SYSTEM INFLUENCE FRAMEWORK: IT PROJECT MANAGERS' INFLUENCE TO FORM CRITICAL STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENTS AND PROMOTE VALUE REALIZATION

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family:

My daughter: Diya, love of my life. I never understood the meaning of life until the day I held you in my arms. I will always love you.

My parents: I grew up cocooned in your love, comforted by your hugs, blessed by your prayers, and motivated by your lives. Thank you for everything.

My two brothers and sister: For sharing beautiful childhood memories with me. You are the miracles and blessings that entered our family. Thank you for everything.

My fiancée: Thank you for your unconditional love and support throughout this process. I could not have made it without you.

My grandmother: In your memory, for believing and encouraging me to pursue what I like. Thank you, and I miss you so much.

If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?
— Albert Einstein

Research is creating new knowledge.
— Neil Armstrong

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System Influence Framework: IT Project Managers' Influence to Form Critical Stakeholder Alignments and Promote Value Realization

Abstract

by

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Information technology (IT) projects are getting more complex by the day. From piloting to deployment, through different project phases and cycles, the IT field is still experiencing catastrophic failure. Seventy-one percent (71%) of IT projects are either outright failures or remain significantly challenged during the project execution, and most are related to soft-skills inadequacies. The three studies in this dissertation provide empirical evidence through various theoretical lenses that help explain how to avoid such failures. In particular, I focus on IT project managers' influence in forming critical project alignment toward actualizing project benefits and shaping consequent project success. *Study 1* researched factors that lead IT projects to fail. I intended to better understand what shapes project outcomes, that is, causes that contribute to failure. Findings revealed, the use/lack of power, authority, and influence shapes project outcome. *Study 2* investigated the role of the IT project manager's influence toward actualizing project benefits realization. I developed a model of benefits realization at the project level and analyzed to what extent it is driven by the stakeholders' and business alignment induced by three types of influence (*dimensions*); behavioral, and informational, and power-based held associated with the project manager's role. Findings

revealed information and behavioral-based influence are significant means of impacting stakeholder alignment to realize benefits. Also, my research suggested that power and behavioral-based influence are significant means of impacting business alignment to realize benefits. *Study 3* aimed to uncover the influence tactics (*success elements*) IT project managers enact while creating stakeholders and business alignment. Results revealed that IT project managers use different tactics to achieve the desired results and/or actualize benefits while engaging with business and stakeholders. Nonetheless, this behavior is harnessed on the leadership style which is dependent on personal traits and positional power. The IT Value Realization Model is a complex set of processes that requires a dynamic shift and myriad leadership styles depending on the project phase, task(s) on hand, stakeholders, and benefits to be actualized. The role of the IT project manager is to be insightful to get things done through people while assessing the environment. Based on my collective findings, I offer an integrated discussion of the three studies concluding with the *System Influence Framework*. I elucidate how IT project managers' behaviors can influence and form critical project-level alignments and to what extent such influence is conducive to project benefit realization.

Keywords: project management; information systems; project success; project failure; power; authority; influence; information seeking; stakeholder alignment; business alignment; benefits realization; value realization; social influence; influence tactics; leadership styles.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Standish Group (2015) reported that 71% of projects failed or were significantly challenged. A PMI study (2017a) shows that organizations are wasting an average of US $97 million for every US $1 billion invested. Whereas KPMG (2010) reported that only 40% of project objectives are aligned with organizational strategy, and the Standish Group (2015) reported a large portion of projects do not meet their objectives. These numbers suggest that organizations continue to struggle with implementing their information systems and their project management practices are not on par to deliver value (Breese, Jenner, Serra, & Thorp, 2015). Generally, organizations expect project managers to deliver quality outputs on time by meeting their role expectations (Levin, 2015). These outcomes are generally broader benefits to the organization and its customers (PMI, 2016a) that align with the organization's strategy (Lappe & Spang, 2014). Yet, PMI (2016b) reports that 38% of organizations identify project managers as primarily responsible for ensuring that project benefits stay aligned to strategic objectives, and project managers are responsible for aligning expectations among stakeholders to promote project success (Kerzner, 2017a). Benefits are considered and anticipated during the early stages but are not actively managed during later stages (Ashurst, Doherty, & Peppard, 2008). The more mature organization are in managing projects, the more capable they become in delivering value from their projects and monitoring anticipated benefits throughout the project life cycle (Thomas & Mullaly, 2007). As such, effectively identifying and managing project stakeholders and how to

influence them significantly improves the chances of successful project execution (Retfalvi, 2014).

In this dissertation, I examine how IT project managers can improve and shape the benefits realization during project execution. To achieve this, a project manager has to identify the project objectives and formulate a plan for how to achieve them (Melton, Yates, & Iles-Smith, 2011). Accordingly, the project manager needs to exercise authority, responsibility, and accountability to achieve the project objectives through his communications and acting (Lester, 2014). To this end, they need to lead the work effort (Peltier, 2016), provide recommendations and oversight to make the business case (PMI, 2017b), plan, direct, and integrate the project effort (Nicholas & Steyn, 2017), keep the project on schedule and anticipate future activities and objectives, and monitor project deliverable due dates (Vellani, 2006), and manage and shape interactions within the team and between stakeholders (Smith & Ragan, 2004).

Several studies have examined how projects promote business realization management (Aithal, 2013; Doherty, Ashurst, & Peppard, 2012; Levin, 2015; Liu et al., 2010; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015, 2019). These have been studied across several fields such as information technology (Ashurst, Crowley, & Thornley, 2016; Ashurst et al., 2008; DellaVecchia, Scantlebury, & Stevenson, 2007; Gregor, Martin, Fernandez, Stern, & Vitale, 2006; Päivärinta, Dertz, & Flak, 2007; Thorp, 2001), and entrepreneurship (Huarng, 2013). The studies have focused on various project manager roles (Mossalam & Arafa, 2016; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015) and alternative forms of project governance (Bradley, 2010; Turner, Anbari, & Bredillet, 2013). Additionally, advocates of risk management have identified how project managers need to anticipate

and deal with threats to project success (Disha Experts, 2018; Ericson, 2015; Mokhatab & Poe, 2012; Schmidt, Lyytinen, Keil, & Cule, 2001) by managing related project risks (Boehm, 1991; Ropponen & Lyytinen, 2000; Ewusi-Mensah, 2003) and taming project complexity (Al-Ahmad et al., 2009). Finally, several studies have examined how business and stakeholder alignment influences benefit realization (Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Breese et al., 2015; PMI, 2016a; Serra, 2016; Serra & Kunc, 2015).

Alas, we currently know little about how the IT project manager's influence form critical project alignments and promote value realization. To address this gap, I next elucidate three studies that support my rationale. I view this approach as essential to building a better rational understanding moving from macro and micro-scale/perspectives. Study 1 (Chapter 2) seeks: *What factors influence IT project failure?* Study 2 (Chapter 3) investigates: *To what extent does the project manager's varying influence impact business and stakeholder alignment and consequent project's benefits realization?* Study 3 (Chapter 4) uncovers: *What are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by IT project managers to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?* To address the proposed questions, a mixed-methods inquiry was carried out to identify 1) what shapes project outcome, 2) investigate the ability of the IT project manager to use influence to promote value realization to stakeholders and business, and 3) identify and analyze the measures enacted by the IT project manager to form stakeholders and business alignment required to project success/project level alignment.

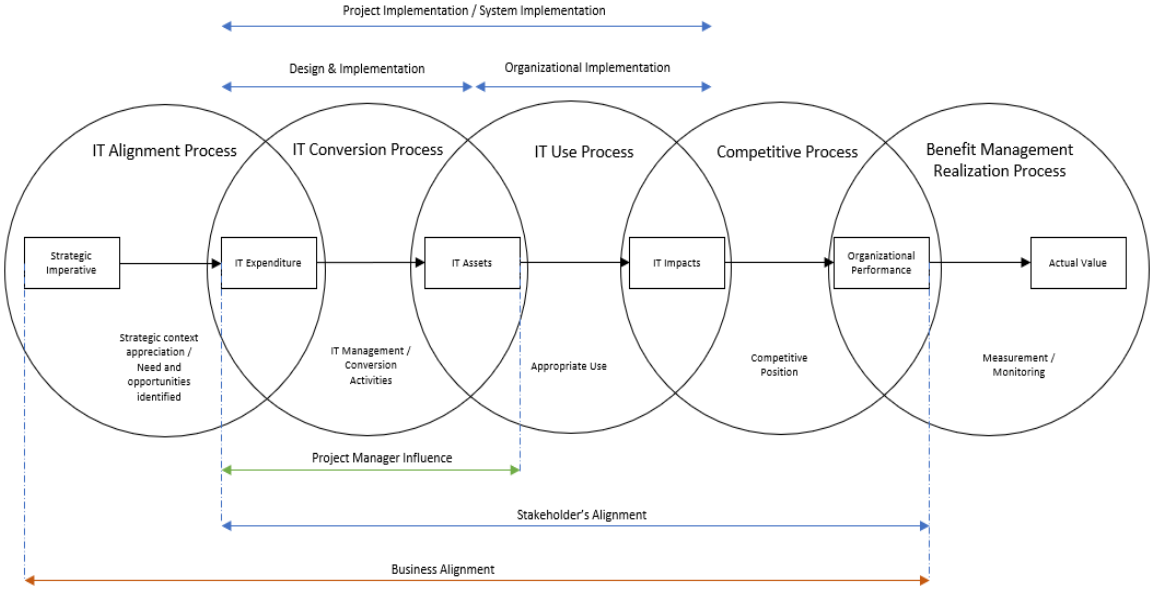
A mixed-methods inquiry was carried out because while reliable and well-validated quantitative instruments are available to measure the degree to which project

managers' influence tactics shape stakeholders and business alignment, the quantitative inquiry alone does not inform about how the role of these tactics in contributing to alignment. Failure to identify stakeholders, understand stakeholder needs, and meet their needs can result in spectacular project failures (Serrador, 2009). Moreover, I do not know how they are selected and used effectively in specific contexts and settings. Therefore, a more open-ended qualitative study was used to identify and understand the role of influence-related behaviors in PM practices and to identify how and why appropriate influence tactics are selected and orchestrated leading to alignment. Answers to these questions provide valuable insights for practitioners and related PM training.

Theoretical Framing

IT project managers exercise influence during IT conversion, that is, system design and implementation process which calls to achieve stakeholders and business alignment (Figure 1). Such alignment is necessary for later projects' benefits realization; Soh and Markus (1995), Marshall, McKay, and Prananto (2004), and Smith and Crossland (2008) identify several mechanisms (use process, competitive process) that underlie such benefit realization. The model underscores specifically that proper IT investment (alignment) and consequent project execution (IT conversion) are necessary to convert static and heterogeneous IT resources into usable organizational assets and value.

Figure 1: IT Value Realization Model



The model suggests that stakeholder alignment combines the IT conversion and competitive process. Project managers' influence takes place solely during this process towards stakeholder alignment. The business alignment is focused on identifying and selecting projects related to, tangible/intangible, the business strategy. The role of the IT project manager is to clarify misunderstandings surrounding the project and to identify an implementation approach to receive approvals from stakeholders to adopt and/or to own the project. In the conversion process, the IT project manager influences multiple stakeholder groups: users, functional leaders, decision-makers, technical managers, and regulators to establish stakeholder alignment. This involves creating a shared understanding of the system and its benefits/impacts for each group. In the use process, the IT project manager guarantees stakeholders and business commitment, meeting stakeholders' expectations, business requirements addressed and ensuring stakeholders have the necessary skills to use the system. During the competitive process, the IT project

manager's role is to make stakeholders and the company aware of the achieved, tangible/intangible benefits while articulating the importance of benefits by meeting strategic goals and, in other cases, complements other projects. As for the benefits management realization process, the IT project managers' role is to ensure ongoing continuous measurement and monitoring of benefits taking place. The focus will be on intangible (indirect) benefits by creating measurable impact metrics of benefits while assessing the organization's strategic goals.

Generally, the manager's influence: 1) shapes each stakeholder's expectations towards the system, 2) clarifies the business intent for the investment, 3) actualizes the advantages gained from the investment through behavioral change, and 4) ensures that the project is delivered and used as intended. The model also suggests that business alignment combines the IT alignment process with the environmental competitive process towards established business goals when the conversion process has been successful, that is, the stakeholder alignment has been achieved. In addition, the alignment process assumes that the project manager directs the stakeholder alignment and related conversion towards established business goals.

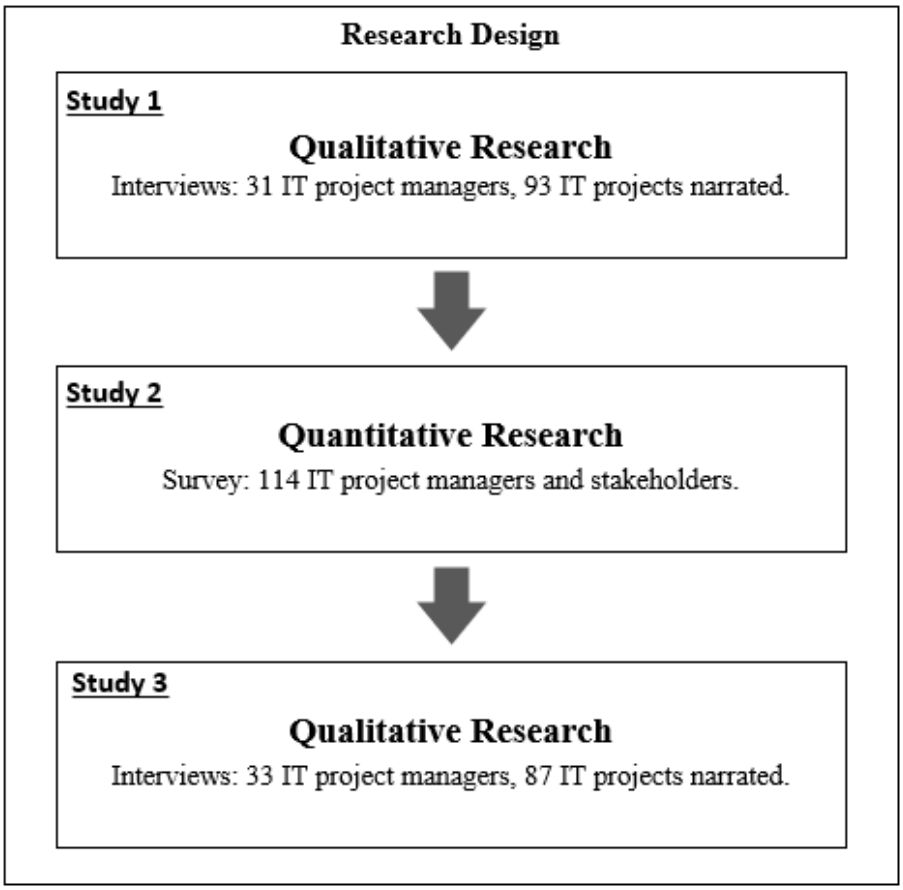
Project benefit is defined as an outcome of behaviors, products, and services that provide value to the sponsoring organization as well other projects' intended beneficiaries or stakeholders (Project Management Institute, 2017b). Project managers need to manage the project towards those benefits and orchestrate conversion processes that achieve those business benefits. Additionally, the project manager has to analyze the connection of the process to established business objectives by monitoring for acceptable use of resources, risk, cost, quality, and time (Kerzner, 2019). The project manager must

observe interdependencies so that the benefits derived from the project can also benefit multiple other projects (Loucks & van Beek, 2017). Such benefit realization forms a critical element of project management. Managers need to understand and heed the business effects of project implementation because only through such activities projects will add value (Duggal, 2018). Some of the benefits are tangible and can be quantified (Kerzner, 2019) and need to be assessed during all stages of the project as to direct the project towards those benefits (Ajam, 2018; Hinde, 2012). Some are intangible and latent and need to be recognized during interactions between stakeholders. Benefits realization and related means are commonly defined at the initiation of the project (Burke, 2016) though the realized benefits may significantly differ at later stages of implementation and use (Kerzner, 2018). Generally, conversion forms a success when most stakeholders receive desired benefits, and no one is worse off (Pareto optimal solution). Accordingly, benefits realization involves negotiation across stakeholder groups for benefits and as such, forms a critical element of project success and demands project managers' influence (Ajam, 2018).

Research Design

I used a mixed-methods approach (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) with three integration points to allow me to explore themes that emerge from each study. The procedures for the sequential explanatory mixed methods design of this study are presented in Figure 2.

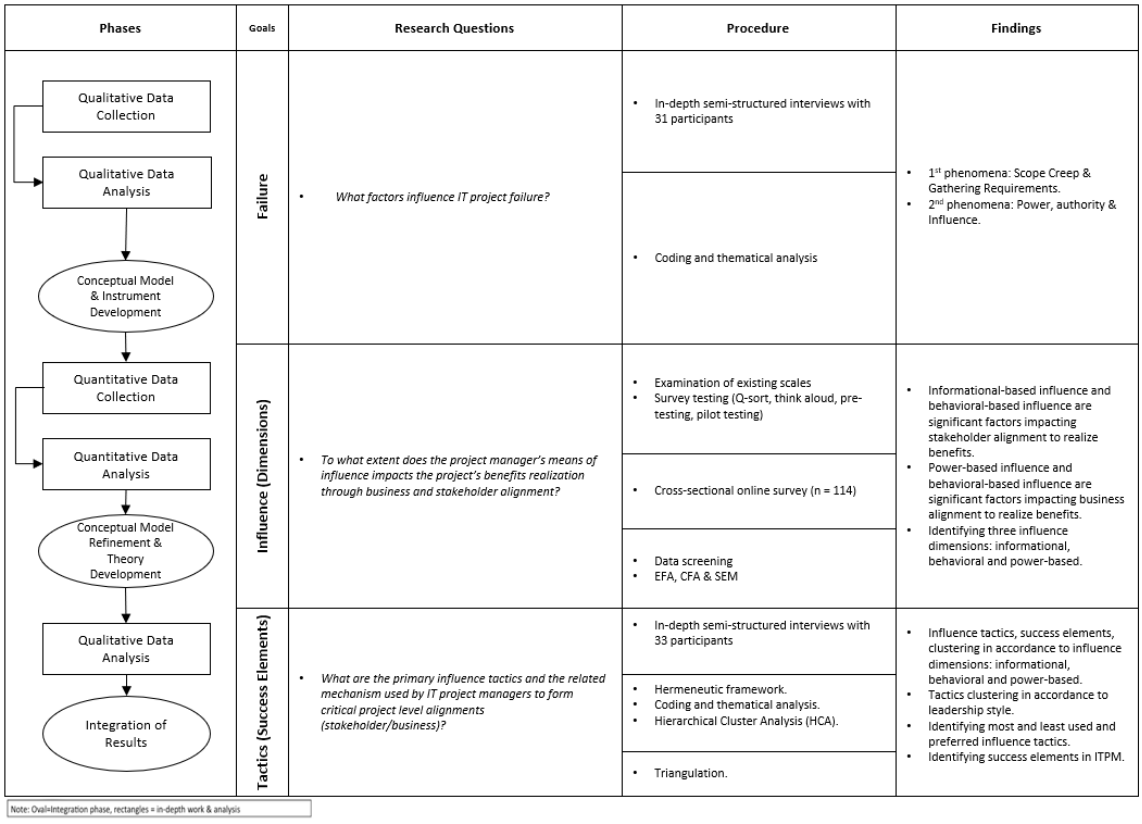
Figure 2: Overview of Research Design



Integration points (Figure 3) will be included after each study and were used to explore themes that have emerged from the prior strand of the study. The final strand of this dissertation is an integration of all studies, which will be used to help explain my collective findings. This dissertation is organized into five chapters: Chapters 1 and 5 are the introduction and summary of this dissertation; Chapter 2 is the qualitative study conducted in 2018; Chapter 3 is the quantitative study conducted in 2020; Chapter 4 is the final qualitative study conducted in 2021; Chapter 6 introduces the philosophical lens of IT project management. This dissertation examines, investigates, and seeks answers to the following questions. **Study 1 (Chapter 2):** *What factors influence IT project failure?*

Study 2 (Chapter 3): *To what extent does the project manager's varying influence impact business and stakeholder alignment and consequent project's benefits realization?* **Study 3 (Chapter 4):** *what are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by IT project managers to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?* Hence, the outcome of this dissertation is to produce the *System Influence Framework* that guides IT practitioners, that is, IT project managers, upper management, and stakeholders, to improve their IT project performance/reshaping project outcome (survival).

Figure 3: Mixed-Methods Study Design



Integration of Studies

The first integration point is where I leveraged the findings from Study 1 to build a research model from which a quantitative instrument was designed and implemented. The second integration point occurs during my interpretation of Study 2's results to explain the identified and observed bases of project manager influence impact on alignment to realize benefits. Finally, results from all three studies will be integrated consistently with my exploratory sequential design.

Internal validity is achieved by using pattern matching, explanation building, and logic models and by addressing conflicting explanations. External validity is addressed through the use of replication logic for the multiple two sources of data. Reliability is achieved through the use of interviews. Nonetheless, generalizability is addressed by using "analytic generalization," in which the empirical results of the study are compared with existing literature.

The overall construct definition, measurability, discriminant, and convergent validity are expected to be enhanced by the iterative process of constant comparison between the quantitative data and the qualitative responses from the interviewees. I will use explanation building and logic models, and I will address potential rival explanations to further enhance internal validity (Yin, 2003).

Summary of Study Results

This proposal is divided into three phases to address research questions founded on a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). **Study 1** utilizes a qualitative approach based on grounded theory to seek: *What factors influence IT project failure?* Outcome: Based on the qualitative findings, a theoretical model of

social influence; power, authority, and influence are proposed for empirical study. **Study 2** utilizes a quantitative approach to empirically test the proposed model. More specifically, this phase investigates the question: *To what extent does the project manager's means of influence impact the project's benefits realization through achieving business and stakeholder alignment?* Outcome: IT Project managers better succeed in achieving the desired benefits if they can align stakeholders and business behind common objectives and a shared vision. To achieve desired results, my research suggests that informational-based influence and behavioral-based influence are significant means of impacting stakeholder alignment to realize benefits. Also, my research suggests that power-based influence and behavioral-based influence are significant means of impacting business alignment to realize benefits. **Study 3** utilizes a qualitative approach based on exploratory case studies that uncover: *What are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by the IT project manager to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?* In particular, I focused on influence tactics used by the IT project manager to engage in information, power, and behavioral-based to reach a stakeholder and business alignment. Outcome: This phase provided a greater empirical and theoretical understanding of the contextual influence tactics and their combinations that IT project managers can use to increase the likelihood of success/actualizing benefits.

Structure of Remaining Chapters

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: In Chapter 2, I will discuss the factors that influence IT project to fail/shapes project outcomes, In Chapter 3, I will discuss the influence types (dimensions) used by the IT project manager to align

stakeholders and business to actualize benefits. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the influence tactics (success elements) enacted to form project-level alignment. In Chapter 5, I elucidate how the findings of each study are integrated into creating the *System Influence Framework* and the possible contributions from the mixed-methods design. Finally, in Chapter 6, I introduce the philosophical lens of IT project management that adds value and support to my dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: QUALITATIVE STUDY

Introduction

Failure is a common phenomenon in projects. In 2015, the Standish Group reported 71% of the projects failed or were challenged. Likewise, the Standish Group reported medium size projects had the worst performance where 57% failed or were challenged. According to Project Management Institute (2017), organizations today are wasting an average of US $97 million for every US $1 billion invested. Whereas KPMG (2010) reported that only 40% of project objectives are aligned with organizational strategy, and The Standish Group (2015) reported a large portion of projects do not meet their objectives. A study of over 10,640 projects found that only 2.5% of companies complete their projects 100% successfully, indicating the rest either failed to meet some of their original targets or missed the original budget or deadlines (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). These numbers suggest that organizations continue to struggle with implementing their information systems and their project management practices are not on par to deliver value (Breese et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, failure in the field of information systems is not new. Previous research revealed information systems projects continue to fail at high rates (Doherty & King, 2001; Lee, Cuellar, Keil, & Johnson, 2014) with an average of 70% or higher (Doherty et al., 2012; Keil & Mähring, 2010). However, the increasing complexity of information systems and modern system development frameworks and processes can be a challenging task or a black box to scholars to uncover and pinpoint where failure exists. According to Pinto and Mantel (1990), operationalizing project failure is difficult and cumbersome due to 1) the concept of project failure is nebulous, few people agree on

exactly how to define project failure; 2) much of the research conduct has been conceptual; 3) the possibility that the causes of failure may vary by the type of project being studied; and 4) contingent on the stage of the life cycle in which the project resides. Yeo (2002) noted there is a gap between theory and practice in information system studies and, in particular, failure studies.

The purpose of this chapter is to further seek the factors that lead to IT project failure. In particular, I focus on finding an answer to *What factors influence IT project failure?* Searching for factors that influence projects to fail has been of great interest to both researchers and practitioners. My work is motivated and has been inspired based on three lenses. First, previous research has looked into failure (Balachandra & Raelin, 1980, 1984; Balachandra, 1984; Bedell, 1983; Lyytinen & Hirschheim, 1988; Jeffrey K Pinto & Mantel, 1990; Sauer, 1993; Kumar, Persaud, & Kumar, 1996); nonetheless, research has not delved deep into social behaviors and practices that contribute and lead to reshaping project outcome. Second, my work is inspired by the interviewees' responses indicating other factors, not only technical shortfalls but what influences IT projects to fail. Third, is based on the researcher's practical experience managing and directing mega-projects. To address this question, I interviewed 31 IT project managers managing complex IT/IS programs and projects to uncover new factors that lead IT projects to failure and/or shapes project outcomes.

Literature Review

Since project managers serve as guardians of the project's benefits, they are expected to cater to its business and implementation risks and be sensitive to business and stakeholder changes and related influences (Kerzner, 2017b). Therefore, project

managers are expected to select activities (including influence tactics) that promote expected project outcomes and create alignments with business goals and stakeholder benefits (Shao, 2012). Given that the project resources are always limited, in competition to other needs and shared with other projects, this calls for project managers to engage in joint management of such resources and ensure adequate resourcing of the project through influence (Cheldelin, Druckman, & Fast, 2003). Such assessments commonly take place around "gateways" where project deliverables are evaluated given potential benefits realization (Morris & Pinto, 2010).

Failure Types

There are two well-established concepts of the information system failure realm. Lyytinen and Hirschheim (1988) suggested four types of failure: correspondence, process, interaction, and expectation failure. The correspondence failure refers to detailed specifications that are set from the beginning with clear objectives. If the project did not correspond with the specifications or fails to meet the objectives, the inability to produce what is required will be considered a failure. The process failure leads to shortfalls where the development process produces an unsatisfactory system. This is associated with time and budget constraints and poor project management. Interaction failure refers to where the developed system is unsatisfactory to the user or to attract users. The argument for this type of failure is that the system did not match the user's requirements. While the expectation failure, encompassing the three preceding types, where the project fails to meet stakeholder expectations in terms of correspondence, process, and interaction (Lyytinen & Hirschheim, 1988). On the other hand, Sauer (1993) proposed the termination failure as an exchange relations model between the system, supporters

(stakeholders), and project organizations. In Sauer's view, termination failure is the acceptance of the expectation failure (Lyytinen & Hirschheim, 1988) as a normal part of the information systems development, and that any discrepancies between the desired and the actual outcome are acceptable because of the uncertainty of the innovation process (Sauer, 1993).

Other researchers further explored and extended to what has been proposed above. Ewusi-Mensah further explored termination failure (Sauer, 1993) by proposing a different type of failure as abandonment. Total abandonment is viewed as ceasing the project operation. The substantial abandonment refers to a major challenge leading to a decrease in operation to modify original specifications, whereas, partial abandonment refers to a scope reduction without modifying the specifications (Ewusi-Mensah, 2003), while Atkinson (1999) referred to project management failure as the sin of commission (Type I error) or the sin of omission (Type II error). Type I errors is when something is done wrong due to poor planning, inaccurate estimating, lack of control. Type II errors could be thought of as when something is forgotten or not done as well as it could have been done, such as using incomplete criteria for success (Atkinson, 1999). In this section, I have discussed failure, types, and/or variations in the IT/IS field. Next, I will discuss the impact of failure on our industry.

Failure Impact

In the field of project management, failures are observed more often than successes. Generally, the IT sector faced such failure. Ewusi-Mensah (2003) defined failure as either the implemented system not meeting the user expectations or the inability to create a working or a functioning system. According to Gartner (Gartner, 2012), IT

projects with a budget of about $1 million are 50% more likely to fail than projects with a budget of $350,000 or below. Geneca (2017) indicated 75% of IT executives believe their projects are doomed right from the start, and 75% of business executives who implement software projects believe their projects will fail. PMI reported only 4% of physicians have stated that they have extensive, fully functional Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems (PMI, 2011). Gallup (2012) reported that IT failure rates are between 5% and 15%, representing a loss of $50 billion to $150 billion per year in the United States. Nonetheless, a troubling fact only 55% of IT managers reported they have an understanding of the business objectives of their IT projects (Geneca, 2017). What is even worse, 17% of IT projects fail so miserably that they could threaten the company's existence (Goatham, 2009).

IT projects are notoriously difficult to manage. A survey showed 20% of companies reported that their IT requirements process is not the articulation of business needs (Geneca, 2017), and IT projects need to be less complex and not focus on governance (Moore, 2015). According to McKinsey (2012), software projects have an average cost overrun of 66%, the same figure for non-software projects is 43%. However, 133% of non-software projects fail to meet their stated benefits, compared to just 17% for software projects. Moreover, a survey published in HBR found that the average IT project overran its budget by 27%. Furthermore, at least one in six IT projects turns into a "black swan" with a cost overrun of 200% and a schedule overrun of 70%. In other words, while most IT projects will fall short of their budget targets, a few might overshoot the targets so much as to cause catastrophic organization-wide problems.

Studying IT project failures is overbearing and is associated with various financial and non-financial losses, which can prevent the development of other potential projects, the decline in performance, or even lead any business to close. However, real-life examples of project disasters can be invaluable sources of information and provide real insight into how mismanagement can wholly negate an otherwise successful project undertaking (Pinto & Kharbanda, 1996). In the following section, I go over different forms of leadership/managerial power. When used or leveraged correctly to influence an individual or group, each form of power has a different impact on relationships and outcomes. The impact can affect the intended individual, group, projects, and, in some cases, the whole organization.

The Bases of Power

Several classifications have differentiated social power in an organization (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980); however, this paper focuses on French and Raven's (1959) and Raven's (2004, 2008) work, due to its popularity. They identified six types of power: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, referent, and informational categorized bases of power in two groups—positional and personal. Their theory of power is limited to influence on the person, P, produced by a social agent, O, where O can be either another person, a role, a norm, a group, or a part of a group. Table 1 presents the definition of each power.

Table 1: The Bases of Power

Source	Power	Definition
Positional	Legitimate	Defined as power which stems from internalized values in P which dictate that O has a legitimate right to influence P and that P has an obligation to accept this influence. Nonetheless, legitimate power is not always role related in the sense that P may accept an induction from O simply because he previously promised to help O, and he values his word too much to break the promise. In all cases, the notion of legitimacy involves some sort of code or standard, accepted by the individual, by virtue of which the external agent can assert his power.
	Reward	Defined as power whose basis is the ability to reward. The strength of the reward power of O/P increases with the magnitude of the rewards that P perceives that O can mediate for him. Reward power depends on O's ability to administer positive valences and to remove or decrease negative valences. The strength of reward power also depends upon the probability that O can mediate the reward, as perceived by P.
	Coercive	Similar to reward power in that it also involves O's ability to manipulate the attainment of valences. The coercive power of O/P stems from the expectation on the part of P that he will be punished by O if he fails to conform to the influence attempt. Thus, negative valences will exist in given regions of P's life space, corresponding to the threatened punishment by O. The strength of coercive power depends on the magnitude of the negative valence of the threatened punishment multiplied by the perceived probability that P can avoid the punishment by conformity.
	Informational	Results from one's ability to control the information that others need in order to accomplish something. Informational power holders can use their information to persuade others by providing rational arguments and facts.
Personal	Expert	Defined as the strength of the expert power of O/P varies with the extent of the knowledge or perception that P attributes to O within a given area. Probably P evaluates O's expertness in relation to personal knowledge as well as against an absolute standard.
	Referent	Defined as a feeling of oneness of P with O, or a desire for such an identity. If O is a person toward whom P is highly attracted, P will have a desire to become closely associated with O. If O is an attractive group, P will have a feeling of membership or desire to join. If P is already closely associated with O, he will want to maintain this relationship. The stronger the identification of P with O, the greater the referent power of O/P.

Though literature shows the significance and the advantages of power, it also shows insignificance and disadvantages of power. Research indicates how power positively influences performance; increasing the sense of responsibility (DeWall,

Baumeister, Mead, & Vohs, 2011), reducing fear of negative evaluation (Schmid & Mast, 2013), better task planning (Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008), decreasing stress in social situations (Anderson & Brion, 2014), better access to information through a network (Krackhardt, 1990), setting agendas and decision making (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962), influencing organizational decisions (Ferris et al., 2012), better to initiate negotiations and bargaining advantage (Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007), goal pursuit and faster in setting up goals (Guinote, 2007a, 2007b), promote goal prioritization (Overbeck & Park, 2006) and so on. On the other hand, literature also shows how power may promote and/or lead to poor performance: less accurate time prediction by focusing on desired goals (Weick & Guinote, 2010), overconfidence in decision-making (Fast & Overbeck, 2011), perceived control over the outcome (Fast, Sivanathan, Mayer, & Galinsky, 2012), less risk-averse (Inesi, 2010), engage in risky behaviors (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), create social distancing (Magee & Smith, 2013), inhibiting subordinate voice and decision-making biases (Ferguson, Ormiston, & Moon, 2010), and so on.

As such, we can deduce power holders' behaviors and/or influences impact the performance and outcome of projects. A greater understanding of social influence in IT/IS projects will uncover overlooked/new factors that lead to project failure/shape project outcomes.

Research Design

Methodology

Given the lack of a mature body of knowledge in this space, an inductive qualitative inquiry was selected as an appropriate means of building an emergent theory (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Rich qualitative data gleaned from the lived

experiences of those immersed in the phenomenon was deemed as appropriate evidential foundation of this exploration. A grounded theory methodology by (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and refined by Charmaz (2014) provided the main methodical approach for identifying, integrating and explaining the failure types. This involved iterative steps of initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical analysis aided by constant comparison. This process facilitated the identification of main themes and building a conceptual framework to integrate the emergent theory of explaining IT/IS project failure.

Instrument Development

Open-ended questions with varying prompts were formulated to elicit rich narratives of lived experiences and related details of IT project managers managing complex IT/IS projects. The studies focused both on their experiences with successful and failed projects. The interview protocol was developed based on my knowledge and experience managing projects and programs. The probes sought to clarify and elaborate IT project manager management during project execution. By project execution, I cover all project phases; initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing (PMI, 2017), of which the IT project manager is responsible for or participates. The IT project manager's responsibilities generally range from planning the project, creating a schedule and timeline, executing each phase, managing the budget, troubleshooting, and maintaining to serve as the liaison across all stakeholders and business lines. The full interview protocol is included in Appendix A.

Sample

The sample size elicited 31 IT project managers from the private and public sectors managing, directing, and controlling a wide range of IT projects. Ninety-three (93) IT projects were narrated, discussed, and analyzed during the interview. The industries and the interview candidates were selected based on my professional network. IT project managers were pre-screened to indicate that they have either worked with or have worked on significant projects. Following the grounded theory approach of continuous comparison and theoretical sampling, the collected data guided the sampling process until theoretical saturation has been achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data Collection

Data were collected between April 2018 and November 2018. The interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. One interview lasted around 3 hours. All interviews were conducted remotely using video conferencing services, Zoom and Skype. Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after each interview. The interviewer recorded a brief memo, typically ranging from four to ten minutes, with observations, highlights, and thoughts concerning the interview.

Data Analysis

Consistent with a grounded theory methodology, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and iteratively (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Initial coding begun after a few interviews. It was conducted through reading the transcripts line-by-line using NVivo software and assigning codes to sections of text that ranged in size from a few words to complete paragraphs. Codes were phrased as gerunds to capture

concepts from a process perspective (Saldana, 2015). The codes ranged from one to complete sentences to convey sufficient meaning to facilitate further coding. Throughout the initial coding of the first nine transcripts and the first nine post-interview memos, initial codes that were similar but potentially subtly different than existing codes were created with less careful analysis if they were duplicates. This was done to avoid combining concepts that appeared similar but might diverge as the coding progressed. After nine interviews were completed, the list of codes and their associated references were reviewed. Codes that were essentially duplicates were merged. This analytic process, along with the coding of additional interviews, provided insights allowing the initial coding process to focus on specific themes. Codes with tightly coupled meanings were merged, and some codes that had been initially created but were out of the scope of this study were removed.

Findings

Finding I

The first phenomenon was directly related to managing, coordinating, and directing the technical aspect of projects affecting the project charter and project scope in particular. The results indicated *scope creep* and *gathering requirements* are two distinct topics yet complimentary, affecting the continuum and the survival of projects. However, this is not new. Research analyzed the effects of scope creep in software development projects (Madhuri, Rao, & Suma, 2014), scope change/unclear objectives (Schmidt et al., 2001), on project quality assurance (Thakurta, 2013), controlling scope creep during the design phase (Kuprenas & Nasr, 2003) and all over project success (Mirza, Pourzolfaghar, & Shahnazari, 2013). Though scope-creep is a common event in the life

of a project (HIMSS, 2016) and occurs in a small increment over time (Heldman, 2017), it is considered a major threat to projects (Milosevic, 2003) which is only somewhat controllable, and it is only controllable when it is recognized (Pennock, 2001). On the other hand, research also indicated gathering requirements is another significant factor affecting/influencing a project's outcome and/or success (Schmidt et al., 2001). Requirements gathering is an iterative process (Sadtler et al., 2013) that includes gathering and documenting overall system requirements, including the functional and non-functional requirements (Warsinske et al., 2019). However, when requirements are altered after the initial project is defined, and those added requirements are substantial enough to affect the project timeline (Nelson & Staggers, 2016), scope creep occurs. The issue rises; requirements gathering are often vague because it is difficult to articulate the needs before seeing the end product (Larson & Larson, 2005). Also, requirements gathering needs comprehensive planning (Stone, Jarrett, Woodroffe, & Minocha, 2005) where project team members and stakeholders should be responsible. Nonetheless, due to the complexity of the process, missing important requirements can be overwhelming (Wagenblatt, 2019) because one simple requirement could have a different timeline and scope impacts other resources (Harned, 2017).

Interviewees indicated the continuous and irrational requirements change resulted in scope creep, which affects project performance. Table 2 illustrates some quotes from my interviewees.

Table 2: Scope Creep Quotations

Response
Basically, we finalize the scope, we obtained the sign-off, but still, you know, a customer came back and they tried to add some additional things inside that, uh, they came up with some requirements which are not originally part of the scope.
Business continuously came up with new requirements that were not originally agreed upon. We cannot babysit them.
Users expect IT to change requirements without documentation and making CRs.
We're in the middle of the execution phase and business decides to add new requirements. They don't understand we cannot implement new requirements without studying them.
We explained each phase clearly, yet requirements kept on changing.

Nevertheless, interviewees indicated gathering requirements is considered a waste of time and financial loss projects, and organizations cannot tolerate it. Hence, this phase was shortened or skipped, which impacted project performance. Table 3 illustrates some quotes from my interviewees.

Table 3: Gathering Requirements Quotations

Response
We were rushed into execution with no proper forecasting and gathering requirements. What we kept hearing; we cannot lose money on gathering requirements.
Our client decided to execute the project after giving us less than a week to identify and gather requirements.
I really don't understand why management has the impression gathering requirements is a of waste time.
We needed to bill our client as per agreement requirements gathering phase wasn't billable.
Eventually the project took more time to complete as the requirements were not clear. The previous manager rushed this phase and went straight to development.

Finding II

The second phenomenon that was discovered *power, authority, and influence* are strong success factors IT project managers should have and embrace as they need that to shape stakeholder expectations and related behaviors. To promote project success, IT project managers should have leadership skills, soft skills. Individuals occupying certain roles should have the power, authority, and influence to pursue rights, duties, activities, and obligations in favor of the service, that is, project, task, and so on. The terms *power*, *authority*, and *influence* can be confusing and/or be used interchangeably. As such, power can be best described as the maximum force which A can induce on B minus the maximum resisting force that B can mobilize in the opposite direction (French & Raven, 1959). Authority can be best described as legitimate power can be defined as the authority; power conferred for a purpose (Heifetz, 1994), whereas influence can best be described ability to affect the behavior of others in an intended direction (Pollack, Cohen, Morgan, Jerry, & Pollack, 1990). Nonetheless, organizations depend on members occupying roles of authority to ensure the predictable performance of organizational tasks (Simon, 1947). And, organizations need managers and executives with legitimate power and authority to function in a rapidly changing and complex environment, which is necessary to ensure service delivery (Lunenburg, 2012). Also, organizations need to influence managers to provide guidance and direction to their subordinates, motivate subordinates to contribute their optimum to enterprise goals, and influence subordinates' behavior in conformity with organizational needs; a manager engages in continual communication with them (Agarwal, 1982). Hence, the influence of managers is most clearly seen in the leader role (Vecchio, 2007); and every manager has a sphere of

influence, and they should be able to state what he is trying to achieve (Sturman, Corgel, & Verma, 2011). However, power is that which enables them to do it (Handy, 2007), and with the right authority, power structures are perpetuated by tradition and eventually legitimized (Martinez, 2010).

In Table 4, I explore some of the interviewees' responses indicating the use of social influence had a positive impact on the project performance.

Table 4: Use of Social Influence Quotations

Responses
I have always believed that the responsibility and authority need to go together. And if it doesn't go together, then you're going to be in a problem. If there is no harder than a decision, you have, at least you should be an influencer to take those decisions.
But I had enough influence at the time that I, um, they kept pushing back, not wanting to bring in a, an ERP to run the whole organization to bring HR and accounting together.
I identify those key stakeholders who have high influence and power to make decisions to work with them directly because I know I will be needing their support and help later.
You've got to do a quick look around to see what's in place, who were the authorities and who are the people in place regarding projects that can actually get this thing moving. And then once you've done that, you need to look at the stakeholders. Who's who, who has influenced, who has power, who's going to be a good steward? Who's going to be for you? You know, things like that.
Doing the background work, you're in a lot better place to negotiate and influence those people to get to get them on your side for the project.
I think from our experience we did not understand the dynamics of the groups within the team. So, from a project management perspective, I think the stakeholder influence is something we miss. We did not understand how these stakeholders are crucial. I mean you grew up thinking we have the core technology groups of flight through this.

Nonetheless, the absence or lack of social influence indicated a negative impact on project performance. Additionally, IT project managers with no power, authority, and influence were characterized and seen as only gatekeepers or bookkeepers, bringing no value or benefit to the project. In Table 5, I explore some of these responses:

Table 5: Absence of Social Influence Quotations

Responses
It helps to push people back and to say no to changes. You're not in the priority because I have no authority.
I saw charter and I couldn't make any changes. Management denied changes. I lost my authority and influence.
It was a hard move without the champion being myself to not have direct line authority over the people that were working. We failed.
Did not have direct line authority over everyone who is working on that system. We had to implement changes but everyone rejected. Eventually, systems crashed and we had to answer to business.
I accepted data responsibility, but I did not have the courage that does I have the authority to make those decisions.
What happened was when I was talking to people who were seniors, I cannot demand work out of them because I had no authority and power.

Discussion

In this study, I sought to expand my understanding of the factors that influence IT projects to fail and in particular, find answers to my research question *What factors influence IT project failure?*

My study revealed, IT project managers play an important contributor in the successful execution of IT projects, that is, shaping project outcomes. Continuous and/or irrational requirements change leads to scope creep, which can disrupt the entire project strategy, agreed execution path, and in some cases, the pre-defined goals and/or milestones/tasks. Interviewees indicated organizations do not allocate appropriate time for requirements gathering. Some interviewees indicated their organizations consider the requirements gathering phase is a *waste of time* and *business monetary loss*. Moreover, poor requirements gathering resulted in ambiguous, incohesive, and inconsistent specified requirements resulting in project failure. Nonetheless, scope creep and

gathering requirements are not new, and previous literature supports this finding (Schmidt et al., 2001).

However, and what stands out, my research uncovered the lack of IT project managers' social influence in particular power, authority, and influence does impact project performance leading to success or failure. Interviewees indicated (some insisted) IT project managers should have the power and ability to influence others yet have the authority to make the necessary changes according to the project. With this, the IT project manager can attain/meet demands and/or stop (police) unanticipated changes (sometimes immediate). Responses indicated, IT project managers that demonstrated such ability were able to lessen project shortfalls and tradeoffs were made i.e., prioritize changes to suit their project while accounting/considering stakeholders' satisfaction/meeting requirements (sometimes minimum). On the other hand, IT project managers who didn't embrace such ability (power, authority, and influence) over their projects faced underperformances and sometimes leading to failures. Elaborating more, under different circumstances, interviews indicated having power on one team can be helpful to achieve and close on requirements and changes. But in other groups, lacking the influence to drive these changes/benefits to move forward or be implemented. The same behavior was reflected by the lack of authority on other stakeholders could lead to underperformances. Nonetheless, a comparable narration was noticed lacking one of the abilities is sufficient enough to reshape project outcome negatively (even failure).

To this end, interviewees categorized the role of the IT project manager as lacking such abilities as *gatekeepers* or *bookkeepers* bringing no value to the project when needed/required.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings presented in this paper should be considered in light of several limitations. The study was conducted in the United States. Different results may be obtained if conducted in a different geography or country. Also, the study had 87% males to 13% females sample ratio. Results may vary if I had a higher number of female participants.

While qualitative study allowed me to explore ideas and experiences, a quantitative study would allow me to investigate the findings systematically and build/test hypotheses. Also, studying factors that influence IT projects to fail in specific industries may provide different results.

CHAPTER 3: QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Introduction

To achieve the project's business goals, project managers need to exercise authority and show accountability (Lester, 2014), lead the work effort (Peltier, 2016), and make the business case (Project Management Institute, 2017b). Several studies have examined business realization (Aithal, 2013; Doherty et al., 2012; Levin, 2015; Liu et al., 2010; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015, 2019) in several fields of information technology use (Ashurst et al., 2016, 2008; DellaVecchia et al., 2007; Gregor et al., 2006; Päivärinta et al., 2007; Thorp, 2001). They focus on project managers' varying roles (Mossalam & Arafa, 2016; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015) and forms of project governance (Bradley, 2010; Turner et al., 2013). Some studies also examine to what extent business and stakeholders' alignment influences benefit realization (Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Breese et al., 2015; PMI, 2016a; Serra, 2016; Serra & Kunc, 2015).

We currently know less about how a project manager's influence affects business benefits realization through business and stakeholder alignment. To address this gap, I elucidate a model, which formulates to what extent project managers influence project stakeholders and whether such influence is conducive to project benefits. I recognize three types of influence: legitimate, informational, and expertise-based. My research question is: *To what extent does the project manager's varying influence impact business and stakeholder alignment and consequent project's benefits realization?* To address this question, I surveyed 114 IT project managers and other project stakeholders and used structural equation modeling to examine whether the three types of influence shape the

project's business alignment and stakeholder alignment and mediate the project manager's influence towards business benefits realization.

Literature Review

Benefits Realization

A project's benefit is defined as an outcome of actions, behaviors, products, services, or results that provide value to the sponsoring organization as well as to the project's intended beneficiaries (Project Management Institute, 2017a). Project benefits are achieved in different stages, with multiple intermediate benefits linked to the final benefits (Smith, Sidhu, Skelsey, & King, 2014). Some of these benefits are tangible and can be quantified (Kerzner, 2019). Some benefits are assessed and realized in the early stages of the project (Ajam, 2018), whereas others can be assessed in later phases of the system use (Hinde, 2012). However, in many cases, it is difficult to measure during project execution whether projects deliver business value because the business value means different things to different stakeholder groups (PMI, 2017b). Success is only achieved when all stakeholders receive the desired benefits.

Accordingly, benefits realization is a topic related to one aspect of project success, which the organization seeks to assess in the longer term (Ajam, 2018). Benefits realization is defined at the beginning of the project with the specification of the expected business outcomes (Burke, 2016). However, some later benefits may significantly differ from the expected benefits defined at project initiation (Kerzner, 2018). Once the project is initiated, it must constantly align with the established business outcomes (Burke, 2016). An underestimation of such benefits leads to situations where the project is unable to meet its stated objectives.

Since project managers must become increasingly business-oriented as many of the technical challenges related to project implementation have been eased, they are expected to understand business risks, constantly reassess the benefit-to-cost ratio, and be sensitive to business situations and changes that will affect the project objectives (Kerzner, 2017b). Consequently, they need to be involved in follow-up activities of how to realize business benefits (PMI, 2017a). It is a common truism that each project manager tends to choose the most favorite activities for their project and maximize related outcomes (Shao, 2012). Given that the company's resources are limited, and the utilization of resources by part of the organization can hinder other projects from progressing. Thus, a mutual benefit results from joint planning of projects and management of resources (Cheldelin et al., 2003). Major project changes and benefit assessments are typically planned around the project ‘gateways,’ corresponding to major project deliverables and related benefits delivery (Morris & Pinto, 2010).

Project managers need to manage projects for defined benefits. Accordingly, project management is a group of processes aimed at achieving the business benefits expected from the project. Consequently, benefits realization management has become critical for project management. Project managers and PMOs are increasingly seeking to understand business model aspects of project implementation because only that opens opportunities for projects to add value (Duggal, 2018).

Furthermore, project managers can see key business value-creating activities and the channels through which it reaches different segments (Duggal, 2018). Therefore, the project manager has to ensure the flow of values (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2019) that are direct or indirect to a project (Dunham-Taylor & Pinczuk, 2006). Additionally, the project

manager has to understand the benefits required and analyze the relationship that the project has to the business objectives by monitoring for potential waste, acceptable levels of resources, risk, cost, quality, and time as it relates to the desired benefits (Kerzner, 2019) as the actual benefits derived from any new project will benefit different multiple projects (Loucks & van Beek, 2017).

Alignment

Alignment processes allow strategic decisions to guide daily action (Weill & Ross, 2004). Also, alignment is defined as relationships between the four dimensions; firm strategy, IS strategy, organizational structure, and IS structure (Xiang & Tussyadiah, 2014). Achieving business alignment is a critical step as this step includes developing a strategic plan along with yearly approved projects and support agenda that aligns with the organizational needs (Balgrosky, 2014). In contrast, stakeholder alignment is related to and complementary to organizational structure (Rebentisch & Prusak, 2017). In other words, it involves coordinating the respective goals and actions of involved stakeholders so that they constructively use the system and produce a business benefit. Hence, alignment means that all stakeholders not only share the same vision, understanding, and strategy, but are also aligned on what is needed to execute the strategy, what to expect throughout the process, and ultimately on making solutions with intended benefits (Castrounis, 2019).

Business alignment. The key goal the project manager has to conduct and ensure is strategic alignment or business alignment. Strategic alignment is critical to the success of the system as part of a competitive strategy. The system's use is expected to combine strategic and operational practices in such a way that both levels are satisfied (Bailey,

Mankin, Kelliher, & Garavan, 2018). This is achieved by creating a cycle that connects strategy formulation and strategy implementation (Denison, Hooijberg, Lane, & Lief, 2012). Vertical strategic alignment refers to the positioning of resources to competitive strategy, whereas horizontal strategic alignment is driven by cooperation between business and IT on integrating the strategy, and on developing and agreeing on system-level performance measures and sharing responsibilities (Stewart & Brown, 2019).

Companies should synchronize IT with the rest of the business so that IT and the business make decisions together (Blais, 2011) while leveraging IT with the company's business partners, customers, and clients (Brocke & Rosemann, 2014) and highlighting the importance of optimizing IT business alignment (Praeg, 2010). Alignment occurs when practices are in their proper place relative to the formulated strategies needed to reflect the business realities on the ground (Denison et al., 2012). Alignment is frequently focused only on how IT is aligned with the business; however, alignment must also address how the business is aligned with IT (Brocke & Rosemann, 2014) as both fields interrelated as IT tries to provide services at all levels of the business organization to effectively achieve goals and objective (Pokorny et al., 2011).

Therefore, I conclude that IT-business alignment has extended its reach to encompass the value chains not only for external customers and suppliers but also for internal organizational users. Hence, I can deduce IT complements business by creating harmony (Van Grembergen, 2004).

Stakeholder alignment. A stakeholder can be defined as any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of an organization (Mariappanadar, 2019) and, in my case, the project. Stakeholders can

influence decisions and project proceedings. Also, stakeholders review, agree or disagree on the change requests to the project requirements before they are applied (Wysocki, 2011). On the other hand, stakeholder alignment depends on knowing and working with key project stakeholders (Manz, 2018), and in many ways, related to and complementary with organizational structure (Rebentisch & Prusak, 2017). By involving and identifying initiatives of key stakeholders, the project manager has a better understanding of what they have at stake and can assess the alignment between their objectives and the stakeholders' and finding ways to increase the alignment (Joiner & Josephs, 2006).

Stakeholder alignment is critical when there is a conflict between different stakeholders' opinions. In this case, the project manager should maintain the alignment (Reeves & Haanaes, 2015) necessary to successfully execute a particular project and its outcomes (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2016). Thus, the project manager's role is to identify each stakeholder's needs to get benefited, and his needs should be satisfied (Mohapatra, 2009).

To do so, the project manager has to conduct stakeholder analysis which consists of the systematic identification and characterization of the most relevant stakeholders for an organization or initiative: that is, those stakeholders exerting, or trying to exert, influence on the project activities (Bevir, 2006). Stakeholder analysis combines two distinct modes (Roberts, Hsiao, Berman, & Reich, 2003): one is interest group analysis which consists of understanding the social groups that are seeking to move in a particular direction (Schoettle, 1970), while the second analysis examines bureaucratic politics and is focused on the competition between agencies and individuals (Martin, 1969). Henceforth, I can conclude that the project manager needs to ensure stakeholder

alignment in collaboration with applicable stakeholders to align with key decisions (Hill, 2007). To this end, they need to conduct stakeholder analysis necessary to the survival of the project by (Smith, 2012) comparing interests and influences (Stewart & Rogers, 2017).

Bases of Project Manager Influence

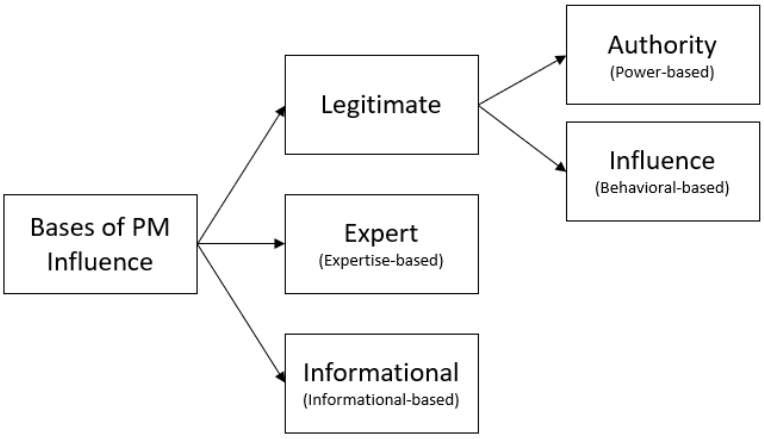
Social influence, as defined by Kelman (1961, 1974), is the process that occurs whenever a person (P) changes his behavior as a result of induction by another person or group (O). Additionally, Kanter (1979) distinguished two types of influence: 1) negative influence - powerlessness resulting from the lack of information, support, and due to the presence of coercion, and 2) positive influence - the capability to engage in democratic, participatory, and effective decision making. In what follows, I focus on influence - ways of affecting others to act towards established goals.

French and Raven's (1959) analysis of social influence identifies six types of influence: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, referent, and informational. In the project management context, I will focus on three dimensions of influence: legitimate, expert, and informational influence (Figure 4) that are essential for the actualizing project benefits.[1] Reward and coercive influence are concerned use of rewards or punishments to get an employee to follow and comply with specific expected behavior. Project managers do not typically have such influence over the stakeholders, given their position in the organization, and exercise of such influence would be only effective for a limited time

[1] My selection was influenced by the results obtained from my earlier Study 1 where I used qualitative coding of interviewees responses of what shapes project outcomes.

which would not help actualize benefits.[2] Referent influence can be defined as to what extent employees follow leaders due to leaders' perceived attractiveness, worthiness, and right to others' respect. This is not relevant in my case, as this would apply only to some members of the technical project team, but most critical stakeholders in a project management setting are not followers but other external stakeholders.

Figure 4: Bases of PM Influence



Legitimate

Legitimate influence is invested in the role or title and related formal authority—a power conferred for a purpose (Heifetz, 1994; Lunenburg, 2012). Nzotta (1987) defines authority as the capacity to invoke compliance in others based on the formal position and related psychological rewards, inducements, or sanctions that accompany a formal position. Kings, police officers, and managers all have legitimate influence based on power (French & Raven, 1959). Legitimate influence can be viewed as flowing from a person's job title or position- a position that gives them the right to issue orders.

[2] Typically, project managers revert to top management to exercise such power in some instances of project implementations. Users of such influence are normally called 'fixers' (Keen, 1980).

Authority is the given right to perform roles and related rights legitimized by consensual decisions codified in constitutions, contracts, charters, rulings, and accepted institutional sanctions (Kahn & Kram, 1994).

Project managers have limited authority for actions around their teams, but they are also expected to coordinate and influence the actions of other managers and stakeholders based on their formal position (O'Donnell, 2002). Singh (2000) studied the relationship between a manager's authority, power, and perception with their subordinates and noted that the ability to induce or influence others' behavior also followed one's position in the organization. Therefore, we can conceptualize a project manager's legitimacy as power invested in the form of authority or influence. Legitimacy gives them the potential for influence based on their sanctioning ability, and authority defines normatively regulated power either towards the project team members, other stakeholders, or users based on authority vested upon project managers (Scott & Davis, 2015). For the remainder of this paper, I will refer to *authority* as "power-based influence" and *influence* as "behavior-based influence."

Expert

Expertise can be defined as having invested and deeply technical, process, or disciplinary knowledge (Scandura, 2017). It can be extended to any unusual command of esoteric but useful knowledge (Greenwald, 2008). Expertise refers to invested and demonstrated experience in action (Chermack, 2011) that signals of individual's specific competencies (Hill, 2003). A non-expert skill draws on commonly shared knowledge, whereas an expert or professional expertise demonstrates deep specialization (Johnson, 1994). Hill (2003) connotes such expertise as a type of influence. The more unique and

critical the person's expertise, the more important they are as a source of influence to establish directions or to make decisions. French & Raven (1959) define expert power accordingly as something rooted in specialized knowledge or expertise, from which the person possessing that knowledge benefits. This type of influence arises from having superior expertise or experience relevant to the given task.

Project managers need to draw on their expertise when they rely on management techniques and methodologies to orchestrate and provide discipline to the project (Cavell, 2017). They need to also draw on technical and or domain expertise to justify specific design or implementation decisions. Their expert-based influence is cognitive (in nature) and uses information and knowledge input from stakeholders and team members (Heldman, 2011) to identify, describe, rank, plan, and control activities that call for their technical, theoretical, and managerial skills (Schwalbe, 2015). Additionally, the project manager needs to coordinate and integrate the team effort and build upon their expert-based influence towards critical stakeholders to get them to accept proposed solutions (Schwalbe, 2015). For the remainder of this paper, I refer to this influence as "expertise-based influence."

Information

One of the influence types defined by French and Raven (1959) is information based described as A's ability to provide B with factual data (Dunne, Lusch, & Carver, 2010). Information-based influence is independent of influence types because it relies on the particular information that the person possesses (Singh, 2015) and their competence to utilize that information (Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019) and skills to restrict or allow access to information (Lock, 1998). Information-based influence is personal and emerges

from a person's ability to understand and control the information that others need and to seek new information based on ideas of satisfying such needs. Overall, the project manager has access to varied information related to the phase of the project, whether the project is on the schedule, its upcoming activities and objectives, and project deliverable due dates (Vellani, 2006). They are also responsible for coordinating the activities of several departments for the completion of a specific project (Daft & Marcic, 2016). Project managers have access to detailed information about management plans, stakeholders, their activities and technical and functional facts about the project or business process, and so on. As a result, they can leverage such information and seek to influence stakeholder groups during each phase of the project by sharing or curtailing such information while coordinating with several functional areas, the project team, and other stakeholders. I refer to this influence type as "information-based influence."

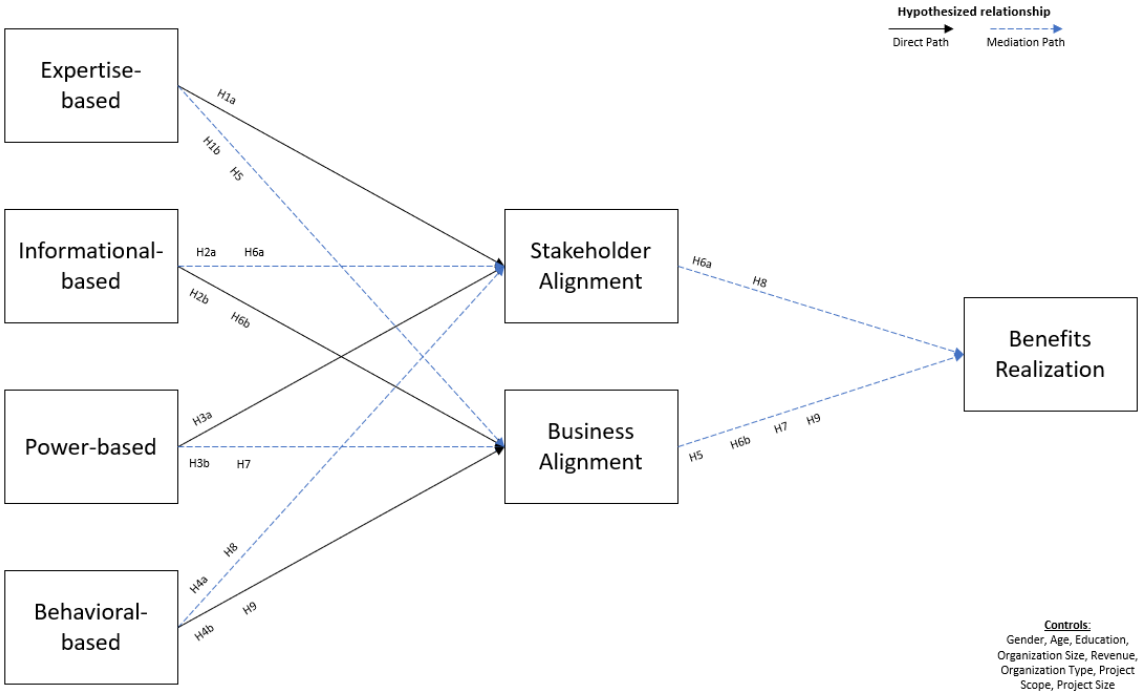
Previous studies have shown that business and stakeholder alignment actualize benefit realization (Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Breese et al., 2015; PMI, 2016; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Serra, 2016). However, no empirical studies have been conducted on to what extent the project manager's varying types of influence shape alignment and benefits realization.

Hypothesis Development

In this section, I formulate hypotheses concerning how the project manager's influence shapes alignment and consequently shapes IT project benefit realization. Figure 5 represents the tentative research model. Previous studies on project outcomes have shown that business and stakeholder alignment actualize benefit realization (Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Breese et al., 2015; Project Management Institute, 2016a;

Serra, 2016; Serra & Kunc, 2015). However, no extensive empirical studies have been conducted on the project manager's different types of social influence in shaping the alignment and benefits realization. By examining the project manager's varied forms of social influence, I hope to increase my understanding of critical antecedents that affect how IT projects actualize benefit realization.

Figure 5: Research Model



IT project managers lead projects by identifying key stakeholders and selling the project to them (Serra, 2016). IT project managers are strategic in their approach by understanding and addressing interdependencies, critical issues and having a clear sense of requirements that stakeholders seek to address. Their experience of managing projects of similar size and scope, meeting deliverables and milestones, knowledge of business functions, work processes, and goals allow them to align stakeholders and business. Additionally, continuous alignment between project outputs, outcomes, benefits, and

organizational strategy is required to achieve benefits realization (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). IT project managers' accumulated experience in handling large projects, system deployments, deep industry experience, and experience of working across business units can play a significant role in setting up the project and articulating benefits towards business goals. Experienced IT project managers can formulate strategies and convince others of their efficiency. IT project managers who have, due to their domain expertise, a better grasp of the short and long-term trade-offs of project decisions, are better able to actualize benefits. Hence, I hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 1a. Project managers' expertise-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1b. Project managers' expertise-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1c. Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of expertise-based influence on benefits realization.*

IT project managers need to involve stakeholders and align them with current project tasks. They achieve this by delivering detailed and factual information about tasks and the system to address potential concerns of involved stakeholders (boundary spanning). They need to be viewed as a reliable information source by stakeholders to be more prone to align their activities around the project. The manager's involvement uncovers and reduces risks and increases buy-in among involved actors. This, in turn, increases stakeholder alignment. IT project managers need to be seen as strategic business partners vested in identifying and sharing information required to achieve project success. They need to determine, evaluate, and assess business requirements using the information gathered from stakeholders, business domain, or extramurally. IT project managers must communicate stakeholder's information about system features, goals,

tasks, and/or environmental changes to achieve stakeholder alignment. Similarly, IT project managers need to ensure that information about system features, goals, tasks, milestones, and/or changes are aligned with given strategic goals and that those activities are executed to foster the formulated strategy. As such, the IT project manager must understand the business problem or opportunity at hand based on an actual business problem, facts, data, and/or reliable information and its underlying root cause or business driver. Hence, I hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 2a. Project managers' information-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2b. Project managers' information-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2c. Stakeholder alignment positively mediates the positive effect of information-based influence on benefits realization.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2d. Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of information-based influence on benefits realization.*

IT project managers are expected to have a say about stakeholder's performance. This increases loyalty and commitment to the project (Heldman, 2018). IT project managers are awarded authority over projects because they are responsible for the project's performance. Typically, project managers are given the same level and scope of (limited) authority based on standard project management practices rather than articulating a unique position within the organizational hierarchy (Hill, 2007). To align stakeholders, the managers need to still primarily motivate and nudge stakeholders to increase their commitment. IT project managers need to ensure that their projects align with the proposed business strategy and business goals. This alignment can be sustained if IT project managers communicate short-term and long-term objectives based on their

formal mandate by outlining the project's value proposition. IT project managers also need to wield power to state requirements that relate to conflicting business needs. If involved business functions are not aligned, it decreases the likelihood of business realization. To do so, IT project managers need to confer to their formal position and authority to get business functions to align to discuss and review their priorities and execute projects that align with the proposed IT strategy. In doing so, IT project managers revert to formal authority and position to make the stakeholders aware of project benefits, which, in turn, helps benefit realization. Hence, I hypothesize:

> *Hypothesis 3a. Project managers' power-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3b. Project managers' power-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3c. Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of power-based influence on benefits realization.*

IT project managers must clarify and highlight the importance of project benefits to gain business and stakeholders' alignment. If IT project managers fail to integrate diverse opinions, expectations of stakeholders and business, this will impact benefits realization. And, if the project manager does not have an equal say or at least some say about the employee's performance, it will cause the team member to be loyal to the functional manager and show little loyalty to the project (Heldman, 2018). As such, the projects are directed by project managers, who have only monitoring authority to direct team members and under the power influence of project managers (Kerzner, 2007). IT project managers must describe the value proposition of their projects in terms of the benefits they will provide. To do so, IT project managers need to adopt and use an adaptive strategy-based persuasion approach that continuously shows benefits,

tangible/intangible, to deliver them incrementally. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion considers two main routes that play a role in delivering a persuasive message: central and peripheral (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route is logic-driven that uses data and facts to convince people of an argument's worthiness. This is a direct route to persuasion that focuses on the quality of the information, which will result in attitude change. The peripheral route is an indirect route that uses peripheral cues to associate positivity with the message which relies on association with positive characteristics such as positive emotions and celebrity endorsement. This indirect change does not require information processing which results in less permanent attitude or behavior change. In doing so, the IT project manager influences effective project selection by helping evaluate potential value of the project. Hence, I hypothesize:

> *Hypothesis 4a. Project managers' behavioral-based influence has a negative impact on stakeholders' alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4b. Project managers' behavioral-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4c. Stakeholders' alignment negatively mediates the negative effect of behavioral-based influence on benefits realization.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4d. Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of behavioral-based influence on benefits realization.*

Methods

To validate the research model, I surveyed IT project managers using a single-source online survey. The survey was deemed appropriate to gauge the opinions of informed respondents and to generalize the results to a larger population. All of the scales were adapted from the existing literature. Some of the scales had been used in the past,

and I followed scale development guidelines (Churchill, 1979). All scales relied on a 5 or 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Benefits Realization was measured using scales adapted from Wixom and Watson (2001). For items such as: "project managers ensure projects objectives are successful in meeting or exceeding stakeholders' expectations;" "Project managers verify projects work the way stakeholders expected them to;" Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.777$. I will denote benefit realization as BR in my analytical work.

Business Alignment was measured with a seven-item scale adapted from Segars and Grover (1998) anchored by 'Entirely Unfulfilled' and Entirely Fulfilled," and included: "Project managers align information systems strategies with organizational strategic plans;" "Project managers adopt information systems objectives to the organizational objectives." Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.716$. I will denote business alignment as BA in my analytical work.

Stakeholder Alignment was measured using a seven-item scale adapted from Segars and Grover (1998). Items include: "Project managers and stakeholders achieve a general level of agreement regarding the risks and trade-offs among new systems implemented;" "Project managers and stakeholders establish a uniform basis for prioritizing projects." Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.754$. I will denote stakeholder alignment as SA in my analytical work.

Power-based influence was measured using seven-item scales adapted from Sanders and Courtney (1985). Items include: "Project managers have authority in determining how tasks are prioritized;" "Project managers have authority in determining

how projects proceed in case of deviations;" Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.758$. I will denote power-based influence as PI in my analytical work.

Behavioral-based influence was measured using scales adapted from Ames and Flynn (2007). All seven items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." My construct includes: "Project managers can influence and steer project meetings in their favor;" "Project managers are very good at influencing and generating innovative solutions to resolve conflicts with stakeholders;" Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.712$. I will denote behavioral-based influence as BI in my analytical work.

Expert-based influence was measured using an eight-item scale adapted from Nesler et al. (1999). Items include: "Project Managers can give stakeholders good technical suggestions;" "Project Managers can share with stakeholders their considerable experience and/or training." Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.795$. I will denote expert-based influence as EI in my analytical work.

Informational-based influence was measured using a seven-item scale adapted from McDonald and Westphal (2011). Items include: "Project managers ask stakeholders for information about the project progress;" "Project managers and stakeholders closely assess project progress." Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.723$. I will denote power-based influence as II in my analytical work.

Social desirability was measured using scales adapted from Manning et al. (2009). Items include: At my company, hiring decisions have always been based only on merit. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.723$. I will denote social desirability as SD in my analytical work.

I controlled for the project scope and size of the project and measured project size with the following indicators: project cost, development team size, business implementation team size, and project duration. I controlled for the geographical span of the project and defined it as a local, regional, or global deployment. I also controlled for gender, age, and education for project managers.

The scale items were refined and developed using scale development guidelines, Q-sort procedures, and online pilot tests. In Q-sort, the lowest item percentage of correct classification was strong, 77.7% agreement. Pilot testing assessed further the reliability and content validity of the questionnaires using Cohen's Kappa and Moore and Benbasat's Hit Ratio in assessing the questionnaire (Nahm, Rao, Solis-Galvan, & Ragu-Nathan, 2002). Data was collected over four weeks from January 24 to February 21, 2020, using LinkedIn social platform requesting participants to complete via Qualtrics platform. A total of 116 responded to the survey, of which 114 respondents (98%) completed the survey. The distribution of the survey (Appendix N) sampled IT project managers and other decision-makers that have been a part of an IT project. I analyzed the data for unengaged responses and outliers. The data was normally kurtotic and slightly skewed. I analyzed the data for abnormalities: education, experience, and age ranges, which seemed acceptable. The final sample size N = 114 was deemed adequate for the structural part of the study (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

The scales are reflective. The EFA was conducted using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Promax rotation resulting in the acceptable pattern matrix (Appendix B) and assessment of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity KMO = 0.697,

and Bartlett's Test significant ($\chi 2 = 994.971$, df = 276, and p-value = .000) (Hair et al., 2010). All loadings were > 0.3 or greater (Hair et al., 2010). Cronbach's alphas were greater than the recommended level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The scree plot confirmed the leveling-off of 7 extracted factors (Hair et al., 2010). The seven-factor solution with 24 items explained almost 53.962% of the variance (Baxter, 2009). The CFA measurement model (Appendix C) included seven first-order latent constructs and consisted of 24 items. The model showed excellent model fit $\chi 2/DF = 1.29$, RMSEA = 0.05, PClose = 0.46, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, and TLI = 0.90. The average variance extracted (AVE) for all factors were greater than 0.5 except for BR = 0.478, BA = 0.460 and BI = 0.491, indicating sufficient convergent validity (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). The square root of AVE exceeded all correlations between factors and was > MSV demonstrating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The reliability of factors remained above the 0.7 thresholds (Table 6).

Table 6: Reliability Test, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity among Study Variables

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	EI	BR	II	PI	SA	BA	BI
EI	0.800	0.502	0.261	0.813	0.708						
BR	0.783	0.478	0.305	0.801	-0.019	0.691					
II	0.751	0.502	0.179	0.755	-0.020	-0.015	0.708				
PI	0.781	0.550	0.261	0.852	0.511***	0.090	0.032	0.741			
SA	0.754	0.505	0.179	0.759	-0.049	0.098	-0.423**	-0.058	0.711		
BA	0.718	0.460	0.224	0.724	0.009	0.432**	-0.020	0.192	0.032	0.678	
BI	0.733	0.491	0.305	0.788	0.022	0.552***	0.045	0.192	-0.272*	0.474**	0.700

Significance of Correlations: † p < 0.100, * p < 0.050, ** p < 0.010, *** p < 0.001

Expert-based Influence (EI), Benefits Realization (BR), Informational-based Influence (II), Power-based Influence (PI), Stakeholder Alignment (SA), Business Alignment (BA), Behavioral-based Influence (BI).

Chi-square difference test to assess common method bias indicated that the difference between CLF and plain measurement model was significant p = 0.000,

suggesting that s social desirability is a concern. CMB corrected factor scores were imputed to the structural model to mitigate against social desirability effects.

I conducted a structural analysis using IBM SPSS AMOS v26 and Mplus v8.4. Descriptive statistics and correlations included in the structural model are displayed in Appendix D. The mediation effects were tested using maximum likelihood estimation with 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected confident intervals. I added four additional paths to obtain an acceptable model fit. These were from expertise-based, informational-based, power-based, and behavioral-based on benefits realization, respectively. I correlated mediators (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). The final structural model showed a good fit $\chi 2/DF = 1.036$, RMSEA = 0.018, PClose = 0.679, SRMR = 0.024, CFI = 0.999, and TLI = 0.995 and explained adequate variance for all criterion variables (Business Alignment R2 = 36.5 %, Stakeholders' Alignment R2 = 36.2 %, and Business Realization R2 = 54.4 %).

Results

The entire path coefficients for the full model are displayed in Table 7. Next, I will discuss my work.

Table 7: Path Coefficients for Structural Model and Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Description	Beta	P-Value	Supported
H1a	Project managers' expertise-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.	-0.120	0.319	No
H1b	Project managers' expertise-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.	0.079	0.229	No
H1c	Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of expertise-based influence on benefits realization.	-0.014	0.354	No
H2a	Project managers' information-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.	-0.707	0.000	No
H2b	Project managers' information-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.	-0.071	0.379	No
H2c	Stakeholder alignment positively mediates the positive effect of information-based influence on benefits realization.	-0.230	0.001	No
H2d	Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of information-based influence on benefits realization	-0.013	0.482	No
H3a	Project managers' power-based influence has a positive impact on stakeholder alignment.	0.079	0.407	No
H3b	Project managers' power-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.	0.123	0.028	Yes
H3c	Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of power-based influence on benefits realization.	0.022	0.191	No
H4a	Project managers' behavioral-based influence has a negative impact on stakeholders' alignment.	-0.383	0.000	Yes
H4b	Project managers' behavioral-based influence has a positive impact on business alignment.	0.461	0.000	Yes
H4c	Stakeholders' alignment negatively mediates the negative effect of behavioral-based influence on benefits realization.	-0.124	0.011	Yes
H4d	Business alignment positively mediates the positive effect of behavioral-based influence on benefits realization.	0.084	0.080	Yes

The direct relationship between expertise-based influence and stakeholder alignment was insignificant ($\beta = -0.120$, $p = 0.319$); hence, Hypothesis (**H1a**) was **not supported**. The direct relationship between expertise-based influence and business alignment was insignificant ($\beta = -0.079$, $p = 0.229$); hence, Hypothesis (**H1b**) was **not supported**. Business alignment mediating expertise-based influence and benefits realization was insignificant ($\beta = -0.014$, $p = 0.354$); hence, (**H1c**) was **not supported**.

The direct relationship between information-based influence and stakeholders' alignment was negatively highly significant ($\beta = -0.707$, $p = 0.000$), but **not** in the

direction as predicted in Hypothesis (**H2a)** was **not supported**. The direct relationship between information-based influence and business alignment was insignificant (β = -0.071, p = 0.379); hence, Hypothesis (**H2b**) was **not supported**. Stakeholders' alignment mediating information-based influence and benefits realization was negatively significant (β = -0.230, p = 0.001); hence, Hypothesis (**H2c**) was **not supported** as I hypothesized to impact positively. Business alignment mediating information-based influence and benefits realization was insignificant (β = -0.013, p = 0.482); hence, Hypothesis (**H2d**) was **not supported**.

The direct relationship between power-based influence and stakeholders' alignment was insignificant (β = 0.079, p = 0.407); hence, Hypothesis (**H3a**) was **not supported**. The direct relationship between power-based influence and business alignment was positively significant (β = 0.123, p = 0.028); hence, Hypothesis (**H3b**) was **supported**. Business alignment mediating power-based influence and benefits realization was insignificant (β = 0.022, p = 0.191); hence, Hypothesis (**H3c**) was **not supported**.

The direct relationship between behavior-based influence and stakeholders' alignment was negatively significant (β = -0.383, p = 0.000); hence, Hypothesis 4a **(H4a**) was **supported**. The direct relationship between behavior-based influence and business alignment was positively significant (β = 0.461, p = 0.000); hence, Hypothesis 4b (**H4b**) was **supported**. Stakeholder alignment mediating behavior-based influence and benefits realization was negatively significant (β = -0.124, p = 0.011); hence, Hypothesis (**H4c**) was **supported**. Business alignment mediating behavior-based influence and benefits realization was positively significant (β = 0.084, p = 0.080); hence, Hypothesis (**H4d**) was **supported** as I hypothesized the impact to be negative.

Generally, stakeholder alignment mediating behavior-based influence and benefits realization is **partial**; the indirect effect was negatively significant (β = -0.124, p = 0.011) while the direct effect was positively significant (β = 0.733, p = 0.000). Business alignment mediating behavior-based influence and benefits realization **is partial**: the indirect effect is positively significant (β = 0.084, p = 0.080) and the direct effect is positively significant (β = 0.733, p = 0.000). Stakeholder alignment mediating information-based influence and business realization is **partial**: the indirect effect is negatively significant (β = -0.230, p = 0.001) while the direct effect is positively significant (β = 0.166, p = 0.064). Stakeholders' alignment mediating expertise-based influence towards benefits realization was insignificant (β = -0.039, p = 0.343) while stakeholders alignment mediating power-based influence toward benefits realization was insignificant (β = 0.026, p = 0.434).

Discussion

My research provides strong evidence that the project manager can succeed in achieving the expected benefits if and only if they can align stakeholders and business leaders to project objectives. The relationship between stakeholder alignment and business realization is significant, with a beta of 0.325. Similarly, the relationship between business alignment and benefits realization is significant, with a beta of 0.325. This supports claims in the literature that common goals and collaboration are necessary during project delivery. To achieve stakeholder alignment, information-based influence and behavior-based influence are significant factors. Information-based influence has a beta of -0.707, and behavioral influence has a beta of -0.383. This indicates that the project managers need to act openly and transparently with all stakeholders to ensure that

everyone has access to the relevant information and remains informed throughout the process of project execution. Due to incomplete and inaccurate information supplied or not shared by the IT project manager to stakeholders or vice versa, the results suggest that alignment will not be achieved.

The project manager needs to develop a shared vision among the stakeholders and integrate the changing requirements throughout the phase of the project to achieve stakeholder alignment. To achieve business alignment, my research suggests that power-based influence and behavior-based influence are significant factors. Power-based influence has an associated beta of 0.123, and behavior-based influence has a beta of 0.461. This suggests that the project manager has to have formal authority to integrate different requirements of different business functions into one coherent IT requirement that can be translated into an actionable plan. The project manager needs to have authority to resolve related conflicts. Overall, the role of the project manager is that of an integrator combining and negotiating functional needs and align them with business strategy, sometimes through formal authority. They also need to establish their legitimacy through collaboration and building trust and shared vision as a project manager. Finally, I found it surprising that expertise did not play a significant role in creating business and shareholder alignment. By itself, it appears not to be sufficient to realize the desired benefits. The project manager's leadership skills are more critical factors in shaping his influence. This warrants further study and exploration.

My research suggests that expertise alone is not sufficient for an IT project manager to succeed. The critical factors are their leadership skills, that is, the ability to align key stakeholders and to integrate the project task with the firm's strategy. I further

note that the project manager needs to manage with transparency and behave inclusively. As such, organizations must appoint an IT project manager that has such soft skills to enhance the ability to succeed and realize the planned benefits. I note that the IT project manager's influence, a.k.a. invisible hand, contributes to and impacts to realize benefits. The project manager should learn how to maneuver the organizational politics, or in other words, to learn the ongoing orchestration of the political dance around the project. Success in IT projects requires the project teams to work together to build a shared vision of the go-to organization. This greatly enhances the ability of the PM to succeed, as a shared vision drives both stakeholder and business alignment.

IT project managers should be aware of the firm's objective, business strategies, and short and long-term goals to align them with stakeholders' expectations and requirements. If the IT project manager executes narrowly on the system objective without consideration to the organization's broader needs and the functional leaders, they will likely fail. To summarize, organizations should focus on hiring IT project managers not only based on their expertise. IT project managers should have sufficient leadership skills, soft skills to create alignments between stakeholders and business.

The major limitation of the study is the presence of significant bias in the data set. While I corrected for bias using the social desirability construct, this remains a limitation. External factors affect project continuity, and most organizations have projects that are parts of a program in which the project manager makes changes that affect the project. I did not control how resource allocation within the IT function affects project execution. Also, organizational policies, governmental regulations, funding, industry best practices, and so on can affect stakeholder alignment and success. Lastly, my study did not

recognize the effect of market conditions that may shape stakeholder alignment and benefits.

Lastly, I name behavioral, informational, and power-based influences as *influence dimensions*. These dimensions are the overarching method or process that the IT project manager must follow while aligning business and stakeholders to actualize benefits.

Practical Implications

It is clear from my research that expertise is not sufficient for an IT project manager to succeed. The critical factors are the leadership skills of the PM, their ability to align key stakeholders and to integrate the project in the firm's strategy to achieve business alignment. I further note that the PM needs to manage with transparency and behave inclusively. As such, organizations must appoint a PM that possesses these soft skills to enhance the ability of the PM to succeed and realize the planned benefits.

Success in IT projects requires the organization to work together; a shared vision of the go-to-organization post-implementation of the project greatly enhances the ability of the PM to succeed, as a shared vision drives both stakeholder and business alignment.

IT project managers should be aware of the firm's objective, business strategies, and short and long-term goals to align strategic goals with stakeholders' expectations, requirements, and IT strategy. If the IT project manager's mission is only to execute narrowly on an objective without due consideration to the greater needs of the organization and the functional leaders and be willing to adapt to an ever-changing business environment, that PM will likely fail.

Organizations should consider and focus on hiring IT project managers not only based on their expertise. Though according to the literature, expertise and education play

a role in managing projects and achieving benefits, my research shows IT project managers should have leadership skills, soft skills, necessary to create alignment between stakeholders and business, by the same token, creating a shared vision among partners.

Limitations and Future Research

The major limitation of the study is the presence of significant bias in the data set. While I corrected for bias using a social desirability construct, specific studies of actual failures and why they occurred will supplement my study.

External factors affect project continuity in general. Most organizations tend to have projects that are part of a program in which the project manager can make certain changes that could affect a project at the expense of another. I have not studied how resource allocation within the IT function can affect a program and lead to failure. Failure could also occur because the organization decides to halt or cancel the project for reasons that are beyond the IT project manager's control. Also, organizational policies, governmental regulations, funding, industry best practices, and so on are contributing factors (promote) that could lead to failure.

Lastly, my study did not focus on changing market conditions or competition actions that may at times result in project failure. These circumstances are outside the scope of my analysis.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE STUDY

Introduction

Since the 1980s, an increasing amount of research has been conducted on managers' influence behaviors (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992; Fu & Yukl, 2000). Influence has been recognized as an essential element of effective leadership (Feser & de Vries, 2016). Literature has specifically focused on how influence enhances the performance of subordinates (Vecchio & Sussmann, 1991), shapes work outcomes (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003), empowers groups (Sparrowe, Soetjipto, & Kraimer, 2006), reduces resistance to change (Furst & Cable, 2008), affects assessments of promotability (Thacker & Wayne, 1995), relates to career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994), is gendered (Smith et al., 2013), offers bases of power (Mossholder, Bennett, Kemery, & Wesolowski, 1998), transforms behaviors towards subordinate attitudes (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996), shapes applicant impression and recruiter perception (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002), or is grounded in transactional leadership behaviors stemming from exchange process (Burns, 1978). Literature also depicts that project managers are responsible for aligning expectations among stakeholders to promote project success (Kerzner, 2017a). As such, effectively identifying and managing project stakeholders and how to influence them significantly improves the chances of successful project execution (Retfalvi, 2014). During project execution, project managers need to recognize goal changes (Gemünden, Salomo, & Krieger, 2005) as to understand who the stakeholders are, identify each stakeholder's agenda, their relative power and how it is used, and find ways how to satisfy stakeholders, and ways to act to address their concerns (Mallak, Patzak, & Kurstedt, 1991). Despite the importance of the topic for

project management, there has not been much empirical research on influence tactics used by IT project managers.

One reason for interest in influence is that projects drain an organization's resources and performance. Per Gartner, IT projects with a budget of $1 million or more are over 50% likely to fail while generally between 5% and 20% of IT projects fail to create a loss of between $50 billion to $150 billion per year in the United States (Gallup 2012; Gartner, 2012). In addition, 17% of IT projects fail to the extent that they can threaten the company's existence (Goatham, 2009). Only 55% of IT managers reported they understand the business objectives of their IT projects and consequently cannot steer the project towards those goals (Geneca, 2017). At the same time, Toney (2001) found that project managers have a direct influence for over 50% of project success, and MacInnis (2003) found that insufficient project manager competencies accounted for 60% of project failures. Müller and Turner (2007) likewise found a positive correlation between a project manager's leadership competencies and project success. In particular, project managers appear to play a critical role in influencing project stakeholders so that they commit to project goals and help reach expected business effects (Moradi, Kähkönen, & Aaltonen, 2019). Hence, it is important to understand what makes some IT project managers effective and what types of influence tactics they deploy in creating critical alignments during project execution.

A project manager's task can be broadly defined as planning, implementing, and monitoring a family of activities over a specific period to be carried out by a select group of participants of diverse backgrounds with the intent to deliver a product or a service (PMI, 2017). As such, the project manager's primary role is largely transactional; it is

about execution discipline to carry out the project task on time, budget, and scope (Morris, 2013). Several scholars argue, however, that these activities do not suffice in most settings (Müller & Jugdev, 2012; Pinto, 2000; Pinto & Mantel, 1990; Pinto & Slevin, 1987, 1988; Pinto & Pinto, 1990). Project managers need to engage also in multiple types of leadership behaviors such as transformational leadership to gauge and satisfy stakeholder needs, identify and meet unexpected goals and functional requirements, and deliver novelty with unexpected benefits and threats.

Study 2 showed that IT project managers succeed better in achieving project benefits if they can align the project towards stakeholder needs and business objectives. To do so, they need to exercise information and behavioral-based influence to reach stakeholder alignment. This research also suggests that power and behavioral-based influences offer a significant means to reach business alignment. Given the variance-based focus of the study, it lacks granularity to explain which types of tactics managers use under different conditions to promote project execution. This study, a framework, also does not identify under what conditions tactics yield successful alignment and when they do not. Generally, research shows that managers' influence is dependent on their leadership style, the target of influence (Cable & Judge, 2003), and it depends on culture (Xin & Tsui, 1996). Given this gap, this study asks: *what are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by IT project managers to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?*

To address this question, I engage in a qualitative inquiry and use grounded theory and thematic analysis to identify and analyze the effect of commonly used influence tactics. The study covers 33 semi-structured interviews with experienced IT

project managers managing large IT projects across several industries. In particular, I focus in this study on influence tactics used by the IT project manager to engage in a variety of information, behavioral, and power tactics to form stakeholder and business alignment.

Several important observations emerge from the study. First, each influence dimension is characterized by multiple influence tactics, success elements that the IT project managers use to actualize project benefits. Second, the path to forming critical project level alignments depends on the project manager's leadership style and related behaviors of directing, motivating, guiding, and managing stakeholders and subordinates. Finally, I present the most and least preferred influence tactics enacted.

Literature Review

The IT project managers' influence occurs nearly one-sidedly during the IT conversion (Study 2). As a result, the IT project manager needs to consider constantly their influence options to reach the alignment that recognizes and reconciles multiple interests and environmental factors during the conversion. Next, I will investigate what I know of influence tactics and how the IT project manager has been shown to enact these tactics during the conversion.

Influence Tactics

I reviewed research on influencing behavior and tactics by adopting the hermeneutic framework of Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014). By executing embedded hermeneutic circles during the review (Appendix E), I developed a more comprehensive understanding of influencing tactics and how their use relates to the IT conversion process. In particular, I sought to identify major research streams around different forms

of influence, assess their contributions to knowledge, as well as their shortcomings. I initiated the literature review based on my initial knowledge about IT project manager influencing behaviors and searched for review papers and highly cited empirical papers around leader influence. This iterative effort provided an overview of the past and current research in the area. I moved forward in the review using snowballing (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic 2014) to find additional sources. I identified and selected a set 210 of relevant sources (research papers, books, published articles) using this method. Next, I proceeded with in-depth reading of the sample articles and identified and classified them into distinct research topics, approaches, and research streams around influence. Finally, I compared identified streams and their assumptions regarding influence behaviors and influence tactics. Through this process, I developed analysis of influence tactics literature and noted its lack of empirical research on influence tactics used by IT project managers. The remainder of this analysis is informed by this review which I also used for theoretical triangulation and refinement of influence tactics during the coding process. Next, I introduce stakeholder theory and leadership research and discuss how they relate to accounts of social and leadership influence.

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman formalized stakeholder theory in his work by characterizing a stakeholder as a group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman, 2010). The stakeholder theory has been widely used to explain and guide the structure and operations of corporate interactions with its internal and external stakeholder groups (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Donaldson and Preston (1995) characterized the uses of stakeholder theory in such settings using four

primary lenses: descriptive, instrumental, normative, and managerial. Descriptively a corporation can be described as an aggregate or nexus of multiple stakeholder groups and their interests. The instrumental perspective suggests that stakeholder theory is instrumental in creating frameworks that guide and help analyze complex corporate behaviors. The normative perspective legitimizes the interests of various stakeholders and attributes them some intrinsic value regardless of whether the corporation as such shares that interest. Finally, the managerial perspective asserts that stakeholder theory is handy as it can be applied managerially, that is, it defines the structure and scope of practices related to stakeholder management. My study focuses mainly on the last managerial aspect while recognizing the validity of the second and third perspectives in dealing with stakeholder alignment during project execution.

Clarkson (1995) categorizes stakeholders into primary and secondary groups where the former is responsible for the continued existence of an organization while the latter is either influenced or affected by an organization but is not essential for its survival. In most IT projects, the main focus is on primary stakeholders such as users and managers, but project managers need to attend also to the secondary stakeholders such as regulators and vendors. In the project management context, the IT project manager should create a working relationship with critical stakeholders by identifying and meeting their expectations. Creating such a relationship is not guaranteed. In most cases, it must be earned. The IT project manager can build such positive relationships with stakeholders using various influence tactics such as proactive communication and listening. These tactics may vary across different groups, across the stages of IT conversion, and/or a specific setting or a system.

Leadership Styles

A leadership style defines a leader's characteristic behaviors when they direct, motivate, guide, and manage groups of people, that is, influence them. Leadership style covers, among others, the ways a manager plans, organizes, makes decisions, delegates, and manages their staff. Next, I draw on how leadership behaviors related to project performance and success. Thite (2000) focused on identifying successful leadership styles during information technology/systems projects. His research suggests that a combination of transformational and technical leadership behaviors and related influence must augment the dominant forms of transactional leadership. Harwardt (2020) focused on to what extent servant leadership and related forms of influence affect the success of IT projects. His research suggests certain characteristics or behaviors of servant leader which leads to successful projects. Allen et al., (2016) focused on evaluating and identifying successful leadership styles in an academic pharmacy. Their research suggests that academic pharmacies must evaluate which leadership model, transformational and/or servant, fits the needs of their environment as well as their individual skill set. Aga (2016) focused on examining the relationship between transactional leadership and project success in development projects. His research indicates that transactional leadership is positively related to project success. Table 8 presents the definition and interpretation of leadership styles. As such, I denote that leadership has been defined as interpersonal influence, the social influence exerted in a situation and directed using a communication system towards attaining specific goals (Limbare, 2012).

Table 8: Leadership Styles

Style	Interpretation
Technical	The leadership engaged in technical, scientific occupations, such as engineering, information technology, and research and development, based on their expertise
Transformational	The leader identifies the needs of change, and creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change in tandem with committed members of a group.
Transactional	Focuses on supervision, organization, and task performance by monitoring specific tasks and using rewards and punishments to motivate subordinates.
Servant	Focuses on sharing power by putting the needs of others first, helping individuals to develop and improve in their performance, focused on learning from others.

In the project management context, several studies have analyzed project success relative to how much and when the project manager uses different leadership styles (Margules, 2011; Müller & Turner, 2006). These studies suggest that successful IT project managers choose an appropriate leadership style that suits the needs of the team and the project task at hand. In other words, leadership is the ability to form the attitudes and behaviors of other individuals. The process of influencing others mobilizes and directs their efforts towards specific goals and helps attain these goals. In what follows, I focus on social influence and reveal how influence tactics emerge; these are IT project manager's ways of affecting others to create and establish alignment among business and stakeholders.

Social Influence

Influencing generally is goal-oriented behavior where individuals use behavioral tactics to achieve outcomes which they desire (Cetin, 2016). Such influence is defined by the following conditions: whenever a person (P) changes his behavior as a result of

induction by another person or group (O) (Kelman, 1961, 1974). Another way of putting it is that influence is about “getting one’s way” (Kipnis et al., 1980).

As such, influence can be generally defined as an action exerted by an individual or group using indirect means (Lawson-Porter & Creek, 2010), whereby A (individual/group) seeks to modify B (Handy, 2007). This can involve actions to alter, affect, or change their attitudes, behaviors, values, and beliefs (Walsh & Vito, 2018); shape the conduct, development, and conditions of social situation (Lawson-Porter & Creek, 2010) to a result desired by the influencer (Lazo, 2009). As such, it is the process or behavior the leader behaves to influence and modify the behaviors of others. Kanter (1979) distinguished two types of influence: 1) negative influence – feelings and beliefs of powerlessness resulting from the void of information, support, and due to the presence of coercion, and 2) positive influence – the increased capability to engage in democratic, participatory, and effective decision making.

Next, I will explore how social influence is viewed generally and in IT project settings. One of the important indicators of effective management is that managers influence their colleagues, their superiors, and their employees (Cetin, 2016). Influencing can be viewed as trilateral movement: upward, downward, and lateral. Deluga and Perry (1991) describe upward influence as an attempt made by the subordinate to secure a desired response from the superior. Moideenkutty (2006) describes downward influence as actions intended to change the behavior of subordinates, while lateral influence can be described as behavior to convince peers at the same level (Enns, Huff, & Higgins, 2003). Most of the project managers' behaviors are lateral towards stakeholders or downwards

towards their project team. The managers need also find ways of influencing upwards to secure project proceedings and ensure that critical blocks are removed from its execution.

Project managers operate in organizational roles and with related mandates, so I need first to explore how influence is based on a position and associated role conduct. One of the seminal studies in this regard is by French and Raven (1959). They define power as the primary source in achieving results or compliance from another individual. Their research helped understand why managers influence others based on their position and how and why others accept their power. Nonetheless, in their analyses, the bases of power do not relate to or directly explain certain influence strategies. Often people exercise an influence that is not accounted for by existing power classifications (Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). As such, the effectiveness of bases of power is situational. It is therefore important to know the situational uses of each power by focusing on when each is the most effective. According to Raven (2004), it is of practical interest to know what power bases or which power strategies are likely to be effective. A more accurate representation of such influence tactics was introduced by Kipnis et al. (1980).

Kipnis et al. (1980) initiated a significant stream of research on influencing behaviors which lead to the development of an instrument called “Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS)” (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982). This can be used to measure the frequency with which various people within organizations use specific influencing tactics. Their work led to the identification of three approaches of influence: influence your manager (from M), influence your subordinates (from S) and influence your coworkers (from C). Their work has gone through several development and refinements, leading to the identification of nine influence tactics (Appendix F). Their

instrument has been criticized by Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) for poor sampling and instrumentation. Yukl and Falbe (1990) carried out additional studies on the instrument, which involved reconceptualization of influence categories. The research also identified additional tactics, which added a useful refinement of the original classification leading to the creation of the "Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ)"(Appendix G) (Yukl & Michel, 2006). A recent study by (Hall & Barrett, 2007) introduces another classification of eleven influence tactics (Appendix H). Their summary provides an effective understanding of how managers influence others at certain settings or specific times. Moreover, other studies have uncovered new influence tactics (Appendix I) which were identified while conducting a literature review. For example, Ralston et al. (1993) identified new tactics not covered by previous literature by studying the influence strategies across Asian and American cultures (Appendix J). A complete list of all influence tactics is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: List of Influence Tactics

Tactics	Explanation	References
Rational Persuasion	Use of logical arguments and factual information to convince a target that the agent's request or proposal is feasible and consistent with shared objectives	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Ralston et al., 1993; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Consultation	Professional relationship in which a specialist attempts to improve the functioning of another professional	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Inspirational Appeals	Generating enthusiasm by appealing to values and ideals	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Collaboration	The act of working with another or others on a joint project	(Leong et al., 2006; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Apprising	Involves an explanation of how the target person or group will benefit by complying with a request	(Leong et al., 2006; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Ingratiation	The use and to evoke interpersonal attraction or liking	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Personal Appeals	To appeals that are based on feelings of loyalty, friendship, or human compassion	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Exchange	The involvement of explicit or implicit offers by an agent to provide a favor or benefit to the target in return for doing what the agent requests	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)

Tactics	Explanation	References
Accountability	People with authority and responsibility are subject to reporting and justifying task outcomes to those above them in the chain of command	(Hall & Barrett, 2007)
Social Cliques	The action or practice of participating in social activities or mixing socially with others.	(Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Leong et al., 2006)
Legitimating	The belief that the influence has formal authority	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Pressure	A pressure tactic is based on the principle of authority, meaning that people tend to obey authority figures, even if these authorities ask them to perform objectionable acts	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Coalition	Refers to enlisting the help of others or the support of coworkers to convince the target to go along with the request	(Hall & Barrett, 2007; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Upward Appeals	The tension between two members or groups meaning matters have become much more strained between them and a mediator can be used to settle disputes at an early stage and stop problems or friction	(Hall & Barrett, 2007)
Gifting	The agent gives small gifts to the target person or his/her family before making a request.	(Leong et al., 2006; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Informal Approach	The agent takes the target person to a non-work setting (home, restaurant, or other places) to make the influence attempt.	(Leong et al., 2006; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Written Explanation	The agent sends the target a memo explaining why the request or proposal is important for the organization.	(Leong et al., 2006; Yukl & Michel, 2006)
Friendliness	Use of flattery, the creation of goodwill, acting humble, and being friendly before making a request.	(Ralston et al., 1993; Tepper et al., 1993)
Politicking	Intra organizational influence tactics used by organization members to promote self-interests or organizational goals in different ways	(Steensma & Milligen, 2003)
Manipulation	Inform or argue in such a way that the target is not aware of being influenced.	(Mowday, 1978; Steensma & Milligen, 2003)
Rewards	Results from one individual's ability to compensate others for compliance.	(Mowday, 1978; Steensma & Milligen, 2003)
Good Soldier	Get ahead through hard work that benefits the organization.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Image Management	Actively present oneself in a positive manner across the entire organization.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Personal Networking	Develop and utilize an informal organizational social structure for one's benefit.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Information Control	Control information that is restricted from others to benefit oneself.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Strong-arm Coercion	Use illegal tactics, such as blackmail, to achieve personal goals.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Organizationally Sanctioned Behavior	Behaviors directly beneficial to the organization such as self-enhancement (obtaining an MBA) and personal ingratiation tactics.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Destructive Legal Behavior	Behaviors that directly harmful to others or the organization, such as obtaining and communicating information to discredit others.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Destructive Illegal Behavior	Behaviors harmful to others and illegal such as blackmailing, stealing valuable documents, and harassment.	(Ralston et al., 1993)

What can we learn from these influence studies for IT manager influence? These studies suggest that the choice and use of such tactics varies per the goals of engagement (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982). This implies that the IT project manager needs to identify potentially relevant aspects of influence and align them with distinct goals of the setting. This results in using varying choices of influence tactics across subordinates, other stakeholders, peers, and functional or higher-level managers. As part of this process, managers need to engage also in other potentially feasible social influence tactics that involve expressions of self-conscious emotions and more complex cognitive behaviors (Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990).

Research Design

Methodology

Given the lack of a mature body of knowledge in this space, an inductive qualitative inquiry was selected as an appropriate means of building an emergent theory (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Rich qualitative data gleaned from the lived experiences of those immersed in the phenomenon was deemed as appropriate evidential foundation of this exploration. A grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) refined by Charmaz (2014) provided the main methodical approach for identifying, integrating, and explaining the use of influence tactics. The involved iterative steps of initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical analysis aided by constant comparison. This process facilitated the identification of main themes and building a conceptual framework to integrate the emergent theory of explaining IT project manager influence.

Instrument Development

Open-ended questions with varying prompts were formulated to elicit rich narratives of lived experiences and related details of the tactics IT project managers use to influence project stakeholders. The studies focused both on their experiences with successful and failed projects. The interview protocol was developed based on the author's knowledge and experience managing projects and programs. In addition, the literature review provided insights and conceptual definitions, which permitted the author to enlist and create sensible questions. The probes sought to clarify and elaborate project manager management during project execution. By project execution, I cover all project phases; initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing (PMI, 2017), of which the IT project manager is responsible for or participates. The IT project manager's responsibilities generally range from planning the project, creating a schedule and timeline, executing each phase, managing the budget, troubleshooting, and maintaining to serve as the liaison across all stakeholders and business lines. The full interview protocol is included in Appendix K.

Sample

The sampling strategy was purposeful sampling and focused on IT project managers from private and public sectors who had significant experience managing, directing, and controlling a wide range of IT projects. I sampled a total of 33 IT managers who narrated their experience of 87 IT projects. These were discussed and analyzed during the interviews in terms of what influence tactics were mobilized and used to what goals. Twenty-two of the interviewed IT project managers were located in the United States, while the remaining 11 came from Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Two

participants were female, while the remainder were male. I recruited the participants through personal and professional networks. IT project managers who had been pre-screened to indicate that they have either worked with or have worked on significant projects. Following grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this research employed constant comparison and theoretical sampling. For constant comparison, as data was collected, it was simultaneously analyzed to refine the categorization process. Theoretical sampling was performed during the interview process to determine if interview data or trends suggested any refinement to the information being sought.

Data Collection

Data were collected during two months between November and December of 2020. The interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. One interview was split into two sessions on different days due to timing constraints. All interviews were conducted remotely using a video conferencing service, Zoom. Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after each interview. The interviewer recorded a brief memo, typically ranging from four to ten minutes, with observations, highlights, and thoughts concerning the interview. These memos were transcribed for further analysis. In addition to the existing sample above, I also used previous research transcripts of interviews conducted in 2018 (different sample of IT project managers) (Study 1), as they contained information relevant for this research and were used for triangulation and clarification.

Data Analysis

Consistent with a grounded theory methodology, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and iteratively (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Initial coding begun after a few interviews. It was conducted through reading the transcripts

line-by-line using NVivo software and assigning codes to sections of text that ranged in size from a few words to complete paragraphs. Codes were phrased as gerunds to capture concepts from a process perspective (Saldana, 2015). The codes ranged from one to complete sentences to convey sufficient meaning to facilitate further coding. Throughout the initial coding of the first 11 transcripts and the first 11 post-interview memos, initial codes that were similar but potentially subtly different than existing codes were created with less careful analysis if they were duplicates. This was done to avoid combining concepts that appeared similar but might diverge as the coding progressed. After 11 interviews were completed, the list of codes and their associated references were reviewed. Codes that were essentially duplicates were merged. At this point, I began periodically composing analytic memos regarding provisional constructs and themes that emerged from the data. Examples of analytical memos covered those interviewees indicated listening closely to stakeholders' needs which helped in creating alignment; interviewees indicated the use of rational accounts, which helped the project managers persuade stakeholders and business units, interviewees indicated that the use of escalation could result in resolving differences and so on. This analytic process, along with the coding of additional interviews, provided insights allowing the initial coding process to focus on specific themes. Codes with tightly coupled meanings were merged, and some codes that had been initially created but were out of the scope of this study were removed.

Triangulation

The constant comparison, refinement, and sense-making of the initial open codes resulted in more focused codes characterizing influence. By coding the remaining

interviews and further analysis, a comprehensive view began to emerge concerning the range of influence tactics, their frequency, and settings where they were used. This, along with further analysis of the codes and their references, resulted in identifying 20 specific influence tactics. At this stage, I cross-referenced and compared the results obtained from the coding of interviews with the classification obtained while conducting the literature reviews. Table 10 illustrates the triangulation results, final data set. Tactics denoted by * are new influence tactics that were not covered by literature.

Table 10: Triangulation Results

Tactics	Explanation
Rational Persuasion	Use of logical arguments and factual information to convince a target that the agent's request or proposal is feasible and consistent with shared objectives
Consultation	Professional relationship in which a specialist attempts to improve the functioning of another professional
Inspirational Appeals	Generating enthusiasm by appealing to values and ideals
Collaboration	The act of working with another or others on a joint project
Apprising	Involves an explanation of how the target person or group will benefit by complying with a request
Ingratiation	The use and to evoke interpersonal attraction or liking
Personal Appeals	To appeals that are based on feelings of loyalty, friendship, or human compassion
Exchange	The involvement of explicit or implicit offers by an agent to provide a favor or benefit to the target in return for doing what the agent requests
Accountability	People with authority and responsibility are subject to reporting and justifying task outcomes to those above them in the chain of command
Social Cliques	The action or practice of participating in social activities or mixing socially with others.
Legitimating	The belief that the influence has formal authority
Pressure	A pressure tactic is based on the principle of authority, meaning that people tend to obey authority figures, even if these authorities ask them to perform objectionable acts
Coalition	Refers to enlisting the help of others or the support of coworkers to convince the target to go along with the request
Upward Appeals	The tension between two members or groups meaning matters have become much more strained between them and a mediator can be used to settle disputes at an early stage and stop problems or friction
Appearance*	The degree to which a person's physical features are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful.

Tactics	Explanation
Shadow/Proxy*	The mediator (P) or the middleman acting on behalf of the IT project manager (A) to ensure, enforce, execute, maintain certain tasks or activities on other individuals or groups (B).
Empowerment*	Power shared by leaders and managers with employees where employees take responsibility for setting up and managing their work rather than constantly working under supervision.
Listening*	A structured and heedful form of listening and responding in which the listener focuses on the speaker's message with all senses.
Guilt*	The belief that an individual has have done something wrong or made a mistake and leads to focusing on subsequent improved behavior.
Shame*	The belief, that a person is bad and focuses on his or her self-worth so that the persons feel that he or she is inherently bad.

Findings

Generally, I identified 20 influence tactics used by the IT project manager to form critical project level alignments. In this section, I will next review three key findings that emerged from my analysis of these influence tactics and their use. Each finding is associated with its specific research question.

Finding I

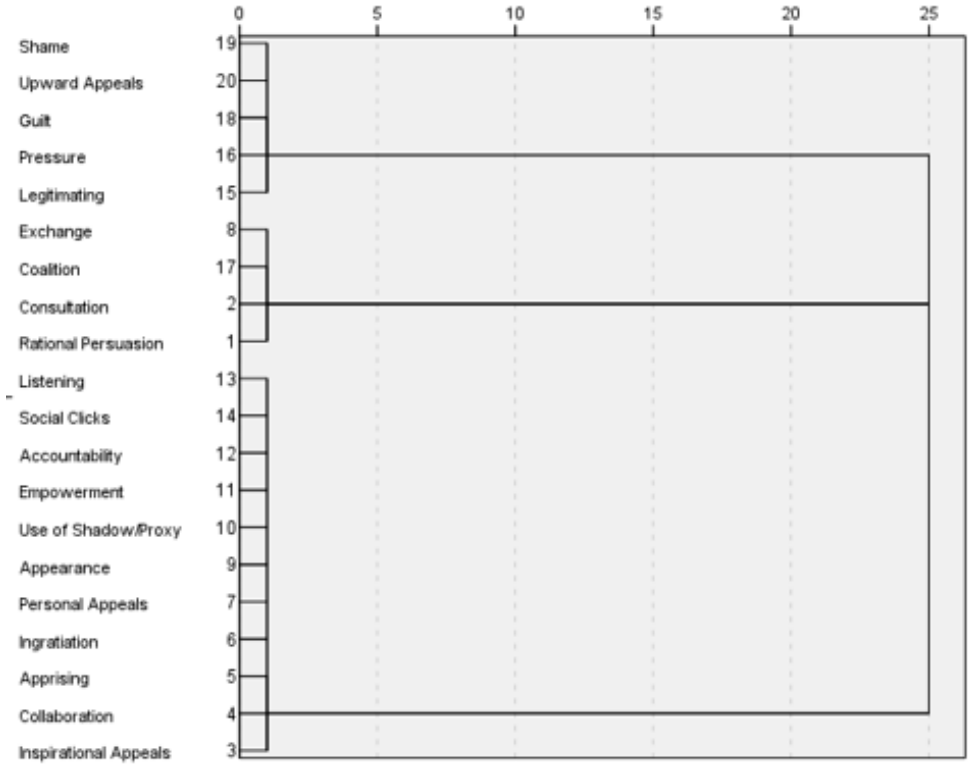
> Can the gathered tactics be clustered per the three influence dimensions identified in the earlier study: information, behavioral, and power-based? (Study 2)

I analyzed the identified tactics using two different methods to evaluate the number of appropriate clusters. In the first stage, a two-step cluster strategy was employed to identify the appropriate number of possible clusters with minimal variability. Two-step cluster analysis identifies groupings by running pre-clustering first and then by running hierarchical methods (Norušis, 2008; Şchiopu, 2010). The benefit of this procedure it uses a likelihood distance measure which assumes that tactics in the cluster model are independent. Continuous variables, dimensions, informational, behavioral, and power-based influences (Study 2) are assumed to have a normal Gaussian

distribution, and categorical variables, influence tactics, are assumed to have a multinomial distribution. Empirical testing indicates that the procedure is fairly robust and further analysis should be conducted, discussed in the second stage below. As such, the optimum number of clusters identified for analysis was 3 (Appendix L).

In the second stage, I sought to explain the clustering results and reveal the natural groupings of influence tactics on a higher granular level. Groupings or clustering were based on influence dimensions: informational, behavioral, and power-based influences (Study 2). Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) was employed to identify how tactics mold together, forming separate clusters. Hierarchical cluster analysis begins by separating each tactic into a cluster by itself. At each stage of the analysis, the criterion by which tactics are separated is relaxed to link the two most similar clusters until all tactics are joined in a complete classification tree. The basic criterion for any clustering is distance. By distance, I used Squared Euclidean distance measure to calculate the distance as a straight line between two clusters. The dendrogram (Figure 6) is the final cluster solution summary. The input was based on cases listed along the left vertical axis. The horizontal axis shows the distance between clusters when they are joined. Tactics near each other should belong to the same cluster, while tactics that are far from each other belong to different clusters.

Figure 6: Dendrogram Using Centroid Linkage



Based on the results obtained, the optimum number of clusters identified for this analysis was 3. I classified each cluster and related influence dimension based on the groupings of tactics as presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Tactics Clustering per influence dimensions

Dimension	Tactics
Power	Shame*, Upward Appeals, Guilt*, Pressure, Legitimate
Informational	Exchange, Coalition, Consultation, Rational Persuasion
Behavioral	Listening*, Social cliques, Accountability, Empowerment*, Shadow/Proxy*, Appearance*, Personal Appeals, Ingratiation, Apprising, Collaboration, and Inspirational Appeals

Overall, I was able to find an answer to this question in that influence tactics could be clustered per the influence dimensions identified in Study 2. Next, I explore

each of these influence tactics in detail per the identified influence dimension. Nevertheless, my focus and attention will be on tactics denoted by * as these are new influence tactics that were not covered by literature compared to the others. To reduce confusion, some tactics denoted by ** were defined according to best suits this research.

Power Dimension.

***Shame*.** Shame refers to the thought, *I am bad*, which focuses on our self-worth so that we feel that we are inherently bad (Creutzfeldt, Kluger, & Holloway, 2018). However, in emotion research, researchers argued to define and distinguish shame. The mainstream of research argued, when people attribute their transgressions to their global and stable self, *I can't believe I did that*, they experience shame. Others argue, shame typically involves being negatively evaluated by others. In this view, shame is often viewed as more devastating to people's self-concepts and self-esteem. In other words, shame has an *external* orientation and is associated with the fear of exposing one's defective self to others. Nonetheless, empirical findings suggest that in the U.S., people are unlikely to experience shame compared to other countries. Also, research suggests that shame-prone individuals are more likely to engage in avoidance and withdrawal, to experience inward anger, and to blame others (Wong & Tsai, 2007). In summary, shame occurs when one is negatively evaluated by others for behaving inappropriately, involves global and stable attributions for transgressions, and is associated with maladaptive consequences.

Interviewees indicated that they used shame as a tactic to provide benefits for projects and not as formal means of punishment. It is important that shaming is proportional and done intentionally, not as a means of vindication and not in public view.

As a result, the IT project manager can align and influence resistant stakeholders to do the desired work and to objectify and actualize project goals. Using shame as a tactic helps reform and reintegrate rather than fight or flight. Even better, it can be used to prevent bad behaviors from stakeholders. Asian and Middle Eastern interviewees indicated; this means of influence is based on the inculcation of shame and the complementary threat of ostracism. In this conduct, stakeholders align to avoid anguish and fear from being environmentally rejected and/or depreciation of personal worth and value. Table 12 illustrates quotes from IT project managers that narrate their lived experiences of using shame.

Table 12: Shame Quotations

Response ID	Response
X03	Poking or needling, you know, try to notch people you know to do stuff in the shameful way.
X08	You're getting you set out the task where you're expecting say and put back from 10 people you get it back from five, six, after the One limiter second reminder 30 mind that you kind of start naming and shaming them and the email. So yeah, and it works quite well again last resort, but it does work.
X19	That kind of nudge them in to get in line with everything else that's going on.
X21	Maybe call out someone and that may change them, but you don't go out with the purpose of shame but you've got to be able to call out things that are going right, or people that aren't doing their job and like I said before, sometimes you got to deal with their managers or their supervisor.
X25	I use the word needling, and that's you know that's sort of a shaming. Right. It's kind of in that category, but it's but it's a, you know, but it's a t's a much more socially acceptable way and it's more about it's more about sort of guiding people that you care about, as opposed to shame, you know, shame, to me, is something that you would do.

Upward Appeals.** I will refer to escalation (an early term for this influence) as upward appeals to avoid confusion. In social psychology, escalation occurs when a party to a conflict first uses a contentious (aggressive) tactic or employs heavier contentious

tactics than before (Fiske, Gilbert, & Lindzey, 2010). Escalation refers to the growing tension between two members or groups where relationships become more strained. As such, a mediator can be used to settle the dispute between two members or groups at an early stage and curb the friction. Escalation has a clear presence in political situations that include domestic and internal disputes (Lickel, Kushlev, Savalei, Matta, & Schmader, 2014; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994).

Interviewees indicated that IT project managers use upward appeals as a tactic if a project stakeholder is not willing to comply according to standards, close on deliverables, or find a resolution to undisputed issues/conflicting ideas. In such situations, IT project managers saw it necessary to escalate the issue to the superiors for resolution. Table 13 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers and narrating their lived experiences.

Table 13: Upward Appeals Quotations

Response ID	Response
X11	I had to go to my vice president to get pressure put on the lab to spend the extra hours to do the work. So, we can show in our demo. So, it's pressure through escalation.
X17	Sometimes I sometimes escalate and if it's like five if I can handle it or not someone's not listening or not collaborating, or I will escalate to Someone more senior depends on the context.
X21	And you said you do by this type and kind of pressure in that way if that doesn't work. Then you keep escalating in stages, don't you, so you go and speak to them personally. Make sure it can be done. And if that fails, you might speak to their superior to try to sort of include that. Yeah. So, there's different stages of escalation.

***Guilt*.** Guilt refers to the thought I have done something wrong or made a mistake. It focuses on my past behavior (Creutzfeldt et al., 2018). However, in emotion research, researchers argued to define and distinguish guilt. The mainstream of research

argued, when people attribute their transgressions to transient actions or stares, *I can't I believe I did that*, they experience guilt. Others argue, guilt typically involves being negatively evaluated by oneself. In this view, guilt has an *internal* orientation and is associated with the fear of not living up to one's *own* standards. Nonetheless, empirical findings suggest that in the U.S., people are likely to experience guilt compared to other countries (Wong & Tsai, 2007). In summary, guilt occurs when one negatively evaluates one's *own* self for behaving inappropriately, involves specific and temporary attributions for transgressions, and is associated with adaptive consequences.

Interviewees indicated that IT project managers reminded project teams and stakeholders of their role and the fact that they are not living up to their expectations or setting organizational goals. So, they should feel guilty for not fulfilling their duty. In this setting, the IT project manager acts as an influencer to align stakeholders to do the desired work unit to actualize project goals. U.S. interviewees indicated; the means of influence is maintained by creating and continually reinforcing the feeling of guilt. In this conduct, stakeholders align based on individual conscience, violating absolute standards of morality within the self. Table 14 illustrates quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 14: Guilt Quotations

Response ID	Response
X04	I've used guilt to kind of all where, hey, just to take three to four days for resolution and that's the only time that I'd use filter. This is a mistake on our part, we have to own up to it, the business team cannot suffer so we need to understand that this was our mistake. Yes, we have highlighted it to them. As we should, but we also need to work a little harder to get this resolved as soon as possible.
X06	I don't I don't put sugar in the reviews. Okay, so if you do a bad job, by the way, you did a bad job. Next time they do it better. So, they may feel guilt. Yes, it's normal. I think it's in the process. But that's not the purpose of the review the words of the review are make them feel that they can do better. But yes, it can be something that it comes in in the way
X12	When you're like that on the fixed bid projects a politically, the client has a lot of faults and guilt in are not being truthful with you. Then it gets kind of adversarial and once they get adversarial, you still have a contract, you have an obligation to complete.
X16	You feel guilty that you know so that you do the job or you do something for them.
X22	If they feel guilty about something that, you know, they would love to feature the second time the third time, but I can tell you, I, I thought that will happen, but that did not happen so I tried to have them feel responsible. You know you want more responsibility, of course, but this also comes with accountability.

Pressure.** Requesting is referred to as a pressure tactic that is based on the position of formal position and authority. People obey authority figures, even when the authorities ask them to perform objectionable acts (Feser & de Vries, 2016). However, requesting per se is not negative. It is the simplest way to make a demand in a nonthreatening way by authority while leaving no room for negotiation without entailing punishment or other negative consequences (Feser & de Vries, 2016). I will refer to requesting as pressure to avoid terminological confusion. In the project management context, the pressure is referred to as frequent checking or persistent reminders used to influence stakeholders or others to do something.

Interviewees indicated that they use pressure as a tactic to execute mission-critical events, meet deadlines, or accomplish what the manager wants, desires, or interests them.

Table 15 illustrates quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experiences.

Table 15: Pressure Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X02	I've spoken to people who have felt an implied amount of pressure from project managers in that sense. to make sure that they align with that particular viewpoint.
X06	Pressure is unavoidable, especially when you're working with deadlines and everything, but no intimidation, of course.
X15	I am using these pressures to my corresponding parties; I am using it to even to my client. How I'm using A guys if you want me to deliver the state unit deliver this day if you don't deliver the state, don't expect me to deliver to meet to the target take
X21	Pressure is mainly based on the time. There's a time to do things because I like to say so many people just don't turn up to meetings turn up.
X22	When you're getting close to that line and You're going to miss it to more people to push harder.
X25	I use pressure constantly but not so much threats and not so much in it sort of negative connotation.
X27	And I'm getting the pressures from my managers to that was like to the last one. And I was very, very firm. as authoritative as my position allows me because I couldn't go beyond a certain Point in being bossy.

Legitimate Power. Legitimate power refers to a setting where the manager's influence is based on formal authority (Jones, Finkler, & Kovner, 2012) derived from the position (Martin, Danzig, Flanary, Orr, & Wright, 2016). Legitimate power is common in most project forms and matrix-type organizations.

Interviewees indicated that they used legitimate power as a tactic to objectify and actualize project goals by enforcing or instructing stakeholders to perform a task and/or deliverable or just to follow changes and/or requirements without objections. Table 16 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experiences.

Table 16: Legitimate Power Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X04	It does come up once in a while where we do need to kind of push forward and mandate, hey, this needs to be done in terms of if there's a delay.
X06	I think there are cases in which it is needed to show your authority face.
X07	I spoke directly to his boss and I told him, listen, we need to change that guy has been working on some other projects and giving me a new one because I want to show that my clients new faces, then this happened. I use my authority as project manager.
X08	When all else fails, we ended up escalating to boost my direct manager and eventually HR setting your performance improvement and kind of resolve the issue.
X10	You know Theory X works on occasion when you're in that last stage than getting ready to deploy. Yeah, you know, sometimes I mean that's it you know the 80/20 rule applies, you know, 80% of the work gets done the last 20% of last time. Right, right, that tends to be being a little facetious, but that tends to be Theory X.
X16	I've had that once in one meeting. The reason why I did it. There's the other person was cocky, so had to be put down because conversation started.
X17	I'm the project manager, you have to listen to me.
X19	As PM in the kind of roles that I fall into I can play the authority card. The easiest with independent contractors.
X25	That's one of those things where that's also a tool in the toolbox and you don't want to pull that tool out very often.

Information Dimension.

Exchange. Exchange refers to the manager's involvement in explicit or implicit offers to provide a favor or benefit to the influence target in return for doing what the agent requests (Porter, Angle, & Allen, 2003). To be effective, the agent must offer something the target considers desirable and appropriate (Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Interviewees indicated that they used exchange as a tactic to objectify and actualize project goals. Table 17 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experience.

Table 17: Exchange Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X05	A mutually beneficial exchange a dialogue and not a monologue, so that we can overcome any challenges that will inevitably arise down the road.
X06	You decide to invest some extra hour some extra for some extra money. You know the to give something to the client. And maybe the client is particularly happy and an expert in the pipeline.
X15	Okay guys, I cannot deliver this functionality, but let's give some compensation for this delivery. For by the other means. You see what I mean. If you cannot deliver something as you can ask for some compensation and you can communicate with the compensation.

Coalition. Coalition refers to enlisting the help of others or the support of coworkers to convince the target to go along with the request (Johnson, 2019). This tactic is usually used in combination with one or more of the other influence tactics (Goethals et al., 2004).

Interviewees indicated that coalition, or project advocates, as a tactic can be enforced when the IT project manager brings along a supporter or supporters when dealing with a target person or group. Both the IT project manager and the support(s) may use different influence tactics as complementary tactics. These include rational persuasion, accountability, and so on to align business and stakeholders to actualize project goals. Table 18 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experiences.

Table 18: Coalition Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X06	Well, you should do it for positive purposes but yeah lobbying. It's getting the support of stakeholders, or the key members, for example, who are able to influence other people. It's very useful because sometimes, for example, is that the project and you don't have the trust of the product team. And you may get the trust and you may mean direct way getting the support of someone who has that asked of them. So that's lobbying for a positive way.
X07	If we look at the project manager should not approach the technical team directly. There is a technical lead one guy who was leading the team. So, the product manager should be in contact with that technically It happens. Always that the product manager for me personally, sometimes I want some deliverables to be out to the client. And in some occasions. I believe that the risk of stopping the deliverables form submission
X07	So, I always use the technical leads as someone in between, between me and the technical team.
X21	You build up a coalition from the beginning of what I call project advocates that hopefully you'll get one in each department and they, in turn, become your champion in that department to help us. communicate the vision and the message of the end, you know, get things done project activities and training and stuff like that. They help a lot. So that's the coalition your sponsor and any project advocate or champion that you can get. Hopefully, one in each department.
X25	Just naturally within business. There are situations where there are people that you need to persuade that you don't have direct access to and you know the old saying too is, you know, you one of the people you got to get on your Christmas card list is the admin, you know, of the person that you need to implement right and so yeah you do that sort of thing routinely and you treat those people golden, right, because they can hold the keys to the kingdom.

***Consultation*.** Consultation refers to creating a professional relationship in which a specialist seeks to improve the functioning of another professional and influence their conduct (Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2004).

Interviewees indicated that they use consultation as a tactic and a process to help problem-solving, seek advice, and seek, give or receive help to address specific issues. Generally, IT project managers seek the consultation of others and related appeals to the individuals' self-worth and positive self-concept, which then pulls them in the intended

direction. Table 19 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experiences.

Table 19: Consultation Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X04	Consult certain stakeholders for certain decisions and for others, we would only just keep them informed and let them know.
X06	Maintain the timeline with information and feedback from high-def client so at the end we consulted the engineer opposing the situation to fix the problems.
X07	Let's consult our stakeholder team to get the approval and they are in direct contact with that.
X08	Consulting people it is required. You need to ask people; you cannot make a decision on your behalf always. You need to have other opinions; you need to get a group of people to make sometimes a good decision. So, it is essential and I use it as part of me building relationships.
X21	They're going to be agreeing with a lot of the staff, or at least consulting with you without any friction, but internally is a lot of consultation, because of the resistance so there's no project that doesn't have any resistance people against the project or against you.
X27	This is why we have the business analysts and we have a developer so you have to consult these people in the issues because the subject matter experts. They are the ones who can actually dig deep into the system and understand the core issue and the different ways to be addressed.

***Rational persuasion*.** Rational persuasion involves the use of logical arguments and factual information to convince a target that the agent's request or proposal is feasible and consistent with shared objectives (Porter et al., 2003).

Interviewees indicated that they use rational persuasion as a tactic to appeal to the target's values and ideals or seek to arouse the target's emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal. Table 20 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 20: Rational Persuasion Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X02	To eliminate certain tasks, we had to convince them that that are our decisions where were rational and sound and for the benefit of the company.
X07	I presented to them based on recent delivered projects and I told them, guys. We spent x y z on those similar projects similar type of products or why we are going with less.
X11	Most of the persuasion is done upfront either during the presales process or the planning stages. It comes into play as you get closer to a deadline or if there is a scope issue.
X12	I have to really create a center of excellence and bring the data scientists. And do all those things that you have to do. So those are some of the things that we had to overcome it and just really explain the rationale to the stakeholders.
X19	I think facts definitely come into play are very important. One person's fact in another person's context, you need to be aware of what might be a little gray area there. So, it's not framing things as 100% accurate but you know take into consideration, x, y, and z.
X21	There's always going to be that struggle between business as usual and project work. So, you need persuasion during the execution phase to get people to do some work so you can get through the deliverables and the objectives of the program.
X23	I thought that I was waiting a very valid argument a logic very logical, scientific thinking, but his was actually do banking debunking mine and I agree to him.
X26	Especially in in my situation where I am not the technical person. I don't understand all the technical aspects of every project I worked on one way to persuade is to find out, do all the fact finding before I start talking to persuade them something.

Behavioral Dimension.

Listening**. Active Listening refers to a structured form of listening and responding in which the listener focuses on the speaker's message with all senses (Slusser, Garcia, Reed, & McGinnis, 2018). Active listening serves multiple purposes: increased understanding on the listener's part, building rapport and relationship between the speaker and listener, and making space for speakers to share something they consider important (Raines, 2012). Research has identified that mindful listening leads to identify

better apparent and subtle issues, risks, and opportunities necessary when working with higher levels of uncertainty (Goldstein, 2013).

Interviewees indicated that active listening ensures the IT project manager actively collects data and information for validation from others. As a result, IT project managers use active listening as a tactic because they deal with a wide range and several stakeholders by meeting and closing on their expectations and not forcing solutions/decisions. If they fail to listen, project managers cannot reasonably expect a stakeholder to become partially or fully engaged in a project. Also, interviewees indicated, some stakeholders feel better when they talk or share their personal or professional problems and/or needs. In this view, stakeholders become engaged and immersed in deep conversations, which allows the IT project manager to build trust allowing them to be noticed, buffer up and/or vent, which will ease the influence and alignment process to actualize project benefits. Table 21 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 21: Listening Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X09	All you had to do was to listen to them. But, you know, it was like having a, like a family dinner.
X11	You have to listen to the client take their lead. Let them explain to you, their issues, their concerns I have seen numerous times where others go into a meeting the client will start talking and then the project manager from the software vendor that had won the original project would assume that he knew where the conversation was going, and he would just cut them off and start proposing a solution.
X13	I tend to be a very personable individual. So, what I would do first is to sit there and listen to what the problem is.
X19	Listening to stakeholders and then addressing. Like I said that low hanging fruit, those immediate areas of concern to kind of bribe them into participation.
X20	Before imposing your thoughts, you should listen and understand and see, and then you turn to advice what is the best solution.
X22	So, in many cases, my ideas were rejected by my team members and again I have to listen to them because I trust them.
X22	Have a fairly open discussion with that person and I will try to listen to that person before I share my feedback and listen to them.

Social cliques.** I define social cliques for the following reasons:

Socializing refers to the action or practice of participating in social activities or mixing socially with others. Socialization generally refers to the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs, and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within their society. Research has shown the importance of socialization tactics for newcomers' adjustment (Simosi, 2010) leading to lower role ambiguity, role conflict, stress symptoms, and intentions to quit and with higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational identification (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). *Cliques* refer to a subset of group members whose average liking for each other is greater than their average liking for the other members in the

group (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). Members are attracted to cliques because they perceive similarities or interests (Levesque, 2014) or sometimes rivalries (Walker, 2020). What characterizes cliques, members might interact more frequently compared to being in a crowd (Levesque, 2014). Research has shown the importance of cliques given the high interaction among members, homogeneity, such groups can influence the attitudes and behaviors of their members (Levesque, 2014).

Interviewees indicated that IT project managers benefit from social cliques by learning to know personally other individuals, groups, and stakeholders that allows them to build stronger relationships, increase engagement, and in some cases, find new or join certain cliques or circles critical to move the project ahead. More importantly, social cliques help in socializing the project expectations prior planning phase by gaining support from senior leadership and stakeholders. As a result, social cliques as a tactic benefits the IT project manager in achieving their immediate goals to deal with project tasks. Table 22 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers which narrate their lived experience.

Table 22: Social Cliques Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X08	A good hobby to pick up his golf, because that's on the golf course road the business deeds are happening. Basically, and never picked up the goal, but I was told it's a they go feed is a good place for business after work.
X15	Since the guy was smoking. I was walking. I was going only in a couple of minutes. I was explaining and asking his support and he was taking the action, otherwise you cannot find a him in his desk.
X16	We're joking about whether they're fans of this and there's fan of that.
X17	A smoking is a good example. I picked up smoking because of work.
X20	You do networking events where you get opportunity to meet showcase your talent showcases your stuff so that opportunity helps you to win projects.
X21	Especially in a social environment because people are more relaxed.
X25	Go and smoke breaks with some of these people just because of that social interaction, you know, it's kind of a clique and I ride motorcycles. So, you know, motorcycle, same sort of thing, right.

Accountability. Accountability refers to the state where people with authority and responsibility are subject to reporting and justifying task outcomes to those above them in the chain of command (Rao et al., 2009). Accountability is multifaced or multilevel and has several dimensions, including personal, interpersonal, and organizational (Blakey & Day, 2012). The personal focus is on personal actions, learning, and engagement. The interpersonal focus on partnerships, managerial relationships within a business unit or a team. At this level, participants set common goals and agree to complete them together through shared responsibility, work, and accountability. The organizational level focuses on stakeholders within the wider system: the business organization, department or division, other staff, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and the public at large. At this level, accountability measures include written and unwritten mission statements, ethical

standards, and cultural norms. In the project management context, accountability obliges an individual or group to account for their activities, accept responsibility, and transparently disclose the results. Researchers show that building connections within teams through meetings encourages a culture of accountability and a sense of camaraderie (Brownlee, 2010).

Interviewees indicated that a person labeled accountable for a task or deliverable has to bear the consequences for any related decisions, actions, results, and so on. In short, they are held accountable, and they must account for what happened. Accountability as a tactic can benefit the IT project manager in achieving his or her task goals and align stakeholder activities to those. Table 23 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 23: Accountability Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X03	I found it very important to hold people accountable and to know that they were being held accountable.
X03	And across projects I follow these Gantt charts very carefully. And I use them to hold people accountable for the different elements and projects.
X04	Based on the decision and we have a matrix that for a certain type of decision one particular person is responsible, one is accountable one person just needs to be informed and specific people need to be consulted, so based on the decision we have a matrix where we would follow such a flow.
X22	You have to be accountable for this and there's a call to meet the deadline, I have to ask, why did you do that and they were just at least us some of my experience. They were justified in one way or another. And frankly, repeat the problem again.
X24	Identified all the compliance leaders in this business units in this for at least five business units. And we made them the coordinators for their business units because they were accountable to, you know, to ensure the compliance by moving to the cloud.
X24	Stakeholder mapping is very important to that is one and also identifying the single point of accountability from the client organization is also very important.

***Empowerment*.** Empowerment refers to the process of power-sharing by leaders and managers with their employees. It provides means for employees to take responsibility for setting up and managing their work rather than constantly working under manager monitoring (Kolb, 2008). Empowerment can also be defined as to invest someone legally or formally with power or authority; authorizing, license'; or 'impart or bestow power to an end or for a purpose; to enable, permit (Bhavnani et al., 2016). Several studies have analyzed the effects of empowerment on team members (Morgan Tuuli, Rowlinson, Fellows, & Liu, 2012), on job satisfaction (Zolkapli, Bashirun, Ahmad, Samudin, & Badrolhisam, 2020), on knowledge sharing and performance (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006).

Interviewees indicated that the key to empowering a project team member lies in the project manager's ability to get to know the person's strengths and weaknesses. Some people, although highly skilled, are weak at managing other individuals, where some can influence but aren't necessarily good at managing time or budget. As such, empowerment as a tactic benefits the IT project manager in achieving his or her task outcomes and improve team performance. Empowerment can instill greater trust in leadership, encourage motivation, lead to creativity, improve employee retention, recognition, and contribution (Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie, & Morin, 2009; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013; Zolkapli et al., 2020). Table 24 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 24: Empowerment Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X04	Similar to the previous scenario where a person did reach out asked if he could be the project manager, I empowered him with all of the decisions and I allowed him to choose his team. I allowed and shared the resources that he needed to the project. How the project needs to be initiated and delivered and what sort of manner, and he was provided all sorts of capabilities to make the decisions on bringing the project team on board executing the project in his manner.
X16	You have to empower especially if we're ranking with technical people because they're introverts, you have to empower also your client, you have to understand that your clients report to someone. So, if you make him feel good in front of his bosses.
X19	People prefer to be empowered. One of the things that we do to control for that I'm on projects one
X21	I think empowerment important so you always get especially staff members that aren't managers, so they can what I find is staff members that aren't managers generally are more inclined to help you on your project that managers are yet they're less appreciate it

Shadow/Proxy*. I refer to the use of shadow/proxy as the introduction of the mediator (P) or the middleman who acts on behalf of the IT project manager (A) to ensure, enforce, execute, maintain certain tasks or activities on other individuals or groups (B). We can denote the influence through an expression A > P > B; where > stands for influence. The use of shadow/proxy is the act the mediator initiates per the IT project managers' request on other individuals or groups. In the project management context, the shadow or proxy can be a project coordinator, product owner, proxy product owner, assistant, or so on. Some studies have analyzed the attributes of the project coordinator (Jha, 2005), who coordinates the schedules, budgets, and addresses the going issues and risks of the project. Their job is to make sure that the project is well-organized and it runs smoothly. The coordinator's task includes communicating with various departments in the organization to make sure everyone is on the same page. The product owner (Bass, 2013, 2015) is an IT professional responsible for setting, prioritizing, and

evaluating the work generated by a software team to ensure that the features and functionality of the product meet the customer's needs. The proxy product owner (Proxy PO) is the mediator role between the individuals making decisions about a product and the individual or group developing it. A Proxy PO usually performs activities that are performed by the product owner. These include gathering customer needs, defining and ordering the product backlog, planning how to realize the backlog with other teams, deciding when the product increments can be released.

Interviewees indicated that IT project managers used shadow/proxy in actualizing project benefits as a tactic, and it benefited the IT project managers in achieving his or her project-related goals. Interviewees indicated the use of shadow/proxy did help especially in easing discussions, approvals, and/or alignment with stakeholders. Table 25 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 25: Shadow/Proxy Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X04	In terms of that a lot of my team is all. Sure. So, I do have an offshore project leader as well. And it's not easy for me to talk with each individual. So, in terms of that just the distance, the ability to communicate effectively. The best way to do so is to have A lead in each specific region that can ensure those particular resources in that region are able to work. In the same timely manner, especially when you have a lot of moving parts on about let's say you have four different moving parts, all of them to be work. Delivered accordingly in the same timely manner.
X19	We may definitely involve them in in presenting information. We're working with the client on that, that's just watching the dynamics of the team and how things are going.
X21	When I was in the Philippines, it's class system collective society if you turn up. You know, to a meeting and you know the type of client that you have that You know, like to see attractive women, for example in overseas. You go into those meetings. It's like the Japanese culture right if you turn up with an attractive woman. It helps the client, because that's what they want to see. That's kind of what happens in the Philippines as well.
X21	Business analyst or whatever that comes in and I guess can fill in your gaps can highlight what you say can basically give a fuller picture, then you can align so ever. You know, physical attractiveness of a female that you're bringing or whether it's the knowledge of a BA because they talk the language of the client that's in the room you basically trying to bring in who you can to make you as a project manager.

***Appearance*.** Physical attractiveness is the degree to which a person's physical features are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful. Physical attractiveness impact all face-to-face social interactions, but the greatest effects of attractiveness are perhaps in dating opportunities, romantic attractions, and romantic relationships (Frederick, Reynolds, Fales, & Garcia, 2012). However, several studies have also looked at the role of physical attractiveness from a different angle related to business interactions. They have focused on getting hired (Gilmore, Beehr, & Love, 1986; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996), process selection (Watkins & Johnston, 2000), earning money (Umberson & Hughes, 1987), higher stock return (Halford & Hsu, 2013) and getting elected in public offices, political scenes and electoral campaigns (Berggren, Jordahl, & Poutvaara, 2010;

Jäckle, Metz, Wenzelburger, & König, 2019). These studies indicate that beauty is beastly, that is, attractive people are more successful, achieve better, benefit more, and have overall higher well-being.

Interviewees indicated that physical attractiveness does play a role in actualizing project benefits and acts as a tactic supporting the IT project manager in achieving their goals. They indicated stakeholders and management value a well-groomed or well-presented IT project manager compared to a not-groomed one, especially at the initiation and planning phases (meet and greet) while meeting business and stakeholders. Whereas, and in contrast, some interviewees indicated IT personnel tend to be sloppy or do not care for their physical looks, which will make other repeal or try to avoid. Table 26 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 26: Appearance Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X05	This is going to sound crazy, but I do I'm normally pretty people deliver bad news. Better than people who are not pretty. So yeah, I do believe physical. Unfortunately, the world of shallow. I do believe physical appearance does play a part.
X19	You know, I was asked to remove a consultant from our project for a few reasons. One of them was at during a go live weekend when there's a lot of Things going on. He had a very sluggish appearance and out of an abundance of overactive nerves was just cramming himself.
X21	They want to see you, you know, professional. That means maybe your project is professional maybe what you have to say is professional and it's a bit more respected that kind of fits with your qualifications and background, I guess, then just turning up in jeans and a t shirt.
X26	I think so that impression is important. Especially, maybe, I don't know, because I'm working in a pharmaceutical company where I'm meeting with a lot of scientists and people that are very, very well educated very highly educated, so it's good to represent it and represent your team in a good way.

Personal Appeals. Personal appeals refer to appeals that are based on feelings of loyalty, friendship, or human compassion (Van Wart, 2014). Interviewees indicated that they use personal appeals to convince others of a course of action which they would not otherwise select. Table 27 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 27: Personal Appeals Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X07	One of the times I called him. I told him I need your help on. I know this guy is very and extremely busy and one of the times I quoted one James I said I need advice on
X11	I just spoke of working with the independent contractors and bringing them along from one project to another you know that's key to keeping a happy, successful team.
X15	Say you are identifying some of the project parties that you can communicate better that you can understand each other better that you can trust the sensitivity better and you can identify whoever has the same ambition.

Ingratiation. Ingratiation refers to the use and to evoking of interpersonal attraction or liking (Proost, Schreurs, De Witte, & Derous, 2010). Interviewees indicated that they use ingratiation as a tactic by giving compliments or doing favors for superiors or co-workers to create alignment. Table 28 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 28: Ingratiation Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X05	You got to keep them in a good mood and because work will be deteriorated.
X06	Before submitting a proposal, you got to work on the expectation putting others in a good mood.
X07	In a way we can I do, yeah putting others or someone in a good mood.
X10	And, you know, capturing the hearts of people makes a huge difference in creating commitment
X15	Open with a good mood to conversation or the discussions in a friendly way that start to go into details of the problems and issues.
X24	All the time that's very, very important, important all the time to put people in good mood

***Apprising*.** Apprising refers to and involves an explanation of how the target person or group will benefit by complying with a request (Yukl et al., 2005). Interviewees indicated that they use apprising as an influence tactic for influencing peers and subordinates by realizing possible benefits such as pay increase, faster career advancement, and opportunities to learn new skills that will be useful in the future. Table 29 illustrates some of the quotations shared based on IT projects managers' lived experiences.

Table 29: Apprising Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X08	It kind of motivates them to keep going. But obviously kind of the incentive is there that if he does it successfully, it would mean an incentive for him to be considered.
X09	What I mean of course you know people are interested in, what's in it for me.
X16	Showing them where the technology can go, they can actually learn it and take some of it on them
X20	Especially to my team members and it is more to the peers and team members to show them the benefit, not that much to my seniors.
X21	If we succeed in this project, you know, probably, you get more money your salary will increase.
X25	It's about breaking things into component parts moving forward so they can value the personal benefit
X26	If you work with me and do XYZ, you will be promoted.

***Collaboration*.** Collaboration refers to the acts of working with others on a joint task (Mistrík, Grundy, van der Hoek, & Whitehead, 2010). Interviewees indicated that they use collaboration as a tactic whereby two or more participants in the project teams or stakeholders actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at achieving project goals. Table 30 illustrates some of the quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 30: Collaboration Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X04	Just do a collaborative joint discussion with everyone and have everyone's point of view. And at that point, see what is the best solution if one specific solution is available, if not what it's a collaboration of multiple solutions that you can utilize.
X08	The PM kind of is the orchestrator for this collaboration creation but it only works, if everybody is kind of doing their part.
X10	It's more fun to being collaborative and working with people you know there's a lot of risk associated with being that you know the answer person for all questions as you can't.
X11	Collaboration occurs at all phases during the project and by elaboration good ideas to emerge.
X19	Collaboration is essential because in the PM world there's a lot of moving parts that impact different areas. The biggest challenge there is when there is resistance noted earlier
X21	Regardless of how popular program is you should always be sort of that positive collaborative high energy so that you do inspire people so that it builds momentum.

***Inspirational Appeals*.** Inspirational appeals refer to generating enthusiasm by appealing to broad values and ideals (Cawsey & Deszca, 2007) that arouse emotions and commitments (Johnson, 2019). Interviewees indicated that they use inspirational appeals as a tactic to develop enthusiasm and commitment by arousing strong emotions toward specific goals and activities. This mostly took place by linking a request or proposal to a person's needs (project), values, hopes, and standards. Table 31 illustrates some quotes shared by IT project managers narrating their lived experiences.

Table 31: Inspirational Quotations

Response ID	Example Quote
X08	Inspiring change and kind of feel the PM should do. It's also a way to get the team motivated to keep doing what we do, it is honestly kind of inspiring and being a part of this whole vision.
X08	A lot of value charisma is it can move people and charisma is really connecting with people on some level.
X09	But charisma requires eloquence. You got to be eloquent to capture the imagination and the attention and the hearts of people and, you know, capturing the hearts of people with a lot of people. It makes a huge difference in creating commitment.
X22	Whether the manager likes it or not, he or she will be looked at as a father figure or the model figure, regardless of age, regardless of anything. There's an influence that is an implicit for managers and they have to use that wisely.
X24	What I mean by that, gaining support and acceptance of others through leading them to inspiration vision and articulating the goals of the project or the organization.
X25	It's kind of like the coach, but before the game, given that inspirational speech and that, you know, kind of get you out to the field.

Analysis

In this section, I present influence tactics clustered into dimensions based on the results of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA). Originally these dimensions were discovered in Study 2. Their results indicated; benefits realization is impacted by stakeholders' alignment based on the project manager's behavioral and informational-based influence. Also, benefits realization is impacted by business alignment, which depends on the project manager's use of behavioral and power-based based influence. The authors name behavioral, informational, and power-based influences as influence dimensions. These dimensions are the overarching method or process that the IT project manager has to follow while aligning business and stakeholders to actualize benefits. Nonetheless, endorsing these dimensions won't help the IT project manager to achieve

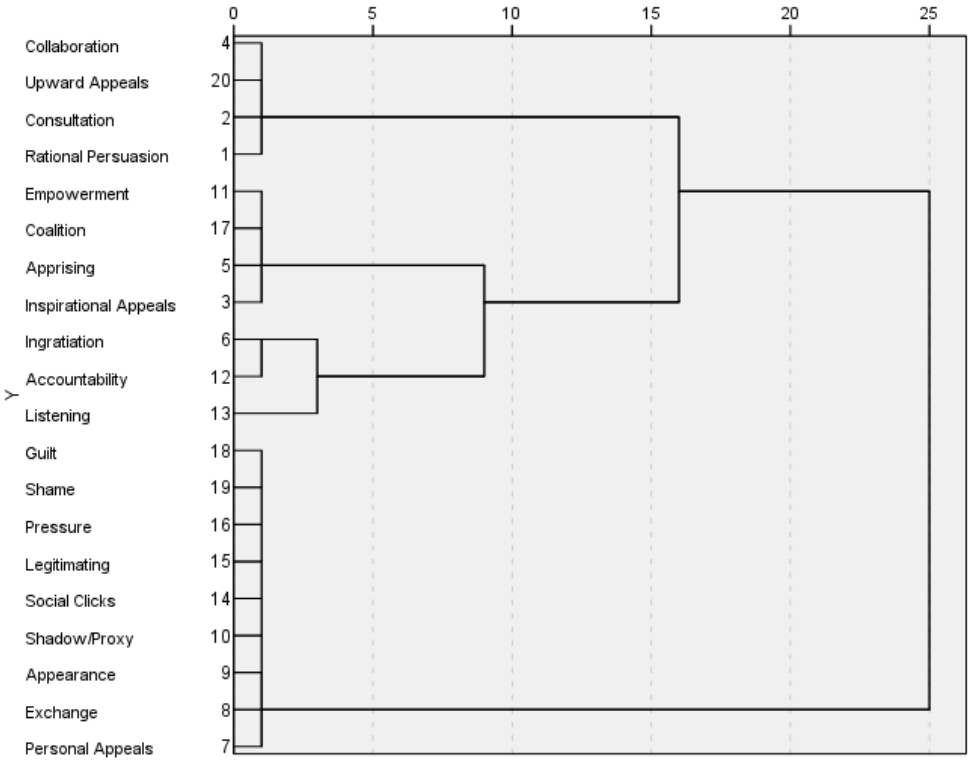
his/her desired outcome. Hence, more granular measures are needed. The triangulation process allowed me to develop a comprehensive understanding of social influence focusing on the IT project management field. Some of these influence tactics were new and not previously covered and/or identified by previous literature. I refer to these influence tactics as success elements. By success elements, I mean measures by which the IT project manager can enact while facing business and stakeholders to actualize and realize benefits. *What constitutes the credibility and validity of these success elements?* These success elements are the results of accumulated years of research in the realm of social influence. Using the hermeneutic framework to identify, data that emerged were triangulated from data captured interviewing experienced and professional IT project managers. Documenting their experiences and feedback, managing complex IT/IS projects and programs allowed me to create what I refer to as success elements.

Finding II

Can the identified tactics be clustered along with leadership styles?

This section focuses on examining the tactics employed based on leadership styles followed or enacted by the IT project manager. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) was employed to identify clusters (Figure 7). The input was based on influence cases listed along the left vertical axis. The horizontal axis shows the distance between clusters when they are joined. Tactics near each other should belong to the same cluster, while tactics that are far from each other belong to different clusters.

Figure 7: Dendrogram Using Ward Linkage



Based on the results obtained, the optimum number of clusters identified for this analysis was 4. I classified each cluster based on the tactics' groupings relevant to the leadership style as presented in Table 32.

Table 32: Leadership Style Preferred Tactics

Cluster	Tactics	Style
1	Collaboration, Upward Appeals, Consultation, Rational Persuasion.	Technical
2	Guilt, Shame, Pressure, Legitimating, Social Cliques, Shadow/Proxy, Appearance, Exchange, Personal Appeals.	Transactional
3	Empowerment, Coalition, Apprising, Inspirational Appeals.	Transformational
4	Ingratiation, Accountability, Listening.	Servant

Analysis

The analysis reveals, IT project managers use different tactics as means to achieve the desired results and/or actualize benefit. They engage in all leadership styles in different positions, and these styles change adapting to the environment and/or interactions facing business and stakeholders.

Transformational and transactional leadership are different but can complement each other depending on stakeholders' and business requirements fulfillment, type of task on hand, and so on. Transformational leaders inspire followers to higher levels of performance for the sake of the organization, while transactional leaders focus on exchange relations with followers (Yukl, 2010). However, I view the combination of transformational and transactional leadership as best as, according to Aga (2016), transactional leadership is considered as a necessary precondition for transformational leadership to be effective. Though it may be easy to augment transactional relationships, it is not possible to replace it with transformational leadership since transactional leadership is also an effective motivation technique. Hence, transformational leadership exceeds transactional leadership, but transactional leadership is a prerequisite.

Also, I view transactional leadership as a shortcut and is not as effective as transformational leadership because the reward or exchange promised may not always be available, but the influence of the IT project manager will never be depleted. Additionally, transformational leaders create new initiatives and stimulate action and loyalty, whereas transactional managers are better at administering systems and making things happen daily and have an important role in sustaining change once it has been introduced (Chang & Daly, 2012).

Transformational and servant leadership reveal relatively similar attributes and are people-oriented (Scandura, 2017). Both types of leadership involve influence on followers, yet both leadership styles emphasize followers (Harwardt, 2020). While transformational leaders and servant leaders both show concern for their followers, the overriding focus of the servant leader is upon service to their followers, that is, the team's perception and efficient project implementation. The transformational leader has a greater concern for getting followers to engage in and support organizational objectives (Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). As such, I view, in the IT project management context, servant leadership as a subset of transformational leadership.

Lastly, the analysis reveals that the IT project manager has to have technical competencies. The IT project manager must have the technical competencies while working with and through people to make sure that the organization is in alignment with the environment and making sure there is appropriate and consistent adherence to the organizational goal (Van Wart, 2014), that is, ensures ideas are appropriately represented in the project and communication among various groups within the organization is never disrupted. Langer (2017) views leadership as attained by the chief IT executives when they employ cognitive and technological skills, organization etiquette, management, a sense of business ethics, and a sense of executive presence.

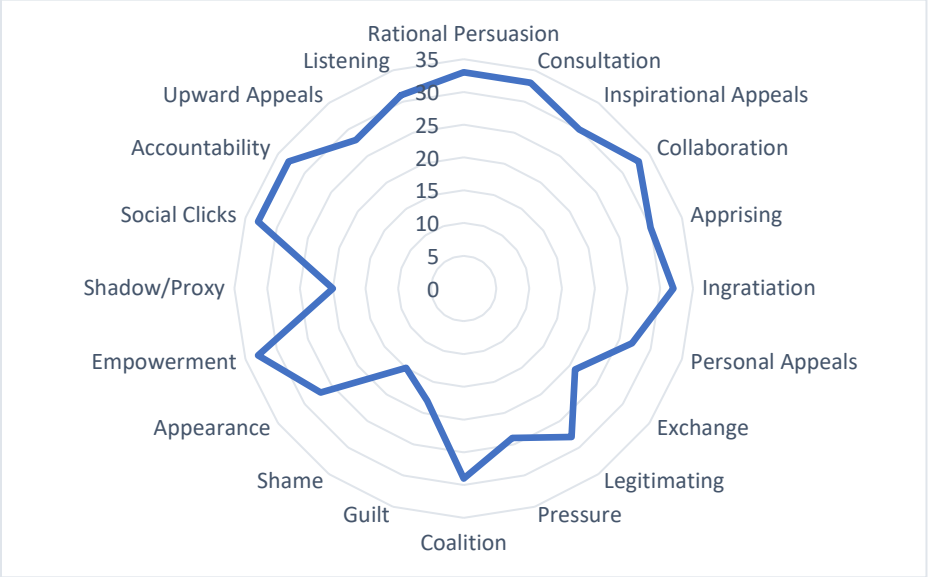
Finding III

Which influence tactics were most and least used/preferred?

Figure 8 presents the interviewees' influence tactics by the frequency of response. Generally, I note that most tactics were used by the majority of interviewed managers. There were only a few which were rarely used, as discussed below. Using the frequency

analysis, I could identify the top three most used and the least three used influence tactics enacted by IT project managers. These will be discussed next.

Figure 8: Interviewees' Frequency Response



Analysis

The top three most used influence tactics were rational persuasion, consultation, and collaboration. According to Kennedy, Fu, and Yukl (2003), rational persuasion, consultation, and collaboration were universally rated as effective tactics and they appear in the top-five lists in all countries where management influence has been studied. Building on Finding 1, these influence tactics are classified to be in the informational and behavioral-based influence dimensions. Study 2 revealed, benefits realization is impacted by stakeholders' alignment achieved through behavior-based and information-based influence, whereas these influence tactics are classified for the technical leadership style based on Finding 2. Analysis reveals, IT project managers need a variety of skills to adapt to various situations. On a macro level, IT project managers require conceptual

skills. Conceptual skills refer to the manager's cognitive ability to synthesize information, think critically, creatively, and logically (Johnson & Davey, 2019). As such, the effectiveness of the manager depends on the content of interaction and style (Rao, 2014). On a micro level, IT project managers should have specific knowledge and skills, technical competencies and proficiency, central and related to information technology to understand its potential and limitations (Dixit, 2007). My observation sides with Udo and Koppensteiner (2004), who state that the project manager should have general management skills such as leadership, negotiation, communication, team building, and other human resource management skills to gain influence and respect of stakeholders when they demonstrate the linkage between the corporation's business goals and the project. Project managers put time and effort into building relationships (Ellis, 2019), and one way is to bolster informality within the project by removing status barriers and inspiring casual conversations between managers and workers (Nicholas & Steyn, 2017).

Alternatively, the three least favored influence tactics used were shame, guilt, and shadow/proxy. Building on Finding 1, these influence tactics are classified to be in the behavioral and power-based influence dimensions. Study 2 revealed, benefits realization is impacted by business alignment driven by the project manager's behavioral and power-based influence, whereas these influence tactics are classified for the transactional leadership style based on Finding 2. Shame and guilt are considered self-conscious emotions. Self-conscious emotions are cognitively more complex than basic emotions (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Self-conscious emotions are based only on social goals, whereas basic emotions are based on biological needs of survival and reproduction. A study conducted by Flynn and Schaumberg (2012) revealed, although guilt and shame seem

quite similar to most people, both negative responses, there is a crucial distinction between the two. People's tendency to feel guilt, rather than shame, predicts how good a leader they are. If people feel guilty toward their organizations, they will behave in ways that make sure they live up to the organization's expectations (Flynn & Schaumberg, 2012). The tendency to feel guilt also predicts people's sense of responsibility for others. Statistical analyses suggest that guilt influences the sense of responsibility for others, which in turn affects people's success as leaders. In other words, a person who's ashamed tends to pull away from problems, whereas a guilt-prone person tends to judge actions rather than themselves by driving to solve problems. In another study by Alexandra Brewis-Slade, shame is a very powerfully felt emotion and can motivate people to conform when shame is related to violating some social expectation. Research has found that feeling shame was a stronger predictor than guilt or regret for motivation for positive self-change (Lickel et al., 2014). Interviewees indicated the use of shame and guilt as the last resort/option focusing on the results or specific goals by enforcing rules, standards, and expectations. Transactional leadership results in maximizing the efficiency and productivity of an organization (St. Thomas University, 2014). As such, this behavior leads IT project managers to give constructive feedback, not destructive as previously thought, regarding performance that allows stakeholders to improve their output to obtain better feedback and reinforcement. Terms such as poking, needling, nudging, and so on were used. They were more socially acceptable behavior or conduct and could have less long-term repercussions on workplace/project image yet not affecting work performance. IT project managers refrain from direct shaming or guilting others due to the company's policies in place around harassment in the workplace. On the other hand, interviewees

indicated they were not against or with the use of shadow/proxy – more inclined/favored depending on certain situations, environment, and/or tasks on hand. The use of shadow/proxy is to help IT project managers focus on broader issues and any problems that may arise by managing the day-to-day minutiae of a project. Also, the use of shadow/proxy help IT project managers with administrative tasks on a specific project, ensure stakeholders and departments have what is needed to meet the deadlines and milestones, executing specific plan stages, and so on. Terms such as coordinator, product owner, proxy product owner, champion, assistant, and so on were used.

Discussion

In this study, I sought to expand my understanding and knowledge on the fundamentals of social influence in the field of information systems and I particularly focused on answering: *What are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by IT project managers to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?*

To shape stakeholder's expectations towards the system, clarify the business intent for the investment, actualize the advantages gained from the investment, ensure that the project is delivered and used as intended, the IT project manager has to influence stakeholders and business. Per the IT Value Realization Model, the model suggests that stakeholder alignment combines the IT conversion and competitive process. This alignment process is impacted by informational and behavioral-based dimensions. Generally, project managers have access to detailed information about management plans, stakeholders and their activities, technical and functional facts about the project or business process, and so on; it is best advisable to enact informational tactics. These

informational tactics are exchange, coalition, consultation, and rational persuasion. Nonetheless, using informational tactics will not suffice alone. IT project managers have to have interpersonal skills, soft skills, at the core of his/her social interactions. These interpersonal skills, behavioral-based influence, are listening, social cliques, accountability, empowerment, shadow/proxy, appearance, personal appeals, ingratiation, apprising, collaboration, and inspirational appeals. The combination and the use of informational and behavioral-based tactics will create the alignment of stakeholders to actualize and realize benefits.

On the other hand, the model also suggests that business alignment combines the IT alignment process with the competitive process towards established business goals when the conversion process has been successful. This alignment process assumes that the project manager directs stakeholders towards established business goals. Due to the limited authority of actions around stakeholders, IT project managers are expected to induce and influence using other means. These means are based on the power and behavioral-based dimensions that offer a significant means to reach the desired outcome. The power dimension is characterized to invoke compliance in subtle and incisive conduct using tactics as shame, upward appeals, guilt, pressure, and legitimacy. Nonetheless, using power tactics will not serve alone. IT project managers have to have interpersonal skills, soft skills, at the core of his/her social interactions. These interpersonal skills, behavioral tactics were discussed previously. The combination and the use of power and behavioral tactics will align the business to actualize and realize benefits.

The second important theme highlighted that the path to forming critical project level alignments depends on the leadership styles used and behavior directing, motivating, guiding, and managing stakeholder and business. The author was seeking to find answers to: *Can the identified tactics be clustered per leadership styles?* Enacting influence tactics was primarily based on personal traits and not based on their role/positional power. Yet, positional power did contribute to the arsenal as it made IT project managers more visible or recognized, giving them in specific situations formal authority. Hence, both personal traits and positional power are complementary. The IT project manager will not be able to actualize project benefits to stakeholders and business without being also awarded the proper and formal authority necessary to influence people around them.

This study also proposes leadership styles take effects through the appropriate predisposed influence tactics. Transformational IT project managers tend to use empowerment, coalition, apprising, and inspirational appeals to align and gain stakeholders and business to the desired outcome. This behavior should be promoted in IT projects as it offers great practical significance, but it can be too conceptual and not task-focused. As such, transformational leadership is contingent on transactional, servant, and technical leadership. Transactional managers tend to use influence tactics that emphasize guilt, shame, pressure, legitimating, social cliques, shadow/proxy, appearance, exchange, and personal appeals. Such behavior and use of tactics are important in sustaining change once it has been introduced. As such, I see transactional leadership as a prerequisite to transformational leadership once stakeholders actualize benefits. Servant managers are inclined to use influence tactics that emphasize ingratiation, accountability,

and listening. This leadership is important in building trust, boosting morale, and encouraging ownership and responsibility but may lead to failure if stakeholders do not understand the big picture and/or business goals. I categorize servant leadership as a subset of transformational leadership in the IT project management context only required to align stakeholders by feeling more valued and appreciated in projects, but it will not suffice alone. As for the technical managers, they use tactics as collaboration, upward appeals, consultation, and rational persuasion with stakeholders who exhibit higher competence levels to actualize the desired results. With this leadership, creativity and innovation can align stakeholders but may lead to ambiguity in roles, responsibility, and cross-team conflict. To reconcile and explain my thoughts, the IT Value Realization Model is a complex set of processes that requires a dynamic shift and myriad leadership styles depending on the project phase, stakeholders, and benefits to be actualized. The role of the IT project manager is to be insightful to get things done through people while assessing the environment.

The IT project manager's technical competencies, functional knowledge, skills, and information are important in determining the success to form critical project level alignments. To influence, they should have a natural and/or highly developed ability to read the actual and potential behavior of others around them to provide technical guidance and clear direction when needed. This suggests that the IT project managers need to act openly and transparently across all stakeholders to ensure that everyone has access to the same information and remains informed throughout the process of execution. Also, the project manager needs to develop a shared vision among the stakeholders and integrating changing requirements throughout the phase of the project to

achieve stakeholder alignment. Overall, the role of the project manager is that of an integrator combining functional needs with business strategy, sometimes through formal authority but often through collaboration and building trust and shared vision and engaging in various forms of social influence.

The last point this paper presents, typically IT project managers who obtained project management certifications yet lack technical understanding of how information technology operates, lack technical skills, exhibit transformational, transactional, or servant behaviors. They use any form of influence tactics to actualize project benefits, reach the desired outcome, as a means not to lose their position. Nonetheless, this is not enough; they need to demonstrate technical leadership. These IT project managers typically entered the field of information technology/systems due to the financial benefits. They hinted it will be hard or take time to find another position if they lose their current one. As such, they swing between power and behavioral influence dimensions depending on the individual/groups trying to influence and/or task trying to achieve.

On the other hand, IT project managers who held a deeper understanding, knowledge, and education of information technology exhibit a technical leadership style. Though technical leadership excels in certain areas (Farris, 1988), it is not enough as a more hybrid or agile leadership is needed. These managers were characterized to be direct and sharp as they have the knowledge that others do not. Also, these managers openly stated that their knowledge is scarce and valuable, and it is easy for them to move from a company, organization, or project to another. As such, they were positioned in the informational influence dimension. Lastly, I refer to the third type of IT project manager as hybrid or agile, high-performing IT project managers. They obtained their project

management certifications while holding a deep understanding and knowledge of information technology. They could swing between all influence dimensions, use any influence tactic or combination of influences tactics to form critical project level alignments. These IT project managers camouflage their behavior and style to actualize benefits.

Contributions

In terms of literature review, I seldom come across comprehensive research incorporating leadership theory, social influence, and IT project management into a single comprehensive study. Adopting the hermeneutic framework review process helped us produce several influence tactics, which I triangulated with data obtained from my semi-structured interviews. As such, my study results are consistent with the literature on influence tactics while uncovering additional tactics that I had not earlier recognized. My work contributes to the academic body of knowledge while providing insights for the practitioner community.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations are present in this research. This study is a framework and does not identify under what conditions tactics yield successful alignment and when they do not. The first limitation, depending on the software development lifecycle, for example, following the traditional approach such as waterfall requires the project manager to play an essential role in every phase of the project, whereas the agile approach enables the entire team to manage the project without having a dedicated project manager. The second limitation, most organizations tend to have projects that are part of a program in which the program manager can make certain changes that could

affect a project at the expense of another. Lastly, my study did not focus on changing market conditions or competition actions that may at times result in project failure or canceling the project. These circumstances are outside the scope of my analysis.

This research can be further analyzed by identifying individual's or parties' interests. Sternberg identifies interests (Hackney, 2011) as intra-personal, inter-personal, and extra-personal. As such, future research can analyze stakeholders' network dynamics, project dynamics, tasks on hand, that is, type of change/request, deployment, system enhancement, and so on, and incentives/reward system. Also, future research should consider evaluating tactics in specific industries. Hierarchal-based organizations as governments are characterized by ascending chains of power or authority. Conducting such research will be valuable to identify which influence tactics are found and can be enacted to actualize project benefits to stakeholders and business.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate what shapes project outcome, that is, factors that influence IT projects to fail. Specifically, it focused on social influence as a contributing factor to this behavior. It sought to examine the method or the process that the IT project manager has to follow while aligning business and stakeholders to actualize benefits. Also, this study uncovered the measures by which the IT project manager can enact while facing business and stakeholders to promote value realization.

The literature describes project management as planning, implementing, and monitoring (controlling) a group of activities intended to deliver a product or service (PMI, 2017). As such, project management is viewed as an execution-oriented discipline focusing on delivering projects on time, budget, and scope (Morris, 2013). Nonetheless, Morris (2013) criticized the focused view of execution discipline and narrow-minded set as it neglects front-end aspects of the projects, in particular with strategy. Cicmil et al. (2006) discussed current practices that are too focused on efficiency, tools, and techniques while ignoring the role of ethics, relationships of power, political issues, or interdependencies between project actors. The underlying assumption, projects are complex social settings characterized by unpredictability, monitoring, and collaborative interaction among participants, while project management practice is consequently seen as social conduct. Project management adheres social aspects needed to implement common practices and support collaboration, shared design, problem-solving (Mutis & Hartmann, 2018), not a one-person operation (Kerzner, 2017b) combined with the art of managing people (Westcott, 2005).

Schmidt et al. (2001) generated a comprehensive list (14 groups) to broaden our view of the types of risks projects can encounter or adhere to. Their research has identified, and to name a few; failure to gain user commitment, failure to get project plan approval from all parties, and managing multiple relationships with stakeholders to be important sources and/or factors of project risk. Despite evidence suggesting that such factors exist, I still do not know how social influence form critical stakeholder alignments and promote value realization.

This study contributes to the understanding of how IT project managers form critical stakeholder alignments and promote value realization. To do so, they should engage and use a variety of influencing techniques (Craddock & Gumz, 2012). With this understanding, the selection of influencing techniques depends on the context, individuals, and/or groups involved.

My research aimed to answer the following: **Study 1**: *What factors influence IT project failure?* **Study 2**: *To what extent does the project manager's varying influence impact business and stakeholder alignment and consequent project's benefits realization?* **Study 3**: *what are the primary influence tactics and the related mechanism used by IT project managers to form critical project level alignments (stakeholder/business)?* Next, I will introduce the integrated findings of this dissertation.

Integrated Findings

Table 33 presents the *Bases of Project Manager Influence*. It puts forth a validated research model to form critical project alignments and actualize benefits. It demonstrates the method (how) to form alignment and measures (what) enacted to promote benefits.

Table 33: Bases of Project Manager Influence

Finding	Method			Alignment		Measures			Outcome
Bases of Project Manager influence	Influence Dimensions	The IT project manager has to follow while aligning business and stakeholders to actualize benefits.	Power	Stakeholder	Business	Success Elements	The IT project manager can enact while facing business and stakeholders to promote value realization.	➢ Shame, Upward Appeals, Guilt, Pressure, Legitimate	Value Realization
			Behavioral					➢ Listening, Social clicks, Accountability, Empowerment, Shadow/Proxy, Appearance, Personal Appeals, Ingratiation, Apprising, Collaboration, and Inspirational Appeals	
			Informational					➢ Exchange, Coalition, Consultation, Rational Persuasion	

Finding 1: Bases of Project Manager Influence

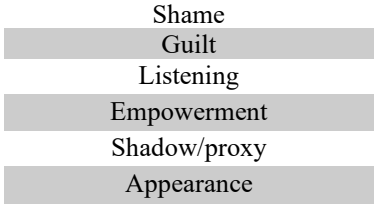
One of the first to coin the behavioral and organizational issues of project management was Baker et al. (1983). Their study broader defined project success than the typical triple constraints of cost, time, performance. Nevertheless, Cicmil et al. (2006) discussed project actuality encompasses the understanding of the lived experience of organizational members with work and life in their local project environments. With this, my selection was influenced by the results obtained from Study 1, where I used qualitative coding of interviewees' responses of what shapes project outcomes. I focused on three types: legitimate, expert, and informational influence (Figure 4) that are essential for the actualizing project benefits. To achieve project success and avoid failure in execution, IT project managers should have leadership skills, soft skills, and not only technical skills to achieve stakeholder alignments. The study concluded the absence or lack of leadership skills and void of capabilities to engage stakeholders, that is, not able to meet expectations and align to the system had negative implications on the projects' continuum/shaped project outcome.

To further investigate these three types of influence, I conducted Study 2, where I used a quantitative approach to identify which type of influence impacts benefits realization. I developed a research model which formulates to what extent IT project manager's various influence on project stakeholders is conducive to realized project benefits. Two results were identified; first, benefits realization is impacted by stakeholder alignment achieved through the project manager's behavior and information-based influence. Second, benefits realization is also impacted by business alignment driven by the project manager's behavioral and power-based influence. I identify behavioral,

informational, and power-based influences as critical influence dimensions. These dimensions are the overarching method or process that the IT project manager has to follow while aligning business and stakeholders to actualize benefits.

With the identification of influence dimensions, these were too generalized lacking granularity to explain which types of tactics IT project managers should use. As such, Study 3 used qualitative coding of interviewees' responses to uncover these tactics. I used an exploratory, Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA), tool designed to reveal the natural clustering within my dataset. Tactics were clustered per the dimensions discovered in Study 2. As such, I was able to uncover what constitutes each dimension. Exchange, coalition, consultation, and rational persuasion types of influence belong to the informational dimension. Listening, social cliques, accountability, empowerment, shadow/proxy, appearance, personal appeals, ingratiation, apprising, collaboration, and inspirational appeals belong to the behavioral dimension. Shame, upward appeals, guilt, pressure, and legitimacy belonged to the power dimension. I named these tactics as success elements; measures by which the IT project manager can enact while facing business and stakeholders to actualize and realize benefits. Additionally, my research uncovered new success elements which previous literature has not identified (Figure 9).

Figure 9: New Identified Tactics



Finding 2: Dynamic Mindset & Adaptive Style

Table 34: Dynamic Mindset & Adaptive Style Overview

Finding	Prerequisite		Process			Output	
Dynamic Mindset & Adaptive Style	IT project managers use different tactics as means to achieve the desired results and/or actualize benefit.	Technical	Synchronization Process	**Knowing Organization**	Sense Making	Depends on the context, individuals and/or groups involved.	❖ Ensures ideas are appropriately represented in the project and communication among various groups within the organization is never disrupted.
					Knowledge Creation		
					Decision Making		
		Transactional		**Stakeholder Analysis**			❖ Administering systems, making things happen daily and sustaining change once it has been introduced.
		Transformational			Culture Awareness		❖ Ensures engagement and support organizational objectives.
		Servant		**Risk Management**			❖ Ensures team's perception and efficient project implementation.

Table 34 presents the overview of *Dynamic Mindset and Adaptive Style*; a systematic approach to form critical alignments and actualize benefits which I will discuss next. I will start with the prerequisites (what is required) then discuss the process (how) to achieve desired project output.

It takes more than technical skills and the fulfillment of contractual obligations to shape project outcomes. Project managers need to develop and apply interpersonal skills to be successful leaders and if they want to be also effective leaders (Kliem & Ludin, 1995). IT project manager's approach influences the performances of every organization, process, activity, or project. Current literature (Munns & Bjeirmi, 1996; Turner & Müller, 2005; Rodney Turner, Müller, & Dulewicz, 2009) focuses on the efficiency of projects; however, they overlook project manager's leadership styles and competencies contributing as factors to project success. To further understand this behavior, I conducted Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) to investigate which tactics under different conditions to promote project execution and/or yield successful alignment. Analysis revealed, IT project managers use different tactics as means to achieve the desired results and/or actualize benefit. Using success elements is dependent on the context, individuals, and/or groups involved. My conclusion. technical leaders ensure ideas are appropriately represented in the project and communication among various groups within the organization is never disrupted. Transactional leaders are best in administering systems, making things happen daily, and sustaining change once it has been introduced. Transformational leaders ensure engagement and support organizational objectives, whereas servant leaders ensure team perception and efficient project implementation. This contradicts the previously established ideas and published literature

view of leaders managing projects. They need to engage in multiple leadership styles (adaptive) in different roles, not just transactional or technical leadership to execute the project, that is, they need to be adaptive to the environment and/or interactions facing with business and stakeholders.

Leadership has become increasingly more difficult, complex, and multi-faceted for organizations of all types globally, thereby bringing new questions and challenges regarding the "best" type of leader (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). If IT project managers invest in project output (completing the project) and do not devote enough attention to fulfilling stakeholders' requirements/needs, eventually, the project will fail, and benefits will not be sustained. If IT project managers invest in closing each stakeholders' requirements/needs and devote less attention to strategy to be executed encompassing organizational goals, eventually the project will fail, and benefits will not be sustained. As such, IT project managers need to know how to balance project outcomes and stakeholders' requirements to sustain and actualize benefits.

To do so, several steps should be satisfied, encompassing knowing organizations, stakeholder analysis, and risk management. I define this stage as the *synchronization process*. The first step is *knowing organization*. According to Cho (1996), *knowing organizations* are those that use information strategically in the context of three areas; sensemaking, knowledge creation, and decision-making. The immediate goal of sensemaking is for an organization's members to share a common understanding of what the organization is and what it is doing; the long-term goal is to ensure that the organization adapts and therefore continues to thrive in a dynamic environment (Cho, 1996). In other words, strategic reflections (transcended by upper management) must be

done concerning the mission, vision, values, and culture, allowing its members to bring value. Knowledge creation is achieved through a recognition of the synergistic relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge (Appendix M) in the organization and through the design of social processes that create new knowledge by converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Cho, 1996). Particularly, this knowledge allows the organization to develop new abilities and capabilities, create new or improve products/services, redesign its organizational processes. Decision-making involves choosing the best option among the plausible and presented to pursue based on the organizational strategy. Hence, by using information strategically the IT project manager will be able to act wisely and decisively to promote value/actualize benefits to stakeholders and business.

The second step includes stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis consists of the systematic identification and characterization of the most relevant stakeholders for an organization or initiative: that is, those stakeholders exerting, or trying to exert, influence on the project activities (Bevir, 2006). Stakeholder analysis combines two distinct modes (Roberts et al., 2003). One is interest group analysis which consists of understanding the social groups that are seeking to move in a particular direction (Schoettle, 1970), while the second analysis examines bureaucratic politics and is focused on the competition between agencies and individuals (Martin, 1969). Also, this step includes being culturally aware. Literature highlights (Hofstede, 1983, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) culture plays a role in influencing the behaviors of people in different societies. With this, culture exerts influence on views and expectations of individuals concerning tasks to be done which can impact individual behaviors in the workplace. Hence, to

obtain alignment with key decisions (G. M. Hill, 2007), the IT project manager needs to conduct stakeholder analysis necessary to the survival of the project (S. J. Smith, 2012) and have cultural awareness while collaborating with applicable stakeholders.

The third step includes risk management. Risk management is defined as a systematic approach for analyzing and managing threats and opportunities associated with a specific project and will increase the likelihood of attaining project objectives (Mokhatab & Poe, 2012). This involves provisioning for predictable and non-predictable risks (Disha Experts, 2018), which are mitigated, minimized, or controlled through engineering, management, or operational means (Ericson, 2015). Hence, adopting this approach, the IT project manager will be able to identify, evaluate, and prioritize risks, including cultural difference as a factor, to increase the value of the project; promote benefits to stakeholders and business.

To summarize this section, my dissertation acknowledges that projects today require different leadership styles opposing to what was considered in the past. The synchronization process starts by synchronizing IT with the rest of the business so that IT and the business make decisions together (Blais, 2011). This can be done when the IT project manager has technical competencies highlighting the importance of leveraging information technology to attain organizational goals. Nonetheless, *knowing organization* proposes the IT project manager use information strategically to promote value/actualize benefits to stakeholders and business. To do so, they have to wear multiple hats swinging between different styles depending on the context, individuals, and/or groups involved. In parallel, he/she should conduct a *stakeholder analysis* to find stakeholders exerting, or trying to exert, influence on critical project decisions and activities. Knowing this, and as

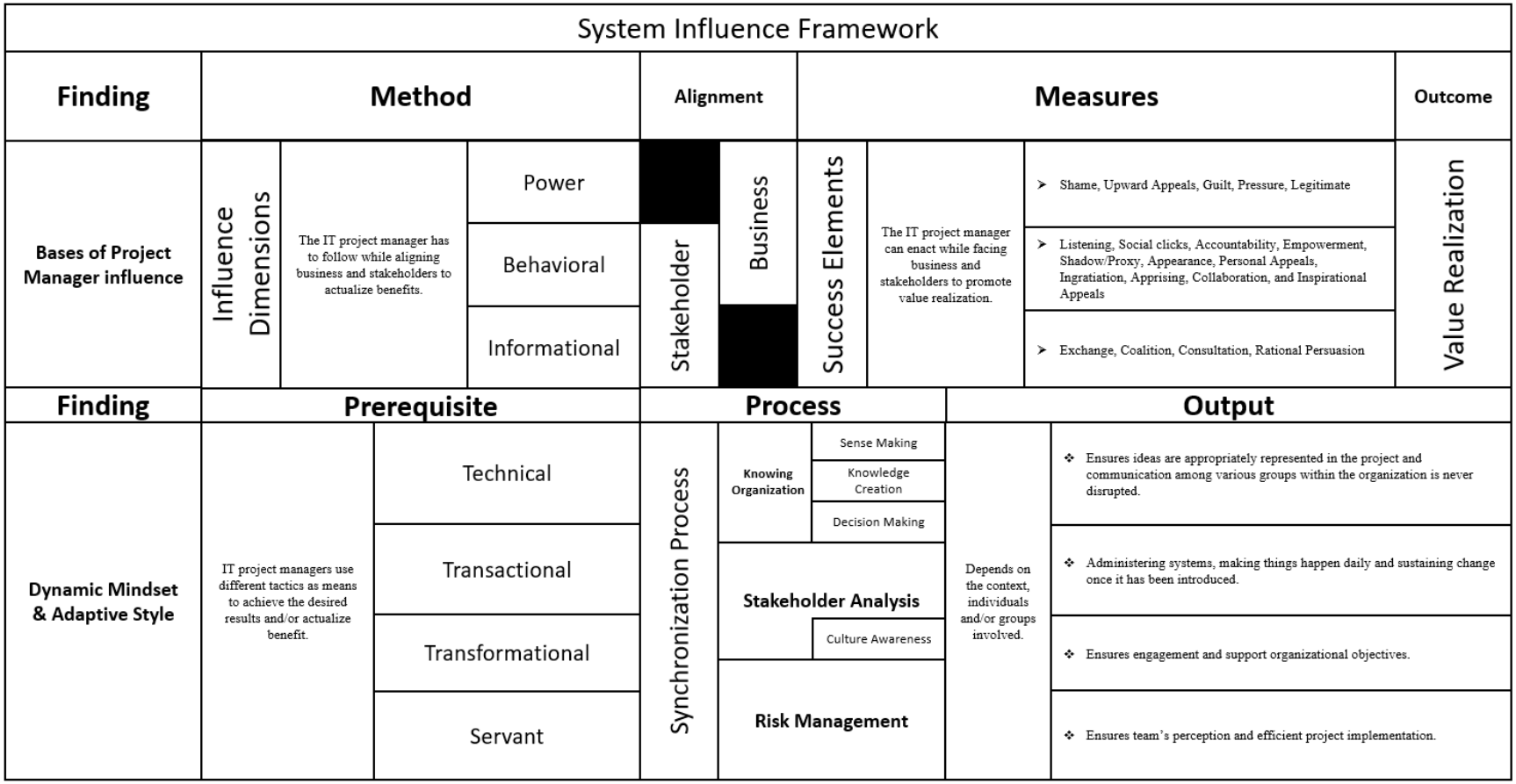
literature highlights, values and attitudes can influence evaluations at an organizational/project level, the project manager can use specific or combination of tactics to reduce or eliminate. Furthermore, conducting *risk management* and accounting cultural differences could help in mitigating complex project dynamics to promote benefits. Hence, I view servant leadership as a subset of transformational leadership, and transformational leadership exceeds transactional leadership, but technical leadership is a prerequisite to servant leadership. Alignment is here focused on how IT is aligned with the business and how business is aligned with IT (Brocke & Rosemann, 2014) as both fields are interrelated. With this step-by-step approach in mind, the IT project manager can overcome natural inertia and/or resistance influencing in the direction intended to promote benefits and form critical alignment.

Conclusion

The desire for this dissertation is to present the *System Influence Framework* (Figure 10) that guides IT practitioners, that is, IT project managers, upper management, and stakeholders, to improve their IT project performance. Success in IT projects requires the organization to work together, a shared vision of the go-to-organization pre/post-implementation of the project greatly enhances the ability of the PM to succeed, as a shared vision drives both stakeholder and business alignment. IT project managers should be aware of the firm's objective, business strategies, and short and long-term goals to align strategic goals with stakeholders' expectations, requirements, and IT strategy. If the IT project manager's mission is only to execute narrowly on an objective(s) without due consideration to the greater needs of the organization, and the functional leaders are

willing to adapt to an ever-changing business environment, that project and project manager will likely fail.

Figure 10: System Influence Framework



Contributions

Organizations should consider and focus on hiring IT project managers not only based on technical expertise. Though according to literature, expertise and education play a role in managing projects and achieving benefits, IT project managers should have leadership skills, soft skills necessary to create alignment between stakeholders and business. Nonetheless, enacting the dimensions and using the success elements based on the individual/group to influence and/or task on hand to accomplish I refer to as the *System Influence Framework.* With this framework, IT practitioners can utilize/follow to improve project performance.

Limitations And Future Research

Adopting the *System Influence Framework* has its limitations. I presented a method to how the IT project manager can increase the likelihood to form critical project alignments and, when necessary, enact certain success elements to actualize benefits to stakeholders and business. Nonetheless, this method is generalized. By generalized, first, I mean other certain factors (discussed above) that may lead to success or failure to projects that were not accounted in this dissertation, that is, the organization decides to halt or cancel the project, organizational policies, governmental regulations, funding, overlooking industry best practices, market conditions or competition actions and so on. Second, mastering social influence, soft skills, and becoming *socially intelligent* takes years to practice, that is, trial and error (build experience). As such, knowing the success elements does not suffice. Third, depending on the project dynamics, external and internal project roadblocks may affect the project outcome/success, that is, ambiguous goals, few resources, insufficient data gathering, and so on.

Echoing the above section, this research can be further analyzed by identifying individual's or parties' interests. Sternberg identifies interests (Hackney, 2011) as intra-personal, inter-personal, and extra-personal. Nonetheless, future research as well should analyze the principle of liking. Since project management adheres to social aspects, project managers and stakeholders are likely to be persuaded by individuals and/or groups they like and those they want to be like.

CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

A Different View of IT Project Management

In this section, I will explore my work from a different lens. A philosophical approach, inspired by concepts that I feel relevant, add value and support to my dissertation.

I introduce a new lens of IT project management. In my view, the conceptual survival of a project can be related to the philosophical concepts of natural selection and existentialism. For Darwin (1859), natural selection is a drawn-out, complex process involving multiple interconnected causes. It requires variation in a population of organisms. That variation is acted upon by the struggle for existence, a process that in effect selects variations conducive to the survival and reproduction of their bearers (Gildenhuys, 2019). A breeder would select individuals with desirable variations and allow only those to produce offspring. In my view, natural selection is not an explanation for adaptation; it only explains why and how relatively better adaptations can increase in frequency (Endler & May, 1986). It works through the effects of a trait on survival. In other words, if a change to our physical structure or behavior leads to a survival advantage. Darwin's theory argues that species change over time is dependent on features or traits in offspring that are beneficial, that is, no fixed nature. This aligns well with existentialism philosophical approach. According to Heidegger, human existence or *dasein* is a practical engagement with the world. The center of existentialism lies the claim that humans are given their content neither by ahistorical, transcultural essence nor by nature (Blattner, 1996). *Dasein* determines this content in its act of self-understanding, specifically, the essence of *Dasein* lies in its existence. This was the inspiration for Jean-

Paul Sartre's thesis that *existence precedes essence.* According to Sartre et al. (2007), humans are aggregate relations that constitute an enterprise. In his view, humans are defined by their actions and choices, that is, born free (no fixed nature).

To this end, we can determine humans can adapt their rationality and behaviors in their struggle to survive. For Dyer et al. (2009), the ontological view of a project as a human cluster exhibiting a flock behavior (birds). As such, only a small minority of informed individuals is needed to guide a large uninformed group(s). This makes sense as the individual with this identity and characteristics is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). That is to say, when social behaviors are resisted, humans strategize their behavior to normalize discourse.

Moving forward, and building on the above, the Darwinian view of an IT project manager can be defined as a social construct with different agendas to promote competitive benefits. In contrast, the existentialist view of the IT project manager can be defined as a social construct purposed to form alignment. With this, we can determine humans can adapt their rationality and behaviors in their struggle to survive and in my case the conceptual survival of a project.

Initially, in Study 1, my work started to seek influence factors that contributed to IT projects' failure. In other words, I was exploring what shapes project outcomes. My work has taken a different direction upon uncovering the lack of social behavior that could lead to project underperformance leading to failure. Study 2, macro level, investigated dimensions needed to make the system useful and to actualize its expected benefits to stakeholders and business. Study 3, micro-level, uncovered the tactics and

success elements needed by which we can judge the successful outcome of a project. These success elements will increase the likelihood of success/actualizing benefits.

The desire for this dissertation is to present the *System Influence Framework* that guides IT practitioners, that is, IT project managers, upper management, and stakeholders, to improve their IT project performance. Adopting this framework will increase the likelihood of survival of IT projects.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- Tell me about a time when you were involved in a project that was successful/less than successful/not successful.
    - Probes:
        - Project description.
        - What is the business goal the project is aiming to achieve?
        - What business benefits will these goals deliver if achieve?
        - What will be the consequences to the business (financial, reputation, etc.) if the project does not go ahead or fails to deliver the objectives?
        - Are there any alternatives to this project?
        - Who is the main stakeholder?
        - Who is responsible for ensuring resource allocation?
        - Is the new project dependent on a previous or current project?
        - What are the success criteria that will indicate the objectives have been met and the benefits delivered?
        - Any contingency planning developed or in place?
- Looking back on your experience while working on the project:
    - Probes:
        - Can you describe an effective project manager?
        - Can you describe a less effective project manager?
        - What gets in the way of an IT project manager?

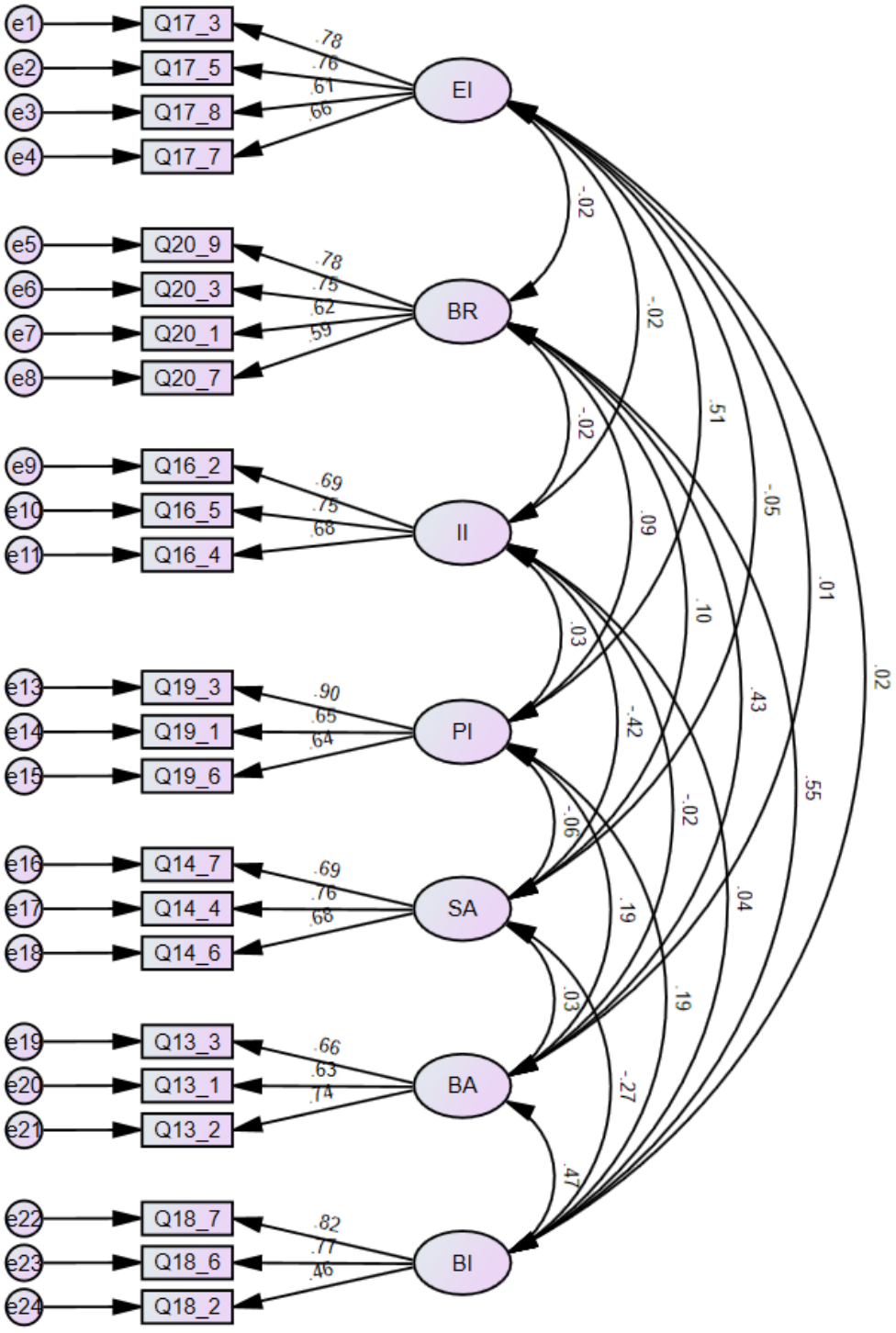
Appendix B: EFA Pattern Matrix

Pattern Matrix [a]

	Factor						
	EI	BR	II	PI	SA	BA	BI
Q17_3	0.960						
Q17_5	0.656						
Q17_8	0.555						
Q17_7	0.522						
Q20_9		0.809					
Q20_3		0.801					
Q20_1		0.591					
Q20_7		0.503					
Q16_2			0.866				
Q16_5			0.656				
Q16_4			0.601				
Q16_1			0.446				
Q19_3				0.901			
Q19_1				0.637			
Q19_6				0.583			
Q14_7					0.761		
Q14_4					0.671		
Q14_6					0.667		
Q13_3						0.711	
Q13_1						0.655	
Q13_2						0.601	
Q18_7							0.758
Q18_6							0.686
Q18_2							0.572

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

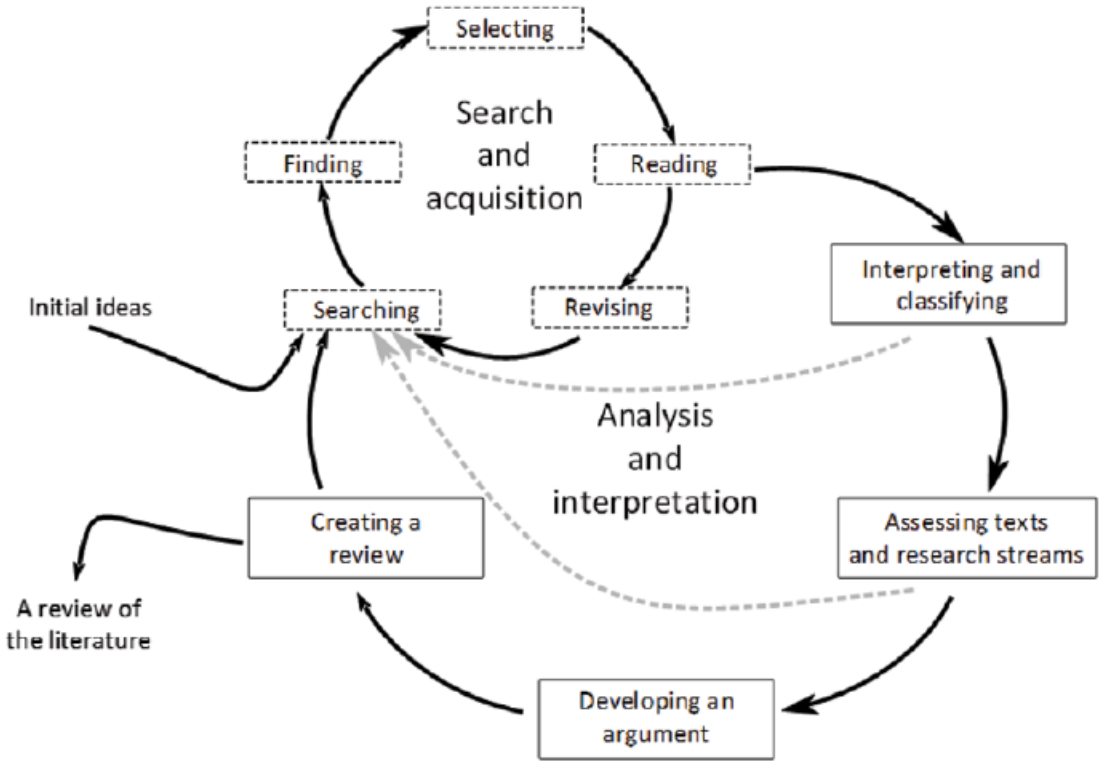
Appendix C: CFA Model



Appendix D: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations & Composite Reliability Estimates

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability	BI	BA	PI	II	BR	EI	SA
BI	15.666	0.647	0.712	1						
BA	15.497	0.549	0.716	.575**	1					
PI	19.507	0.832	0.758	.224*	.231*	1				
II	9.894	0.571	0.723	0.062	-0.026	0.038	1			
BR	18.727	0.694	0.777	.641**	.531**	0.108	-0.022	1		
EI	17.120	0.753	0.795	0.029	0.016	.587**	-0.022	-0.022	1	
SA	10.162	0.814	0.754	-.312**	0.033	-0.071	-.511**	0.106	-0.058	1

Appendix E: Hermeneutic Circles



Appendix F: Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS), Definition, and Interpretation

Tactic	Definition & Interpretation
Requesting	Use of demands to get others to take action. Requesting also includes the use of frequent checking and persistent reminders to get employees to act.
Legitimating	Originates from the belief that a person has the formal right to make demands, and to expect others to be compliant and obedient.
Coalition	Enlist others' help and use their support as a method to extend influence or reach goals they could not accomplish on their own.
Rational Persuasion	Combination of pressure request approach with logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a request is feasible and relevant to reach important objectives.
Socializing	Use praise and flattery as an attempt to get others to carry out a request.
Personal	Ask others to carry out a request out of friendship or personal favor.
Exchange	Give or provide something of value to others in return for something in return. Explicit or implicit expectations, an exchange is based on the concept of reciprocity i.e., negotiating, bargaining, or trading.
Consultation	Ask others to suggest or help to reach an acceptable solution or decision. Participation is a form of consultation i.e., asking for input, probing for feedback, incorporating others' ideas, creating a sense of ownership that can be appealing to others to create and establish influence.
Inspirational Appeals	Appeal to others' values and ideals or seek to arouse their emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal.

Appendix G: Influence Tactics and Definitions

Tactic	Definition
Rational Persuasion	The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show that the request or proposal is feasible and relevant for important task objectives.
Apprising	The agent explains how carrying out a request or supporting a proposal will benefit the target personally or will help to advance the target's career.
Inspirational Appeals	The agent appeals to the target's values and ideals or seeks to arouse the target person's emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal.
Consultation	The agent asks the target to suggest improvements or help plan a proposed activity or change for which the target person's support is desired.
Collaboration	The agent offers to provide relevant resources or assistance if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change.
Ingratiation	The agent uses praise and flattery when attempting to influence the target person to carry out a request or support a proposal.
Personal Appeals	The agent asks the target to carry out a request or support a proposal out of friendship, or asks for a personal favor before saying what it is.
Exchange	The agent offers something the target person wants or offers to reciprocate at a later time if the target will do what the agent requests.
Coalition	The agent enlists the aid of others, or uses the support of others, as a way to influence the target to do something.
Legitimating	The agent seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request or to verify that he/she has the authority to make it.
Pressure	The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do something.

Appendix H: Eleven Influence Tactics and Definition

Tactic	Definition
Pressure	Behavior includes demands, threats, or intimidation to convince others to comply with a request or to support a proposal.
Assertiveness	Behavior includes repeatedly making requests, setting timelines for project completion, or expressing anger toward individuals who do not meet expectations
Legitimating	Behavior seeks to persuade others that the request is something they should comply with given their situation or position.
Coalition	Behavior seeks the aid of others to persuade them to do something or uses the support of others as an argument for them to agree.
Exchange	Behavior makes explicit or implicit a promise that others will receive rewards or tangible benefits if they comply with a request or reminds others of a favor that should be reciprocated.
Upward Appeals	Behavior seeks the approval/acceptance of those in higher positions within the organization before requesting someone.
Ingratiating	Behavior seeks to get others in a good mood or to think favorably of them before asking them to do something.
Rational Persuasion	Behavior uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade others that a proposal or request is viable and likely to result in task objectives.
Personal Appeals	Behavior seeks others' compliance to their request by asking a "special favor for them," or relying on interpersonal relationships to influence their behavior.
Inspirational Appeals	Behavior makes an emotional request or proposal that arouses enthusiasm by appealing to other's values and ideals, or by increasing their confidence that they can succeed.
Consultation	Behavior seeks others' participation in making a decision or planning how to implement a proposed policy, strategy, or change.

Appendix I: Supporting Influence Tactics and References

Tactics	Reference
Gifting, informal approach, written explanation.	(Leong, Bond, & Fu, 2006)
Friendliness.	(Tepper, Brown, & Hunt, 1993)
Politicking.	(Steensma & Milligen, 2003)
Good Soldier, Image Management, Personal Networking, Information Control, Strong-arm Coercion, organizationally Sanctioned Behavior, Destructive Legal Behavior, Destructive Illegal Behavior.	(Ralston et al., 1993)
Manipulation, rewards.	(Mowday, 1978)

Appendix J: Ralston et al. (1993) Tactics

Tactics	Description
Good Soldier	Get ahead through hard work that benefits the organization.
Image Management	Actively present oneself in a positive manner across the entire organization.
Personal Networking	Develop and utilize an informal organizational social structure for one's benefit.
Information Control	Control information that is restricted from others to benefit oneself.
Strong-arm Coercion	Use illegal tactics, such as blackmail, to achieve personal goals.
Organizationally Sanctioned Behavior	Behaviors directly beneficial to the organization such as self-enhancement (obtaining an MBA) and personal ingratiation tactics.
Destructive Legal Behavior	Behaviors that directly harmful to others or the organization, such as obtaining and communicating information to discredit others.
Destructive Illegal Behavior	Behaviors harmful to others and illegal such as blackmailing, stealing valuable document and harassment.

Appendix K: Interview Protocol

- Tell me about yourself.
    a. Family and work/professional career history.

- **Project Involvement:**

- Tell me about a time when you were involved in a project that was *Successful/Not successful*.
    a. Project description.
    b. What was the business goal the project aimed to achieve?
    c. What were the benefits of the project?
    d. Where the benefits tangible or intangible?

- **Authority, Decision Making & Communication:**

1. Who was the project owner/sponsor? What decision-making/authority did they have?
2. To what extent are you allowed to make decisions in your project? Is it enough/not enough?
3. Tell me about the most challenging task encountered and how did you accomplish it?
4. Describe a project where you had specific responsibilities but did not have direct authority over the stakeholders whose support was necessary. How did you handle it and what happened?
5. Before undertaking a change, how was it communicated to stakeholders to gain support?
6. Describe some of the networks you've developed within your function and inter-functional. How does this help?

- **Mission, Vision & Strategy:**

1. How was success defined at the beginning of the project? what is different in the completion phase? What has changed?
2. How were changes to the scope handled? What has changed and who was the major influencer/which stakeholder and why?
3. Were the stakeholders aware of the purpose and outcome of the project? Did their input affect the outcome?

- **Influence:**

1. Describe a situation where you had to influence another stakeholder or group to achieve project benefits. How did you handle it and what happened?
2. Describe a situation where a stakeholder influenced the other stakeholders, not in the form you were expecting? What were the factors that made it successful?
3. Describe a situation where a stakeholder influenced you? What were the factors that made it successful?
4. Describe how you anticipate and influence the needs of stakeholders for actualizing benefits they may not know about yet.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to influence to create alignment. Describe the actions that you took and what the results were?
6. Describe a time when you were very effective in influence your point across and aligning others to change their positions.
7. Describe a time when you had to influence others in a particular situation. What influence technique and/or measure did you take?
8. When you face obstacles in your project, what influence approach works best for you and why?

- **Alignment:**

1. How was alignment at the beginning of the project formed?
2. Describe a time when you were not/effective in aligning stakeholders. What contributed to this?
3. Can you tell me about a time when a stakeholder was not functioning as part of the team? What you did and what was the outcome?
4. Tell me about a time when you had to bring others around to your way of thinking. How did you establish alignment? How did you influence them?
5. Describe some major steps you need to take to start building alignment between project teams/individuals.
6. Describe a situation where the stakeholder was approached for a particular situation he was opposing? How was it resolved?

- **Benefits Realization & Accountability:**

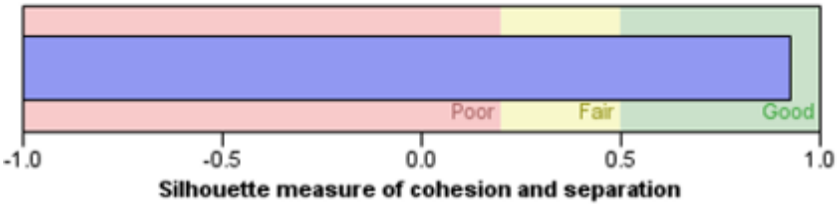
1. How do you propose benefits to stakeholders and what are the major determinants you consider?
2. How do you measure benefits and how do you influence stakeholders' buy-ins and alignment?
3. Tell me about a time when you presented a project benefit and stakeholders declined it. What did you do?
4. How do you persuade/influence benefits accountability and fulfillment to stakeholders? How do you establish the sign-off?

Appendix L: Research Model

Two-step Cluster Distribution

		N	% of Combined	% of Total
Cluster	1	4	20.0%	20.0%
	2	5	25.0%	25.0%
	3	11	55.0%	55.0%
	Combined	20	100.0%	100.0%
Total		20		100.0%

Cluster Quality



Appendix M: Knowledge Creation

Knowledge	Description
Tacit	Personal knowledge that is hard to formalize or communicate to others. It consists of subjective know-how, insights, and intuitions that comes to a person from having been immersed in an activity for an extended period of time.
Explicit	Formal knowledge that is easy to transmit between individuals and groups.

Appendix N: Survey Items

Stakeholders' Alignment

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers and stakeholders achieve a general level of agreement regarding the risks and trade-offs among new systems implemented.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers and stakeholders establish a uniform basis for prioritizing projects.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers and stakeholders maintain open lines of communication with other departments and functional units.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers and stakeholders identify and resolve potential sources of resistance to project plans.	○	○	○	○	○
Our organization has placed defined processes to ensure adequate stakeholder representation in the standards settings, changes, and communication process.	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders participate in project meetings.	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders champion innovations related to information technology.	○	○	○	○	○

Business Alignment

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers align information systems strategies with organizational strategic plans.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers adopt information systems objectives to the organizational objectives.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers identify information technology opportunities to support strategic organizational priorities.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers and stakeholders understand business requirements and IT limitations.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers implement efficient information technology solutions to support organizational strategic changes.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers get sufficient funding to operationalize and align the strategic objectives of the organization.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers educate stakeholders on the benefits of information technology on organizational and operation strategies.	○	○	○	○	○

Informational-based

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers ask stakeholders for information about the project progress.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers and stakeholders closely assess project progress.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers consult stakeholders about project activities or tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers check with stakeholders about the project progress in fulfilling certain activity or tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ask stakeholders if they are having problems or difficulties working on a specific activity or task.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers reach and seek stakeholders for information or clarifications.	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders seek and request information from project managers.	○	○	○	○	○

Expertise-based

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project Managers can give stakeholders good technical suggestions.	○	○	○	○	○
Project Managers can share with stakeholders their considerable experience and/or training.	○	○	○	○	○
Project Managers provide stakeholders with progress reports, escalations and changes.	○	○	○	○	○
Project Managers can provide stakeholders with the needed technical knowledge.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers are technically knowledgeable.	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders are well trained and experienced.	○	○	○	○	○
Project Managers are experienced running multiple projects.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers are experienced to assess project risks, quality, performance etc.	○	○	○	○	○

Behavioral-based

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers are able to influence and steer project meetings in their favor.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers are very good at influencing and generating innovative solutions to resolve conflicts with stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○
By establishing rules, project managers influence stakeholders of how projects proceed.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers influence stakeholders by determining how work exceptions are to be handled in projects.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers influence the opinions of stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers are able influence and build effective working relationships with stakeholders who have different opinions or interests.	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders seek project managers' advice and help in resolving project conflict.	○	○	○	○	○

Power-based

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers have authority in determining how tasks are prioritized.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers have authority in determining how projects proceed in case of deviations.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers have authority in establishing rules and procedures of how projects to be completed.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers have authority in determining how projects exceptions are to be handled.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers can give stakeholders requests to complete tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers have the authority to override, change or deny request changes on projects.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers have full authority over projects.	○	○	○	○	○

Benefits Realization

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Project managers ensure projects objectives are successful in meeting or exceeding stakeholders expectations.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers verify projects work the way stakeholders expected them to.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ensure and verify projects met their business needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ensure and verify the project delivered all desirable features and functionality.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ensure and verify the project met its critical project deadlines (e.g.., roll-out deadline, initial development deadline) with stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ensure the cost of the project do not exceed its budgeted amount.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers ensure the cost of the project do not exceed its budgeted amount.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers explain to stakeholders the difference between project output and project outcome.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers identify project benefits to stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers evaluate benefit realization for completed projects.	○	○	○	○	○

Social Desirability

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
At my company, hiring decisions have always been based only on merit.	○	○	○	○	○
Different functional areas within my firm, such as IT and HR, sometimes lack cohesion or unity.	○	○	○	○	○
Managers at my firm are sometimes afraid to voice their disagreement with a higher level manager's ideas.	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes my firm fails to exercise good judgment.	○	○	○	○	○
My firm has downplayed an event that customers might view as negative.	○	○	○	○	○

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