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Project Title

**The Impact of Applying Project Governance Dimensions on the
Overall Performance of Capital Projects: A Quantitative Study on a
Sample from the Saudi Government Sector**

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Chapter 1 : General Framework of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Saudi Arabia is going through a moment of change that has few parallels in its modern history. Vision 2030 is at the heart of this shift, and its goal is straightforward: build a less oil-dependent economy, with more sources of income and more opportunities for the local market. Capital projects sit at the centre of that plan. They are not side activities; they are the way most of the Vision's promises actually reach the ground. Recent figures from the Public Investment Fund put government capital spending at around SAR 64.9 billion, covering Vision-related programs, mega-projects and investment work in municipalities, health, education and infrastructure (Public Investment Fund, 2024). Numbers of that size raise an obvious question. Are these projects being managed in a way that turns the money into real results, on time and on budget? Or is too much of it lost along the way?

What we see in other countries is not very encouraging. Large public projects fail more often than people assume, and the reasons are rarely external shocks. In most cases the cause is something internal: a weak governance setup, no real accountability, gaps in risk management, or a culture where reports tell only half the story (KPMG, 2016). An Aon study went further and estimated that projects without a proper governance framework fail about 30% more often than projects that have one (Aon, 2014). Saudi Arabia is not insulated from these patterns. If anything, the size and number of public projects make the question of governance even sharper here.

So what is project governance, in plain terms? It is the framework that keeps a project on track—who decides, who answers for results, and how the project stays aligned with the wider strategy of the organization behind it (Sharma et al., 2009). Four pillars are usually named in the literature: governance structure, transparency, accountability, and risk management. Together they form the control system around the project. PMI puts it bluntly: organizations with mature governance hit their targets more often, control costs better, and produce more predictable results (PMI, 2017).

Performance, on the other hand, is no longer judged by the old "iron triangle" of time, cost and quality alone. That view is too narrow for projects of this scale. Today, a project is also judged by whether it actually delivers the benefits it promised, whether stakeholders are satisfied, and whether it leaves something durable behind (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2012). For Saudi capital projects—linked as they are to national development—this wider view is the only one that really makes sense.

Yet, even with all the international writing on project governance, Arabic-language and Saudi-focused research on the topic is still thin. Past studies do not always agree on which governance dimension matters most, and their methods and samples vary widely. The result is a gap. This study tries to narrow it. It looks at how the four governance dimensions affect the overall performance of capital projects inside Saudi government entities, using a hybrid model that borrows from PMI and ISO 21500 but stays grounded in the local environment—Vision 2030 programs, the National Transformation Program, and the regulations that shape day-to-day public-sector practice.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Government capital projects in Saudi Arabia are not short of money. They are not short of political attention either. The problem lies elsewhere. Many of them still struggle to finish on time, stay inside their budget, or deliver the benefits they were sold on. A big part of this comes back to governance—or more precisely, to governance that is applied unevenly, dimension by dimension, instead of as a single working system. The cost is not just financial. Every overrun and every delay chips away at the credibility of public spending and slows down the Vision 2030 agenda.

The international picture lines up with this. KPMG (2016) surveyed major capital projects and found that 53% of them had been underperforming the year before. Only 31% landed within 10% of their budget, and only 25% met their original schedule. These are not edge cases. They are the norm in environments where governance is weak.

In Saudi Arabia the stakes are even higher because of the sheer scale involved. NEOM, the Red Sea Project, Qiddiya, Amaala—each runs into hundreds of billions of riyals on its own (Public Investment Fund, 2024). Money alone will not make them succeed. What will determine

the outcome is whether the governance around them is strong enough: clear decision-making, useful reporting, honest accountability, and risk work that happens before problems blow up, not after.

The real question, then, is not whether governance matters. Almost everyone agrees that it does. The question is how strongly each governance dimension—structure, transparency, accountability, risk management—actually moves the needle on overall performance in the Saudi public sector. That is what is still unclear. And in a setting where traditional bureaucracy and modern governance reforms sit side by side, the answer is unlikely to be the same as in the studies done in Europe or North America.

From this, the main research problem can be phrased as a single question:

What is the effect of applying the four project governance dimensions (governance structure, transparency, accountability, and risk management) on the overall performance of capital projects in the Saudi government sector?

Research Gaps

Theoretical Gaps

Even with all the work done on governance, the picture is not complete. Several gaps stand out:

- Most Arabic-language studies treat governance as a corporate-level topic. Project governance as a separate field, with its own rules, is rarely examined—especially inside the Saudi context.
- It is hard to find a single study that brings all four dimensions—structure, transparency, accountability, risk—together. Researchers tend to pick one or two and stop there.
- Models that connect project governance to a wider notion of performance—one that goes beyond time, cost and quality—are not well developed.
- There is no clear hybrid framework that mixes the international standards (PMI, ISO 21500) with the realities of Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program.

Applied (Empirical) Gaps

- Field studies on what governance actually looks like inside Saudi government projects are few. Most of the empirical work was done in Western settings or in private-sector contexts that do not match the Saudi public environment.
- There is no widely used, locally validated tool to measure governance dimensions in this context. Without one, every researcher ends up reinventing the wheel.
- Few studies link real governance practice—not just stated policies—to the actual performance of capital projects on the ground.
- Almost no work examines how governance application and its effect on performance vary by experience, job level, or type of government entity.
- Practical, evidence-based recommendations that Saudi entities can actually use to improve their capital-project governance under Vision 2030 are still missing.

1.3 Significance of the Study

1.3.1 Scientific (Academic) Significance

On the academic side, this study tries to add value in four ways. The first is filling a clear gap. Project governance has been studied a lot in the West, but very little of that work focuses on the Saudi or Arab setting. Most local writing still treats governance at the corporate level rather than at the project level. By looking at government capital projects directly, this study adds material to a field that needs it.

The second contribution is a kind of bridge between two worlds. On one side, the international standards (PMI, ISO 21500). On the other, the Saudi administrative system, with its own rules, its own culture, and its own programs (Vision 2030, the National Transformation Program). Bringing the two together produces a hybrid framework that is more useful locally than either source alone.

Third, the study lays some groundwork for future research. If a reliable measurement tool can be built for the Saudi context, other researchers can use it later—maybe for comparative work between entities, maybe for tracking governance changes over time.

And fourth, there is the theoretical side. Testing the four governance dimensions inside a developing-economy public sector is not the same as testing them inside a Western company. The results either confirm what the literature says or push back against it. Both outcomes are useful.

1.3.2 Practical Significance

On the practical side, the value of the study is more direct. Decision-makers in government bodies and in investment vehicles like the Public Investment Fund can use the findings to know which governance dimensions actually move performance—and which ones are mostly noise. That helps them spend reform money where it counts.

Second, the work feeds into one of Vision 2030's quieter but more important goals: spending public money more efficiently. The Fiscal Sustainability Program already aims at this. Strong project governance is one of the practical ways to get there.

Third, the National Transformation Program is built around speeding up infrastructure delivery and pushing excellence in government performance (National Transformation Program,

2024). Recommendations from this study line up with those goals, not as theory, but as specific suggestions that can be applied.

Fourth, on the cultural level, the study helps spread the language of governance among project managers in the public sector. Many of them know the international best practice exists, but few have seen it adapted to local conditions. This work is one step in that direction.

Fifth, by giving weight to transparency and accountability, the study supports the work of audit and oversight bodies in Saudi Arabia. Their job becomes easier when the projects they look at already have the right governance pieces in place.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Main Objective

To examine how applying the four project governance dimensions—governance structure, transparency, accountability, and risk management—affects the overall performance of capital projects in a sample of Saudi government entities.

Sub-Objectives

- Review the theoretical and applied literature on project governance and overall performance, and pin down the specific knowledge gaps the study tries to close.
- Build a conceptual model showing the expected links between the governance dimensions (independent variables) and overall project performance (dependent variable).
- Develop a reliable, valid questionnaire suited to the Saudi context for measuring governance dimensions and overall performance.
- Diagnose how strongly the four governance dimensions are actually applied in the capital projects under study, as seen by the participants.
- Assess the current overall performance of those projects, again from the participants' perspective.
- Test the statistical hypotheses on how each governance dimension affects overall performance.
- Check whether responses differ significantly by experience, job level, or type of government entity.

- Offer practical, evidence-based recommendations that Saudi public bodies can use to improve the governance of their capital projects.

1.5 Research Questions

Main Question

What is the effect of applying the four project governance dimensions (governance structure, transparency, accountability, and risk management) on the overall performance of capital projects in a sample of Saudi government entities?

Sub-Questions

- To what extent are the four governance dimensions actually applied in the capital projects under study, as perceived by the participants?
- What is the current level of overall project performance, as perceived by the participants?
- Is there a statistically significant correlation between governance application and overall performance?
- Which governance dimension has the strongest perceived effect on overall performance?
- Do participants' assessments differ significantly by years of project management experience?
- Do they differ significantly by job level?
- Do they differ significantly by type of government entity?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis

H0: There is no statistically significant effect, at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), of applying the four project governance dimensions on the overall performance of capital projects in the Saudi government sector.

Sub-Hypotheses

- H1: At ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), governance structure has no statistically significant effect on overall project performance.

- H2: At ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), transparency has no statistically significant effect on overall project performance.
- H3: At ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), accountability has no statistically significant effect on overall project performance.
- H4: At ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), risk management has no statistically significant effect on overall project performance.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Project Governance. Following ISO 21500:2021, this is the organizational framework—plus the processes and structures behind it—that directs, controls and monitors the project so it actually delivers its goals while taking stakeholders into account. In this study, the term covers the policies, systems and practices applied to a Saudi government capital project to keep decisions disciplined, information honest, responsibilities clear, and risks under control.

Governance Structure. The first dimension. It is the formal setup that decides where authority sits, where responsibility ends, and how the leadership bodies—the Project Steering Committee, the Executive Sponsor, the Chief Projects Officer—relate to one another (Müller, 2009).

Transparency. The second dimension. It is about how available, clear and accurate project information is—financials, progress, risks, decisions—and whether stakeholders see it in time to act on it (Bovens, 2007).

Accountability. The third dimension. It is the institutional system that ties clear responsibilities to measurable performance, based on well-defined roles, written expectations and a fair distribution of authority (Kwna, 2025).

Risk Management. The fourth dimension. It is the structured process for spotting risks, weighing their effect on the project, and putting responses in place early rather than late (ISO 31000:2018).

Overall Project Performance. In this study, the term refers to a wider assessment of project success—wider than time, cost and quality—that also takes in strategic benefits, stakeholder satisfaction, overall quality, and how sustainable the result is in the long run.

Capital Projects. Large investments in fixed assets—infrastructure, facilities, equipment—with long service lives and clear strategic weight for the body running them. In this study, the focus is

on those projects executed or supervised by Saudi government bodies, including infrastructure, public facilities, and the developmental mega-projects tied to Vision 2030.

Chapter 2 : Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Project Governance

First: The Concept

Project governance is not an old field. It grew out of corporate governance over the last two decades or so, as researchers and practitioners noticed that projects—being temporary, one-off pieces of work—needed their own kind of oversight, different from how permanent operations are governed (Müller, 2009).

PMI (2017) defines it as the framework that sets out the authorities, responsibilities and rights connected to a project, and that gives the project its working shape. ISO 21500:2021 is close in spirit: a set of processes and structures used to direct, control and monitor the project. Neither definition treats governance as a chart on a wall. It is a working system: who has authority, who decides, how the project stays aligned with strategy, and how accountability is actually enforced.

It is worth keeping project governance separate from project management. The two are not the same thing. Project management is about getting the work done—plans, schedules, resources. Project governance is about the conditions under which that work happens. It is the wider frame (Müller & Turner, 2007).

In government settings the topic carries extra weight. Public projects tend to be bigger, more politically sensitive, and exposed to a wider audience of stakeholders. Without serious governance, public money does not always reach where it was meant to go (KPMG, 2016).

Second: Objectives

What is project governance trying to achieve? A few interlocking goals, really:

- Strategic alignment — keeping the project tied to the bigger strategy of the body running it, not drifting off into something disconnected. PMI (2017) treats this as a way to stop money being spent on initiatives that no longer fit.

- Effective decision-making — clear paths for decisions at the strategic, tactical and operational levels, so nothing gets stuck in the middle (Atlassian, 2026).
- Accountability and stewardship — knowing who answers for what, and making sure that answer is honest (Kwna, 2025).
- Transparency — accurate and timely information for the people who need it: regulators, sponsors, the public (CLA, 2026).
- Proactive risk management — naming risks early, registering them, and dealing with them before they turn into damage (Aon, 2014).
- Performance improvement — monitoring against indicators so that deviations are caught while they can still be fixed (PMI, 2017).
- Compliance and sustainability — staying inside the law, the ethical lines, and the environmental and social commitments (Oracle, 2024).

Third: Dimensions

Project governance is most often broken into four dimensions. The choice of these four is not random; they keep appearing in both the academic literature and the professional standards, and they are the ones most strongly linked to performance:

Dimension One: Governance Structure

Structure is the foundation. It tells you who decides, who executes, and who watches the work being done (Kwna, 2025). On paper it can look like an organizational chart, but in practice it is more than that—a working map of authority lines and information flows.

A typical structure includes a Project Steering Committee at the top, an Executive Sponsor who carries the political and strategic weight, a Chief Projects Officer responsible for delivery, a Project Manager handling day-to-day work, and a PMO providing institutional support (KPMG, 2016).

When the structure is built well, it does several things at once: it clarifies how the board and executive management relate, it distributes authority across levels, it balances delegation against accountability, and it separates roles in ways that limit conflicts of interest (Kwna, 2025).

Dimension Two: Transparency

Transparency is the trust-building piece. It is also the piece that gets misunderstood the most. Being transparent does not mean publishing everything you have. It means publishing the right things—what, how, to whom, and when (Kwna, 2025).

In a project, this usually involves regular reports (financials, performance, risks), open channels of communication, disclosure of any conflict of interest, and—where it makes sense—digital tools for open access (Kwna, 2025).

The payoff is concrete. Transparency builds institutional credibility, improves the quality of decisions, attracts investment, and removes the kind of ambiguity that turns into risk (CLA, 2026).

Dimension Three: Accountability

Accountability is the most demanding dimension to put into practice. It is one thing to write down who is responsible for what. It is another to enforce it (Kwna, 2025). In a project setting, accountability shows up as precise role definitions, transparent performance evaluation, channels to raise complaints, both individual and institutional KPIs, and a deliberate link between results, rewards and consequences.

Dimension Four: Risk Management

Risk management is unavoidable for projects of this size. ISO 31000:2018 defines it as the coordinated work used to direct and control an organization with regard to risk. The wording is dry, but the activity is not.

Inside project governance, risk management means identifying risks, analysing and assessing them, choosing how to treat them, monitoring what happens, and keeping stakeholders informed throughout the process (Aon, 2014). Skip any one of these steps and the rest stop working as intended.

2.1.2 Overall Performance of Capital Projects

First: The Concept

How we judge project performance has changed a lot. The old yardstick was the iron triangle: time, cost and quality. That view still has its uses, but it is too narrow for projects of

strategic scale. Müller and Turner (2007) made a useful distinction here, between project management success—which is mostly about internal efficiency—and project success, which is about whether the project delivered on the bigger promises around it.

This study treats overall project performance as a multi-dimensional thing. Zwikael and Smyrk (2012) suggested three layers: project management success, project ownership success, and project investment success. Each looks at a different angle of the same project.

Inside the study, overall performance breaks down into five components: (1) cost performance—how well the project stays inside its budget; (2) schedule performance—how well it keeps to its timeline; (3) quality performance—how well it meets technical specifications; (4) benefits realization—how well it actually delivers the strategic benefits it promised; and (5) stakeholder satisfaction—how the people affected by the project judge the result.

Second: Why It Matters in Government Capital Projects

Overall performance carries extra weight in the public sector for obvious reasons. First, the money involved is public money. That alone forces a higher bar for value-for-money discipline. Second, these projects are tied to national developmental targets, so delays in delivery mean delays in those targets too. Third, government bodies live under intense scrutiny—from audit institutions, from oversight authorities, and increasingly from the public itself. Fourth, capital projects last a long time. Decisions made now affect outcomes decades from now.

Third: The Link to Project Governance

The link between governance and performance is not just a theoretical argument. The evidence is there. Mushavhanamadi and Phatlhane (2021) found a positive relationship between project governance and project delivery inside a South African bank. KPMG (2016) identified weak governance as one of the main drivers behind the failure of large capital projects. McKinsey (2023) reported that organizations with strong governance practices cut their project failure rate by around 30%.

Why does this happen? Because clearer structure, sharper decision-making, more honest information, real accountability and forward-looking risk work do not just look good on paper. They change what the project can actually deliver—on schedule, on cost, on quality, on benefits, and in the eyes of stakeholders.

2.2 Previous Studies

2.2.1 Arabic Studies

Al-Ajmi, Al-Salmi, and bint Ayed (2019). "The Role of Administrative Leadership in Promoting Organizational Commitment from the Perspective of Workers at the National Guard Hospital." Naif Arab University for Security Sciences. Using a descriptive approach with a random sample (n=283), the study reported moderate agreement on the role of administrative leadership in promoting commitment, with stronger agreement on the affective-commitment dimension. The authors recommended developing administrative leadership and reinforcing the commitment dimensions.

Al-Sharif, Al-Hwedi, and Salem (2021). "The Impact of Leadership Skills in Enhancing Organizational Loyalty." *Al-Ostath Journal*, (21). This study—conducted at Libyana Mobile Phone Company—used a descriptive-analytical approach and 66 distributed questionnaires. It found that leadership skills had a statistically significant effect on loyalty ($R^2=39.3\%$), with different skills carrying different weights. The study called for further investment in the more influential skills.

Qandil (2024). "The Role of Empowering Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Loyalty among Employees in General Administration at Selected Private Universities." *Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Commerce – Assiut*, 44(80), 99–159. Using a descriptive-analytical approach with a sample (n=75), the work found a significant positive relationship between empowering leadership and loyalty. Team-working and granting autonomy came out as the most influential dimensions.

Study on the Role of Corporate Governance in Developing Academic and Research Performance (2025). El-Chahid Hama Lakhdar University, El-Oued, Algeria. A descriptive-analytical case study (n=115) found a strong, statistically significant positive correlation at ($\alpha=0.01$) between the four governance principles (transparency, autonomy, accountability, participation) and academic and research performance.

Al-Zein (2025). "The Impact of Applying Governance Principles on Institutional Performance: A Practical Case Study on Bakier E-Commerce Company." *African Journal of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 613–633. The author reported a very strong significant

relationship between governance principles (transparency, fairness, accountability) and institutional performance (Pearson=0.984, Sig=0.000).

Study on the Impact of Corporate Governance on Strategic Performance (2025). Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Commerce, Assiut University. The field study examined how corporate governance dimensions (rule of law, transparency, accountability, fairness) affected strategic performance.

Study on the Impact of Governance on Institutional Performance in the Sultanate of Oman (2023). Sultan Qaboos University. Conducted in North Al Batinah Governorate, the study examined how transparency, fairness and independence affected institutional performance (efficiency and effectiveness).

Al-Turki (2014). "Administrative Skills of the Leader and Their Role in Organizational Commitment at the General Directorate of Passports in Riyadh." A descriptive-analytical approach with a sample (n=226) showed administrative skills as highly available and commitment as noticeably elevated among respondents.

Al-Mazah Al-Almei (2018). "The Impact of Corporate Governance on the Financial Performance of Saudi Joint-Stock Companies." Journal of Economic, Administrative and Legal Sciences. Using panel data from a sample of Saudi listed companies, the study examined how board size, board composition, audit-committee meetings, and the number of audit-committee members influenced financial performance. Results showed that governance mechanisms — particularly board independence and the frequency of audit-committee meetings — exert a statistically significant positive effect on financial performance, giving direct empirical support for tightening governance structures in Saudi capital-intensive entities.

Study on the Impact of Corporate Governance on the Financial Performance of the Capital Goods Sector Listed in the Saudi Stock Exchange (2022). Arab Journal of Administration. Covering the period 2015–2020, the panel study focused specifically on the capital-goods sector — the closest sector to capital projects in the Saudi market. Governance indicators (ownership structure, board independence, audit committee) were found to have a statistically significant effect on ROA and ROE, with transparency and disclosure emerging as the most influential dimensions. The study offers one of the few sector-specific Saudi views directly relevant to the present research.

Al-Otaibi Al-Anzi (2023). "The Effect of Family Corporate Governance on Project Management: An Applied Study on Othaim Company." Academic Journal for Research and Scientific Publishing, (73). Using a descriptive-analytical approach with a purposive sample of project managers, the study reported a strong positive relationship between governance mechanisms (transparency, accountability, board structure) and the effectiveness of project management, with accountability being the strongest predictor of on-time and on-budget delivery.

Haif Farhan (2025). "The Impact of Project Management on Improving Financial Performance: A Case Study of Companies in the Gulf Region." International Journal of Financial, Administrative and Economic Sciences. Drawing on a mixed-methods design with a sample of 190 project managers in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, the study showed that effective project management practices — anchored in governance discipline, cost control and risk management — significantly reduce unnecessary costs and raise financial efficiency, with governance structure and risk management explaining 46.2% of the variance in financial performance ($R^2=0.462$).

2.2.2 Foreign Studies

Müller, R., & Turner, J.R. (2007). "The Influence of Project Managers on Project Success Criteria and Project Success by Type of Project." European Management Journal, 25(4), 298–309. The paper drew a useful line between project management success and project success, and showed that the project manager's influence shifts depending on the type of project. With over 400 citations, it became a reference point in the field.

Müller, R. (2019). "Governance, Governmentality and Project Performance: The Role of Sovereignty." International Journal of Information Systems and Project Management, 7(2). The author built a framework separating management, leadership, governance and governmentality, and showed that higher levels of governance sovereignty correlate with higher project and institutional performance.

Zwikaël, O., & Smyrk, J. (2012/2021). "Project Governance, Benefit Management, and Project Success." International Journal of Project Management. Drawing on data from 333 projects across countries and industries, the study showed that effective governance contributes directly to project success on three layers: management success, ownership success, and investment success.

Mushavhanamadi, K., & Phatlhane, N. (2021). "The Impact of Project Governance on Project Delivery in the Enterprise Project Management Office within a South African Bank." Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management. The mixed-methods design revealed real operational gaps between governance processes on paper and how they were actually carried out.

KPMG (2016). "Building on Success; Learning from Failure: Governance and Planning of Major Capital Projects." KPMG spoke with more than 30 board members and senior executives in Canada. The numbers were sobering: 53% had experienced underperforming projects, and only 31% of projects came within 10% of budget.

Aon (2014). "Governance of Project Risk – A Guide." Aon offered a guide to project-risk governance and named seven attributes: portfolio direction, project sponsorship, delivery capability, financial stewardship, disclosure and reporting, anti-corruption controls, and procurement.

Sharma, R.S., Stone, M., & Ekinici, Y. (2009). "IT Governance and Project Governance: The Stakeholder Perspective." Journal of Business Research. Three factors stood out as critical: leadership and decision rights, agile and scalable processes, and the use of enabling technology.

Bovens, M. (2007). "Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework." European Law Journal, 13(4), 447–468. Bovens treated accountability as a social relation in which an actor is obliged to explain and justify their conduct to others.

Joslin, R., & Müller, R. (2015). "Relationships between a Project Management Methodology and Project Success in Different Project Governance Contexts." International Journal of Project Management, 33(6), 1377–1392. The paper examined how the link between methodology and project success shifts depending on the governance environment.

ISO 21500:2021. "Project, Programme and Portfolio Management – Context and Concepts." The standard provides the general framework for managing projects, programs and portfolios, with project governance treated as a key concept.

Sirisomboonsuk, P., Gu, V.C., Cao, R.Q., & Burns, J.R. (2018). "Relationships between Project Governance and Information Technology Governance and Their Impact on Project Performance." International Journal of Project Management, 36(2), 287–300. Based on 533 responses from

project practitioners, the study confirmed that both project governance and IT governance exert a positive influence on project performance. Three governance dimensions — structure, process and relational mechanisms — were tested, with process and relational governance dimensions carrying the strongest weights. The paper has since become a widely cited empirical anchor in the project-governance literature (300+ citations).

Musawir, A., Serra, C.E.M., Zwikael, O., & Ali, I. (2017). "Project Governance, Benefit Management, and Project Success: Towards a Framework for Supporting Organizational Strategy Implementation." *International Journal of Project Management*, 35(8), 1658–1672. Using structural equation modelling on data from 333 projects, the authors demonstrated that effective project governance improves project success both directly and indirectly through an enhanced benefit-management process. The study provides one of the strongest empirical bridges between the governance dimensions used in the present research and the wider notion of overall project performance.

Mohosho, J.S., & Marnewick, C. (2024). "The Effect of Governance and Governmentality on Project Portfolio Success." *Acta Commercii*, 24(1). Drawing on 104 responses from project and portfolio managers in the South African public sector, the study found that governance sovereignty, transparency mechanisms and accountability lines are significant predictors of portfolio success. Notably, the study operates in a public-sector emerging-economy setting comparable to Saudi Arabia, and its findings support the argument that stronger governance dimensions translate into measurable performance gains in government capital portfolios.

2.3 What Sets This Study Apart

Compared with the studies above, this one carries a few features that give it its own identity:

First, the focus is sharply Saudi. The work zooms in on capital projects in the Saudi public sector—an environment shaped by Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program. Most prior studies either worked on private-sector settings or stayed in Western contexts.

Second, all four governance dimensions are studied together. Most earlier work picked one or two and called it a day. Here, structure, transparency, accountability and risk are tested individually and as a combined set.

Third, the framework is deliberately hybrid. International standards (PMI, ISO 21500) are crossed with recent academic work and tied back to local realities (Vision-related programs, public-sector regulations).

Fourth, the method is quantitative. The data come from a structured questionnaire and are analysed with correlation, regression and t-tests, which makes hypothesis testing strict and results easier to generalise.

Fifth, performance is treated broadly. Instead of stopping at the iron triangle, the study includes benefits realization and stakeholder satisfaction as part of the picture.

Sixth, the practical side is real. The findings are designed to be useful for leaders inside Saudi government bodies—people who actually need to know what to change next.

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