Original Research Paper

Balancing Act: External Stakeholder Salience in IT Governance

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Abstract: This study explores how IT executives prioritize external stakeholders based on their perceived salience in various IT governance decision domains. Through a combination of computed salience scores and content analysis of interviews, we uncover that the prioritization of external stakeholders varies significantly across IT strategic vision, architecture, investments, infrastructure, applications development, and outsourcing decisions. Key external groups investors and shareholders, compliance and external audit bodies, IT vendors, business customers, and joint ventures are examined for their influence, legitimacy, and urgency. Notably, investors and shareholders exert direct influence on strategic vision and investment decisions, while compliance bodies shape architecture and infrastructure governance. Conversely, IT vendors and joint ventures play pivotal roles in application development and outsourcing. The findings underscore the necessity for IT executives to manage these stakeholders proactively, anticipating conflicts, mitigating risks, and leveraging opportunities. This study lays the groundwork for deeper empirical inquiries, ultimately aiming to refine IT governance practices and enhance organizational performance.

Keywords: Compliance, External Stakeholder Salience, IT Governance

Introduction

Strategic management of information technology, known as IT Governance, represents a fundamental component of organizational governance structures. This framework encompasses allocating IT-related authority and accountability across different organizational stakeholders while establishing formal protocols and systems to guide and oversee high-level IT decision-making processes (Karatas and Akir, 2024). IT governance encompasses a range of decision domains, including IT strategic vision, IT architecture, IT investment, IT infrastructure, IT applications development, and IT outsourcing (Grover *et al*., 2007). IT Governance involves distributing decision-making rights and responsibilities for IT among various organizational stakeholders and establishing procedures and mechanisms for making and monitoring strategic IT decisions (Peterson, 2004; Karatas and Akir, 2024). A significant differentiation exists between the operational aspects of IT management and the strategic nature of IT Governance. When properly implemented, IT governance frameworks facilitate the synchronization of technology investments with corporate strategic goals while simultaneously ensuring comprehensive risk oversight and adherence to

regulatory standards (Wilkin and Chenhall, 2020). The decision-making process within IT Governance frameworks characteristically encompasses various stakeholder groups who maintain distinct and sometimes competing priorities. These stakeholders can be defined as entities that either bear accountability for the organization's information technology systems or maintain specific expectations regarding their performance and outcomes (IT Governance Institute, 2003).

IT Governance constitutes a fundamental element within the broader enterprise and corporate governance structure framework. The ultimate oversight resides with board directors and senior leadership. At the same time, the practical implementation of governance protocols permeates throughout the organizational hierarchy, requiring active participation from executives, managers, and personnel across all operational divisions and functional departments (Hitz and Schwer, 2018; Ben Boubaker *et al*., 2021; Harguem *et al*., 2022). To illustrate this concept, consider the strategic determination to externalize IT operations this represents a high-level corporate IT Governance verdict. In contrast, establishing protocols for managing these outsourcing arrangements exemplifies operational IT Governance, specifically focused on transactional oversight and execution

(Cordero *et al.*, 2020; Al Romaihi *et al.*, 2024). Stakeholders residing beyond organizational boundaries encompass those entities and individuals who maintain vested interests in, or experience impacts from, the institution's technology-related strategic decisions (Jafarijoo and Joshi, 2021). These stakeholders can significantly influence IT governance through various means, such as providing resources, setting industry standards, or exerting regulatory pressure (Cordero *et al.*, 2020; Borja *et al.*, 2022).

For the purposes of this research, external stakeholders are conceptualized as societal constituencies operating within the broader environmental context who possess the capacity to shape organizational decisions regarding technology investments and utilization patterns (Hovelja *et al.*, 2013; Aasi *et al.*, 2014; Abraham *et al.*, 2019; Wilkin and Chenhall, 2020; Ackermann *et al.*, 2024). Key external stakeholders are selected based on IS research and management literature. Building upon this established framework, the study employs a qualitative methodological approach to investigate which external stakeholders play critical roles in IT Governance structures and to examine how these stakeholders are ranked in importance across various IT decision-making spheres.

The stakeholder salience model by Mitchell *et al.* (1997) provides a useful lens for examining the influence of external stakeholders on IT governance. According to this model, stakeholders are considered salient based on their possession of one or more of the following attributes: Power, legitimacy, and urgency. According to this theoretical framework, stakeholders who demonstrate possession of all three characteristics emerge as the most prominent, consequently wielding the strongest influence over organizational decision-making processes.

This study aims to enhance the understanding of the stakeholder perspective in IT Governance research by drawing on the theory of stakeholder identification and salience as proposed by Mitchell *et al.* (1997). The theoretical framework proposes that three key attributes power, legitimacy, and urgency - function as the defining characteristics of stakeholder classification and establish their relative salience or precedence, thereby serving as metrics for assessing their comparative significance in relation to other stakeholders (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001). A stakeholder's power is characterized by their capacity to influence organizational decisions, while legitimacy encompasses the perceived validity and appropriateness of their participation in governance matters. Urgency describes the time-sensitivity and criticality of stakeholder demands. This investigation extends these theoretical foundations to advance the development of a stakeholder-centric paradigm within IT Governance scholarship.

This research enhances the existing body of knowledge in IT governance literature by illuminating external stakeholders' significant role in molding IT governance mechanisms. By identifying key external stakeholders and analyzing their impact across various IT decision-making spheres, this investigation yields valuable practical applications for technology executives and policy architects. The theoretical framework offers a comprehensive structure for evaluating external stakeholders' influence on IT governance processes. It emphasizes that organizations must incorporate external stakeholder perspectives and requirements into their IT governance frameworks to ensure sustainable and effective technology management. These theoretical foundations and empirical findings lead to the following research propositions.

Research proposition 1: External organizational stakeholders who possess the capability to influence an organization's IT infrastructure should be incorporated as key stakeholders within the IT Governance framework.

Research proposition 2: External stakeholders who experience impacts from an organization's technological decisions and implementations must be included in IT Governance.

Research proposition 3: The relative significance accorded to external stakeholders within IT Governance frameworks, as evaluated by information technology executives, correlates with these stakeholders' measured levels of power, legitimacy, and urgency.

Research proposition 4: IT executives' assessment of external stakeholders' importance within IT Governance structures will demonstrate variation across different technological decision-making domains.

The paper is structured as follows: The subsequent section presents a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach, encompassing data collection protocols and analytical procedures. Following this, the research findings are examined, with particular emphasis on external stakeholders' impact across various IT Governance decision spheres. The paper concludes with an exploration of the study's theoretical and practical implications, acknowledgment of research limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Materials and Methods

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon stakeholder identification and salience theory (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997), employing this framework to conduct a systematic analysis of IT Governance structures. This study examines the degree to which external stakeholders factor into IT Governance decision-making processes and explores their relative prioritization within governance mechanisms. To address the central research question, the stakeholder identification and salience theoretical

framework has been specifically adapted to the context of IT Governance.

His research seeks to examine external stakeholders' significance in IT Governance frameworks through the theoretical perspective of stakeholder identification and salience (Mitchell *et al*., 1997). The research adapts this theoretical model to the IT Governance sphere to explore the fundamental question: What is the nature and extent of external stakeholders' influence on organizational IT Governance? To investigate this question, we developed an inventory of critical external stakeholders derived from information systems scholarship and management literature. This stakeholder list encompasses technology vendors, consulting firms, regulatory bodies, external auditing and security entities, commercial clients, supply chain partners, investment stakeholders, company shareholders, market competitors, industry associations, and community constituents.

The analysis evaluates these stakeholders through three primary attributes: Power, legitimacy, and urgency. Within this framework, power is operationalized as a stakeholder's capacity to deliver or withhold economic benefits, exercise coercive authority, or leverage social influence channels to achieve intended outcomes. The urgency dimension is evaluated based on stakeholders' temporal demands and the perceived criticality of their requirements and expectations. Finally, legitimacy is conceptualized through the organizational perception of appropriateness and validity regarding stakeholder claims and demands.

Research Approach

The paper employed a qualitative survey methodology to explore IT executives' perspectives regarding external stakeholders' significance within IT governance frameworks. This empirical inquiry specifically examines how senior technology leaders evaluate and prioritize the significance of ernal stastakeholdersrnance 'rnance processes, as reflected through the relative importance assigned to stakeholder claims. The research investigation was structured in two distinct phases.

The initial research phase involved a systematic identification of external stakeholders within the IT Governance context, utilizing a validation methodology that incorporated both literature-derived stakeholder classifications and participant feedback. The preliminary stakeholder inventory encompassed technology vendors, advisory services, regulatory and security entities, commercial clients, supply chain partners, capital investors, corporate shareholders, market competitors, industry organizations, and community stakeholders. The framework included an additional open category enabling technology executives to identify supplementary external stakeholders not captured in the initial classification. This methodological approach sought to establish an exhaustive and representative catalog of external stakeholders relevant to IT Governance structures.

The second research phase incorporated (Mitchell *et al.* 1997) stakeholder evaluation framework with established IT decision domain classifications to analyze external stakeholder prioritization in IT Governance. This theoretical synthesis enabled the assessment of stakeholder significance within IT Governance by examining their influence across principal IT decision domains within comprehensive governance frameworks. Through structured interviews, research participants evaluated each external stakeholder group's power, legitimacy, and urgency using a ten-point scale (ranging from minimal (1) to maximal (10)) across various IT decision domains. Participants provided qualitative justification for their numerical assessments and elaborated on the mechanisms through which external stakeholders exert influence within each decision sphere.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through executive interviews, with senior IT leaders selected as primary informants based on their integral roles in organizational IT Governance processes. The research employed a purposive sampling methodology to identify participants, ensuring diversity across professional experiences, industry backgrounds, and geographic regions (encompassing Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta). The sample represented multiple business sectors, including manufacturing, service industries, financial institutions, insurance providers, governmental bodies, and consulting organizations.

Participant recruitment utilized the Canadian Directory of Senior Technology Executives as the sampling framework, from an initial identification of sixty-five qualified executives, twelve participants committed to the research engagement. The demographic and organizational characteristics of the participant cohort are detailed in Table (1).

Interview sessions were predominantly conducted via telephone to accommodate geographical constraints and executive scheduling requirements. Each participant provided documented informed consent before the interview commenced. Interview durations ranged between forty-five and ninety minutes and all sessions were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Analysis

The analysis examined patterns in how technology executives prioritized external stakeholders across six fundamental IT decision domains: Strategic technology vision, architectural planning, investment allocation, infrastructure development, application development processes, and outsourcing strategies.

Table 1: Demographics of the interviewees

ID	Title	Gender	IT experience (years)	Education	IT employees	Industry	Total employees
1	IT architect	M	7	Masters	150	Financial service	2,200
2	CIO	M	21	Masters	300	Manufacturing and Eng. Services	16,000
3	CIO	M	2.5	Masters	60	Insurance services	500
4	VP IT	M	15	Bachelors	50	IT services	1,200
5	VP IT	M	30	Masters	3000	Banking services	48,000
6	IT director	M	25	Diploma	8	Manufacturing and processing	200
7	VP IT	M	25	Diploma	350	IT services	350
8	IT director	M	18	Bachelors	30	Govt. Agency	120
9	Enterprise architecture	M	15	Masters	150	Insurance services	1,600
10	CIO	M	6	Ph.D.	375	Education	10,000
11	CIO	M	21	Ph.D.	150	Higher education	3,200
12	CIO	F	23	Diploma	25	Education	2,000
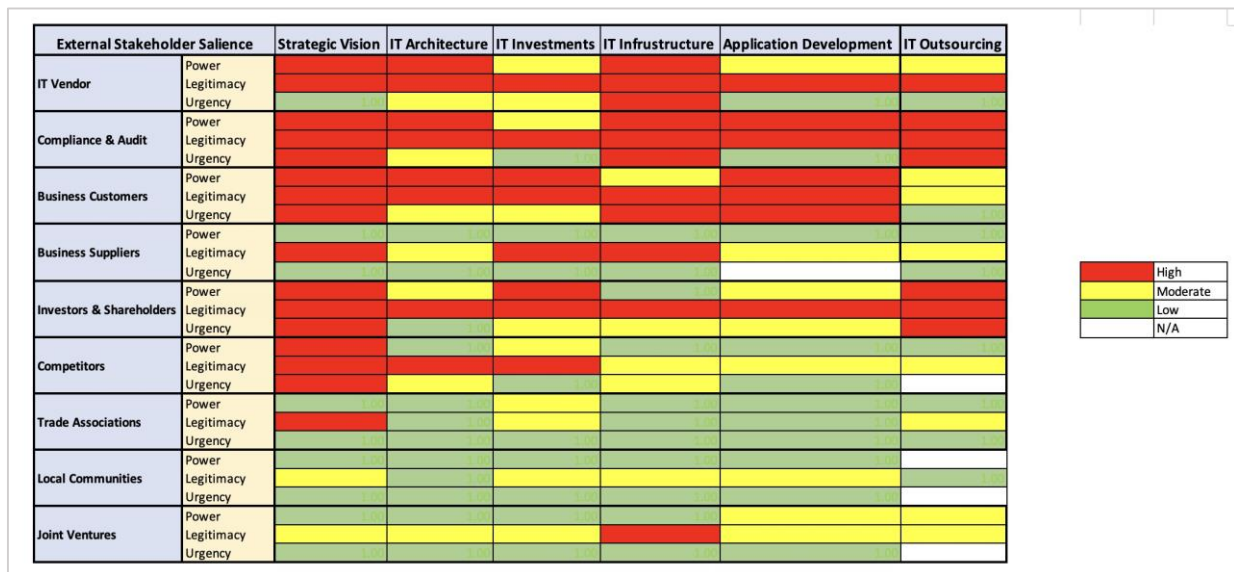
Fig. 1: External stakeholder salience score grid

Data coding incorporated both deductive and inductive analytical techniques. Interview transcripts underwent systematic examination, with researchers documenting all instances supporting predetermined thematic elements within the coding framework. This deductive methodology facilitated data categorization utilizing a coding scheme derived from the six IT decision domains conceptualized by Grover *et al.* (2007).

An inductive analytical phase followed, during which researchers identified recurring themes absent from the initial coding framework. This process revealed an additional significant theme- the type of external stakeholder influence- which was subsequently incorporated into the coding structure following validation by the study's authors.

This coding methodology was applied systematically across all interview data. The analytical process began with randomly selecting two interview transcripts for preliminary coding using the established framework. The resulting analysis underwent author review to validate interpretative accuracy and coding definitions, yielding minor refinements to definitional labels. Following these adjustments, researchers applied the modified coding framework to analyze all remaining interview transcripts.

Complementing the qualitative content analysis, researchers quantitatively analyzed respondents' numerical assessments of stakeholder attributes (power, legitimacy, and urgency). The study calculated stakeholder salience scores by determining the mean values of power, legitimacy, and urgency ratings assigned by participants across each IT decision domain (illustrated in Fig. (1). This quantitative salience metric, when integrated with the qualitative content analysis, provided

enhanced insight into external stakeholder prioritization within IT Governance frameworks.

Discussion

This research phase investigated which external stakeholders technology executives consider within IT Governance decision-making processes. Table (2) presents a curated list of external stakeholders identified as significant in IT Governance contexts. Based on participant feedback, several stakeholder categories underwent consolidation: The "investors" and "shareholders" classifications were unified, reflecting their shared role as organizational funding providers. Similarly, "IT consultants" and "hardware equipment suppliers," including network service providers, were consolidated into a comprehensive "IT vendors" category.

Table 2: External stakeholders considered in its governance

External stakeholder	Rationale	Salience and impact on the firm's IT	Salience and stake in IT	Respondents
Compliance, external audit, and security group	This stakeholder classification encompasses external audit entities, regulatory authorities at both governmental and industry levels, along teams responsible for security compliance oversight	Affect	Exercise strategic influence over operational divisions to drive the adoption of their technological solutions, methodologies, and industry-standard practices	All
IT vendors	This stakeholder category comprises IT consultants, hardware providers, technology consulting organizations, and entities dedicated to promoting IT best practices	Affect	Respect their recommendations	All
Business customers	The entirety of commercial clients operating within the organization's defined business ecosystem	Affect and affected by	System dependability and operational accessibility of technological resources provided for their utilization.	All
Business suppliers	This classification encompasses all entities that provide businessrelated products and services to the organization	Affected by	Deployment of systems that enhance communication capabilities and facilitate improved interaction protocols	All
Investors and shareholders	Encompasses all entities and individuals who provide financial capital to support organizational operations	Affects	Operational effectiveness, adherence to financial allocations, expenditure minimization, and enhancement of procedural efficiencies	All
Competitors	Organizations operating in competitive market spaces relative to the enterprise's business domain	Affects	Maintain oversight of technological solutions while delivering superior IT services and product offerings	All
Trade associations	Encompasses labor organizations and professional associations that represent collective interests	Affected by	Deliver technological products and services that align with and fulfill their specified requirements and expectations.	All
Local communities	Encompasses the broader public sphere, including media entities, municipal stakeholders, and national constituencies within which the organization operates	Affected by	Acknowledgment and accommodation of their distinct cultural characteristics and specific operational requirements	All
Joint ventures	A strategic business collaboration where multiple entities combine their respective resources toward achieving specific objectives, operating as a distinct organizational entity separate from the participating parties	Affects and affected by	Provision of technological infrastructure that enables collaborative development of products and services	2 and 5

A majority of study participants (respondents 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12) advocated for limiting the "trade associations" classification specifically to labor unions and professional organizations while recommending that entities promoting IT best practices be categorized under "IT vendors." Furthermore, two participants (respondents 2 and 5) proposed the addition of "joint ventures" as a distinct stakeholder category, which was subsequently incorporated into the final external stakeholder framework for IT Governance.

The interviewed IT executives universally acknowledged that specific stakeholders, notably compliance, audit, and security entities, along with investors and shareholders, generate direct impacts on organizational IT operations. In contrast, other stakeholders, such as business suppliers, primarily experience the effects of organizational IT decisions. Certain stakeholder groups, exemplified by business customers, maintain bidirectional influence through their requirements and interactions. Participants confirmed that all identified stakeholder groups maintain legitimate interests in IT operations and possess the capacity to shape IT Governance processes. This stakeholder validation process provided empirical support for the study's initial two research propositions.

The subsequent research phase examined technology executives' prioritization patterns regarding external stakeholders based on perceived importance levels (illustrated in Fig. (2). Analyzing the relative salience assigned to each stakeholder category yielded crucial insights into their comparative significance within the governance framework.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis of additional participant commentary enhanced our understanding of stakeholder prioritization across decision domains.

Interview findings revealed that external stakeholders exercise both direct and indirect influence over IT Governance, with variation depending on their level of active engagement in organizational IT operations and their broader organizational relationships. The following sections present a detailed analysis of participant perceptions regarding the prioritization of each external stakeholder group.

Investors and Shareholders Group

The majority of respondents emphasized the significant role of investors and shareholders in shaping strategic IT vision decisions, IT investment planning, and IT outsourcing. This group's influence extends across various IT decision domains. Their direct financial involvement in IT initiatives positions them as key influencers in governance processes.

Participants emphasized the substantial influence that investors and shareholders exercise over IT financial allocations, acknowledging their essential role in funding technology initiatives. This dynamic was particularly well illustrated by respondent 4's observation:" As the financial stakeholders, cost considerations become paramount to them. We must provide clear justification for our budget requests and resource requirements. They maintain rigorous oversight of project timelines and deadline compliance."

The legitimacy of investors' and shareholders' involvement in governance processes is widely acknowledged. Their demands are treated with utmost importance due to the significant financial implications on these decision domains.

Fig. 2: External stakeholder importance charts

In IT architecture decisions, IT infrastructure decisions, and applications development decisions, investors and shareholders are perceived as moderately important. Their influence in these areas is considered to be indirect by the respondents.

As illustrated by respondent 1's observation:" Their influence operates through indirect channels [...] when they establish directives for 'customer-centric' operations and implement new consultative business streams, we must develop technological solutions that address these strategic imperatives and modify our architectural framework accordingly." This testimony demonstrates how investor and shareholder influence shapes technological decisions through strategic organizational mandates.

Participants emphasized the importance of providing evidence to investors and shareholders regarding the efficient utilization of IT investments. This manifests through the deployment of technological capabilities and infrastructure that support core business objectives. Although stakeholder demands in this domain are not characterized by extreme urgency, participants acknowledge their legitimacy and the necessity for appropriate response measures.

The Compliance, External Audit and Security Group

The stakeholder category encompassing compliance entities, external auditors, and security groups receives substantial prioritization across multiple IT decision spheres, spanning strategic vision formulation, architectural planning, infrastructure development, application development processes, and outsourcing determinations. While their influence typically operates indirectly, participants consistently acknowledge their fundamental role in shaping organizational technology strategies.

This stakeholder group exercises institutional authority by establishing regulatory frameworks that mandate organizational compliance, including information security standards and industry-specific regulations. There regulatory directives transform into practical implementation guidelines for organizational information systems. This dynamic was exemplified by respondent 4's observation:" Their significance is substantial. Regulatory framework requirements and constraints fundamentally shape the orchestration of IT service delivery. The IT implementation landscape would be markedly different in the absence of these regulatory structures." Participants consistently validate the legitimacy of their relationship with this stakeholder group and address their requirements with considerable urgency.

In the context of IT investment decisions, however, participants assign medium-level importance to compliance, audit, and security entities. While these stakeholders influence investment patterns through regulatory requirements, their claims in this domain receive lower urgency ratings from participants. As respondent 8 noted:" Legislative and regulatory requirements, such as web accessibility mandates, inevitably generate project demands that necessitate investments in personnel and consulting resources. This can alter project timelines and prioritization frameworks. The impact is undeniable." Nevertheless, participants perceive their influence on investment decisions as less time-sensitive than their role in other IT decision domains.

IT Vendors

Analysis reveals that participants attribute high significance to IT vendors in architectural planning, investment allocation, and infrastructure decisions. Respondents emphasize that technological feasibility in architecture and infrastructure frequently depends on the market availability of vendor products and services, highlighting vendors' utilitarian power position. This dynamic was articulated by respondent 6:" When considering available market solutions and their technological evolution trajectories [...] during architectural planning, even optimal strategic approaches become constrained by vendor solution availability, inherently influencing our strategic direction." Participants consistently validate the legitimacy of vendor involvement in these decision spheres and prioritize their input accordingly.

Participants perceive moderate vendor influence on strategic vision and application development decisions. Within strategic vision determination, vendor impact manifests indirectly through marketing initiatives targeting senior leadership. As respondent 5 observed," The influence operates more indirectly. Vendors shape executive perspectives through sales approaches and marketing tools, requiring IT departments to accommodate these influences retrospectively." Consulting organizations can subtly influence organizational IT trajectory through market analysis and benchmarking services. Participants indicate limited urgency in addressing vendor claims within this context.

However, vendors maintain a direct impact on application development processes through their roles as development partners or consultants. In this capacity, their recommendations carry substantial legitimacy, with their involvement considered an operational necessity rather than discretionary input.

Business Customers

Participants predominantly assign high importance to business customers across multiple IT governance decision domains, encompassing strategic vision,

architectural design, investment allocation, infrastructure development, and application development. Their influence typically operates through indirect channels, with customer requirements reaching IT departments via business unit management structures.

Research participants indicate that business customers exercise considerable normative influence through their ability to impact organizational reputation. Their position as primary revenue generators further establishes their utilitarian power base. Participants consistently acknowledge both the legitimacy and time-sensitivity of customer requirements. This perspective was captured by respondent 10's observation that business customers" shape rather than authorize decisions. Ongoing dialogue occurs with these stakeholders. Their influence extends through reputational impact and financial leverage. Failing to meet their requirements directly constrains our revenue generation capacity."

Regarding outsourcing decisions, business customers maintain moderate yet significant influence. Organizational efforts to maintain customer satisfaction can influence vendor selection processes, particularly concerning brand perception and reputational considerations. As articulated by respondent 5:" Reputational impact remains significant. Customers may respond negatively to non-local vendor selection. Customer reactions influence our decision-making process, potentially influencing reciprocal business relationships." However, participants indicate reduced urgency in addressing customer concerns within this decision domain.

Competitors

Most participants (1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 12) recognize competitors' substantial influence in shaping IT strategic vision governance. Research indicates that competitive benchmarking plays a crucial role in strategic IT planning. Respondent 8's observation that" market investment patterns by competitors shape our direction when we observe new service deployments [...] these directly influence our strategic IT vision. Continuous competitive analysis drives strategic plan refinement" illustrates this perspective.

Participants attribute moderate significance to competitors in architectural planning, investment allocation, and infrastructure decisions. Their influence manifests indirectly through ongoing analysis of technological innovation and market trends. As respondent 1 noted," identification of competitor technological advantages prompts initiatives to eliminate or surpass such advantages, necessitating architectural modifications." This competitive intelligence drives adjustments in investment strategies and technological infrastructure decisions. Participants validate the legitimacy of such competitive analysis and emphasize its importance for technology leadership consideration.

In contrast, participants assign limited importance to competitive influence in application development and outsourcing governance decisions. While they acknowledge the validity of competitive benchmarking in these domains, they indicate reduced urgency in responding to competitive factors within these decision spheres.

Business Suppliers

Participants unanimously attribute minimal significance to business suppliers across IT governance decision domains. Respondent 1's observation characterizes these stakeholders primarily as service providers with limited strategic influence.

Nevertheless, participants recognize the inherent validity of incorporating business supplier requirements within IT governance frameworks on a discretionary basis. While acknowledging their limited direct influence, participants note that supplier input can indirectly shape governance decisions. This dynamic was exemplified by respondent 6's statement that" supplier initiatives to introduce new products or expanded services necessitate consideration within our architectural planning framework."

The analysis indicates that while business suppliers maintain a peripheral role in IT governance influence, their perspectives retain value and may inform decision-making processes through voluntary incorporation.

Trade Associations

Participants consistently indicate the minimal significance of trade associations across general IT governance decision domains. This stakeholder group is perceived as possessing limited authority over governance decisions, though participants acknowledge the validity of considering their input on a voluntary basis.

However, trade associations attain moderate importance specifically within IT investment governance. Participants emphasize that affiliated unions possess the capacity to impede technology investment initiatives when perceived as potentially detrimental to member interests. This dynamic was articulated by respondent 12:" Union entities maintain the ability to contest board-approved technology investments [...] particularly when such investments are perceived as potentially compromising employee rights or benefits. Their opposition may manifest through industrial action targeting specific technology acquisitions." This observation indicates trade associations' coercive influence over investment decisions. Participants attribute moderate legitimacy to this stakeholder group and assign intermediate urgency to addressing their concerns.

Local Communities

Analysis reveals that participants attribute minimal significance to local communities within IT governance decision processes. While this stakeholder group is perceived as lacking substantial decision-making influence, participants recognize the inherent validity of considering their interests, albeit without temporal pressure.

In certain contexts, local communities are conceptualized as prospective clients whose requirements merit consideration through market analysis data transmitted via business units to technology leadership. Additionally, these communities represent potential talent pools for technology operations. This perspective was illustrated by respondent 9's observation:" Regional human resource availability [...] and prevalent skill sets frequently influence infrastructure development decisions, such as programming language selection [...] while not deterministic, workforce demographics shape these considerations."

The nuanced influence of local communities was further elaborated by respondent 10, who noted their impact manifests" through reputational channels. Debates regarding open source versus proprietary software exemplify this dynamic. Public sentiment and media coverage can directly influence such decisions."

While participants validate the legitimacy of local community involvement in IT governance, this stakeholder group is not perceived as wielding significant authority or requiring urgent responses to their concerns within the broader governance framework.

Joint Ventures

Participants attribute minimal significance to joint venture stakeholders across strategic vision, architectural planning, investment allocation, and infrastructure governance domains. While participants validate the legitimacy of incorporating their requirements and acknowledge potential indirect influence channels, this stakeholder group is perceived as wielding limited authority over these decision spheres.

However, joint ventures attain moderate importance within application development and outsourcing governance frameworks. Their influence operates through direct channels in these domains, primarily due to the collaborative requirements inherent in joint venture relationships, where shared product or service development necessitates alignment of development methodologies. Strategic partnership considerations influence make-versus-buy decisions and joint venture partners frequently participate in vendor selection processes for shared technological services and products.

Conclusion

This study extends the current IT Governance literature by implementing stakeholder theory frameworks, particularly stakeholder identification and salience models. Research findings indicate that external stakeholder prioritization demonstrates variation across IT decision domains and manifests through direct and indirect influence channels.

The evaluation of external stakeholder groups revealed differentiation based on participant-assigned salience attributes and qualitative feedback. The analysis demonstrates that the power, legitimacy, and urgency associated with external stakeholders vary within IT governance contexts according to technology executive perceptions. Moreover, stakeholder importance fluctuates across distinct IT governance decision spheres.

Empirical analysis indicates that external stakeholders exercise influence through direct and indirect mechanisms across various IT governance domains, contingent upon their engagement in technology activities and organizational relationships. For instance, while investors and shareholders directly impact strategic vision governance decisions, other stakeholders operate through intermediary channels, mainly via business units maintaining direct stakeholder contact. This observation suggests that external stakeholder influence patterns correlate with their organizational roles, manifesting directly or indirectly.

Several research limitations warrant acknowledgment. The restricted sample size constraints result in generalizability. A more expansive and heterogeneous sample would enhance understanding of external stakeholder salience in IT governance frameworks.

Additionally, the research scope primarily encompassed technology executive perspectives, excluding business leadership viewpoints. Integrating business executive insights could enhance understanding of external stakeholder salience in IT governance contexts.

Future research opportunities include examining combined internal and external stakeholder salience within unified theoretical models. This comprehensive approach could facilitate stakeholder classification and enable organizational leadership to establish an equitable balance among diverse stakeholder interests.

Given this study's exploratory nature, subsequent research could employ alternative empirical methodologies, including large-scale quantitative surveys, to validate results. Investigating contextual variables, including industry classification, decision-maker organizational hierarchy, and stakeholder scale, could yield valuable insights into external stakeholder management within IT governance frameworks.

Addressing these limitations and pursuing identified research opportunities could enhance understanding of external stakeholder dynamics in IT governance and advance stakeholder management strategic frameworks.

The practical implications emphasize the strategic importance of external stakeholder management in IT governance. Understanding the variations in influence, legitimacy, and urgency across stakeholder groups enables technology executives to anticipate potential conflicts, identify risks, and optimize stakeholder management opportunities.

This strategic orientation enables technology executives to achieve multiple objectives:

- Anticipate conflicts: By comprehensively understanding divergent stakeholder priorities and expectations, technology leadership can develop preemptive conflict resolution strategies before escalation occurs.
- Leverage opportunities: By identifying potential collaborative ventures and strategic partnerships among external stakeholders, technology executives can harness these relationships to accelerate innovation, optimize operational efficiency, and enhance organizational capabilities
- Enhance stakeholder management: Understanding the dimensional attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency enables technology leadership to implement targeted stakeholder engagement strategies.
- These approaches incorporate established communication frameworks and relationship culture technology stakeholder relationships within IT governance frameworks, which prove essential for the success of technology initiatives, strategic alignment, and organizational performance optimization. The empirical insights generated through this research enable technology executives to navigate external stakeholder relationships with enhanced strategic precision and operational effectiveness.

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Author's Contributions

Saida Harguem: Acquisition of data, investigation, interpretation of data, original draft preparation, reviewed and approved the version to be submitted.

Karim Ben Boubaker: Conceptualization, investigation, methodology, reviewed, edited, and approved the version to be submitted and any revised version.

Said Baadel: Revision, analysis, and interpretation of data, reviewed, edited, and approved the version to be submitted and any revised versions.

Ethics

This study is an original research work and the lead the author confirms that all co-authors have reviewed and endorsed the manuscript without any ethical concerns.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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