

Investigating the Impact of Project Governance on Project Outcomes in CyberCrest Consulting - A Single-Case Study

1st Sultan Sameea
College of IT, Department of Information
Systems
University of Bahrain
Manama, Bahrain
Sultansameea@gmail.com

2nd Salman Sameea
College of IT, Department of Information
Systems
University of Bahrain
Manama, Bahrain
SalmanHI016@gmail.com

3rd Maan Aljawder
College of IT, Department of Information
Systems
University of Bahrain
Manama, Bahrain
Maljawder@uob.edu.bh

Abstract—This paper aims to investigate the impact of project governance on project outcomes within CyberCrest Consulting, a company based in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The primary goal of this paper is to outline the advantages of applying project governance in organizations, promoting the continuous adoption of ever-improving practices that contribute to project success and enhance operations and results, thereby having a lasting effect across numerous fields. A qualitative single-case study approach was employed, utilizing a method triangulation research strategy along with qualitative thematic interpretation as an analysis method. The primary data point consisted of survey data obtained from the organization, while published documents and publicly available information sources served as secondary data points. The case is of a cybersecurity and IT consulting firm that provides solutions for its clients through security projects. Conclusions regarding the impact of project governance on project outcomes were drawn. To extend current existing governance thinking, a conceptual adaptive strategic alignment governance model (CASAGM) was also developed and proposed based on findings, comprising four interdependent components: strategic alignment, governance clarity, stakeholder integration, and adaptive governance enablers. This is to emphasize the importance of adaptability in contemporary governance.

Keywords—project, project success, project governance, governance, project impact, governance impact, method triangulation, triangulation, governance model.

I. INTRODUCTION (HEADING I)

Project governance has become an increasingly significant component influencing project success in modern organizations, particularly as industries shift toward project-based structures to support digital transformation, strategic alignment, and operational agility [1], [2]. Effective governance ensures that projects are guided by clearly defined roles, decision-making structures, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and organizational enablers that support the achievement of defined project outcomes [3].

Cybersecurity consulting firms represent a unique environment for studying project governance due to their involvement in high-risk, high-impact, and often externally regulated projects. These organizations operate in environments where the quality of governance directly affects risk mitigation, general and direct client trust, digital resilience, and national

infrastructure security, too, in some cases. Bahrain's cybersecurity sector, though growing, is characterized by a mix of large enterprises and small consulting firms, many of which do not publish detailed governance documentation. This creates a research gap concerning the internal governance practices of small, highly specialized firms.

This study investigates the relationship between project governance and project outcomes within CyberCrest Consulting, a Bahrain-based cybersecurity consulting firm that was founded in 2021. This organization publicly positions itself as a provider of cybersecurity advisory services, sessions in the form of training and workshops, as well as strategic project oversight and board-level guidance [4]. Given its specialization and governance-influenced range of available services, CyberCrest presents a suitable context for assessing how governance practices shape perceived project success.

Having been originally planned to be a quantitative study with a broad sample of organizations, the research methodology of this study was later adapted due to time constraints. This is also because, despite having distributed the questionnaire to over 80 organizations via email, only one survey response was received, being from CyberCrest Consulting. The research adopts an exploratory qualitative case study approach using method triangulation. This approach allows the integration of structured survey data, publicly available secondary information, and interpretive analysis together to derive meaningful insights from a single, information-rich case.

Thereby, the objectives of this study are to:

- Assess CyberCrest's project governance maturity using survey responses and secondary data.
- Examine the perceived relationship between governance practices and project outcomes within the firm.
- Provide insights applicable to similar small consulting organizations operating in Bahrain and the wider Gulf region.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on project governance consistently emphasizes its role in shaping project success, organizational coordination, and the strategic use of resources. Governance is generally

conceptualized through mechanisms that define roles, responsibilities, and decision rights, ensuring projects remain aligned with broader organizational strategies [2]. However, existing studies often focus on large enterprises with established governance structures, leaving less explored on how smaller or specialized organizations implement governance in practice.

A central theme in the literature is strategic alignment, which is viewed as a primary indicator of governance maturity. Project governance is meant to ensure alignment between the organizational strategy and project objectives, as noted by [5]. However, alignment is commonly treated as a static condition, despite growing recognition that organizations regularly change, requiring more adaptive and dynamic governance approaches.

Researchers also highlight the importance of stakeholder involvement as a governance enabler, noting that establishing proper stakeholder management, and thus, involvement in a project, improves its odds of success [6].

Another recurring theme is the significance of organizational culture, leadership, and tools in enabling or constraining governance [7]. These governance enablers vary widely across organizations, but their existence is essential for improving governance in them.

Despite these contributions, however, gaps that cannot be disregarded remain. First, the literature provides especially limited insight into how governance functions in smaller, specialized firms, such as cybersecurity or consulting organizations, where structures are leaner and more adaptive by necessity. Second, few studies draw from qualitative, single-case insights to develop grounded conceptual models that reflect the lived realities of modern, shifting project environments.

This paper addresses these gaps by examining governance within a real organization using a qualitative single-case methodology supported by method triangulation. Based on these findings, the paper proposes the Conceptual Adaptive Strategic Alignment Governance Model (CASAGM), consisting of four interdependent components—strategic alignment, governance clarity, stakeholder integration, and adaptive governance enablers. This model extends existing governance thinking by emphasizing adaptability, internal coherence, and the dynamic interplay among governance elements within contemporary project environments.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study initially adopted a quantitative research design, intending to analyze relationships between project governance variables and project outcomes using survey data collected from a wide range of Bahraini organizations. The design incorporated case study elements, supported by a structured questionnaire distributed to over 80 organizations via email.

However, only one response was received, from CyberCrest Consulting. Given these constraints, the original quantitative approach was no longer feasible for this study. As a result, this research adopted a qualitative single-case study design, focusing exclusively on CyberCrest Consulting as an information-rich case. It is also noteworthy that when sample sizes are insufficient for statistical analysis, researchers often shift to

qualitative methods to preserve the viability and integrity of research [8].

B. Methodological Adaptation and Rationale

The shift from a quantitative to a qualitative approach is justified by the following:

- Low response rate: Only one survey response was obtained despite the broad distribution to over 80 organizations.
- Nature of available data: The single response provided detailed insights but was insufficient for statistical analysis.
- Relevance of the responding organization: The respondent holds project-related responsibilities in a governance-oriented firm, making the response highly suitable for qualitative interpretation.
- Suitability of case study research for governance studies: Governance involves organizational processes, behaviors, and contextual factors that qualitative approaches capture effectively and may not be as feasible to capture quantitatively.

This adaptation ensures that the research remains valid, rigorous, and aligned with the data availability.

C. Method Triangulation as a Research Strategy

The study employs method triangulation, which involves using multiple forms of evidence to strengthen credibility and reduce single-source bias [9].

Triangulation in this research integrates the following:

1) Primary Data (Survey Response)

A 16-item closed-ended questionnaire was adapted from a research paper and simplified to fit the scope of this paper [10, pp. 205–206], with the used version for this research added as an appendix. It was then completed by a CyberCrest representative involved in project-related responsibilities. The survey assessed:

- General information regarding the organization.
- Degree of projectification within the organization.
- Established project governance within the organization.
- Organizational enablers for the organization.
- Perceived project outcomes.

The structured nature of the questionnaire allows for consistent interpretation even within a single-case context, which was of high significance for this study.

2) Secondary Data (Publicly Available Information)

Secondary sources were collected to contextualize and enhance primary insights. These include:

- CyberCrest's official website and service descriptions [4].

- Founder background extracted from a board-nomination document [11].
- A public conference participation profile [12].

Secondary data is to strengthen the case by validating organizational structure, mission, and governance-related orientation.

3) Qualitative Thematic Interpretation (Analysis Technique)

Although not treated as a “data source,” the analysis involved coding and interpreting the combined primary and secondary information to identify governance patterns. Qualitative interpretation is a standard analytical approach in exploratory case study research, as shown by [13].

D. Case Study Context

CyberCrest Consulting is a Bahrain-based cybersecurity advisory firm founded in 2021. Public documents and conference profiles describe the founder as a certified cybersecurity and governance specialist with qualifications such as Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), Certified Information Security Manager (CISM), and Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC) [11]. The company offers cybersecurity advisory, executive training, and strategic project support services, indicating a governance-driven operational model [4].

This context justifies CyberCrest as a suitable single case for examining project governance practices within a small consulting firm for this research.

IV. FINDINGS

The following findings are derived from the structured survey response provided by CyberCrest Consulting, supported through method triangulation with publicly available secondary data regarding them.

A. Increasing Project Orientation

CyberCrest has reported major organizational changes within the past year, along with an increase in both company-wide project work and employee project-related responsibilities. The organization rated its project-driven nature 4 out of 5 and confirmed that project-based work has increased in this period.

B. Governance Maturity and Clarity

CyberCrest indicated that its governance practices improved over the past year and rated governance clarity: roles, responsibilities, and decision-making, at 4 out of 5. Strategic alignment scored 5 out of 5, reflecting strong governance integration.

Stakeholder involvement was rated 4 out of 5, suggesting participatory governance practices. Such clarity and alignment are commonly associated with higher project success in prior research [3].

C. Governance Enablers: Culture, Leadership, and Tools

Governance-supporting structures, processes, and culture were rated 3 out of 5, indicating moderate formalization. However, stability and adaptability of enablers both scored 4 out of 5, suggesting strong leadership-driven governance

characteristics. This pattern is not unusual for young firms, where governance is emerging but enabled by strong leadership competencies.

D. Perceived Impact of Governance on Project Outcomes

CyberCrest rated the impact of governance based on the factors: Overall Project Success, Team Performance and Accountability, and Overall Governance–Outcomes Relationship. All of these factors scored 4 out of 5, as reported by CyberCrest.

These findings support the well-established link between governance and project performance [2], confirming that CyberCrest perceives governance as a key contributor to outcomes.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Qualitative Thematic Interpretation

The findings reveal a pattern consistent with contemporary understandings of project governance as an essential driver of organizational maturity. Rather than viewing governance as an administrative burden, the participant’s responses suggest that governance processes at CyberCrest Consulting are actively shaping both project activities and broader organizational changes within. This aligns with the claim by [2] that governance acts as a strategic “bridge” between organizational objectives and project delivery practice, enabling more coherent decision-making environments.

The reported increase in project-based activity, along with stronger governance practices, indicates that the organization is moving toward a more project-oriented structure. In project management literature, such transitions often emerge in firms seeking greater agility and strategic alignment, as they are among the biggest benefits of formal project management [14]. As both governance clarity and project success were rated positively, the evidence supports that well-defined roles, responsibilities, and decision channels provide an influence that improves project performance, particularly in environments experiencing change.

Additionally, a notable insight lies in the simultaneous presence of organizational change and perceived governance improvement. This suggests that governance practices are functioning not only as a control mechanism but also as an adaptive capability. Governance flexibility, reflected in the respondent’s agreement on adaptive enablers, indicates the organization’s ability to adapt its structures and cultures to meet emerging project demands. Here, governance is not static; it evolves to address new operational conditions.

The harmony between alignment (rated highest) and stakeholder involvement (rated strong) indicates that CyberCrest may follow a relational governance model characteristic of knowledge-intensive firms. [1] highlights that governance in such environments relies heavily on communication pathways, stakeholder integration, and soft structural controls. The data imply that these mechanisms are functioning effectively, enabling projects to be executed in ways that reinforce organizational strategy rather than operating as siloed initiatives.

The slightly lower rating for structural and process clarity indicates latent tension between formal governance mechanisms and the more fluid aspects of organizational culture. Governance frameworks in growing organizations can mature unevenly; cultural norms and leadership may support projects effectively while formal documentation and repeatable processes lag. The organization's ongoing changes could explain these inconsistencies, suggesting a governance environment that is effective but still transitioning toward greater formalization.

Collectively, these interpretations position CyberCrest as a firm where governance is contributing positively to project outcomes, but where structural refinement remains an opportunity. The interplay of clarity, alignment, and adaptability illustrates how even smaller organizations can leverage governance practices to improve project performance.

B. Implications for the Field of Project Management

1) Governance Matters, Even in Small and Medium Enterprises

Oftentimes, project governance literature focuses on large organizations and leaves out smaller ones. However, the data acquired from CyberCrest Consulting shows that governance mechanisms can be similarly, if not equally, influential within smaller ones. This supports the notion that governance can influence success, regardless of organizational size.

2) Alignment is Emerging as the Core Function of Project Governance

The strongest ratings from the data obtained from CyberCrest Consulting related to strategic alignment, reinforcing [2]'s position that governance's primary contribution is ensuring project decisions support organizational goals. This suggests that alignment should be treated as a central performance indicator for governance effectiveness.

3) Cultural and Structural Balance Remains a Challenge in Governance

The moderate rating for structural clarity aligns with global observations that organizations often excel in cultural/leadership aspects of governance while lagging in formal process maturity. This implies that practitioners should consider governance as a socio-technical system, where structural controls and cultural enablers must evolve together. Just as the technical aspect cannot be disregarded when considering governance and its evolution, neither can its social aspect. After all, governance includes dealing with people who cannot be inherently dealt with in a technical manner.

C. Proposed Conceptual Model: Conceptual Adaptive Strategic Alignment Governance Model (CASAGM)

This model conceptualizes governance as composed of four interdependent components:

1) Governance Clarity Layer

- Elements: Roles, responsibilities, and decision rights.
- Literature: [15].
- Finding-Based Rationale: Participant perceived clear governance definitions (4/5).

- Function: Reduces ambiguity during organizational change and supports consistency.

2) Adaptive Governance Enablers

- Elements: Culture, leadership flexibility, and tool adaptability.
- Literature: [15], [16].
- Finding-Based Rationale: Governance enablers rated highly (4/5).
- Function: Allows governance to evolve with organizational changes.

3) Stakeholder Integration Mechanism

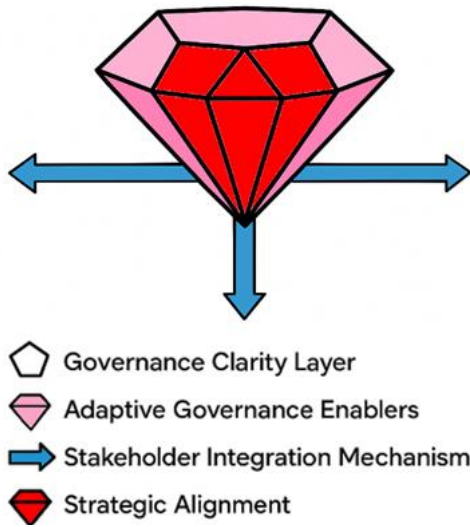
- Elements: Communication, involvement, and relational governance.
- Literature: [17].
- Finding-Based Rationale: Strong stakeholder involvement (4/5).
- Function: Drives coordination and informed decision-making.

4) Strategic Alignment Core

- Elements: Goal alignment, prioritization, and strategic integration.
- Literature: [5].
- Finding-Based Rationale: Highest rating (5/5) indicates maturity.
- Function: Ensures all project decisions reinforce organizational direction.

This model argues that strategic alignment functions as the central integrator, supported by three dimensions: Clarity, Stakeholder Integration, and Adaptive Enablers.

Fig. 1. Illustration of CASAGM Conceptual Model



VI. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the impact of project governance on project outcomes within a specialized small cybersecurity advisory firm that incorporates adaptive governance in its organization. A qualitative single-case study approach was employed, along with methods such as surveying, method triangulation, and qualitative thematic interpretation. Additionally, a conceptual adaptive strategic alignment governance model (CASAGM) was developed based on findings to extend governance thinking.

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Unfortunately, this research was hindered due to a lack of certain information about the case study. Regarding the firm CyberCrest Consulting, it was not possible to gain information on their number of employees, project size, or project frequency. This is due to access and time limitations, and it was not feasible to gain this information after the primary survey was completed. It must be stated that this has affected the ability to draw greater conclusions based on the existing findings.

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APPENDIX

TABLE I. ADOPTED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THIS STUDY, BASED ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE BY MÜLLER ET AL. (2016)

<i>Question Number</i>	<i>Assessment Category</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Possible Answers</i>
1	General Information	Has your company experienced any major change in the past year (e.g., business scope, size, structure)?	Multiple Choice	• Yes • No
2	General Information	Has your role or responsibilities related to project management changed in the past year?	Multiple Choice	• Yes • No
3	Degree of Projectification	To what extent are your company's operations driven by projects?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
4	Degree of Projectification	Has the level of project-based work increased in the past year?	Multiple Choice	• Yes • No
5	Degree of Projectification	Would you say your company's way of working is becoming more project-oriented?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
6	Project Governance	Have project governance practices in your company improved over the past year?	Multiple Choice	• Yes • No
7	Project Governance	Do you believe project governance in your company clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
8	Project Governance	Would you agree that project decisions are aligned with organizational goals and strategies?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
9	Project Governance	Stakeholders are effectively involved in governance and decision-making?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
10	Organizational Enablers	The company has clear structures, processes, and culture that support project governance?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
11	Organizational Enablers	Have there been recent changes in how project governance is supported or enabled?	Multiple Choice	• Yes • No
12	Organizational Enablers	The company's governance enablers (e.g., culture, leadership, tools) are stable over time?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
13	Organizational Enablers	The company's governance enablers are flexible and adapt to new project needs?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
14	Project Outcomes	Would you say that overall project success has improved due to stronger governance?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
15	Project Outcomes	Project governance contributes to higher team performance and accountability?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)
16	Project Outcomes	There is a clear positive relationship between governance practices and project outcomes in your organization?	Linear Scale	• 5 (Strongly agree) • ... • 1 (Strongly disagree)