state and society in providing them.
6. Equality between young men and women in rights and duties.
7. Globalization and its effects on youth.
8. Risks and challenges facing young people (traffic accidents, marriage problems - bullying - extremism).
9. Youth and citizenship have rights, duties, equality and justice.
10. Youth health: physical and psychological illnesses.
11. Youth, education, research and innovation.
12. Youth and the environment.
13. The full and active participation of youth.
14. Youth and different visions with other generations.

Looking closely, a question comes to mind: how did the conceptualizers assume that answering this one question is sufficient to ascertain youth perspectives on matters concerning them? Surely, if the objective was to explore youth perceptions and feedback, then they could have asked several questions and even allowed for participants to freely write their comments. By simply writing these statements, and asking youth participants to pick 6 sentences that one feels reflects their aspirations is not scholarly, nor will it produce actionable data. More importantly, it seems to give the illusion of transforming power relations and supporting youth agency when in fact it only reinforces state structures.

Secondly, another serious problem with QSurvey is that the statements are vague and ambiguous. They could have several different meanings, so it is unclear what the designers of the survey were actually hoping to gain. For instance, the sentences 'the full and active participation of youth,' 'youth health' or 'youth and citizenship have rights, duties, equality and justice,' are not clear, straightforward questions. Are youth being asked if they feel the full and active participation of youth is important? Or, what does full and active participation even mean? There is no explanation for any of the sentences, nor is there any indication what will be done with them. Also, consider the sentence on 'youth health.' Does checking this sentence imply that this issue is considered important, above and beyond the others? What/How will the information gathered be utilised?

Finally, there was the lack of follow-up mechanisms. Other than choosing sentences, there is no way or means for youth participants to engage with government officials working on the development of Qatar's National Youth Policy. Also, there is no guarantee that those who are participating in the survey are even Qatari, since it does not ask for residency/citizenship verification. In all likelihood, Qataris may be a small percentage of those participating. Again, therefore, the actual stakeholders have not been approached. It seems almost inconceivable that no mechanism was evolved to include youth and allow them to be connected to the developments. This means they will not be kept informed about which six focal sentences were chosen, if that is what will happen. Also, no matter what information the government ministry receives following the conclusion of this questionnaire, it could very well ignore the data and establish Qatar's Youth Policy in any direction it chooses. Accordingly, the questionnaire seems to have been deliberately constructed and used to allow officials to back their claims that they had reached out to the youth, but without necessarily doing so, and merely as a means to maintain and reinforce their power and power relations as they are. This also follows a paternalistic pattern of the state knowing what is best for the youth, and of a pattern of high rhetoric and empty substance.

Figure. 1

Practice of Youth Empowerment 2012-2020	Paternalistic	Grandiose Rhetoric	Ambiguity	No Follow-up	Ethics	Citizen Duties	Neoliberal	Absence of Qatari Youth
McKinsey Report	X	X	X	X			X	
Father-Emir Abdication Speech					X	X		
2014 Ministry 'Mission Statement'	X	X	X				X	
Minister Saleh Bin Ghanem Speech	X	X	X				X	
Qatar Youth Forum	X	X	X	X			X	X
2016 HH Emir Shaikh Tamim Advisory Council Speech					X	X		
Al Wijdan Cultural Centre	X		X	X	X	X		X
2018 Ministry 'Mission Statement'	X	X	X	X	X			
2018 HH Emir Shaikh Tamim Advisory Council Speech					X	X		
QSurvey – Social Media Campaign		X	X	X				X

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter applied documentary analysis to deconstruct the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar from 2012-2020 and therein explored the consequent power relations. By doing so, it revealed that state-led youth empowerment policies/programmes do not transform generational power relations. Rather, they work to reinforce power structures that solidify state power and control. Moreover, there is also some indication that the state perceives youth empowerment as a process of managing, directing and controlling the youth as a volatile asset or perhaps as a liability. The entire practice of youth empowerment in Qatar uses the rhetoric of empowering youth, but substantively limits youth agency.

More interestingly, youth empowerment policies/progammes are plagued by ambiguity, paternalism, a contestation between rival ideological trajectories, and no credible mechanism for seeking youth inputs and including them in a power-sharing arrangement. This is also a reflection of the power rivalry that resists resolving the ambiguity, power-sharing – since doing so would amount to a transformation of power structures. Also, there was a realization that values matter, and more state intervention is necessary in order to educate youth and confront growing consumerism and apathy among them. However, even though the state has power over youth, it does not develop such educational campaigns that target youth materialism, economic absenteeism or workplace truancy. Again, this may be a deliberate attempt to maintain obfuscation in order to ignore calls for change. Unfortunately, for these ongoing reasons, the practice of youth empowerment is not leading to youth satisfaction, capacity building or youth/state connectivity. In actuality, the state-led practice of youth empowerment only reinforces its power structures.

Unfortunately, for these aforementioned reasons, the practice of youth empowerment is not leading to youth satisfaction, capacity building or youth/state connectivity, and there is no transformation of generational power relations. Evidently, as is seen in. Figure 1, the

narrative/discourse mapping of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar reveals the overall paternalism, grandiose rhetoric, ambiguity, absence of youth inputs through follow-up, or even their participation in youth events/workshops, and a focus on neoliberalism that centres youth affairs in the realm of employability and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the overall tone/language used towards youth is disempowering.

6 From the Arabian Horse's Mouth: Perceptions of Government Officials & Youth

6.1 Introduction

This chapter extricates those themes that emerged across the entirety of the dataset. Afterwards, it explores those themes in relation to Lukes (2005) concept of power and explains how the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar fails to transform generational power relations as it is largely disempowering. In addition, this chapter includes an analysis of the role and power of the Qatari state on the design, implementation and outcomes of youth empowerment, as well as the internal power struggles between rival ideological trajectories.

6.2 Youth Empowerment: A thematic Analysis

The 69 semi-structured interviews of 17 government officials and 52 youth activists were transcribed, carefully reviewed, coded and, finally, organized thematically to reveal five major inter-related themes emerging across the dataset. In total, those five themes are as follows: First, there is widespread ambiguity on the purposes, definitions, scope or mandate of youth empowerment initiatives/programmes.

A majority of interviewees, both government officials and youth activists, all spoke of the aimlessness and meandering nature of the youth policies/programmes. Simply put, there was even a multiplicity of definitions of 'youth' and 'youth empowerment.' In other words, there was no clear-cut, agreed-upon definition of youth or meaning for youth empowerment. Arguably, one of the factors contributing to this ambiguity is the competitive power relations within the state, and its inability to resolve that contestation.

Second, there is a lack of effective training and guidance for Qatari officials and youth involved in youth empowerment policies/programmes. More specifically, youth input is not being sought which leads to their increasing frustration with policy. In many ways, this is

merely a reflection of Qatar's socio-cultural context in which there is a latent apprehension towards sharing power and aversion to decentralizing authority.

Third, there is an overwhelming sense of paternalism and sense of guardianship that was exhibited by the interviewees, both government officials and youth, though to a lesser degree for the latter. Still, both expressed a clear concern for the moral direction of youth. Plausibly, this has more to do with many government officials, and some youth activists, wishing to maintain the status quo, uphold current power relations and assert their authority through moral policing then actual concern for youth.

Fourth, there was a clear recognition, by youth and government officials, that the state is employing youth empowerment strategies to normalise youth into their state-led ideologies, and not about ending marginalisation or giving access to power to youth. Furthermore, in the state-led process of normalization, a clearly discernible ideological divide is noticeable between so-called modernists and traditionalists/conservatives, not just in the corridors of state power, but also among youth activists. This rivalry and contestation is about the power, control and the direction of youth empowerment policies.

Fifth, there is a neoliberal focus on entrepreneurship and an emphasis on developing a business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit among youth. The state implements a neoliberal agenda and it is altogether unclear whether it is aware of the contradictions in that approach to local Islamic eschatology, values and principles. Moreover, the state pushes an emphasis on employability and job creation (Sukarieh, 2017) when there is no such need, which again reflects how the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is not about transformation but rather, about reinforcing power relations and commitment to the prescribed state agenda.

6.2.1 Ambiguity

To start with, the vast majority of interviewees, 13 government officials and 47 youth activists expressed an overall sense of ambiguity, or a lack of clarity, on the purposes, definitions, scope or mandate of youth empowerment initiatives/programmes. Looking closely,

the interviews confirm a dozen different definitions for the term "youth" and 42 definitions of the term "youth empowerment." For example, a majority of the interviewees considered the term youth to be up to the age of 40 – in line with Qatar's Islamic socio-cultural heritage. This contrasts with the United Nations where acknowledged definition ranges from those aged 18-24 or, even, 15 to 30. Eleven government official interviewees downplayed a specific association of youth with age, arguing instead that it was all about 'one's spirit, motivation to dream and accomplish goals in life, and so forth,' (Government Official Interview, 2018). Yet, the lack of a clear definition of youth or the meaning of youth empowerment is indicative of the overall practice of youth empowerment as directionless. Worse, the state has not endeavoured to remedy this issue by interjecting and agreeing on a definition that could be used across their various youth policies/programmes. As Lukes (2005) suggests that indecision, or the lack of decision-making, is also an act of power and this is how the state contributes to further entrenching ambiguity in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. The perennial question is why?

Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) write that a multiplicity of definitions on youth empowerment, in any context, is not surprising. Ansell (2014) concurs, revealing that different interests often use definitions that serve their particular agendas. However, a total of 53 interviewees – 41 youth and 12 Qatari officials, did not seem intimately knowledgeable about the issue of youth empowerment. Rather, it seemed that they were guessing or trying to define the term based on what they plausibly thought it meant or should mean. For instance, they referred to youth empowerment in general and vague terms such as giving the youth the ability to "accomplish their dreams" (Youth Activist, 2018), "readying them for the workforce" (Government Official, 2018), or "providing youth with opportunities" (Government Official, 2018). Similarly, the interviewees were unable to explain how that would be achieved or how the state would be able to facilitate that. Here, again, the state is not intervening, nor allowing the interventions of civil society or non-state actors to assist in defining either youth or youth

empowerment. This, also, is generally suggestive of Lukes' (2005) description of dominance that is reflected in behaviour of the state as it hinders the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Alternatively, this could be an indication of the intense competition in the state over the direction of youth empowerment, which creates an inertia that leads to ambiguity. From the available research, it is not entirely clear what is preventing the state from intervening and resolving this ambiguity.

6.2.2 Lack of Training raining or Youth Input

Secondly, the lack of effective training, governmental planning and engagement of the state with stakeholders – both youth and government officials, was a concern raised by an overwhelming majority of interviewees. More precisely, 66 interviewees expressed some level of disappointment or dismay at not being effectively trained or understanding the purposes for youth empowerment policies/programmes. This means that almost every person interviewed expresses some level of concern with the government planning, which coincides with the previous finding of ambiguity in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. However, it is also interesting to note that there is no attempt to facilitate the emergence of consensus on definitions, scope and direction of youth empowerment policies/programmes. The state in Qatar, though it wields power, does not endeavour to frame consensus. And, this lack of consensus was starkly noticeable among the 17 Qatari government officials, who are directly involved in the practice of youth empowerment. All 17 officials expressed moderate to severe levels of concern about the lack of training, guidance and direction. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of youth activists, 49 interviewees, clearly conveyed frustration at not enough being done by the state to create platforms that sought their input or to follow-up with them after youth programmes were completed. Reusche (2014) argues that by ignoring a consultative decision-making process, it likely results in dismissiveness which is evident in prevalent sentiment towards youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar. In fact, not a single youth interviewee could recount a youth empowerment policy/programme that sought

out their opinions and developed a mechanism from which to keep participants cognizant of the state's youth agenda.

Interestingly, the entire practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is controlled by the state which has a full monopoly on the policies/programmes of youth empowerment. It, therefore, has the capacity to resolve the ambiguity associated with, offer the necessary training needed by, and decentralize the practice of youth empowerment. Yet, the state undertakes no such steps. A possible explanation, as Lukes (2005) alludes to, is the way power is understood by the government officials in Qatar, which frowns on shared power since that may be viewed negatively as encroaching into the state's decision-making capacities or as disempowering. This is nothing new. In paternalistic/patriarchal cultures such as Gulf states (Matsuo, 2019) there is an uneasiness with sharing power, or even the access to power. The state represents the traditional impulses of centralized authority and often exhibits a territoriality towards decision-making that is disempowering. By offering training, guidance and seeking youth input, it would be empowering others enabling them to participate in the decision-making process vis a vis the practice of youth empowerment. And, in an authoritarian mindset that views power as zero-sum game (Elmeshad, 2017), this would lead to the false assumption of disempowering one's own power and disadvantaging oneself. In such circumstances, there would be resistance to sharing power and inclusion.

Moreover, as Ansell (2014) argues, it is naïve to assume that youth empowerment policies/programmes will bring an end to marginalisation or are implemented with the objective of inclusiveness and power-sharing in mind. Empowerment policies/programmes are an ongoing effort that requires due diligence and long-term commitment. There needs to be an in-depth appreciation and understanding of the benefits of empowering youth for the long-term success and prosperity of society as a whole (Curtis, 2008). Interestingly, despite the numerous empowerment programmes in Qatar, it seems that they have achieved very little in terms of responding to overwhelming sentiments of youth marginalisation and dissatisfaction. Also, out

of the 49 youth interviewees that expressed some level of frustration with the state for not seeking their input, 32 youth activists expressed deep resentment at their exclusion. For instance, Abdul-Rahman (Interview, 2018) was visibly upset saying "after all this time, and clear direction from His Highness the Emir Shaikh Tamim, youth input was deliberately not being sought. They don't want to share power." This verifies a long-standing criticism of the understanding of power in the Gulf context which views power as 'zero-sum' (Elmeshad, 2017).

Lastly, without basic training for stakeholders or meaningful engagement with youth to seek their input and suggestions, the state is unable to transform generational power relations. On the contrary, they become even more unsteady. This leads to a sharp disconnect between the state and youth, in which either side claims the other does not understand them. Likewise, 15 government officials and 36 youth activists expressed moderate to poor level of understanding between the two primary stakeholders: the state and youth. 10 youth activists said there was zero communication. Only, 2 government officials and 6 youth interviewees suggested that communication between the government and youth was good. As Abdul-Rahman (Interview, 2018) states "we simply do not understand one another." However, what is important to note is that no one described state/youth relations as excellent. Hence, unsurprisingly, a majority of the youth activists questioned the viability of the Ministry of Youth, expressing several concerns about its performance, design and vision. In particular, Ahmed (Interview, 2018) complained that the state-led policies/programmes seemed to be "designed by individuals who had little or no knowledge of the needs of the youth or the challenges and issues confronting them."

6.2.3 Paternalism/Patriarchy

Third, another interesting theme that was clearly evident in the semi-structured interviews was the convergence of government officials and youth activists concerning

paternalism/patriarchy in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. In fact, 16 of the government officials and 42 youth activists interviewed conceded that the state has both power over and a responsibility towards youth. In the cultural context of Qatar, the state is seen by many as the people's benefactor (Matsuo, 2019). As such, there is a well-defined paternalistic tendency in the practice of youth empowerment policies/programmes by both government officials and youth activists. Plausibly, this is linked to the impact of patriarchy on Qatari society, that views social relations through its own cultural lens. In many ways, Qataris view the Emir Shaikh Tamim as a 'father figure,' (Battaoglu, 2018).

The state then becomes an extension of the people's collective imagination of what responsibilities fatherhood entails. This is not surprising since interpretations must occur in the socio-cultural realities of the participant/subjects. As Cornish (2006) states, the relevance of the cultural context is always expected since cultural influences in the understanding and conceptualization of youth empowerment is natural. However, even Qatari officials who self-identified as progressive and liberal emphasised the importance of "shielding, protecting, and guiding the youth," (Government Official Interview, 2018).

Yet, self-identification with a particular value-set does not necessarily entail an appreciation of the core values of that ideology. In other words, self-description as a 'liberal' does not at all imply a commitment to the values of freedom and equality. In fact, many post-colonial states and societies exhibit mixed reactions/responses to the purported universalism of liberal norms as they emerge in their local contexts (Guazzone & Pioppi, 2009). Much of this social contestation remains unresolved. Therefore, since Qatar is an evolving patriarchal system (Battaoglu, 2018), this lukewarm commitment to freedom and equality, by those who self-describe as liberals, may merely be a reflection of how entrenched patriarchal cultural values impact individual decision-making and attitudes towards youth empowerment.

Notwithstanding that, when supplementary exploratory questions were asked to the interviewees to explain what they meant when expressing a desire to 'protect youth,' responses focused on "substance abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, and/or leading a meaningless, unmotivated, idle life" (Interview, 2018). While these are legitimate concerns in any socio-cultural context, especially in Qatar where the moral/ethical boundaries and associated social restraints are pervasive, this hardly relates to youth empowerment. in fact, there are two problems with this explanation.

First, the phenomenon of drug or substance abuse in Qatar is so low that it is almost negligible. Therefore, the reasons given for protecting youth or wanting to guide them is not reflective of the ground realities in Qatar. Secondly, the respondents' reference to drug or substance abuse may be an excuse to justify their own power and maintain the status quo. In other words, the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar seems to be understood as a means by which the youth are normalised into existing power structures and value systems by the state, rather than encouraged to participate and pursue self-discovery. Moreover, using the justification of a non-existent drug/alcohol problem is merely an excuse to mask attempts to maintain moral and practical authority over others. In light of this, raising the issue of 'moral concerns' about Qatari youth, without addressing inequality, consumerism, materialism or indulgence is disingenuous.

This is similar to those who pay lip service to the ideals of 'freedom' and/or 'women's rights' but insincerely do so only to secure the moral high ground. As Lukes (2005, p.109) clarifies, the use of power operates to secure compliance to domination. This also may explain why youth empowerment programmes seem to contribute to youth frustrations, especially as so many complained about being excluded and not properly informed or educated on the definitions, purpose and mandate of youth empowerment policies – even though they are advertised as being solely for youth.

Among 18 youth interviewees, 11 females and seven males complained about Qatar's conservative patriarchal power relations that imposes certain values on them. These interviewees criticised the socio-cultural context of their society, suggesting that the patriarchal system marginalised them, compelled them towards standardized values and traditions, and restricted their ability to challenge those norms. Naturally, therefore, these interviewees felt that the conservative contextual constraints in Qatar had a somewhat restricting affect. Yet, somewhat contradictorily, these same interviewees also felt that some level of social control was necessary in order to 'protect youth' from the dangers of breaching religious values and socio-cultural traditions. On the other hand, 24 youth activists complained about the inappropriate moral laxity, and questionable value-system of the self-professed liberal/modernists. These interviewees felt ostracised and excluded in the youth policies/programmes due to the modernist value impositions by a vocal non-conservative minority among youth, and some government officials. They especially expressed these feelings with respect to mixed-gender settings and the neglect of prayer hours. As a response, these youth felt compelled to support the protective narrative by the state and the government officials that supported these narratives which focused on traditions and values. Clearly, there was a divide within state power on the direction of youth empowerment (Government Official, 2018).

In other words, within the state there are two discernible ideological trajectories, which may be loosely referred to as modernist and traditional/conservative. Whichever force wields state power at any given moment, attempts to compel its discourse/narratives through the practice of youth empowerment. Irrespective of which ideological trajectory takes the lead, the state is used to disincentivize youth from challenging state power (Youth Interview, 2018). Simply put, this adds a new layer of frustration and complex power relations inside state power. Meanwhile, youth express their frustration at their exclusion from power and decision-making, whether led by conservatives or modernists, yet ultimately still support the system. This, too,

can be explained by the fact that those who confront power are simply doing so for the ultimate objective of being included in the system or co-opted into the process. Once they are co-opted, the resistance of many youth activists to the practice of youth empowerment is significantly curtailed or weakened. This raises important questions on integrity, and principled resistance vs. opportunistic ambitions. As one youth activist sarcastically stated "when the state sees a youth activist complaining and making noise, they simply shower him with privileges and essentially shut him up. It works." (Youth Activist, 2018).

Ultimately, youth interviewees, despite facing the challenges and obstacles that are inherent in a patriarchal system, returned to support those very same socio-cultural discourses and contextual constraints that limit their agency. This parallels much of the insightful research that explains why so many marginalized or disempowered segments of society vote against their interests. For instance, Carilles (2012) explains how calculating leadership figures may secure compliance, and entrench their power base, by manipulating an already resentful demographic. This resentment creates in and out-groups that essentializes a polarizing discourse that facilitates the rise of demagoguery or cements existing power structures (Riggio, 2017).

Similarly, as previously stated, many interviewees adopted a discourse that stresses the importance of guiding, protecting and shielding youth from what they describe as dangerous or deviant influences. Recognizing this, the government, too, uses a language and discourse in which youth are in need of being protected, guided, cared for, and in one way or another, restricted. By doing so, it substantiates its own moral authority and legitimacy, which as Cornish (2006) acknowledges, is merely another characteristic of paternalism/patriarchal instincts and values in society, that are reaffirming power dynamics, even while the state projects its programs as transformative. In this instance, Lukes (2005) discussion on power informs the reader of the ways Qatar frames youth empowerment as transformative, but ensure it stays the same – or at least, under tight state control.

Paternalism/patriarchy in the practice of youth empowerment reflects poorly on the idea of giving youth agency, and indicates a lack of trust in the decision-making capacities of youth. There is an overriding concern by the majority of government officials - 15 interviewees, and 27 youth activists - that if given the opportunity, youth might make the wrong choice. A similar contradiction was also evident in the responses given by these 15 government officials who showered the youth with praise, as the strategic asset of the nation and the embodiment of hope, while questioning their ability to choose wisely. In fact, all 17 Qatari official interviewees were unanimous in praising the youth, and not a single one of them spoke of youth negatively in any way, but still questioned their ability to make the right choices. Arguments as such rationalize shielding youth, but frown on doing so for adults, who may have similar levels of capacity deficiencies for responsible decision-making (Godwin, 2020). Nevertheless, there is a certain level of fearfulness in those societies in which patriarchy is deeply embedded. For instance, one female interviewee (Fatima, 2018) pointed out that she was victimized by the patriarchal system at work because of her being unmarried and her increasing age. There are evident socio-cultural pressures on women that need to be acknowledged and rectified. While Qatar has taken tremendous strides towards the providing opportunities to women, many people have resisted and questioned such initiatives. Responding to that, and describing that difficult experience as a turning point in her life, she embarked on an ambitious path of independence. She left her cushy government job, established a non-governmental foundation and has now become a credible voice in her field. However, while she resented her prejudicial government work-place experiences, she advocated "obeisance to that same socio-cultural and political system due to the need to protect society and its values," (Fatima, 2018). There is both resistance and acquiescence to state power in Qatar. The paternalistic/patriarchal system propagates values that are deeply rooted in the minds of individuals to the point that even after they achieve success by defying the system, they end up propagating the fundamentals of the very system which oppressed them in the first place.

Finally, another interesting point to be raised concerning 'paternalism/patriarchy' in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is the tendency to make youth risk averse. When the youth interviewees were asked about risk-taking, a small minority out of the 52 youths interviewed, felt comfortable about taking risks. More specifically, only four male interviewees reported quitting their stable, secure and promising government jobs to pursue entrepreneurial career paths instead. Likewise, six female interviewees took unconventional approaches, leaving their government jobs for other pursuits. Among these, three female youth interviewees started their own businesses, two started their own sustainable development organization and one started her own foundation for an environmentally sound Qatar. Nevertheless, such risk-taking is neither typical among Qatari youths, nor in line with established traditions and values of the patriarchal society in which they live.

6.2.4 State-led Normalization

Fourth, what is unmistakably apparent following a careful review of the 69 semi-structured interviewees is that both the government officials and youth activists believe youth empowerment policies/programmes are used by the Qatari state to normalize behaviour. In total, 16 of the government officials and 42 youth activists interviewed candidly admitted that youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar are entirely state-driven. The remainder of the 11 interviewees, while conceding the state has the primary role, insisted that it seeks feedback from non-state sources. Yet, they were elusive when further probed on what type of feedback the state sought, providing no evidence to substantiate their claims. Hala, a youth activist (Interview, 2018), kept insisting that the state "makes efforts to reach out in their own way," yet could not provide any instances of doing so. Nevertheless, 58 interviewees described the youth empowerment programmes as primarily aimed at achieving social transformation by foregrounding the interests of the state and only superficially integrating them with youth concerns or interests. Lukes (2005) emphasizes the way in which the state uses its power to seek compliance, which is attained by engineering youth empowerment policies. Such

posturing does not necessarily enable or empower young people to achieve and exercise agency, making many policies and initiatives merely cosmetic. Consequently, youth empowerment policies in Qatar do not transform power relations, even though are often described as being change driven. This discrepancy between rhetoric and reality often leads to dissatisfaction, resentment or apathy among youth activists in Qatar.

According to Sharp et al. (2000), youth empowerment programmes are often incoherent and contradictory, advocating both empowering and disempowering ideas at the same time. Luke (2005) concurs that power can be used for both access and denial of access, for instance, to policymakers and decision-making. This is particularly relevant in the context of Qatar, where no youth empowerment activities or strategies arise independently from civil society. Even those initiatives that emerge from outside the state, in order to have any sort of legitimacy and not be forcibly shut down, need to be eventually owned by government officials. Only then are they allowed to participate in the practice of youth empowerment. This has been particularly noted in initiatives that are based on the use of social media for the purpose of creating awareness campaigns or to mobilise the youth to engage in desirable social behaviours or to avoid certain undesirable behaviours.

Ultimately, state ownership includes the inevitability of being nudged in directions the state deems appropriate. What this means is that the state uses a rhetoric of transforming power relations between stakeholders, along with a narrative that supports change and youth empowerment, but without actually encouraging or supporting change, transformation.

The practice of youth empowerment in Qatar occurs only within the confines of state control, with no generational transformation of power relations. One the one hand, the state announces its plans to empower, but actually takes every step to ensure that it remains in full control of youth programmes. Second, the state is interested in some form of positive transformation for the youth, but only as long as this transformation serves the view that the

state has of the ideal society. In this sense, empowerment as espoused the state is in fact intended to confine the youth to the available and acceptable paths drawn by the state, which in itself is disempowering. This is how empowerment programmes, as Sharp et al (2000) describe, is both empowering and disempowering. Ultimately, this form of empowerment does not address inclusion, power-sharing or youth satisfaction.

Whether the state co-opts youth into established programmes or funds them to develop their potentials along predefined lines, the unequal relationship between state power and youth is undeniable. Evidently, the state develops such youth programmes for two reasons; partly to utilise the capabilities of the youth as an invaluable resource and asset; and partly to prevent the youth from becoming a liability or a threat to social stability or the political order (Ansell, 2014). As several interviewees pointed out, the state has also created several youth-centric platforms and made it very easy for youths to access financing for well-planned ideas. However, whenever a youth initiative is initiated, the state appropriates those projects, assigns an advisor, and then alters the initiative to ensure it is in line with state agendas.

Another invaluable lesson learned by the interviews was the unanimous support for youth empowerment programmes by 69 out of 69 interviewees. Both youth and government officials strongly affirmed that state-led initiatives are morally commendable and desirable. Moreover, all respondents conceded that the youth empowerment policies/programmes had the potential to reinforce harmony, stability and preserve the socio-cultural system. In other words, there was a clear support for the state having youth empowerment programmes. However, almost all respondents, to varying levels, were unhappy with the current design and management of the youth policies and programmes. Not a single respondent described the youth empowerment policies/programmes as ‘excellent.’ It seems, that being state-led was not the problem, but the content and way that the state practised youth empowerment to entrench its own power were problematic.

All in all, state-led normalization through youth empowerment policies/programmes focuses on capacity building, and that primarily in government bureaucratic structures. A case in point is the advanced leadership programmes offered by the Qatari Leadership Centre (QLC), which focuses on youth capacity building. This leadership programme that QLC offers has enabled hundreds of young Qataris to effectively navigate the large, complex bureaucratic system (Youth Activist Interview, 2018). However, as Aldana (Youth Activist Interview, 2018), a female, youth interviewee pointed out, these are "not empowerment programmes in as much as they are skill-building programmes that are aimed at absorbing the youth into state institutions." When co-opted, these youth are moulded into serving the interests of state, and entrench power relations, in such institutions as the bureaucracy. In the end, the Qatari state's understanding of youth empowerment is singularly focused on ensuring youth fit into the expectations and norms of the current socio-cultural value system, state policy and not upsetting power relations. These findings mirror Pease (2002) who referred to the tendency of empowerment programmes to perpetuate existing power relations rather than challenging them. That is perplexing since the essence of youth empowerment involves some level of power shuffling and accommodation. In Qatar, youth empowerment exists on the terms of the state, and within the boundaries they impose. However, there is a unique and interesting twist, which is that inside the corridors of state power two ideological trajectories contest and further complicate the practice of youth empowerment policies/programmes.

State-led normalization efforts in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar require closer scrutiny, especially, in the ways/means that the state plays a balancing role between internal competing powers, and among other stakeholders. All youth empowerment programmes/policies are initiated, guided and designed by the state, but internally there are competing ideologies and approaches to the practice of youth empowerment. In that circumstance, there is no internal overriding mechanism to resolve contestation. This simply results in each youth empowerment initiative being directed ideologically by whomsoever is

in charge. This explains the discrepancy, ambiguity and conflicting messaging across the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

The state – irrespective of who is wielding power, i.e. modernists or traditionalist/ conservatives - creates youth policies/programmes whose purpose is to assimilate and contain youth in order to solidify and strengthen the existing power structures. As Ansell et. al. (2012) describe, youth empowerment policies are often designed according to the needs of the state, to reaffirm power relations and not challenge them. Accordingly, in the Qatari situation, this amounts to contradictory approaches by the state, which nevertheless still leads to youth empowerment programmes serving the needs for which they were designed, namely, ensuring the stability of the social/political system and reinforcing power relations. However, when the competing discourses internal to the state become increasingly polarizing and antagonistic it proves problematic, heightening internal incoherence and stability. This is where the management and instrumentalization of power – or those with the ability to institute their choices and opinions over others (Lukes, 2005), is vital.

6.2.5 Modernity and Tradition

The internal ideological contestation that pushes and pulls the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar in conflicting directions deserves closer scrutiny. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, a total of 7 governmental officials and 33 youth interviews were in agreement about varying levels of worsening ideological contestation between whom they described as modernists and traditionalists/conservatives. In a certain sense, there seems to be a push-back from the state against trends in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar which arguably conflict with local values. Therefore, among the many facets and variables that impact Qatar's socio-cultural reality, the state is caught between managing/balancing between the tussle of modernists and traditionalists. This conflict is not unique to Qatar and, in several ways, is problematic across the entire Muslim world (Rahman, 1984). In other words, all Muslim

polities are contending with how to manage this contest. Yet, in Qatar, the state intervenes by, largely, siding with the conservative/traditional segments of society. In total, 5 of the government official interviewees, and 18 of the youth interviewees expressed varying levels of frustration towards traditionalists or conservative members of society. On the other hand, 10 government officials, and 24 youth interviewees projected uneasiness about modernists. Lastly, 2 government officials, and 10 youth activists expressed similar apprehensions towards both conservative and modernist ideological trajectories, attempting to rationalize the need for a balance between the polarities. However, no respondent was able to describe how to achieve that equilibrium or manage the ideological contestation, which several specialists in the field of politics and culture have attempted (Chak, 2017).

6.2.6 Social Pressure & Affluence

Based on the analysis of the 52 semi-structured interviews of youth, it is possible to identify two major concerns that youth brought forward that deserve mention. While these concerns were expressed by a majority of youth activists, not all characterised them as negatively impacting the practice of youth empowerment. Those concerns raised across the dataset of youth interviewees can be described as obstacles and challenges to the state-led practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. They arise as contextual constraints which are a consequence of the socio-cultural milieu in Qatar, that includes the values, traditions, attitudes and perceptions that prevail in society which impact youth. Specifically, two major concerns are identified from the dataset, namely moral judgment and social shaming, and the lack of motivation due to affluence.

First, among the more significant complaints by the youth interviewees was the clear contention, by 37 youth interviewees – slightly more than half - that Qatari society can be very judgmental. Hence, if a young man or woman makes a mistake, they are harshly judged, often for the rest of their lives. This can be overbearing in the context of a closely-knit community.

This social shaming affects the human agency and productivity of the youth in society and often acts as a barrier to participation in social life, heightening risk averse behaviour. Yet, this is a complex power issue, as Lukes (2005) describes, in which challenging established cultural norms, which often serve to protect financial and privileged status in society, by class, race, tribe or gender, is difficult. Indeed, cultural impositions cannot be ignored, as they immensely impacting the minds of the stakeholders. For example, several interviewees complained about the invasive nature of certain traditional and conservative norms, but they were still inclined to respect rather than to resist or challenge these restrictive norms, probably to avoid being shamed or frowned by society. In a way, this explains why it is so difficult to challenge established power structures in Qatari society.

The same applies when a young person wants to go against the flow to follow his/her dreams away from conventional expectations in fields of study or career. This is also still seen when women try to play independent roles in the public sphere. The public sphere, in traditional patriarchal societies is often associated with masculinity. Women entering this space is seen as offensive, and potentially socially damaging. However, this is changing in Qatar with the growing roles women are playing in the public sphere, while also championing their conservative values. Courageous women such as Lolwa Al Khater, Alya al Thani, and, of course, the trailblazer in this regard Her Highness Sheikha Moza have altered the perceptions on gender roles. Initially, starting their own arts and culture organizations or initiating an entrepreneurial career rather than getting a stable job were frowned upon. Growing social flexibility, however, is allowing women to expand their presence and roles and even to challenge traditional boundaries. Still, social pressures can be excessive, often discouraging the youth from considering potentials for self-actualization outside the fields of sports and government sanctioned work.

Second, another social issue referred to by 52 youth interviewees was the lack of motivation and the absence of drive among Qatari youth. This is directly attributable to the

rising levels of affluence. The interviewees generally expressed the belief that most young Qataris lack drive, motivation and ambition. When probed, the respondents attributed such apathy to the domineering nature of the state, the socio-cultural values that make the youth risk averse, in addition to effect of affluence. Moreover, since the state guarantees employment for Qataris, getting terminated from a job is nearly impossible, which in turn weakens the incentives to work hard. In fact, this has even triggered very high levels of employee absenteeism at work to the point Emir Shaikh Tamim discussed the issue in a speech in 2020.

When the interviewees were asked who is responsible for rising levels of consumerism, materialism and lack of motivation, 44 youth interviewees directly blamed the state. They attributed the failure to effectively educate youth and to curtail the rising levels of consumerism and materialism on state policies. One of the youth interviewees named Nouf (Youth Interview, 2018), for example, referred to her participation in a state programme that promised engagement and participation, encouraging the youth to participate in policymaking programmes on matters related to the youth. The programme she described emphasised the idea of values of prioritizing money-making over all else. However, when the time came for the youth to be heard, their input was ignored. Interestingly, she did not blame the state, but rather those who act on behalf of the state - specifically the attitude among the Qatari officials -who believe that young people cannot be taken seriously in matters of policymaking.

Modernisation has challenged many of the established and widely embraced socio-cultural norms and ideas, resulting in the emergence of contradictory viewpoints/perspectives throughout society (Giddens, 1991). Rapid industrialisation, economic boom and a massive influx of expatriates has challenged the very social fabric of Qatari society (Buscemi & Kaposi, 2020). The growth of agnosticism, gender-mixing, materialism, consumerism and challenges to patriarchal gender roles has put strains on social cohesiveness. This complicates efforts to seek a unified conceptualisation, definition and agreed-upon policy for youth empowerment policies/programmes. This situation is further aggravated when the persistence of interest

groups within the corridors of state power impose their particular vision and values on youth empowerment policies/programmes. As Lukes (2005) rightly acknowledges, power struggles occur beyond the scope of empirical evidence by those who utilize their positions of authority to limit the participation of others, curtail freedoms and frame manoeuvrability. Moreover, as we notice, state power in Qatar is not coherent. In the practice of youth empowerment, led by the state, is a rivalry between contesting ideologies that is increasing in intensity.

Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that social mores and values do not change overnight. Any transformation must be undertaken by citizenry themselves in partnership with the state in order to advance a smooth transition (Rahman, 1984). Consider, for instance, traffic norms in Qatar between 2006-2008. Many young Qataris understood the need to obey traffic laws, and yet there was a tendency, even if by a minority, to disregard the red traffic signal. This was serious enough for state intervention. Using its power, the state clamped down against transgressors with massive fines, impounding vehicles and other punitive measure. Also, the state began an elaborate educational campaign – targeting schools and universities, in order to transform social attitudes (Ministry of Transport, 2013). Today, and years after the intervention by the state, running a red traffic light is almost unheard of in Qatar. This was a very serious issue in which the state used its power through a well-orchestrated punitive and educational campaign to remedy a social malady.

6.2.7 Neoliberalism

Fifth, among the most interesting themes to emerge from the dataset, both by government officials and youth activists, was the description of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar as focusing on business development, job security/placement, and the entrepreneurial spirit. Among the interviewees, 17 government officials and 43 youth activists acknowledged that youth empowerment policies/programmes give medium to high levels of importance for entrepreneurship. In other words, there was an overwhelming recognition by

the interviewees that the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is heavily tailored to the principles of neoliberalism, without the respondents actually understanding the significance or importance of such a characterization. In fact, not a single respondent was able to provide an answer on what neoliberalism is or to describe any of its basic tenets. Still, an overwhelming majority of government officials and youth activists – 60 interviewees, described the practice of youth empowerment as focused on profit-making, developing an entrepreneurial spirit, and ensuring youth learn "how to engage in business activities and become successful entrepreneurs" (Musa, Youth Activist, 2018).

Looking closely, Harvey (2005, p.11) describes neoliberalism as "in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms" and, that those business skills need to be nurtured within an "institutional framework characterized by strong, private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p.11). In many democratic polities, neoliberals wish to take power away from the state and empower the business community. However, in the monarchical regimes of the Gulf countries, including Qatar, the business community and the state are closely intertwined, through family linkages and state patronage – whether direct and indirect. As a result, power is maintained and amplified in the hands of the state through intertwining political, economic and social interests. While the respondents recognised the overwhelming emphasis on pursuing business, they did not comprehend the broader implications of such policies/programmes for youth empowerment, especially, the ways in which the state uses its power to reinforce its dominance by controlling the means and modes of production as well as narratives.

In Qatar, it is important to recognise the role the state plays in using its power to shape youth empowerment policies and programmes. The state emphasises the importance of job security, profit-making and business. Harvey (2005) concurs stating that almost all states in the world have been following, to different degrees – wilfully, or forcibly - a neoliberal agenda.

The state, due to its vast economic interests often camouflaged as the private sector, entrenches its power through promoting neoliberal policies. Interestingly, this occurs irrespective of whether those interviewed were self-described as modernist or conservative. When interviewees of either persuasion were asked whether there were any ethical concerns with neoliberal economic perspective, both ideological trajectories seem to refuse to acknowledge that. Both ideologues convincingly support youth empowerment policies/programmes that underlined fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and job placement/security. When further probed and questioned on whether there were any moral issues that could be raised by emphasizing money and the market place, 27 interviewees – 8 government officials and 19 youth activists, acknowledged this was a concern or had the potential for concern.

Most of the interviewees – 9 government officials and 33 youth activists - when further probed about the emphasis on profit-making, job placement and developing an entrepreneurial spirit, rationalised state behaviour ranging from necessary to positive. When asked 'why?' these interviewees argued that it was necessary in order to protect Qatar's wealth and ensure that youth do not rely on the state for job security. In fact, Abdul Salam (Government Official Interview, 2018) frankly stated that "the government needs to ensure that the youth develop a business spirit and not only rely on state hand-outs, which cannot continue indefinitely."

Harvey (2005, p.12) writes that neoliberalism believes that the "social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market." This raises serious ethical questions with respect to values, the direction of society and equality that the interviewees seem to either ignore or be oblivious to. Despite the equitable distribution of wealth, protection from exploitation and nurturing an ethical, conscientious society that is more than the sum of its parts is a fundamental in Islamic eschatology (Asutay, 2013). Notwithstanding that glaring inconsistency, the positions of the respondents in relation to Islamic economic values of equity and fairness and what Stiglitz (2002) describes as 'market fundamentalism' was elusive. They

did not seem to comprehend the ways in which a neoliberal ethic can dehumanize and monetize the value of life. Clearly, there is a disconnect between wealth creation, equality and social justice that seems to be missing in the ways the state rationalises the importance of profiteering and entrepreneurship. In many ways, there is an over emphasis on materialism. This notion is certainly challenged by advanced Western societies, such as Inglehart (1977) who argued that rampant materialism was leading to the emergence of postmaterialist values, that preferred meaning, environmentalism and social responsibility over material gain.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter reported on the analysis of the 69 semi-structured interviews to reveal 5 key inter-related themes that emerge from the data-set. By doing so, this chapter was able to present a deep insight and detailed representation of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar – through the perceptions of the stakeholders, not only by understanding the sentiments of government officials, but youth activists as well. Collectively, those five emerging themes located across the dataset are as follows: First, there is widespread ambiguity, or a lack of clarity, on the purposes, definitions, scope or mandate of youth empowerment initiatives/programmes. Arguably, one of the factors contributing to this ambiguity is the competitive power relations within the state, and its inability to resolve that contestation. Second, there is a lack of effective training and guidance for Qatari officials and youth involved in youth empowerment policies/programmes. More specifically, youth input is not being sought which leads to their increasing frustration with policy. In many ways, this is merely a reflection of Qatar's socio-cultural context in which there is a latent apprehension towards sharing power and aversion to decentralizing authority. Third, there is an overwhelming sense of paternalism/patriarchy that was exhibited by the interviewees, both government officials and, to a lesser degree, youth. Both expressed a clear concern for the moral direction of youth. Plausibly, however, this has more to do with many government officials, and some youth activists, wishing to maintain the status quo, uphold current power relations and assert their

authority through moral policing. Fourth, there was a clear recognition by youth and government officials that the state is employing youth empowerment strategies to normalize youth into their state-led ideologies, and not about ending marginalisation. In the state-led process of normalization a clear divide is discernible between so-called modernists and traditionalists/conservatives. This rivalry and contestation is about the power, control and the direction of youth empowerment policies. Fifth, there is a neoliberal focus on entrepreneurship and an emphasis on developing a business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit among youth. The state implements a neoliberal agenda with emphasis on entrepreneurship, employability and job creation (Sukarieh, 2017) when there is no such need. This reflects how the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is not about transformation but reinforcing power relations and commitment to prescribed state-led agenda.

Overall, understanding the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is a very complex issue. The ambiguity, unwillingness to seek youth input or train government officials, deep sense of paternalism and guardianship which infantilizes youth, all characterize the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Moreover, the state-led normalization, which is internally conflicted by conservatives and modernists, further complicates the practice of youth empowerment by contesting power groups. First, the social, legal, political and economic platforms that encourage and motivate empowerment are still inadequate or incomplete. Secondly, there seems to be no clear intention or plan by the state develop such an integrated platform, manage contestation or a create a supportive cultural environment. While, there is no reason to believe that the political environment would be opposed to the emergence of such a platform, especially given the continuous emphasis by the state on the need to address the needs of the youth, there still is no mechanism that allows for youth voices to be taken into consideration when designing youth empowerment programmes/policies.

Ultimately, the data analysis reveals that understanding youth empowerment is not simple or straightforward, especially in a context such as Qatar, which is loaded with complex

power relations that are imposed by the state and a consequence of strong social pressures and restrictions. This reflects the incoherence and contradictory tensions that Sharp et al (2000) suggest characterises youth empowerment programmes. More importantly, it shows the extent to which empowerment programmes may end up serving the dominant ideology such as the patriarchy, by keeping the population in check (Ansell et.al. 2012). The understanding and practice of power in the context of Qatar incorporates a resistance to sharing or decentralizing power. This aggravates and minimizes attempts to seek youth input and train government officials, even while maintaining a rhetoric that suggests otherwise.

Lastly, an interesting dilemma emerges when analysing the 69 semi-structured interviews. The state and its institutions offer numerous so-called empowerment programmes that are tailored for a wide variety of needs, but both empower on one level but also disempower at other levels. All youth empowerment policies/programmes ultimately serve the interests of the state, and are a means by which the state asserts its power and control. This explains why the state has made financing quite easily accessible. However, the avenues for expression are all owned and controlled by the state. It is very possible that by intervening, managing and controlling the totality of youth empowerment programmes, the state will alienate large segments of youth rather than include them successfully. This could also undermine efforts to connect to the youth since the priority of these programmes will be to serve the interests and ideology of the state. Contrarily, if the state adopts a hands-off approach, it risks facing the blame for not contributing to youth empowerment.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary & Overview

This thesis aimed at exploring youth empowerment practices in Qatar through the lens of power dynamics, and to identify and analyse the reasons contributing to youth dissatisfaction, apathy and resentment. The analysis suggests that the practice of youth empowerment utilises a rhetoric of change but does not transform generational power relations between the state and youth. Instead, it reinforces power structures that undermine youth agency, which is leading to heightening levels of frustration and indifference.

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the serious issues involved in understanding the concept of empowerment. After exploring, deconstructing and analysing relevant theoretical perspectives, several critical issues identified when researching and understanding the concept of empowerment. First, the vagueness of the concept; second, its theoretical association to supporting/facilitating marginalised groups in society; third, its theoretical linkage to a certain moral authority; fourth, its purported depoliticization; and finally, its practical association to neoliberalism. Each of these challenges occurs at the individual/community/political level and is also applicable to specific groups *in* communities or societies, such as youth. Moreover, understanding the role played by those who have the ability/capacity to institute their choices—or those with power—is essential for any practical attempt at understanding empowerment.

With respect to the roles that power and stakeholders play in defining and designing youth empowerment policies and their outcomes, the evidence shows that the roles of the state and those with the ability/capacity to facilitate or prevent empowerment are crucial. This is often an underdiscussed aspect in empowerment studies—the role played by other social actors and forces in facilitating the empowerment process, or in the very least, in not obstructing

greater access or agency in society. Hence, the critical relationship between power and empowerment reveals that it impacts the very definition, design and implementation of any form of empowerment. Even as early as adolescence, the youth interact with state institutions and with figures who have the ability/capacity to empower them. However, there is often resistance to power redistribution. To put it briefly, as evidenced by the evaluation of youth policies in Malawi and Lesotho by Ansell et al. (2012, p. 54), youth empowerment policies 'clearly reflect the aspiration of national governments and their "development partners" to control youth (for the nation) as much as to assist them, and to produce neoliberal subjects to serve national and international economies.' In other words, the state, through its power, ultimately dictates what and how much empowerment is allowed, and what it entails for whichever demographic it chooses.

The fact that power plays a central role in understanding the entire process of youth empowerment cannot be overstated, and it is an ongoing theme throughout this thesis. It may, perhaps, be naïve to assume that youth empowerment alone can solve the problem of powerlessness among marginalised individuals and groups when existing power relations in a social order are among the root causes of marginalisation in the first place (Ansell, 2014). At the same time, it is unlikely for those in power to simply give it up for the sole purpose of improving the conditions of the powerless. However, as Murdoch and Ward (1997) point out, this could probably explain the popularity of the concept of empowerment among neoliberals and others who are in a dominant position. This makes youth empowerment and power redistribution a veneer for governmentality through which a state can maintain control. It does so through knowledge technologies, by promoting self-control as a form of empowerment and even by allowing power redistribution that turns out to be mechanisms that are more focused on reinforcing state power than youth empowerment.

The relationship between power, state and youth also reveals that there is little or no agreement on basic definitions with respect to transnational research on youth. Furthermore,

youth empowerment policies only seem to create an illusion of power, whereas, in practice, this illusion is misleading. Also, youth empowerment does not occur in a vacuum and naturally results in power redistribution. This implies that the discourse on self-realisation is often whimsical, ignoring the realities of power and privilege in any society. Most importantly, youth empowerment policies are promoted as apolitical. In reality, they support neoliberalism, which means that these policies claim to be value neutral and apolitical but are not.

The final section of chapter 2 analyses six prominent models of youth empowerment. The analysis suggests that none of them is sufficient as a tool for assessing, understanding or even defining youth empowerment in the Qatari context. All six models avoid offering a precise definition of youth empowerment or what it is that their strategies intend to achieve which further contributes to their ambiguity. Second, these models make a clear assumption that empowerment is morally positive, but provide no clear mechanism for achieving youth empowerment across socio-cultural boundaries. Third, all six models are, in fact, representative of a neoliberal value-system, which is reflected in their recommended policies and practices.

My objective in chapter 3 was to explain my research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and design. In other words, this chapter explains how I decided to go about and explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, and why the chosen research methods best answer my specific research questions. Moreover, in this chapter, I explain how I collected, organised and analysed the data on youth empowerment in Qatar. That data was collected in two ways: semi-structured interviews and the documentary sources that are reflected in youth empowerment programmes/policies, select official documents, texts and speeches. The information gathered from the data is triangulated, deconstructed and analysed using discourse analysis and thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

More specifically, I explore the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar using a qualitative methodological research approach that is interpretivist and uses the retroductive approach, with case study design and case binding. First, retroduction is especially advantageous when using semi-structured interviews, and coupled with critical realism approach since this approach acknowledges a variation of perceptions of reality, all in relation to the social situations/issues pertaining to the unique cultural values, practices and contextual constraints in a specific area. Secondly, the specificity of my research and the fact that it was not done for comparative purposes justified the case study approach with case binding. Similarly, since the purpose of the study was to solely focus on youth empowerment in Qatar and the uniqueness of the Qatari context. Thirdly, the limited control over interviewees or participants/subjects under investigation, the unique contextual constraints that impact the understanding and practice of youth empowerment, the lack of clearly stipulated and agreed-upon definitions and ambiguity between the manifestation of power, the phenomenon and the context, further justified case binding. Together, this constituted my research strategy and design.

Coming to my key data source, this research study included 69 semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 Qatari government officials and 52 youths. Moreover, the research involved reviewing select official government documents, speeches and texts. This chapter also provides a detailed explanation of the methods used for data collection, including explaining the logic of using semi-structured interviews and the rationale for using select documentary sources, that is, official documents, texts and speeches. It is also worth noting that the documentary sources are all from official government institutions and can reliably be claimed to represent the aspirations of the Qatari government's policy on youth empowerment.

Furthermore, to effectively understand and explain the data from the 69 semi-structured interviews, this study primarily relied on thematic analysis, using the reflexive approach. Altogether, this multi-faceted research methodological approach matches the purpose of

understanding the ways people bring meaning to their environment, including allowing space for varying definitions and understandings of youth and youth empowerment. Given this variation, I had to employ an interpretivist research philosophy that combined two very different approaches: namely, a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. This made it possible to consider causal linkages, while recognising the divergence of perceptions when exploring the phenomenon of youth empowerment in Qatar.

The dataset of 69 semi-structured interviews and documentary sources provide a wealth of information on the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. First, the semi-structured interview style was welcomed by participants who tend to be wary of authority – connecting it to rigidity. Making participants feel comfortable in an unstructured, partly-informal setting, allowed them to freely speak about their understandings, perceptions and aspirations about youth empowerment – both positive and negative. For instance, as further discussed in the subsequent chapters, several interviewees pointed out that youth empowerment programmes are not necessarily about youth empowerment in as much as they are about capacity and skill-building. Their purpose, therefore, is intended to develop youth capabilities for professional purposes, to serve the needs of state institutions and meet developmental national planning needs. As such, these state programmes were perceived as focused on specific aspects of youth empowerment, namely the organisational dimension, while missing the individual and community dimensions as defined by Peterson and Zimmerman (2004).

Second, the analysis of documentary sources facilitated the classification of obstacles and challenges to youth empowerment in Qatar as contextual constraints which originate both as a result of the socio-cultural milieu and the attitudes and behaviorus of state/government officials. This is in line with the view that socio-cultural obstacles include the values, traditions, attitudes and perceptions that prevail in society which are embedded in discourse (Fairclough, 2010). More specifically, such obstacles also include moral judgement and social shaming, cultural resistance to change, lack of motivation as a result of affluence.

Chapter 4 chronologised the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar into 3 phases. The first phase (1972 – 1994) refers to youth empowerment programmes/policies in Qatar following independence. As discussed earlier, youth policies were introduced shortly after independence, but their mandate or vision was never explicitly outlined nor effectively operationalised. In the second phase, the emphasis was on the rapid structural and political transformations that took place between the period 1994 to 2008. During this period, a major transformation launched Qatar into a new era under the leadership of the Father-Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, leading to a plethora of initiatives that impacted youth and youth empowerment policies/programmes. A few of the youth initiatives/policies analysed from that period included Qatar Leadership Academy of 2005, the Reach Out To Asia programme of 2005, and the Qatar National Vision that was launched in 2008. The third phase of youth empowerment policies/programmes in Qatar refers to major developments that took place between 2009-2012. Analysis of initiatives and programmes from this period included ROTA's First Youth Empowerment Conference in 2009, Qatar Leadership Centre in 2010 and the Arab Spring in 2011, with emphasis on the impact on the practice of youth empowerment. These selected policies/programmes were among the most important and impactful during the three time-frames under investigation. Admittedly, this is nowhere near the totality of youth empowerment policies/programmes or institutions that launched youth empowerment programmes, yet critiquing sheds significant light on the problems/challenges plaguing the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar.

Chapter 4 also highlighted the causes for the systematic failure of youth empowerment policies/programmes to achive their goals during the three respective phases extending from 1972 to 2012. This systematic failure was attributed to 5 core reasons: (1) employment was not tied to capabilities or skill-sets; (2) the rentier economy produced a rentier mentality; (3) there is lack of clear vision in regards to the purpose and direction of youth empowerment; (4) there was no evidence to suggest that Qatari youth were approached in order to ascertain their goals

and objectives and to involve them as stakeholders in youth empowerment policies/programmes; and (5) the fact that youth empowerment was based on a neoliberal philosophy.

In fact, it is worth elaborating that the neoliberal foundations of youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar are manifested in several ways: (a) The centrality of job security and job placement, though from the private sector; (b) the imposition of the English language and culture in youth empowerment programmes, which often proved to be exclusionary; (c) shifting the perception of youth from a positive to a negative demographic through the introduction of subtle neoliberal concepts.

All in all, the ecosystem and practice of youth empowerment exists in an illusory world that is separate from the socio-cultural context in which youth are expected to play a role through capacity development. It is as if the youth in Qatar are asked to suspend their beliefs, practices and values – their religious, cultural and normative ethos, and then enter the world of 'youth empowerment' policies/programmes. In this world, very little that they have been taught or understood – not even the language they speak in, is relatable. When they enter that 'neoliberal' space, they transform – or are compelled as Lukes (2005) would argue, or run away. Their socio-cultural realities, even at times, are mocked or seen through an outdated modernization prism which equates progress with certain neoliberal characteristics and mannerisms.

Given these realities, the contradictions in the perceptions of youth by society and decision-makers, the continuous shifts in policies addressing youth affairs, and the ambiguity with which policymakers perceive youth-related issues, youth empowerment remains a problematic issue at the official level in Qatar. On the one hand, youth empowerment is still based on the classic perception that the needs of the youth are best served by providing them with all the necessary resources to assure their access to education and secure employment – a

neoliberal emphasis equating youth empowerment to job placement. On the other hand, it is supplemented by another vague assumption that youth empowerment is attained through providing the youth with resources and capabilities to develop their leadership skills in such manner that they can take initiative and realise their goals in life through entrepreneurship – another neoliberal ethos (Herrera, 2017).

Moreover, within the context of a rentier economy, education is provided and employment is secured, but without actually providing the youth with incentives to pursue aspirations, innovate, or even be involved in achieving beyond expectations. As a result of guaranteed lifetime employment in financially rewarding public sector jobs, it is not surprising that young individuals end up with no motivation to pursue higher education or seek to go beyond their career paths. Likewise, there is little incentive for the youth to further develop their capacities and capabilities when, at best, they are expected to be loyal subjects in a system that curtails out-of-the-box thinking, limits risk-taking, or dissuades any form of participation at the civic, economic and political levels.

While the analysis in chapter 4 was focused on the ecosystem of youth empowerment in Qatar and the historic, political and socio-economic contexts in which youth empowerment policies and programmes were initiated, the objective of chapter 5 was to take a closer look at youth empowerment issues through the analysis of official discourse.

To begin, this chapter critiqued the youth report entitled '*Towards Qatar National Vision 2030*,' sanctioned by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, but outsourced to McKinsey Consulting (Towards QNV 2030, 2012). This report was critical of Qatar's record of youth policy/programmes, decrying it as lacking awareness, paternalistic and disempowering. However, the report itself mirrored those same shortcomings, and in a sense, it was a disempowering document that was paternalistic with a top-down approach to youth affairs. More specifically, this was evident in proposing and explaining the need to use social

'influencers' to guide the youth (Towards QNV 2030, 2012, p. 22). Moreover, the report had a neo-liberal focus on entrepreneurship, employability and vocational training. Lastly, it misunderstood the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar by ignoring local axiology and misinterpreting Qatari tradition.

Second, this chapter critically analysed the abdication speech of the HH Father-Emir Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who relinquished political power to his son. This was a monumental moment which shook the corridors of power throughout the Gulf region and the broader Middle East. In his powerful and moving abdication speech the Father-Emir cautioned his people on the importance of ethics, hard work and resilience. Of particular importance, was the emphasis on the ethical foundations of Qatari society. The Father-Emir underlined this issue multiple times in his speech, both directly and indirectly, connecting it to Arab traditions and Islam. This is indicative of the importance of ethical grounding. Moreover, the Father-Emir specifically directed much of his speech to the youth, revealing the utmost importance that the state places on them. The speech was unpretentious and brief, urging the youth to participate in the building of their society and to be conscious of their responsibilities and duties. However, those entrusted with concretising the vision of His Highness the Father-Emir have been unable to achieve those targets.

The subsequent sections in the chapter continued to use policy and text analysis to analyse the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, but was further divided into two distinct sub-parts. Part I was described as the 're-evaluation phase' in which the Qatari government recognised its policies were not achieving the desired outcomes. This section deconstructs four main policies/speeches related to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. First, the 2014 mission statement of the now defunct Ministry of Youth and Sports, which had a confusing, ambiguous mandate. Such ambiguity and inconsistency are not surprising, since as Ansell (2014) points out, youth empowerment seems to mean different things to different users and audiences. However, it somewhat contradictorily juxtaposed local objectives with global

affairs when speaking of youth issues. This was noticeable in the emphasis on organising youth-related conferences locally, regionally and internationally. Moreover, the discourse used in this regard implied a possible neoliberal connection by encouraging the Qatari youth to connect to 'global youth affairs'. Admittedly, while inconclusive, there seemed to be neoliberal framing in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. After all, what possibly could the connection to 'global youth affairs' imply? Also, the mission statement was loaded with rhetoric and hyperbole, including words such as 'elevate,' and 'prominence.' This, unfortunately, has come to define many aspects of youth empowerment in Qatar – high-sounding, swaggering rhetoric without substance or focus on the youth.

Another relevant document analysed in chapter 5 was the ministerial speech by H.E. Saleh Bin Ghanem at the inaugural Qatar Youth Forum in 2016. That speech was keenly indicative of several problematic themes associated with the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. To illustrate, the grandiose language used in the speech was characterised by a braggadocious tone that encouraged youth to 'impress the world.' Such exaggerated language is commonplace and has come to represent the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Another problematic issue in the speech was the use of culturally insensitive metaphors such as 'betting' and 'music.' Both terms have the possibility of being viewed negatively and are unrepresentative of local values. This leaves credence to the assumption that whoever wrote the minister's speech was either unaware of this local perception or simply indifferent and dismissive. In fact, several youths interviewed were critical of the language used as unrepresentative of Qatari society and values. In addition to this, the language used by the minister is an indication of the ongoing ideological contestation in society between traditionalists and modernists, a contestation which is becoming increasingly confrontational. Moreover, this substantiates a perspective that views the entire practice of youth empowerment in Qatar as alien, initiated at the behest of foreign consultants. In addition, the speech was

ambiguous in its messaging, without any clear vision or mandate. Most importantly, it had a neoliberal focus by highlighting the need for youth to become successful entrepreneurs.

Third, in addition to the ministerial speech, the entire 2016 Qatar Youth Forum was representative of the ongoing challenges associated with the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. During the course of the forum, several sessions were planned that largely focused on employability, the job market ad entrepreneurship. This focus reflected obvious neoliberal connotations, and as Luke (2005) argues that the framing of youth empowerment through a neoliberal lens is indicative of how power limits choice. Also, Qatar Youth Forum 2016 had an overwhelming paternalistic attitude. While attending sessions, the youths already had their options limited with pre-determined choices. Again, Luke's (2005) concept of latent conflict is relevant here in the manner the organisers claimed to seek youth inputs, but then provided them with narrow select options from which to choose. In this way, the state circumvents any potential conflict by offering limited and limiting choices. Relatedly, an overall a key characteristic of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is the absence of a mechanism from which to seek youth inputs, during or after programmes/events. However, and perhaps the most critical issue in the Qatar Youth Forum. 2016 was the lack of bona fide Qatari youth participation. In fact, the irony was that the vast majority of participants were not even Qatari citizens, which implies that the recipients of benefits were not even closely associated with the event in the first place. This is a major cause of concern and is among the least discussed, but most serious ongoing problems in the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar: the policies/programmes that are primarily intended to benefit Qatari youth but they do not, since the youth are largely absent or excluded in one way or another.

Fourth, the speech by HH the Emir Shaikh Tamim at the opening of the 45th Session of the Advisory Council is analysed in the prevailing context of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. His Highness Shaikh Tamim's speech was interesting in its gentle, but clear rebuke of Qatari youth. He was particularly concerned about the rise in consumerism,

employee absenteeism and moral/ethical foundations of youth. In other words, examining the speech in the broader context of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, the speech was incisive. It pinpointed the growing scourge of indulgence, moral irresponsibility and indifferent work ethic. As mentioned earlier, many young Qataris are simply collecting a paycheck and not even going to work. This practice has become so prevalent that the Emir had to specifically refer to it in his speech. The speech set the tone for what would follow, specifically the recognition that more needed to be done to remind the youth of their moral and ethical responsibilities. In fact, this speech and its emphasis on the responsibilities of the youth eventually led to the establishment of the Al Wijdan Cultural Centre for Youth.

In 2017, shortly after the Emir's 2016 advisory council speech, the Qatari government established the Al Wijdan Cultural Centre for Youth. This center was focused on indirectly guiding the youth towards living a morally conscious and ethically responsible life. It organised seminars, distributed papers on its extensive mailing list, and held workshops that discussed relevant philosophical questions. While well-intentioned and important, it suffered several problems. Its messaging is paternalistic and at times patronising. Moreover, the tone is stern and condescending, rather than welcoming. Moreover, the messaging is plagued with inconsistency, perhaps as a result of a halfhearted attempt to avoid accusations of enforcing opinions. Most seriously, the beneficiaries of Al Wijdan Cultural Centre and its numerous activities are not Qatari youth. As is an overall problem in practice of youth empowerment in Qatar, many of the events, workshops and conference do not have significant participation by Qatari youth. In fact, is not even representative of their overall population of 12%.

In Part II of chapter 5, a critical analysis also aimed at deconstructing three relevant policies/speeches related to the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. The first is the 2018 mission statement of the current Ministry of Culture and Sports. Curiously, the word 'youth' was removed both from the official name of the ministry and its content. This cannot be inconsequential. In fact, as Luke (2005) clearly acknowledges, through the discourses

associated with them, words have the ability to influence the innermost thoughts. The removal of the word 'youth' is indicative of the increasing frustration of officials who are unable to address this challenge. Similarly, removing the word youth, is almost blaming youth for not responding positively to the government-led initiatives. On the other hand, there were references to the importance of maintaining Qatar's culture and traditions in the mission statement–indirectly implying that culture and traditions are under threat. In this context, two issues are relevant, namely the continuous. concern about the ethical/moral direction of youth, and the recognition of rivalry between tradition and modernity.

At a closer look, although political leaders in the country repeatedly call for empowering the youth and addressing youth needs and affairs, it seems that obstacles actually start at the ministerial level. The continuous restructuring of ministries and departments, and practices such as 'removing the word 'youth' or any serious reference to them, are all indicative of ambiguity. In other words, there is an overall confusion with respect to how youth policies should be initiated, directed and implemented. This is coupled with an obvious lack of strategic goals and vision at the ministerial as well at the lower departmental levels. Put together, these two obstacles strongly indicate that policymakers are either unable to formulate a clear understanding of policies for the youth, or they perceive youth empowerment as a process of managing, directing and controlling the youth as a volatile asset or perhaps as a liability. This perception is further expressed in the form of bureaucratic red tape and impediments that are raised in the face of initiatives led or developed by the youth, whether in the form of licensing and procedural restrictions, or in the restrictions on access to funding at a time when projects and initiatives under state-sponsored policies tend face no such limitations and restrictions.

Part II also analysed the pivotal 2019 speech by HH Emir Shaikh Tamim to the 48th Advisory Council. In this speech, HH the Emir tackled the growing scourge of youth entitlement, consumerism and a declining work ethic amongst youth in Qatar even more adamantly than ever. While the speech was directed at the 'youth', it addressed general issues

and specifically rebuked those who feel 'entitled.' Likewise, it was critical of those who do not fulfill their obligations, and reminded the youth that along with the privileges that the state has generously provided, they have responsibilities and duties. Lastly, the Emir explicitly reiterated the importance of ethical and moral obligations of the youth.

The section also analysed the most recent attempt by the government to ascertain youth sentiments by launching QSurvey 2021 – a social media campaign. However, the analysis shows that those responsible for executing the directives of the Emir Shaikh Tamim have so far been unable to develop effective strategies on ways forward or to seek youth input in the first place. For example, the entire structure of the QSurvey survey was dubious, poorly-thought and restrictive. The survey only asked one question and participants were expected to select six statements that reflected their concerns regarding youth affairs. Even more troubling, the phrases used were far from clear and straight forward. In fact, there was considerable ambiguity in the messaging. Second, there was no mechanism to follow up with participants or inform them on the results of the survey. Even worse, the lack of Qatari youth participation was evident, which is characteristic of youth empowerment policies and programmes. In fact, those who conceptualised QSurvey could have asked for Qatari ID's or resident cards to ensure that those taking the survey were indeed Qatari.

The purpose of chapter 6 was to present insights and a detailed representation of the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar from the perspective of stakeholders. The objective was not only to understand the sentiments and expectations of government officials, but of youth activists as well. Collectively, those five emerging themes located across the dataset are as follows: first, there is widespread ambiguity, or a lack of clarity, on the purposes, definitions, scope or mandate of youth empowerment initiatives/programmes. Arguably, one of the factors contributing to this ambiguity is the prevalence of competitive power relations within the state, exacerbated by the inability to resolve that contestation; second, there is a lack of effective training and guidance for Qatari officials and youths involved in youth empowerment

policies/programmes. More specifically, youth input is not being sought which leads to their increasing frustration with policy. In many ways, this is merely a reflection of Qatar's socio-cultural context in which there is latent apprehension towards sharing power and aversion to decentralising authority; third, there is an overwhelming sense of paternalism/patriarchy that was exhibited by the interviewees, both government officials and, to a lesser degree, youths. Both expressed a clear concern for the moral direction of youth. Plausibly, however, this has more to do with many government officials, and some youth activists, wishing to maintain the status quo, to uphold current power relations and to assert their authority through moral policing; fourth, there was a clear recognition by youth and government officials that the state is employing youth empowerment strategies to normalise youth into their state ideologies, rather than to end marginalisation. In the state-led process of normalization a clearly discernible divide is noticeable between so-called modernists and traditionalists/conservatives. The rivalry and contestation are essentially about power, control and the direction of youth empowerment policies. Fifth, there is a neoliberal focus on entrepreneurship and an emphasis on developing a business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit among youth. The state implements a neoliberal agenda with emphasis on entrepreneurship, employability and job creation (Sukarieh, 2017), even when there is no such need. This reflects how the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is not about transformation but reinforcing power relations and commitment to prescribed state-led agenda.

Overall, understanding the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar is a very complex issue. The ambiguity, unwillingness to seek youth input or train government officials, deep sense of paternalism and guardianship which infantilises youth, all characterise the practice of youth empowerment in Qatar. Moreover, the state-led normalization, which is internally conflicted by conservatives and modernists, further complicates the practice of youth empowerment by contesting power groups. First, the social, legal, political and economic platforms that encourage and motivate empowerment are still inadequate or incomplete.

Secondly, there seems to be no clear intention or plan by the state develop such an integrated platform, manage contestation or a create a supportive cultural environment. While, there is no reason to believe that the political environment would be opposed to the emergence of such a platform, especially given the continuous emphasis by the state on the need to address the needs of the youth. However, there still is no mechanism that allows for youth voices to be taken into consideration when designing youth empowerment programmes/policies.

Ultimately, the data analysis reveals that understanding youth empowerment is not simple or straightforward, especially in a context such as Qatar, which is loaded with complex power relations that are imposed by the state and a consequence of strong social pressures and restrictions. This reflects the incoherence and contradictory tensions that according to Sharp et al (2000) tend to characterise youth empowerment programmes. More importantly, it shows the extent to which empowerment programmes may end up serving the dominant ideology such as the patriarchy, by keeping the population in check (Ansell et.al. 2012). The understanding and practice of power in the context of Qatar incorporates a resistance to sharing or decentralising power. This aggravates and minimises attempts to seek youth input and train government officials, even while maintaining a rhetoric that suggests otherwise.

It is also worth referring to an interesting dilemma that emerged during the process of analysing the 69 semi-structured interviews. The state and its institutions offer numerous so-called empowerment programmes that are tailored for a wide variety of needs, but which actually empower on one level but also disempower at other levels. All youth empowerment policies/programmes ultimately serve the interests of the state, and are a means by which the state asserts its power and control. This explains why the state has made financing quite easily accessible. However, the avenues utilised for expression are all owned and controlled by the state. It is very possible that that by intervening, managing and controlling the totality of youth empowerment programmes, the state will alienate large segments of youth rather than include them successfully. This could also undermine efforts to connect to the youth since the priority

of these programmes will be to serve the interests and ideology of the state. Contrarily, if the state adopts a hands-off approach, it risks facing the blame for not contributing to youth empowerment.

7.2 Contribution

This dissertation yielded several outcomes. First, it provided a detailed historical and contextual analysis of youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar since independence. Second, it offered an evaluation of these policies and programmes, their motivations and objectives, and how they were implemented over different periods and mandates. Third, it provided a detailed analysis of the political, social, ideological and institutional obstacles and challenges that have undermined youth empowerment policies and programmes, and which will continue to plague such efforts in the future. However, several lessons learned can be identified to transform youth empowerment policies and programmes in Qatar.

To start with, the single most important lesson learned from Qatar's experience with youth empowerment is that youth empowerment has to actually be about the youth. The evaluation of four decades of youth policies clearly reveal that while the youth were positioned at the heart of these policies, this was mostly limited to verbal and symbolic commitment, but rarely seen in actions. These were policies and strategies that were developed and devised by much older officials who were probably out of touch with the new generations of young Qataris and their hopes or aspirations. If youth empowerment policies and programmes do not directly involve the youth, and if they are not designed around the youth, with direct, critical and substantial contributions by the youth, then they will most likely lead to similar failures and results.

Since youth empowerment is intended to achieve empowerment for a disenfranchised group, the least that should be done is to engage members of this group as primary stakeholders

in the processes of design, planning, and implementation. For many years, the state has invested heavily to fund youth empowerment initiatives, policies and programmes, but as it became evident in this study, the youth have remained systemically excluded. This exclusion is not only evidenced in the low participation rates among Qatari youths, but also in the responses of interviewees in this study. Moreover, despite the repeated and persistent efforts by the relevant authorities to recruit Qatari youth participants in these programmes, the results have been consistently disappointing, mainly because the exclusion is often inherent in the policies themselves at the very beginning of the process.

Secondly, the commitment to a state ideology is in itself an exclusionary process by its nature. Whether this ideology is merely paternalistic and conservative in nature, aiming at maintaining and propagating certain cultural values and outcomes, or whether it is neoliberal and intended to channel the youth toward the future needs of the market and the state-led economy, as far as the youth are concerned, the outcomes are the same, namely their exclusion from the entire process. Undoubtedly, many young Qataris are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, in assuming leadership positions, or in benefiting from vocational or any other form of training offered in youth empowerment programmes. However, such content is attractive to only a select few, but not to the majority of young Qataris who are probably more interested in exploring their individual potentials, developing their capabilities and pursuing personal interests that may or may not be of relevance to the state. Committing youth empowerment to one specific ideology or perspective, in this sense, is nothing short of state empowerment. It becomes about empowering the vision of the state, of those who are designing and planning empowerment programmes, and of those who implement them. In fact, the only form of agency that most Qatari youths seem to exercise in this respect is ignoring or avoiding these programmes altogether.

Ironically, therefore, the low participation of Qatari youths in youth empowerment programmes can be seen as a form of passive protest for their exclusion from the design and

planning of these programmes, at least for those who are fully capable of accessing these programmes in the first place. However, there are probably many others who are excluded because of linguistic barriers, unable to access these programmes simply because of their poor command of English language, or because of the unfriendly cultural environment in which such programmed are delivered, especially when design or content may be at odds with cultural values and beliefs.

In addition to this, one of the relevant observations during the course of this study is the diversity among Qatari youths. This diversity among the youth mirrors the growing diversity within society as a whole, including both liberals and traditionalists. Meanwhile, youth empowerment policies and programmes over a period of four decades seem to have started with the assumption that the youth in Qatar represent a homogeneous group whose needs can be served and satisfied with a one-size-fits-all approach. This approach, however, serves only one entity, namely the state, but it rarely and barely addresses the actual needs and expectations of young people who are often on the search for the new, the different, and the relevant.

The lessons learned from the disappointing and frustrating experiences of youth empowerment in Qatar offer an opportunity to provide real alternatives in the future. First, the lessons learned do not imply that a neoliberal approach should be abolished altogether. Rather, this approach exists and can actually respond to the needs of certain youth groups who choose to endorse this view and its values. Accordingly, this approach should not be ignored or eliminated, but rather, it should be scaled down and limited to match the needs of the youths who actually need it. In other words, this approach can be implemented as one of several other approaches that are made available to the youth to choose from.

Secondly, it is essential to involve and engage the youth in the design and development, and even in the implementation of youth empowerment policies and programmes. These young

people are the ultimate stakeholders in these policies, and it is their lives, interests, concerns and aspirations that the state claims to have at heart in the name of youth empowerment. Accordingly, the paternalistic top-down approach that has been traditionally implemented must be replaced with an alternative that gives a voice and agency to the youth. Such a recommendation is not an idealistic expression of wishful thinking, but rather, it is based on the fact that for four decades, a paternalistic top-down approach has only yielded an endless series of disappointments by all means. Accordingly, since strong political support at the top has been repeatedly expressed in support of youth empowerment, it is necessary for Qatari officials in charge of youth affairs to consider this alternative seriously.

In addition to this, inclusive youth empowerment policies should not only take cultural diversity into consideration, but also gender diversity and the variety of needs that different youth groups may express. This may impose a burden on the ministry in charge of youth affairs, but this burden would be insignificant in comparison to the substantial investments and efforts that were spent on youth empowerment policies and programmes that do not seem to have delivered any of their intended results in a period of four decades, especially when taking into consideration that the youths targeted by these policies and programmes rarely participated and benefited in the first place.

In a final thought, it is perhaps worth concluding that youth empowerment in Qatar has rarely been about the youth or about empowerment. The state has allocated substantial resources for youth empowerment and programmes, but the record suggests that a paternalistic top-down approach will only continue to yield the same disappointing results. Youth empowerment should at least be about empowering the youth, and the simplest first step in this direction is to initiate a paradigm shift at the policymaking level, a shift that recognises the fundamental need to involve and engage the youth in designing and planning the policies and programmes that are intended to empower them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Fieldwork Interview Participants

(Names have been removed as per the request of the interviewees)

Seq.	Category	Details
1	Official	A university professor and CEO of a professional academy with a distinguished academic background that includes a PhD in education. Served as a director of several youth development, leadership and education centres in Qatar and the GCC, and was the Assistant Undersecretary of Planning and Curriculum Development at the Ministry of Education. Served as a member of the Board of Directors of major social development centres, and as a Chairman of the Supreme Council of Family Affairs, Social Rehabilitation Centre as well as Qatar National Volunteer Award Committee.
2	Official	State Senior Leadership Advisor for Education and Youth affairs and Managing Director of Qatar Leadership Centres. Locally considered as a role model and active youth advocate. Serves as the Chair of the Executive Board and Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Qatar University. Formerly served as Vice President of Education at Qatar Foundation and President of Education City, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, Inaugural President of Hamad bin Khalifa University and Founding Chairman of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE).
3	Official	Education and Youth Development Consultant with a PhD degree in education and development and Director of the Educational Preparation Centre. Well respected locally and very active in media outlets.
4	Official	Founding Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Executive Director of several institutions. Very active in media outlets and considered locally as a youth advocate.
5	Official	Associate Professor at Qatar University and Chairman of a regional leadership consultancy. His university classes include ones about community service, leadership, service learning and civic engagement.
6	Official	Qatari intellectual, writer and lecturer in a variety of topics mainly evolving around building the capacity of young generations to enable them to better build their nation. Has a PhD degree and serves as a senior consultant to the Minister of Youth (now Minister of Culture and Sports) and Director of several cultural centres as well as local initiatives.
7	Official	Qatari thinker and intellectual who serves as a Senior Consultant and Advisor to the Minister of Youth (now Minister of Culture and Sport). He also serves as the Director of Strategy & Development at a semi-governmental entity.
8	Official	An active development advocate who serves as the CEO of Qatar Development Bank, Chairman of Bedaya Centre For Entrepreneurship & SME Development, Chairman of Qatar Business Incubation Centre, Board Member and Former Director of Qatar Science & Technology Park.
9	Official	Community Development Manager at a local youth and education NGO and Chairman of Organizing and Steering Committee of Empower Youth

		Conference. He is also the Secretary General of Qatar Youth Hostel and Member of the Board of Trustees of the International Youth Hostel Federation.
10	Official	Senior Advisor at Education Above All and youth empowerment and capacity building consultant at Reach Out to Asia (ROTA).
11	Official	Head of Community Outreach at Qatar Social Development Centre and (formerly) Education Above All Foundation. Involved in Qatar's local and international educational and capacity building initiatives.
12	Official	Senior Advisor for youth development and empowerment. Responsibilities includes training and mentoring the majority of Qatar youth-let initiatives and service clubs.
13	Official	CEO of a prominent local training, coaching and career development centre. Serves as Management Director at a semi-governmental entity. Very active youth advocate with 14 years of experience in the areas of talent management, leadership development and employee engagement.
14	Official	Executive Director of Outreach and Institutional Advancement at Qatar Foundation and Former CEO of Teach for Qatar.
15	Official	Founder and CEO of a STEM-related enterprise and senior consultant at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Has one of the most successful local stories in the field of STEM education, development and entrepreneurship.
16	Official	Undersecretary at a local ministry and a former Executive Director of Business Localization and Manager of Business Development at Qatar Development Bank. He is also a General Manager of Bedaya Centre For Entrepreneurship & SME Development, a member of the Steering Committee the Supreme Council of ICT Investment Fund and Vice President of Communication at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.
17	Official	CEO of Qatar Business Incubation Centre and Director of Strategic Initiatives & Partnership Development at Qatar Foundation
18	Youth (18-24)	A volunteer in Empower Youth Conference and founder of a youth service club at Reach Out to Asia Organisation.
19	Youth (18-24)	A participant at Empower Youth Conference and member of a youth service club at Reach Out to Asia Organisation.
20	Youth (18-24)	A participant in Qatar's annual youth leadership training. Co-founded a youth service club with her schoolmates, which was awarded in a local youth conference.
21	Youth (18-24)	Active volunteer and founder of a school service learning youth club which got incubated and sponsored by a local NGO.
22	Youth (18-24)	Young participant at the workshops of Qatar Annual Youth Conference. Was aiming at getting the needed training and support to start her public health youth initiative.
23	Youth (18-24)	Volunteer and member of the organizing committee of Empower Youth Conference. Has a small youth service club that includes 2 other members. Got the needed fund from a local NGO after completing several trainings.
24	Youth (18-24)	Participant at Empower youth conference and member of a youth service club that acts as a virtual hub for available capacity building trainings for the youth. Got the needed support and training from Reach out to Asia, and collaborated with the Ministry of Culture for in-kind support.
25	Youth (18-24)	Volunteer at Empower Youth Conference and member of a youth service club. Currently studying at Education City.

26	Youth (18-24)	University student at Qatar's Education City. Was a volunteer in a local youth conference and a participant in the annual youth leadership training. Her plans included joining the Youth Advisory Board of a local entity.
27	Youth (18-24)	Volunteer and member of the youth organising committee of Empower Youth Conference. Recently completed a leadership training and got an award. About to graduate from university and planning to convert her new youth service club into a local association to serve capacity building needs in Qatar's remote areas.
28	Youth (18-24)	Member of two youth advisory boards in a governmental and a semi-governmental entities. Leading the planning committee of a local youth conference. Recently graduated from Carnegie Mellon University and converted her female sport youth club into a self-funded entity after 3 years of sponsorship and incubation.
29	Youth (18-24)	Youth activists and member of several youth advisory boards in Qatar. Considered as Qatar's youth representative at UN youth conferences. Graduate of Georgetown University (Qatar).
30	Youth (18-24)	Student at Qatar University studying international affairs. Not interested in youth service clubs nor youth-led initiatives.
31	Youth (18-24)	Young Qatari artist and a student at Qatar University studying business administration. Faced a lot of difficulties as his art was not welcomed by his family nor local youth empowerment organizations.
32	Youth (18-24)	Business administration student. Participated in several youth initiatives that have been initiated by the Embassy of his home country.
33	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University Student studying mass communication and interested in virtual youth activism. Has a local social media outlet with a lot of followers.
34	Youth (18-24)	University student studying international affairs and foreign service. Not interested in youth empowerment programmes.
35	Youth (18-24)	Studying at Education City and about to graduate.
36	Youth (18-24)	University student majoring accounting.
37	Youth (18-24)	University student studying IT. Changed his major from engineering after noticing the influence of social media on youth affairs. Not interested in participating ar youth leadership or capacity building programmes.
38	Youth (18-24)	University student studying marketing. Attended several youth development trainings, especially during high school, but feels that they are disconnected from youth reality.
39	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University student studying international affairs and active volunteer with local NGOs including Qatar Red Crescent and Qatar Charity.
40	Youth (18-24)	University student studying public relations. Was able to apply what she learned at university in her youth service club.
41	Youth (18-24)	University student studying public relations. Writes blogs and participated in several local talk shows, but did not participate at any youth empowerment programme.
42	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University student studying international affairs. Participated in youth empowerment programmes.
43	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University Student studying international affairs. Not interested in youth empowerment programmes.
44	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University Student studying IT. Never volunteered nor participated at youth empowerment initiatives.

45	Youth (18-24)	Qatar University graduate. Active in volunteering, service learning and community service. Opened a branch of her youth service club in her home country Egypt and got involved with international NGOs.
46	Youth (18-24)	Talented young artists and photographer, founder of 2 community service clubs and active volunteer in local events and initiatives.
47	Youth (18-24)	Founder of a national youth service club and participant in ROTA's leadership training. Got interested in youth activism after the siege that was imposed against Qatar in 2017.
48	Youth (18-24)	Former active volunteer and local athlete. Was able to advocate for his athletic hobbies utilising youth clubs.
49	Youth (18-24)	Youth activists. Was able to convert his school club to a sponsored youth club under a local entity, which was recently converted to a mobile application.
50	Youth (18-24)	Recently graduated from Education City and planning to pursue higher education in the field of development.
51	Youth (18-24)	Speaker at Qatar Annual Youth Conference and q member of several youth clubs and community initiative.
52	Youth B (25-30)	Board member at Qatar Minister of Youth's Consultancy Team and Executive Manager of Qatar Youth Hostel. He also serves as a Project Manager at Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy.
53	Youth B (25-30)	Qatari athletic champion and entrepreneur. He also serves as a Senior Nuclear Engineer at the Ministry of Municipalities and Environment.
54	Youth B (25-30)	Young Entrepreneur who was living abroad and recently returned back to Qatar.
55	Youth B (25-30)	Member of ROTA's Youth Advisory Board and successful entrepreneur. Has several community service initiatives. Represented Qatar as a member of official youth delegations in international conferences.
56	Youth B (25-30)	Manager of Youth Activities Department and Youth Committee at Al-Ahli Sports Club. Has several businesses and writes in local newspapers about community issues.
57	Youth B (25-30)	Senior Engineer Qatar petroleum and successful entrepreneur. Was one of those who got trained by ROTA and other youth centres in Qatar.
58	Youth B (25-30)	Very active youth activists and founder of several youth clubs. He used to be member of ROTA Youth Advisory Board and currently serves as Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist at Teach For Qatar.
59	Youth B (25-30)	Active youth advocate and activist and a member of the Youth Advisory Committee for the Minister of Youth. Recently won youth elections for the newly emerged Youth Council at the Ministry of Culture and Sport, She also serves as the committee's PR manager.
60	Youth B (25-30)	Qatari youth activist, artist and entrepreneur. He currently serves as public diplomacy consultant..
61	Youth B (25-30)	Active and talented youth activist that has several youth clubs and initiatives. She is a senior industrial engineer and used to serve at ROTA Youth Advisory Board. Represented Qatar and her home country Palestine in several international conference.
62	Youth B (25-30)	Dedicated volunteer, doctoral candidate and instructor at Qatar university. Specialised in youth initiatives in Qatar's remote areas.
63	Youth B (25-30)	Youth volunteerism activist and co-founder of Qatar's only fully independent youth and community service centre. Had to close her initiative after years of success.

64	Youth B (25-30)	Youth volunteerism activist and co-founder of 2 major youth service clubs.
65	Youth B (25-30)	Qatari entrepreneur and youth activists. Founder of several business start-ups and service clubs.
66	Youth B (25-30)	Qatari writer, content creator and film producer who founded several youth initiatives including Youth Foundation for Research & Community Studies. He formerly headed national development and Qatarisation department in an international oil company and currently works as a senior advisor for organizational effectiveness.
67	Youth B (25-30)	Founder of several youth initiatives. Founded a Qatari student club while he was studying abroad and led the planning committee of Qatar's Career Fair, which provided youth with job opportunities after graduating university or while running their youth service clubs.
68	Youth B (25-30)	Co-founder of Qatar's first student network and association and very successful engineer.
69	Youth B (25-30)	A diplomat working abroad in the area of public diplomacy. Founded several successful local initiatives and societies in Qatar, and lived abroad for years to create 2 regional self-funded initiatives. Despite his success, he never participated in local youth empowerment or capacity building programmes.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: The Practice of Youth Empowerment in Qatar: Design, Implementation and Outcomes for State Capacity Building

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me (the researcher) if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

This is a PhD research project about youth empowerment in Qatar. Its main objective is to explore and evaluate the type of youth empowerment strategies applied in Qatar and their effectiveness in achieving youth empowerment goals. The project will also compare and contrast these strategies to youth empowerment strategies in developed and developing countries. Based on the evaluation and analysis, the research aims at offering recommendations to improve youth empowerment strategies and practices in Qatar.

Who is conducting this research?

My name is Mohammed Hashem Murtada Al-Hashemi and I am from Qatar. I am a second year PhD student at Brunel University London and this research is part of my PhD degree. Before doing my PhD degree, I completed an MSc degree in Development Studies at SOAS, University of London in 2014, worked as a government and public affairs advisor, and was a member of several advisory boards as well as youth initiatives in Qatar. My supervisor is Professor Nicola Ansell. She is a professor of human geography at Brunel University London. Her research interests focus on young people and social and cultural change, particularly in southern Africa. She is the author of *Children, Youth and Development*, along with many academic papers. She also runs a Master's degree in Children, Youth and International Development.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am (a self-funded student) organising the research in conjunction with Brunel University London.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

This study is covered by standard institutional indemnity insurance. Brunel University London provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Given the limited availability of data and publications on youth empowerment in Qatar, semi-structured interviews will be utilised. The interviews will be conducted during two separate stages of the study. In the first stage, a number of senior officials, authority figures and experts who were or are associated with youth empowerment programs will be interviewed. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews will be administered to 50 Qatari youth who have previously participated in youth empowerment programs as well as those who are currently enrolled in such programs.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be involved in one (1) interview and you will be asked a number of questions. The interview will not take more than one (1) hour and you will not receive any payment. Moreover, this interview will be recorded for research purposes after taking your consent, and you can stop the interview at any time and/or avoid answering any question.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your personal data will be *kept strictly confidential* and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized third parties. If requested, the results of the research will be published in anonymized form and anonymized data. *Our procedures for handling, processing, storage and destruction of data are compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 and* Qatari Data Protection Law (Law No. 13 of 2016)*; however, if evidence of harm or misconduct comes to light, then, in line with research guidelines, confidentiality will have to be broken.*

What will happen to interview recordings and interview transcripts?

- The digital recording of your will be deleted as soon as there is an authoritative written transcript of your interview.
- Your personal details will be stored separately from your interview transcript and may be retained for up to 5 years for research purposes.
- Third parties will not be allowed access to interview tapes and transcripts, except as required by law.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The result of the research may be published, either in Journal articles, conferences or elsewhere. Moreover, you can request the outcomes of the research once available.

Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during the course of their research. Further information can be found on the Brunel University London research integrity webpage.

Contact for further information and complaints:

The Researcher:

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The Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee:

Professor Thomas Betteridge

Dean of College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Arts and Humanities

Brunel University London

Email: thomas.betteridge@brunel.ac.uk

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions for Officials:

- Tell me about xxx program. Does it have a youthful element or any relation with the youth of Qatar?
- What is your definition of youth?
- As a policymaker in Qatar, how do you understand youth empowerment and what do you think of it?
- Is youth opinion considered a threat, challenge or an opportunity?
- What does your organization/institution do to achieve youth empowerment?
- Do you think that youth empowerment is important? If so, why?
- In your opinion, how effective is youth empowerment?
- Do youth think that youth empowerment as a concept and process is important to achieve the national vision?
- How are youth empowerment implemented?
- Why are youth empowerment policies implemented the way they are in Qatar?
- Why are youth empowerment programs implemented in certain ways but not in others?
- What kind of youth empowerment programs have been implemented?
- What are the goals of these programs?
- How are they justified?
- How are they financed?
- How are goals assessed?
- What has been achieved?
- What limitations have the previous or current programs faced?

Questions for Youth:

- In your opinion, what is youth empowerment?
- What is your definition of youth?
- How do you witness and assess youth empowerment in Qatar?
- What are the biggest challenges that face the youth in Qatar?
- How effective and important is the ongoing (if any) process of youth empowerment?
- Do you feel different after going through youth empowerment programs?
- How does youth engagement/participation take place in the society of Qatar and in the process of development?
- The Father Emir of Qatar stated in his last official speech that "Our young men have proven over the past years that they are a people of resolve and fortitude; capable of accommodating the spirit of their time; realising its necessities fully and profoundly; coping with its newest; and above all contributing by their original thinking and creative initiatives." what does this mean to you and how does it make you feel?

Appendix D: Brunel University Ethical Approval Letter

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

www.brunel.ac.uk

19 September 2017

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: Mr. Mohammed Murtada

Project Title: Youth Empowerment in Qatar

Reference: 6993-LR-Sep/2017- 8369-3

Dear Mr. Mohammed Murtada

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.
- The start date cannot pre-date receipt of ethical approval. Any data collected before approval was given cannot be included in the project.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Professor Thomas Betteridge

Chair

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London

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