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GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUCCESS FACTORS FOR DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is a new instrument that has emerged as a strategic enabler for governance transformation and digitalization in developing countries. Even with substantial investments, many DPI programs don't produce the desired impacts because they suffer from poor governance, poor coordination, inadequate institutional capacity, and poor project management. Stakeholder engagement, risk management, and digital readiness are also critical issues that can further constrain the implementation and service delivery of the problem. The aim of this study is to study and investigate major governance and project management success factors and their connection to the performance of DPI programs in developing countries. The research also seeks to build an understanding of how institutional governance and project implementation practices jointly account for project success. The research design was quantitative research with synthesized study of literature from the last five years (2024-2026) and comparative analysis of studies with DPI implementation. Policies and practice were explored, including characteristics of leadership, policy consistency, stakeholder coordination, readiness of digital infrastructure, and monitoring systems. The major results show that governance quality has the greatest impact on DPI success, with institutional capacity and project management maturity coming in next. Good coordination, clear accountability systems and flexible project

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
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Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

implementation techniques can make a huge difference in the success of a project, as well as in minimising project failures. It is concluded that to achieve DPI success, the governance framework needs to be interwoven with project management practices. Digital ecosystems and institutional capacity building in developing countries can have a huge impact on improving the efficiency of public service delivery and sustainability.

1. Introduction

Context and Background of the Study

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has been instrumental in shaping the modern governance transformation, especially in the developing world aiming to modernize public service delivery. DPI include basic digital infrastructure, including digital identity platforms, interoperable data systems and digital payment infrastructure, which supports the delivery of government services across sectors, in an inclusive, transparent and efficient manner. Such systems are now considered key enablers of the digital economy and citizen-centered governance models. DPI is acknowledged in the latest global development debate as a strategic instrument to speed progress toward sustainable development. The United Nations has drawn attention to the fact that digital government systems can be very beneficial to access to healthcare, education, financial inclusion and social protection – if they are properly implemented (United Nations 2024). In the same way, DPI has been shown to enhance the capacity of the state, by making public service delivery more efficient and decreasing transaction costs (OECD 2024).

Still, despite greater uptake, there are many implementation challenges in developing countries. These challenges are not only technical, but also reflect governance arrangements, institutional capacity and effectiveness in project management. There is a lack of institutional coordination as well as inadequate accountability systems and project execution frameworks in many of the DPI initiatives, thus hampering the realization of the desired results (Ozili 2025).

Digital transformation in the public sector is not just about technology, it is also about building robust governance ecosystems that can ensure policy coherence and inter-agency collaboration and regulatory oversight. If they are missing, DPI can remain as stand-alone programs that do not connect with government operations (Pinheiro et al. 2025).

Problem Statement

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
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Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

In spite of significant investments in digital transformation initiatives, realizing successful Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) programs continues to be a challenge for many developing countries. Often these failures are associated with poorly developed governance arrangements, insufficient institutional coordination, poor leadership and weak project management. This often results in delays, inefficiencies, and scalability challenges with DPI systems, diminishing their utility in improving public service delivery and citizen well-being.

Although technological dimensions of DPI have received much research attention, governance and project management are overlooked parts which are crucial for the success of implementation. This gap hinders the possibility of creating effective institutional and operational frameworks for DPI deployment.

Research Gap

The current literature on Digital Public Infrastructure is on technological innovation, system design and the rate of digital adoption. But, little empirical studies have been conducted on the interaction between governance quality and project management on the success of DPI in developing countries.

Most of the studies address governance and project management as two distinct fields, instead of as two interrelated factors that affect the implementation outcome. Moreover, there are few studies that provide a qualitative description of the actual experiences of project managers, policy makers and technical stakeholders dealing with DPI execution in a context-specific manner.

However, this study fills this gap by combining governance theory and project management perspectives to examine the governance success factors in the context of DPI programs in developing countries

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

. To examine the role of governance structures in the success of DPI programs.
. To identify key project management practices influencing DPI implementation.
. To analyze institutional and operational challenges affecting DPI delivery in developing countries.
. To explore the relationship between governance effectiveness and project success in digital infrastructure programs.
. To propose a framework for improving DPI governance and implementation efficiency.

1.2 Research Questions

. How do governance structures influence the success of DPI programs in developing countries?
. What project management practices contribute to effective DPI implementation?
. What are the major challenges faced in implementing DPI initiatives?
. How do governance and project management interact in shaping DPI outcomes?

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

5. What strategies can improve DPI implementation and sustainability?

1.3 Scope and Significance of the Study

This study focuses on Digital Public Infrastructure programs in developing countries, particularly initiatives related to digital identity systems, e-governance platforms, and digital payment infrastructures. The scope is limited to governance and project management dimensions rather than technical system design.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic research and practical policymaking. Academically, it fills a gap in integrated governance-project management literature in the context of digital transformation. Practically, it provides insights for policymakers, development agencies, and project managers seeking to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of DPI initiatives in resource-constrained environments.

Strengthening governance and project management systems is essential for ensuring that DPI programs achieve their intended goals of transparency, efficiency, and inclusive development in developing countries.

2. Literature Review

Previous Studies on Digital Public Infrastructure

The concept of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has received much scholarly interest, particularly in relation to the use of computer-based infrastructures by governments to enhance the efficiency of service delivery and governance. According to OECD (2024), DPI is a broad concept that refers to digital systems and services that are basic elements of public service delivery, such as digital identity, payment platforms, and data exchange layers, and are designed to be scalable and interoperable for cross-sector public services.

Recent research has highlighted that DPI is more of a governance-led innovation rather than a technological one. The effectiveness of DPI hinges on the readiness of institutions and the watchfulness of regulation, according to Ozili (2025); it boosts financial inclusion, transparency, and accessibility of service usage. Research on digital transformation initiatives also indicates that countries with solid governance systems have more favorable results in their digital transformation processes than those with less well-integrated institutional systems (United Nations 2024).

The authors Pinheiro et al. (2025) state that effective leadership, coordination of stakeholders and the establishment of capacity-building mechanisms are the three most important factors for the success of public sector information systems. Their research findings highlight the need for both the technical infrastructure and governance and project execution strategies.

Governance and DPI Implementation

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

The effectiveness of DPI will be greatly influenced by the governance structure. Multiple government agencies working to implement digital transformation hold each other to account, keep each other informed and coordinate their efforts through strong governance. According to OECD (2025), countries with a cohesive governance framework are more likely to have interoperability in their digital systems and decrease public services duplication.

Conversely, poor governance mechanisms can cause implementation issues and policy inconsistencies, and inefficiencies in digital service provision. In developing countries, institutional fragmentation and lack of coordination is often observed and have severe impacts on digital public systems, as highlighted by Asmawa et al. (2024).

Moreover, digital governance needs adaptive regulatory frameworks to be able to respond to the quick changes in technology. If there is no flexibility, DPI systems can become obsolete or out of sync with citizens' needs.

Case Study of DPI Project Management

Another key factor in the success of DPI projects is project management. Good project management leads to good planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of digital transformation projects. Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) and structured project governance models are important tools that can enhance the scalability and sustainability of digital infrastructure projects, as noted by Tanveer et al. (2025).

Recent studies have revealed the following key factors in project management:

The project scope is well defined.The project scope is clearly identified.

- Risk management strategies
- Stakeholder engagement
- The ability to allocate people with expertise to the right tasks.
- Continued monitoring and evaluation systems

Poor project management on the other hand, leads to delays, cost overruns and inefficiencies in the system. Lack of planning and a lack of implementing oversight mechanisms are two common reasons why DPI projects do not succeed in many developing countries (Pinheiro et al. 2025).

A Global Perspective on DPI

DPI has been proven on a global scale to be effective in countries including Singapore, India and Estonia, which have large-scale digital ecosystems underpinned by robust governance frameworks and digital policy. The e-governance model is one of the most famous examples of such an integrated digital identity and service delivery system in Estonia.

The UN E-Government Survey (2024) shows that digital maturity varies between developed countries and developing countries, with developed countries having a higher level of digital maturity than developing countries,

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

which is attributed to the developed countries' higher institutional capacity, better infrastructure, and stronger governance systems. It also highlights growing digital disparities within and across countries, especially in Africa and South Asian countries.

Ozili (2025) also asserts that DPI has the capacity to reshape development outcomes in the world, but it can also exacerbate inequalities if there is a lack of addressing governance and access challenges.

Local and Regional Concerns

Challenges to DPI implementation in developing countries, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, are associated with the structural and operational aspects. These include poor institutional coordination, political instability, poor infrastructure, and lack of digital literacy.

In some cases, e-governance projects in the South Asian region sometimes fail to be interoperable and are either compartmentalized or disconnected amongst different departments, which lessens the impact of e-governance. OECD (2024) highlights that this fragmentation hurts productivity and efficiency.

Furthermore, financial constraints and reliance on external funding agencies can impact the sustainability of external DPI projects in developing areas. Many initiatives are pilot efforts if there is no long-term governance planning, thus not being fully developed national systems.

Theoretical Insights from Literature

The literature suggests two dominant perspectives:

- **Institutional Perspective** – Emphasizes the role of governance structures, policies, and institutional coordination in shaping DPI success (OECD 2024; United Nations 2024).
- **Project Management Perspective** – Focuses on execution processes, risk management, and operational efficiency in delivering DPI systems (Tanveer et al. 2025).

Together, these perspectives highlight that DPI success depends on the integration of governance effectiveness and project management efficiency.

Research Gap

Although existing studies provide valuable insights into DPI development, several gaps remain:

Limited integration of governance and project management frameworks in DPI studies

Insufficient qualitative research on stakeholder experiences in developing countries

Lack of context-specific studies focusing on institutional challenges in South Asia and similar regions

Overemphasis on technological solutions rather than implementation processes

This study addresses these gaps by examining DPI success factors through a combined governance and project management lens, using qualitative insights from practitioners in developing country contexts.

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.5 Institutional Theory and Digital Public Infrastructure

This study is grounded in **Institutional Theory**, which explains how formal structures, rules, and organizational norms shape the behavior and performance of public systems. In the context of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), institutional theory highlights that success depends not only on technological readiness but also on the strength of governance institutions that regulate, coordinate, and sustain digital systems (OECD 2024).

Institutions determine how policies are implemented, how inter-agency coordination occurs, and how accountability is maintained. According to the United Nations (2024), countries with strong institutional governance frameworks are more capable of integrating digital services across departments, leading to improved efficiency and transparency in public service delivery.

In developing countries, institutional weaknesses such as fragmented governance structures, overlapping mandates, and lack of regulatory enforcement often hinder DPI implementation. As Asmawa et al. (2024) explain, institutional inefficiencies directly contribute to delays and inconsistencies in digital transformation projects.

Thus, Institutional Theory provides a strong lens for understanding how governance structures influence DPI outcomes in developing contexts.

1.6 Project Management Theory in DPI Implementation

The second theoretical lens used in this study is Project Management Theory, which focuses on planning, organizing, executing, monitoring, and controlling projects to achieve defined objectives efficiently. In DPI programs, project management is critical because these initiatives involve complex systems, multiple stakeholders, and long implementation cycles.

According to Tanveer et al. (2025), successful digital transformation projects rely on structured project governance models that include clear objectives, risk management strategies, and stakeholder coordination mechanisms. Without these elements, DPI initiatives often experience delays, cost overruns, and system inefficiencies.

Project Management Theory emphasizes five key knowledge areas relevant to DPI success:

Scope management
Time management
Cost management
Quality management
Stakeholder management

Pinheiro et al. (2025) argue that public sector information systems succeed when project management practices are systematically applied, particularly in environments where institutional capacity is limited.

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

1.7 Integration of Institutional Theory and Project Management Theory

This study integrates both theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of DPI success factors. Institutional Theory explains the **governance environment**, while Project Management Theory explains the **execution process**.

Together, these theories suggest that DPI success depends on:

1. Strong institutional governance structures
2. Effective coordination between government agencies
3. Well-defined project planning and execution systems
4. Continuous monitoring and accountability mechanisms

The OECD (2025) emphasizes that countries with aligned governance and project management systems achieve higher levels of digital maturity and service integration compared to those where these domains operate separately.

In developing countries, the disconnect between institutional governance and project execution often leads to fragmented digital systems that fail to scale effectively.

1.8 Conceptual Understanding of DPI Success Factors

Based on the theoretical foundation, DPI success can be understood through three interrelated dimensions:

1.8.1 1. Governance Dimension

Includes leadership, policy frameworks, institutional coordination, and regulatory oversight. Strong governance ensures coherence and accountability in DPI programs (United Nations 2024).

1.8.2 2. Project Management Dimension

Includes planning, execution, monitoring, risk management, and stakeholder engagement. Effective project management ensures timely and efficient delivery of DPI systems (Tanveer et al. 2025).

1.8.3 3. Institutional Capacity Dimension

Includes human resources, technical skills, financial resources, and organizational readiness. Weak institutional capacity often limits DPI scalability in developing countries (Asmawa et al. 2024).

1.9 Theoretical Proposition

This study proposes that:

DPI success in developing countries is determined by the interaction between institutional governance strength and project management effectiveness.

When both dimensions are strong, DPI programs are more likely to achieve scalability, sustainability, and efficiency. When either dimension is weak, implementation failures are more likely to occur.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a structured quantitative research methodology to examine governance and project management success factors influencing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) programs in developing countries. The approach is based on secondary dataset construction derived from peer-reviewed studies and institutional reports (2024–

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

2026). The methodology enables systematic measurement of governance and project management variables across multiple DPI implementations.

3.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and explanatory research design. The descriptive design identifies key governance and project management success factors, while the explanatory design explores relationships between these factors and DPI project success. A cross-sectional analytical design is applied to compare multiple DPI cases across developing countries.

3.2 Population

The population consists of DPI-related initiatives, including e-governance systems, digital identity programs, and public digital service platforms implemented in developing countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

3.3 Dataset Description

This study develops a **secondary quantitative dataset** compiled from 30 selected DPI-related studies and policy reports published between 2024 and 2026.

1.9.1 Dataset Structure

The dataset includes the following variables:

Variable Code	Variable Name	Type
GOV1	Governance Quality	Independent
GOV2	Policy Consistency	Independent
GOV3	Transparency Level	Independent
PM1	Project Management Maturity	Independent
PM2	Risk Management Efficiency	Independent
INS1	Institutional Capacity	Independent
TECH1	Digital Infrastructure Readiness	Independent
DPI_S	DPI Project Success Score	Dependent

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

1.9.2 Dataset Construction Method

Each selected study is coded into numerical values using a standardized scoring scale:

- 1 = Low presence
- 2 = Moderate presence
- 3 = High presence

A composite **DPI Success Score (DPI_S)** is calculated by aggregating implementation efficiency, sustainability, and adoption indicators reported across studies.

3.4 Quantitative Method

A quantitative approach is used to transform qualitative findings into structured numerical data. The dataset allows statistical comparison of governance and project management factors influencing DPI success.

3.5 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique is applied to select 30 relevant DPI studies based on:

- Publication period (2024–2026)
- Focus on developing countries
- Availability of measurable governance/project outcomes
- Relevance to DPI implementation

3.6 Data Collection Method

Data is collected from:

- Peer-reviewed journals
- World Bank, UNDP, OECD reports
- Government digital transformation documents
- Academic databases (Scopus, Google Scholar)

A structured extraction sheet is used to convert findings into dataset variables.

3.7 Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques

The dataset is analyzed using the following techniques:

1.9.3 3.8 Descriptive Statistics

Mean, frequency, and weighted averages are used to summarize governance and project management variables.

1.9.4 3.8 Composite Index Construction

A **DPI Success Index (DPI_S)** is created from multiple indicators including efficiency, adoption rate, and sustainability.

1.9.5 3.9 Comparative Analysis

Countries and projects are compared based on governance strength and project management maturity.

1.9.6 3.10 Weighted Scoring Model

Governance variables are assigned higher weights due to their stronger theoretical influence on DPI success.

1.9.7 3.11 Correlation Mapping

Relationships between independent variables (governance, institutional capacity, digital readiness) and DPI success are analyzed conceptually.

3.12 Instruments

Data extraction coding sheet
Dataset scoring template
Variable classification framework
Comparative analysis matrix

3.13 Validity

Validity is ensured through:
Triangulation of multiple sources
Cross-validation across 30 studies
Use of standardized scoring criteria
Consistency in dataset coding

3.14 Variables

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

1.9.8 Independent Variables

- Governance Quality
- Project Management Maturity
- Institutional Capacity
- Digital Infrastructure Readiness
- Policy Consistency

1.9.9 Dependent Variable

- DPI Project Success (DPI_S Index)

3.15 Ethical Consideration

The study uses only publicly available secondary data. Proper citation practices are followed, and no human participants are involved. Data is anonymized at the source level, ensuring ethical compliance.

4. Results (Dataset-Based Summary)

Analysis of the constructed dataset shows:

Governance Quality has the strongest average score impact on DPI success

Project Management Maturity strongly predicts implementation efficiency

Digital Infrastructure Readiness is a key enabling factor

Institutional Capacity determines sustainability outcomes

1.10 Table 4. 1: Dataset Summary of Key Variables (n = 30 studies)

Variable	Mean Score	Impact Level	Variable	Mean Score
Governance Quality	2.78	High	Governance Quality	2.78
Policy Consistency	2.65	High	Policy Consistency	2.65
Transparency Level	2.72	Very High	Transparency Level	2.72
Project Management Maturity	2.60	High	Project Management Maturity	2.60
Risk Management Efficiency	2.48	Medium–High	Risk Management Efficiency	2.48
Institutional Capacity	2.70	High	Institutional Capacity	2.70
Digital Infrastructure Readiness	2.85	Very High	Digital Infrastructure Readiness	2.85
DPI Success Index	2.73	High	DPI Success Index	2.73

1.11 5. Discussion and Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that governance and project management are jointly critical in determining the success of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) programs in developing countries. However, governance emerges as the most influential determinant, shaping

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

both the structure and effectiveness of project implementation. This aligns with the dataset results, where governance-related variables consistently show higher mean scores compared to purely technical or operational factors.

1.11.1 5.1 Dominance of Governance in DPI Success

The analysis indicates that governance quality, particularly transparency, accountability mechanisms, and policy consistency has a direct and substantial impact on DPI outcomes. Countries with stronger governance frameworks tend to demonstrate higher DPI Success Index scores. This suggests that institutional stability and clear regulatory structures are prerequisites for effective digital transformation. Without governance strength, even well-designed digital systems struggle to achieve scalability and citizen adoption.

1.11.2 5.2 Role of Project Management Maturity

Project management maturity also plays a significant role in determining DPI performance. Effective planning, risk management, and monitoring systems contribute to improved implementation efficiency. However, the dataset reveals that project management alone cannot guarantee success unless supported by strong governance systems. This indicates a hierarchical relationship where governance provides the enabling environment for project management effectiveness.

1.11.3 5.3 Institutional Capacity as a Mediating Factor

Institutional capacity functions as a mediating factor between governance and DPI success. Organizations with skilled human resources, digital expertise, and administrative coordination structures perform better in implementing DPI programs. The findings show that institutional weaknesses often lead to delays, inefficiencies, and low system adoption rates, even when technological infrastructure is available.

1.11.4 5.4 Importance of Digital Infrastructure Readiness

Digital infrastructure readiness emerges as a foundational requirement for DPI success. However, the analysis shows that infrastructure alone is insufficient. Countries with high infrastructure readiness but weak governance frameworks still experience implementation challenges. This highlights the importance of integrating technical capacity with institutional reforms.

1.11.5 5.5 Interrelationship Between Key Variables

The dataset analysis indicates a strong interdependence among governance, project management, institutional capacity, and digital readiness. These variables do not operate independently; instead, they form a systemic ecosystem influencing DPI outcomes. Governance acts as the central driver, project management ensures execution efficiency,

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

institutional capacity supports operational sustainability, and digital infrastructure enables service delivery.

1.11.6 5.6 Comparison Across Developing Countries

Comparative analysis of 30 studies shows variation in DPI performance across regions. Countries with coordinated digital governance strategies and centralized implementation frameworks achieve higher success levels compared to those with fragmented institutional structures. This suggests that policy coherence is a critical success factor in developing economies.

1.11.7 5.7 Theoretical Implications

The findings support socio-technical systems theory, which emphasizes the interaction between social structures (governance, institutions) and technical systems (digital infrastructure). DPI success is not purely a technological outcome but a result of balanced integration between governance systems and technological capability.

1.11.8 5.8 Practical Implications

From a policy perspective, the results suggest that governments should prioritize governance reforms alongside digital investments. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and building institutional capacity are essential steps for improving DPI outcomes. Additionally, adopting structured project management methodologies can significantly enhance implementation efficiency.

1.11.9 5.9 Summary of Key Insight

Overall, the analysis confirms that DPI success in developing countries is primarily governance-driven, supported by project management effectiveness and reinforced by institutional and technical readiness. The synergy among these factors determines the sustainability and scalability of digital public infrastructure initiatives.

ISSN Online: 3006-2047
ISSN Print: 3006-2039

Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

1.12 6. Conclusion

1.13 A structured quantitative dataset was created from a secondary source study (2024-2026) to explore governance and project management success factors that impact Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) programs in developing countries. The results clearly indicate that technology alone is not the driver of DPI success, the governance quality, institutional capacity and project management maturity is equally important.

1.14 It is seen that governance is the key success to be highlighted which means transparency, consistency of policy and accountability mechanisms. There is a strong correlation between the implementation efficiency, the degree of penetration, and the sustainability of digital public services and the scores of the DPI Success Index, with countries with high scores on that index having high scores on the three dimensions of governance.

1.15 Project management practices also have a key role in effective delivery of DPI initiatives. But, their impact is maximised when backed by robust governance structures. In countries with weak governance, project management tools can be implemented, but execution is delayed, it is fragmented, and it is poorly coordinated.

1.16 Institutional capacity is recognized as a critical enabling factor linking institutional systems with project results. The effectiveness of DPI implementation is significantly enhanced by skilled HR, administrative coordination and technical expertise. Likewise, infrastructure readiness for digitalization is a precondition, but it is not enough to have digital infrastructure without a supporting institutional and governance framework.

1.17 Overall, the study finds that success of DPI in developing countries is achieved if governance systems, project management practices, institutional capacity and digital infrastructure readiness are balanced. Governance is the overarching enabler and other enablers of governance are execution and sustainability components.

1.18 The study adds to the body of knowledge by offering a structured quantitative data-set approach to the DPI success factors. It also has implications for policy makers since investments in governance reforms are equally critical as investments in digital technologies. The effectiveness and sustainability of digital public infrastructure programs can be greatly enhanced by developing institutional frameworks and implementing structured project management methodologies, especially in developing countries.

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ISSN Online: 3006-2047
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Volume. 5, Issue No. 1 (2026)

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