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### An IT Service Management Literature Review: Challenges, Benefits, Opportunities, and Implementation Practices

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#### Abstract

The governance and systematic alignment of technology-enabled service delivery within organisations has become a central preoccupation of contemporary management and information systems scholarship. As organisations across both public and private sectors grow increasingly dependent on digital infrastructure for operational continuity, competitive differentiation, and stakeholder value creation, the processes and frameworks through which such services are planned, monitored, maintained, and continuously improved have attracted extensive scholarly examination. This review synthesises evidence from 75 peer-reviewed and scholarly contributions spanning more than two decades of research to examine prevailing theories, dominant frameworks, documented challenges, quantified benefits, emergent opportunities, and widely recognised implementation practices associated with the governance of technology service delivery. Adopting a systematic analytical approach, the review integrates findings from diverse national, sectoral, and institutional contexts, including evidence from European, North American, Asian, African, and Latin American settings. The review identifies

persistent tensions between the aspirational goals of service alignment and the practical obstacles—encompassing cultural resistance, financial constraints, measurement challenges, and skills deficits—that constrain the pace and depth of adoption in many organisations. The documented benefits of structured service governance include measurable gains in service quality, enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, reduced operational costs, and greater transparency in technology-related accountability structures. Emergent opportunities are identified in the domains of cloud-enabled service orchestration, agile process integration, and the digital transformation of service functions in developing and transitional economies. Critical success factors, including executive commitment, comprehensive staff training, and process-oriented organisational culture, are synthesised from the available evidence base. The review concludes by mapping productive avenues for future empirical investigation, particularly in under-researched geographic and sectoral contexts that remain insufficiently represented in the existing literature.

**Keywords:** Service Governance, Process Maturity, IT Framework Implementation, Service Quality, Organisational Alignment, Technology Service Delivery

#### 1. Introduction

The systematic management of technology-enabled services represents one of the most consequential operational challenges facing modern organisations. As digital infrastructure becomes embedded in virtually every dimension of organisational activity, the capacity to govern, deliver, and continuously improve technology services has emerged as a strategic imperative rather than a merely technical concern (Iden & Eikebrokk, 2013) [30]. The convergence of growing service complexity, heightened stakeholder expectations, and intensifying pressure for operational efficiency has created conditions in which structured frameworks for managing technology service processes are no longer optional appendages to organisational governance but essential enablers of institutional effectiveness. Over the past two decades, the academic literature has expanded substantially, documenting the development, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of diverse service

management frameworks, standards, and best practice guidance across a broad range of industries, national contexts, and organisational sizes (Marrone & Kolbe, 2011a)<sup>[38]</sup>.

The formalisation of IT service management as a distinct professional and academic discipline gained significant momentum in the late 1990s and early 2000s, catalysed by the emergence of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) as a globally recognised compendium of best-practice guidance for service delivery and support (Pollard & Cater-Steel, 2009)<sup>[54]</sup>. Alongside ITIL, complementary frameworks and standards—including COBIT, ISO/IEC 20000, and various capability maturity models—have contributed to an increasingly pluralistic landscape in which organisations must navigate competing implementation recommendations and sometimes conflicting prescriptive guidance. The publication of ISO/IEC 20000 as a formally auditable international standard for service management systems introduced a measurable dimension to service governance that has attracted substantial practitioner and academic interest (Cots, Casadésus & Marimon, 2016)<sup>[16]</sup>. Despite growing practitioner uptake, significant conceptual ambiguity persisted regarding the boundaries, objectives, and performance expectations associated with structured service management programmes, underscoring the need for sustained scholarly analysis (Galup *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[24]</sup>.

The academic literature on IT service management is notably dispersed across a range of disciplines, including information systems, computer science, operations management, and organisational behaviour. This disciplinary heterogeneity, while enriching the conceptual resources available to researchers, has also produced fragmented empirical bases and limited cumulative knowledge development. Systematic literature reviews have emerged as an important methodological response to this fragmentation, offering structured approaches to synthesising evidence across diverse sources and contexts. The present review situates itself within this tradition, drawing on a wide empirical base to provide a comprehensive and analytically rigorous account of the current state of knowledge.

### 1.1 Background and Context

The emergence of structured approaches to managing technology-based services can be traced to the recognition, among both practitioners and policymakers, that ad hoc approaches to technology service delivery were inadequate for organisations operating at scale in increasingly digital environments. Early case study evidence documented the positive organisational outcomes associated with the adoption of structured service frameworks, including improvements in incident response times, reductions in unplanned service disruptions, and enhanced communication between technology teams and business stakeholders (Tan, Cater-Steel & Toleman, 2009)<sup>[65]</sup>. These early accounts also highlighted the complexity of the adoption journey, establishing that technical implementation represented only one dimension of a broader organisational transformation effort that required sustained attention to process design, stakeholder engagement, and cultural change. Research examining the barriers to structured service framework adoption identified cultural and managerial resistance as among the most persistent

obstacles, frequently outweighing technical or financial constraints in their impact on implementation outcomes (Sharifi *et al.*, 2008)<sup>[60]</sup>. Theoretical and practitioner accounts have consistently emphasised that the successful adoption of service management frameworks necessitates not merely the installation of new processes and tools but the internalisation of a service-oriented philosophy that reorients organisational attention towards the value experienced by end users. Ahmad and Shamsudin (2013)<sup>[2]</sup> proposed a systematic approach to implementing service management frameworks, arguing that organisations that adopted structured, phased implementation strategies—encompassing initial process documentation, stakeholder engagement, and performance baseline establishment—achieved more sustainable and measurable outcomes than those that relied on informal or piecemeal adoption. This background underscores the importance of understanding not only which frameworks exist but how, and under what conditions, they are successfully embedded within organisations of diverse sizes, sectors, and national contexts.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite two decades of sustained scholarly attention, the implementation of structured technology service management frameworks continues to be characterised by inconsistent outcomes, high abandonment rates, and significant performance variation across organisations of comparable size and sector. Research examining service desk implementation in academic and public sector institutions found that while the adoption of structured process frameworks consistently generated measurable improvements in service efficiency, the full benefits of such frameworks were rarely realised without sustained institutional commitment and dedicated change management capacity (Esteves & Alves, 2013)<sup>[21]</sup>. These findings point to a problematic gap between the theoretical promise of structured service governance and the practical experience of organisations attempting to realise that promise in resource-constrained or culturally resistant environments. Cross-national comparative research further revealed that the adoption of structured service management frameworks varied significantly across organisational and national contexts, with large private sector organisations in developed economies demonstrating higher rates of full process adoption than public sector bodies or small and medium-sized enterprises (Marrone, Gacenga, Cater-Steel & Kolbe, 2014)<sup>[40]</sup>. These empirical patterns indicate that the existing literature has not yet adequately theorised the structural and contextual determinants of adoption success and failure, and that the prescriptive guidance available to practitioners remains insufficiently differentiated by organisational context. The cumulative effect of this gap is a body of literature that, while rich in descriptive accounts of implementation experience, provides limited generalisable guidance for organisations seeking to navigate the adoption process under conditions of uncertainty.

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this review lies in its contribution to a field characterised by conceptual diversity, geographic unevenness, and direct practical relevance to organisational performance and stakeholder value. The governance of technology service delivery is not merely a technical concern but a strategic one with direct implications for

operational continuity, stakeholder trust, regulatory compliance, and competitive positioning. The persistent terminological inconsistency documented in the foundational literature—where different frameworks, standards bodies, and practitioner communities employ divergent vocabularies to describe functionally equivalent processes—has contributed to confusion among practitioners and impeded the cumulative development of knowledge in the academic community (Winniford, Conger & Erickson-Harris, 2009) [72]. By synthesising evidence across diverse frameworks, national contexts, and sectoral settings, this review provides a more coherent account of the field's current knowledge boundaries and its most productive directions for future development. The review also makes a specific contribution by attending to the experiences of organisations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which remain substantially underrepresented in the mainstream ITSM literature despite facing distinctive challenges and opportunities in the adoption and adaptation of structured service governance frameworks. This geographic breadth is essential for producing a genuinely universal account of the field rather than one that inadvertently privileges the experiences of large, resource-rich organisations in Western contexts.

#### 1.4 Aims, Objectives, and Scope

This review aims to provide a comprehensive and analytically rigorous synthesis of the existing scholarly literature on the management of technology-enabled service delivery, with particular emphasis on the theoretical foundations, established frameworks, documented challenges, quantified benefits, emergent opportunities, and practical implementation guidance available to practitioners and researchers. The first objective is to map the dominant theoretical perspectives that inform scholarly understanding of technology service governance, including service science, capability maturity modelling, and IT governance theory. The second objective is to catalogue and critically evaluate the principal frameworks and standards that guide implementation practice across different organisational and national contexts. The third objective is to synthesise evidence on the challenges, benefits, and opportunities associated with structured service management adoption, drawing on empirical studies spanning multiple geographic regions and organisational sectors. The fourth objective is to identify the critical success factors and contextual enablers most consistently associated with successful implementation outcomes. The fifth objective is to examine the specific challenges and opportunities presented by the adoption of structured service management frameworks in developing and emerging economies, with particular attention to African organisational contexts. The sixth objective is to identify productive avenues for future empirical investigation in the field, with special attention to underrepresented contexts and emerging technological developments. The scope of the review is bounded temporally by the period from the early 2000s to 2021, encompassing the formative and consolidation phases of the discipline's academic development, and thematically by the intersection of IT governance, service quality management, and organisational process improvement. The review draws on seventy-five peer-reviewed and scholarly sources selected for their relevance, empirical rigour, and geographic diversity, and employs a structured analytical

approach to ensure comparability and coherence across the synthesised evidence base.

#### 2. Theoretical Foundations of IT Service Management

The theoretical underpinnings of IT service management are drawn from several interconnected intellectual traditions, including service science, operations management, quality management theory, and information systems governance. An understanding of these foundations is essential for contextualising the empirical findings that dominate the practitioner-oriented literature and for identifying the conceptual mechanisms through which structured service management frameworks are expected to produce organisational benefits. Service quality theory, as elaborated within the information technology context, has been particularly influential in shaping both the design of service management frameworks and the criteria used to evaluate their effectiveness. Lepmetts *et al.* (2012) [37] extended the IT service quality measurement framework to incorporate dimensions of process capability, customer satisfaction, and continuous improvement, arguing that a comprehensive theoretical account of IT service quality must encompass both technical performance metrics and relational dimensions of the service encounter. This multidimensional conception of service quality provides a theoretically sophisticated basis for evaluating the performance of service management systems and distinguishing between superficial process compliance and genuine service quality improvement.

The process-based theoretical tradition has been equally formative. Drawing on the Capability Maturity Model Integration and related process improvement frameworks, researchers have sought to conceptualise the governance of IT service processes in terms of progressive maturity levels, where higher maturity is associated with greater process repeatability, consistency, and predictability. Mesquida *et al.* (2012) [45] examined the relationship between ISO/IEC 15504-based process assessment and IT service management improvement, demonstrating that organisations using structured process assessment frameworks were better positioned to identify capability gaps and prioritise improvement investments than those relying on informal self-assessment methods. This process-oriented perspective provides a compelling theoretical justification for the adoption of structured service management frameworks, linking process maturity to measurable service quality outcomes and establishing a foundation for performance benchmarking across organisations and sectors.

The service operations management tradition, which draws on broader management science and operations research, contributes a set of analytical tools for examining the efficiency, capacity, and demand management dimensions of IT service delivery. Conger, Winniford, and Erickson-Harris (2008) [14] proposed a conceptual framework that situates service management within the broader context of service operations, identifying the need for organisations to balance standardisation—which enables efficiency and predictability—with flexibility, which enables responsiveness to heterogeneous user needs. This tension between standardisation and customisation represents a recurring theoretical theme in the service management literature and has direct implications for the design of governance structures and the selection of implementation strategies. The challenge of achieving this balance is

amplified in organisations that serve diverse stakeholder populations with distinct service expectations and tolerance thresholds.

Early empirical contributions to the theoretical literature emphasised the cost–benefit logic underpinning service-oriented IT management. Hochstein, Tamm, and Brenner (2005) <sup>[29]</sup> conducted one of the earliest systematic empirical studies of service-oriented IT management adoption in European organisations, finding that adopters reported measurable improvements in cost transparency, service reliability, and stakeholder communication, even in the absence of comprehensive formal framework adoption. This finding was theoretically significant in that it suggested that the principles underlying formal service management frameworks—rather than the frameworks themselves—may be a primary source of organisational benefit. It implied that the theoretical value of service management concepts could be realised incrementally and contextually, independently of formal certification or comprehensive process implementation.

The publication of ITIL Version 3, conceptualised around a service lifecycle model encompassing service strategy, service design, service transition, service operation, and continual service improvement, provided a rich theoretical architecture that researchers have used to organise empirical investigations of service management adoption. Van Bon *et al.* (2008) provided a comprehensive articulation of the V3 foundations, emphasising the shift from a process-centric to a value-centric conception of service management, in which the ultimate purpose of all service management activity is the co-creation of value for customers and service providers. This value co-creation perspective has been subsequently enriched by broader developments in service-dominant logic and service science, providing ITSM research with increasingly sophisticated theoretical resources that situate service management within the broader dynamics of the service economy.

Risk management theory has also been integrated into the theoretical foundations of the field, particularly as concerns about information security and regulatory compliance have grown. Barafort, Mesquida, and Mas (2017) <sup>[4]</sup> examined the integration of risk management principles drawn from ISO standards into IT service management systems, arguing that a theoretically coherent approach to service governance must explicitly account for the management of service-related risks alongside the optimisation of service processes. This risk-inclusive perspective represents an important theoretical expansion that aligns service management scholarship with the broader IT governance literature and reflects the growing recognition that service quality and security are complementary rather than competing organisational objectives.

Performance measurement theory has contributed to the development of frameworks for evaluating the outcomes of service management adoption. Gacenga, Cater-Steel and Toleman (2010) <sup>[22]</sup> conducted an international analysis of IT service management benefit measurement practices, finding that while organisations widely reported positive outcomes from service framework adoption, measurement approaches varied substantially and few organisations employed theoretically grounded, multi-dimensional performance measurement models. This finding underscores the need for theoretical frameworks that can accommodate both financial and non-financial dimensions of service

management value. Lacity and Willcocks (2013) <sup>[36]</sup>, drawing on extensive research into IT outsourcing and managed services, proposed that the governance of IT services should be theorised as a dynamic capability, in which organisational learning, relational management, and process innovation contribute to sustained competitive advantage. This dynamic capability perspective enriches the theoretical landscape of the field by situating service governance within the resource-based theory of the firm, connecting it to broader debates about knowledge management and strategic organisational competence. Together, these theoretical traditions provide a pluralistic and increasingly integrated conceptual foundation for the empirical study of technology service governance.

### 3. Established Frameworks, Standards, and Models

The landscape of frameworks, standards, and models available to practitioners seeking to govern technology service delivery has grown considerably since the first formal guidance was published in the late 1980s. This proliferation reflects the growing complexity of IT service environments and the diverse needs of organisations operating across different sectors, scales, and regulatory regimes. The coexistence of multiple frameworks—each with distinct conceptual origins, implementation requirements, and certification pathways—creates both opportunity and complexity for practitioners, who must navigate competing prescriptions and exercise informed judgement in selecting and combining guidance relevant to their specific organisational contexts. Iden and Eikebrokk (2014) <sup>[31]</sup> conducted an empirical investigation into the relationship between ITIL-based process governance and broader IT governance structures, finding that organisations that deliberately aligned their process framework implementations with enterprise governance objectives achieved significantly stronger performance outcomes than those that implemented service management processes in relative isolation from strategic governance considerations. ISO/IEC 20000, the only internationally auditable standard specifically addressing IT service management, represents a formal institutionalisation of service management best practice that carries significant implications for organisational accountability and external benchmarking. Cots & Casadésus (2015) <sup>[15]</sup> examined the adequacy of ISO 20000 certification for small and medium-sized enterprises in the IT sector, finding that while the standard's requirements were broadly applicable across organisational sizes, smaller organisations faced disproportionate compliance costs and required significantly more contextual adaptation to realise its governance benefits. This finding highlights the importance of framework scalability as a criterion for adoption decisions and points to the need for standards bodies to develop more differentiated guidance that acknowledges the heterogeneity of the organisations that seek to apply their prescriptions.

Evidence from Southern Africa provided early confirmation that the adoption of formal service management frameworks could produce tangible operational benefits even in organisations with limited prior exposure to structured process governance. Potgieter, Botha, and Lew (2005) <sup>[55]</sup> conducted a study of ITIL effectiveness in South African organisations, providing empirical evidence that organisations applying ITIL practices demonstrated measurable improvements in service delivery consistency,

incident resolution efficiency, and stakeholder communication. This study represented an important early contribution from the African continent to the empirical literature and established that the benefits of structured service governance were not confined to the technologically advanced economies where the frameworks had originally been developed.

The conceptual architecture of modern IT service management frameworks has been comprehensively articulated by Addy (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>, who provided a systematic account of the relationship between ITIL-based service management and broader IT governance structures. Addy argued that effective service management requires organisations to move beyond procedural compliance and develop an integrated governance philosophy in which process design, performance measurement, and continuous improvement are embedded in organisational culture rather than imposed through external mandates. This governance-oriented perspective situates service management frameworks within the broader tradition of organisational quality management and provides a theoretically coherent basis for evaluating implementation maturity beyond simple process adoption metrics.

The challenge of selecting and combining multiple frameworks has attracted considerable scholarly attention, particularly as organisations have increasingly sought to integrate ITIL with other standards such as COBIT and ISO/IEC 27002. Sahibudin, Sharifi, and Ayat (2008) <sup>[58]</sup> proposed a combined implementation model that synthesised the process guidance of ITIL, the governance principles of COBIT, and the security requirements of ISO/IEC 27002, arguing that organisations seeking comprehensive IT governance needed to draw simultaneously on all three frameworks rather than treating them as mutually exclusive alternatives. This integrative approach reflects the growing recognition that no single framework provides sufficient guidance for all aspects of technology service governance, and that effective implementation requires deliberate and contextually informed framework combination.

Evidence from the island nation of Mauritius demonstrated that the adoption of service-based IT infrastructure management approaches was viable and beneficial in small island developing states, which represent a distinct category of organisational context with unique resource, infrastructure, and regulatory characteristics. Doomun and Bhuruth (2008) <sup>[19]</sup> documented the extension of a service-based IT infrastructure management approach in a Mauritian context, finding that the principles of service-oriented management were generalisable across diverse geographic and institutional settings, provided that implementation approaches were adapted to reflect local resource constraints and infrastructure limitations. This finding contributed to the growing body of evidence suggesting that the core principles of structured service governance possess cross-contextual validity.

The relationship between service management frameworks and software engineering practice has been examined by Pérez-Castillo *et al.* (2011), who analysed the use of IT service management principles in the recovery of business processes from service-oriented software systems. Their research demonstrated that the process documentation and configuration management disciplines central to IT service management frameworks provided valuable scaffolding for

software maintenance and recovery efforts, suggesting that the benefits of structured service governance extend beyond operational service delivery into software engineering domains. This finding broadens the scope of the literature and identifies productive intersections between service management and software engineering research.

Historical evidence from early Australian ITIL implementations provided important foundational insights into the practical dynamics of framework adoption in the mid-2000s. Cater-Steel, Toleman, and Tan (2006) <sup>[10]</sup> documented the transformative effects of ITIL adoption on IT service delivery in Australian organisations, noting that the most successful implementations were characterised by strong senior leadership support, deliberate change management investment, and the establishment of clear performance baselines against which post-implementation improvements could be measured. These early empirical findings have proven remarkably durable in subsequent literature, where senior leadership commitment and change management capacity consistently appear among the most significant determinants of implementation success. The cumulative evidence on frameworks, standards, and models thus points to a field rich in prescriptive guidance but still developing the empirical tools needed to systematically evaluate the conditions under which different frameworks produce the greatest organisational benefit.

#### 4. Challenges in IT Service Management Implementation

The implementation of structured IT service management frameworks is a complex organisational undertaking that confronts practitioners with a diverse array of challenges spanning technical, cultural, financial, and strategic dimensions. Despite the extensive normative guidance available from frameworks such as ITIL and ISO/IEC 20000, empirical evidence consistently reveals that a substantial proportion of implementation efforts fall short of their intended objectives, and that the gap between theoretical prescription and organisational practice remains significant. A Delphi study conducted among IT experts in the Norwegian Armed Forces found that the most critical prerequisites for successful ITIL adoption were not technical in nature but rather organisational, encompassing committed leadership support, clear communication of implementation objectives, and the availability of dedicated resources for change management and staff development (Iden & Langeland, 2010) <sup>[33]</sup>. This finding established that implementation challenges are fundamentally rooted in organisational dynamics rather than technical complexity, a conclusion that has been consistently reinforced by subsequent empirical research.

Research focusing on small IT service organisations found that the adoption of process improvement disciplines associated with service management frameworks was frequently impeded by resource limitations, skills shortages, and the difficulty of sustaining improvement efforts in the face of competing operational demands (Cater-Steel, 2009) <sup>[6]</sup>. Small organisations in particular struggled to allocate the dedicated personnel and financial resources that comprehensive framework implementations typically require, often resulting in partial or selective adoption strategies that delivered some benefits but failed to realise the full governance potential of the frameworks being deployed. This pattern of selective adoption is frequently misrepresented as full implementation in practitioner

reporting, contributing to an inflated perception of adoption success rates in the literature.

The strategic dimensions of IT service management challenges have been examined by Eikebrokk and Iden (2017)<sup>[20]</sup>, who developed and empirically tested a model of the strategic factors influencing the outcomes of ITIL implementation. Their research found that organisations that approached ITIL implementation as a strategic initiative—characterised by alignment with organisational goals, executive commitment, and integration with performance management systems—achieved substantially better outcomes than those that treated framework adoption as a technical or operational project. This strategic framing of implementation challenges underscores the importance of governance architecture and leadership engagement in determining whether service management investments produce the expected organisational returns.

The organisational impact of IT service management framework adoption was examined in depth by Marrone and Kolbe (2011b)<sup>[39]</sup>, whose empirical study across a large sample of European organisations revealed that the benefits of framework implementation were frequently accompanied by significant organisational disruption, including resistance from technical staff whose working practices were substantially altered by the introduction of process governance disciplines. This resistance was particularly pronounced in organisations with strong informal IT cultures, where the imposition of structured process requirements was experienced as an unwelcome constraint on professional autonomy. The management of this cultural transition emerged as one of the most challenging aspects of implementation, requiring sustained attention to communication, training, and the visible endorsement of new working practices by senior organisational leaders.

Evidence from Asian IT organisations provided further insight into the sources of implementation failure, with Sharifi *et al.* (2008)<sup>[60]</sup> documenting lessons learned from ITIL implementation failures in Malaysian organisations. Their analysis identified several recurring failure factors, including inadequate scoping of the implementation project, insufficient allocation of training resources, failure to establish clear ownership of implemented processes, and the absence of meaningful performance measurement mechanisms to track progress and demonstrate value to sceptical stakeholders. These findings suggest that implementation failure is rarely attributable to a single cause but rather reflects the cumulative effect of multiple deficiencies in planning, resourcing, and governance.

The challenge of developing an integrated and coherent IT governance and service management framework that accommodates both operational and strategic dimensions was examined by Pereira and Silva (2010), who proposed a framework that sought to bridge the gap between theoretical governance models and practical service management implementation. Their research highlighted the difficulty of translating high-level governance principles into operationally actionable process specifications, a challenge that reflects the conceptual distance between the strategic governance literature and the operationally oriented service management literature. This gap between governance theory and management practice represents a significant ongoing challenge for the field.

Challenges associated with business–IT alignment in emerging economies were examined by Spremić, Zmirak,

and Kraljevic (2008), whose research in Croatian organisations documented the difficulties of achieving meaningful strategic alignment between IT service processes and business objectives in the absence of mature governance structures and clear executive accountability for technology strategy. Their findings pointed to the importance of institutional maturity as a prerequisite for successful service management adoption, suggesting that the governance prerequisites for effective implementation are themselves contingent on the broader organisational and institutional environment in which adoption occurs.

The specific challenges facing small and medium-sized enterprises in implementing IT service management frameworks were systematically reviewed by Melendez, Dávila, and Pessoa (2016)<sup>[42]</sup>, who examined the available evidence on ITSM adoption in SME contexts and found that while the principles of structured service governance were broadly applicable, the tools, templates, and prescriptive guidance available in mainstream frameworks were overwhelmingly designed for large organisations with dedicated IT governance resources. This mismatch between framework design and SME context produced implementation experiences characterised by high relative costs, skills gaps, and difficulty in sustaining process improvement efforts beyond initial deployment. The review called for the development of contextually differentiated guidance that acknowledges the diverse institutional landscapes in which service management frameworks are applied.

## 5. Benefits of IT Service Management Adoption

The documented benefits of adopting structured approaches to technology service governance represent one of the most extensively researched domains within the IT service management literature. Empirical evidence drawn from diverse national and sectoral contexts consistently identifies a core set of organisational benefits associated with structured service management adoption, including improvements in service quality and reliability, enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, reduced operational costs, and greater transparency in technology-related accountability structures. The design science research approach employed by Gacenga *et al.* (2012)<sup>[23]</sup> in developing a performance measurement method for IT service management benefits provided an important methodological contribution to the field, offering a theoretically grounded and empirically validated instrument for assessing the multidimensional outcomes of service framework adoption. Their framework distinguished between financial, operational, and strategic benefit dimensions, and demonstrated that comprehensive benefit realisation required deliberate measurement design rather than reliance on ad hoc assessment approaches.

The role of IT standards in enabling managed IT service delivery was examined by Kumbakara (2008)<sup>[35]</sup>, who argued that the adoption of formal service management standards such as ISO/IEC 20000 provided organisations with a structured mechanism for ensuring the consistency, reliability, and auditability of their service delivery practices. Kumbakara found that organisations that adopted formal standards alongside practical frameworks such as ITIL achieved higher levels of service consistency and customer satisfaction than those that relied on informal process guidance alone, and that the governance discipline associated with formal standard adoption contributed to

stronger organisational accountability for service outcomes. This finding supported the value of formal standard adoption as a complement to the more flexible guidance provided by best practice frameworks.

A nuanced account of the benefits associated with IT service management framework adoption was provided by Martinez *et al.* (2010) [41], who examined the experiences of organisations across both manufacturing and service industries. Their mixed-methods analysis found that while the core benefits of structured service governance—improved service reliability, reduced incident frequency, enhanced change management discipline—were consistently reported across industrial sectors, the relative magnitude of these benefits varied substantially with organisational size, sector, and implementation maturity. Service industry organisations reported particularly strong benefits from the customer-facing dimensions of service management, while manufacturing organisations emphasised the operational efficiency gains associated with structured incident and change management processes.

The theoretical and strategic dimensions of service management benefits were foregrounded by Kolbe and Brenner (2011), who argued for an understanding of IT service management as a mechanism for strategic service orientation and value co-creation rather than merely an operational process improvement discipline. Drawing on the service-dominant logic tradition, they proposed that the most transformative benefits of service management framework adoption accrued to organisations that leveraged service governance disciplines to reorient their IT functions towards value creation for business stakeholders rather than technical efficiency. This perspective situates service management benefits within a strategic management framework and provides a theoretically sophisticated basis for evaluating the long-term organisational value of implementation investments.

Evidence from the Pacific Asia region confirmed that the benefits of IT service management adoption extended to employee-level outcomes as well as organisational performance metrics. Chmylevskyy (2014) [13] investigated the relationship between structured IT service desk management and employee satisfaction among service desk personnel, finding that the introduction of clear process roles, escalation pathways, and performance metrics contributed to higher job satisfaction and reduced staff turnover among service desk employees, in addition to the improved customer experience outcomes typically emphasised in the literature. This finding drew attention to the human resource dimensions of service management benefit, highlighting the importance of considering employee experience alongside customer experience in the evaluation of implementation outcomes.

The transformative organisational benefits associated with IT service management adoption were examined by Bardhan *et al.* (2010) [5], who analysed the role of IT in supporting organisational transformation through structured service management disciplines. Their research identified a category of strategic benefits that extended beyond operational improvement to encompass broader organisational learning, capability development, and strategic positioning effects. Organisations that successfully embedded service management principles in their governance cultures were found to develop stronger institutional competencies for managing technological change and aligning IT investments

with business objectives, contributing to long-term organisational resilience and adaptability.

The intersection of IT service management and information security governance was examined by Mesquida and Mas (2015) [44], who explored the integration of service management standards with security governance frameworks. Their qualitative research found that organisations that adopted integrated service and security management approaches achieved measurably stronger security postures than those that managed service and security governance as parallel and largely independent functions. The integration of security considerations into service management processes produced synergistic benefits in risk identification, vulnerability management, and regulatory compliance, suggesting that the governance value of structured service management extends meaningfully into the domain of information security.

Early empirical evidence for the benefits of service-oriented IT management was provided by Hochstein and Brenner (2006) [28], whose study of Swiss IT organisations found that the adoption of service-oriented management principles produced measurable improvements in cost transparency, service reliability, and the quality of communication between IT functions and business stakeholders. Their research identified a positive relationship between the degree of service orientation adopted and the magnitude of the benefits realised, suggesting that the benefits of structured service management are not merely binary but scale with the depth and comprehensiveness of adoption. This finding has important practical implications for organisations making investment decisions about the scope of their service management implementations and the appropriate pace of adoption.

## 6. Opportunities in IT Service Management

Beyond the documented challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of structured service governance frameworks, the literature identifies a rich array of opportunities for organisations prepared to leverage advances in technology, governance theory, and management practice to enhance the value of their service management investments. The convergence of IT governance and service management disciplines has created particular opportunities for integrated governance frameworks that address service delivery, risk management, and strategic alignment within a coherent institutional architecture. Ribas *et al.* (2012) [56] proposed a framework for combining IT governance and service management in small to medium enterprise contexts, demonstrating that the synthesis of governance and service management principles offered smaller organisations a practical pathway to achieving governance maturity without the prohibitive costs typically associated with comprehensive framework implementations. This integrative approach represented a significant opportunity for the large majority of organisations that operate at sub-enterprise scale.

The growing complexity of global IT service delivery environments has created opportunities for organisations to develop more sophisticated and culturally adaptive service management methodologies. Cusick (2017) [17] documented the development of a practical IT service management methodology in a global organisation operating across multiple continents, demonstrating that the principles of structured service management could be effectively adapted

to accommodate diverse cultural norms, regulatory requirements, and operational contexts without sacrificing the governance coherence that gives formal frameworks their value. This experience of successful global adaptation pointed to the opportunity for organisations to develop hybrid service management approaches that preserve the essential governance disciplines of formal frameworks while accommodating the contextual variability inherent in geographically distributed service environments.

The relationship between diverse implementation perspectives and the scope of IT service management opportunity was examined by Cater-Steel and Pollard (2008) [7], who explored the distinction between treating ITIL implementation as a discrete project with a defined endpoint and treating it as an ongoing operational discipline integrated into the normal rhythm of organisational management. Their research found that organisations that adopted the latter perspective achieved more durable and comprehensive outcomes, suggesting that the greatest opportunity for value creation lay not in episodic implementation projects but in the sustained institutionalisation of service management principles as an enduring feature of organisational culture. This finding has direct implications for how organisations structure their service management investment strategies and measure the return on their implementation expenditure.

The intersection of IT service management with IT governance theory created significant opportunities for the development of integrated frameworks that could simultaneously address the operational and strategic dimensions of technology management. Sallé (2004) [59] reviewed the relationship between IT service management and IT governance, identifying complementary areas in which the process discipline of service management frameworks and the strategic accountability structures of IT governance models could be combined to produce comprehensive technology management approaches that addressed both operational efficiency and strategic alignment. This synthesis represented an important opportunity for advancing the field beyond its historical focus on operational process improvement towards a more holistic account of technology governance.

The emergence of cloud computing as a dominant technology delivery paradigm created profound opportunities for the reconceptualisation and enhancement of IT service management practices. Rouse (2010) [57] provided an early taxonomy of cloud computing models, identifying the implications of cloud-based service delivery for traditional service management frameworks that had been designed for on-premises technology environments. The shift to cloud computing fundamentally altered the boundaries of service management responsibility, creating opportunities for organisations to leverage provider-managed infrastructure while focusing their internal service management capabilities on integration, orchestration, and business value realisation. Yanosky (2009) extended this analysis to examine the implications of cloud computing for enterprise authority structures, arguing that cloud adoption fundamentally redistributed service governance responsibilities between IT departments and business units, creating opportunities for more agile and business-aligned service management approaches.

The opportunity to integrate social and collaborative technologies into service management processes was

identified by Swenson (2011) [64], who examined the potential of social BPM approaches to enhance the responsiveness and adaptability of service management governance structures. Social technologies offered service management practitioners new mechanisms for capturing distributed knowledge, facilitating cross-functional collaboration in service improvement activities, and engaging end users in the continuous refinement of service delivery processes. These capabilities represented significant opportunities for enriching the traditional process governance focus of service management frameworks with more dynamic and participatory approaches to service quality management.

The connection between agile software development practices and service management opportunities was explored by Misra, Kumar, and Kumar (2009) [46], who identified success factors in agile adoption that closely mirrored the cultural prerequisites for effective service management implementation. Their research pointed to the opportunity for organisations to leverage the cultural change investments associated with agile adoption—including greater process transparency, iterative improvement cycles, and cross-functional collaboration—as enabling conditions for more effective service management implementation. This alignment between agile and service management cultural prerequisites suggested that organisations investing in agile transformation were simultaneously developing the cultural foundations necessary for effective service governance, creating compound organisational improvement opportunities. The synthesis of these diverse opportunity streams points to a field positioned at the intersection of multiple transformative technological and managerial developments, each of which offers distinct pathways for organisations to enhance the value, agility, and strategic relevance of their technology service governance capabilities.

## 7. Critical Success Factors and Implementation Practices

The identification of critical success factors for IT service management implementation has been a sustained preoccupation of the empirical literature, reflecting practitioners' urgent need for evidence-based guidance on the conditions that distinguish successful from unsuccessful implementation journeys. The accumulated evidence from diverse national and sectoral contexts points to a relatively consistent set of organisational prerequisites and enabling conditions, although the relative weight of individual factors varies with organisational size, cultural context, and implementation scope. Research by Iden and Eikebrokk (2015) [32] established through empirical analysis that senior management involvement was among the most critical determinants of implementation success, finding that organisations where executive leaders demonstrated active and sustained commitment to service management goals achieved measurably stronger process adoption and performance outcomes than those where senior management engagement was nominal or episodic. This finding underscored the essentially political dimension of service management implementation, in which organisational authority and resource allocation decisions at the leadership level determine the conditions available to implementation teams.

The challenge of adopting a genuinely service-oriented philosophy—as opposed to merely deploying service

management process procedures—was examined by Cater-Steel (2001) <sup>[11]</sup>, who found that many IT service departments struggled to internalise the customer-centric values underpinning formal frameworks even after successfully deploying the associated process structures. This gap between procedural compliance and genuine cultural transformation represented a critical implementation challenge, with profound implications for the durability and depth of the benefits realised. Organisations that successfully navigated this challenge typically invested heavily in leadership communication, staff training, and the visible celebration of service-oriented behaviours at all organisational levels, creating the cultural conditions necessary for sustained service governance improvement.

The structured management of the benefits expected from service management implementation was identified by Gomes and Romão (2015) as a critical but frequently neglected dimension of implementation practice. Their research demonstrated that organisations that adopted explicit benefits management disciplines—defining expected benefits in advance, establishing measurement mechanisms, and tracking benefit realisation throughout the implementation process—achieved significantly better alignment between implementation investments and organisational outcomes than those that relied on informal or retrospective benefit assessment approaches. This finding pointed to the importance of treating implementation as a value management exercise rather than simply a process deployment project, with implications for how organisations plan, resource, and evaluate their service management investments.

Evidence from the South African organisational context highlighted the importance of self-assessment as a foundation for effective service management implementation. Van Baalen *et al.* (2015) <sup>[66]</sup> proposed a self-assessment approach for IT service management organisations in South Africa, arguing that a structured and honest baseline assessment of current capabilities and process maturity was an essential prerequisite for effective improvement planning. Organisations that conducted rigorous self-assessments before commencing implementation were better positioned to prioritise improvement efforts, allocate resources efficiently, and establish realistic performance targets that could sustain organisational motivation throughout the implementation journey. This finding reinforced the broader literature on the importance of diagnostic rigour as a foundation for effective organisational change.

The effect of IT governance critical success factors on performance outcomes in Tanzanian public sector organisations was examined by Nfuka and Rusu (2011) <sup>[49]</sup>, whose research provided important evidence from a Sub-Saharan African context. Their findings identified senior management commitment, the availability of dedicated IT governance resources, and the establishment of clear governance ownership structures as the most significant determinants of IT governance performance, a pattern consistent with evidence from more extensively researched contexts. This geographic replication of established critical success factor patterns contributed to the generalisability of the broader CSF literature and provided African public sector organisations with an evidence-based framework for prioritising their governance improvement investments.

The role of structured ITIL foundation training and

certification in enabling effective implementation was examined by Menken and Blokdijs (2009) <sup>[43]</sup>, whose comprehensive treatment of ITIL V3 foundation principles provided a widely used practitioner reference for organisations undertaking implementation journeys. Their work emphasised that a common foundation of service management knowledge across the implementation team—achieved through systematic foundation training before process deployment—was essential for ensuring shared understanding of implementation objectives and consistent application of framework principles across organisational functions. The establishment of this knowledge baseline represented a critical early implementation practice that determined the coherence and sustainability of subsequent process adoption efforts.

Early evidence from the Australian context identified progress in ITIL adoption and documented the critical success factors associated with implementation achievements. Cater-Steel and Tan (2005) <sup>[8]</sup> found that Australian organisations that had achieved the most significant progress in ITIL implementation were distinguished by their investment in dedicated internal champions who could sustain organisational commitment to service management objectives across the political and resource pressures of daily organisational life. These internal champions performed a critical translation function, mediating between the prescriptive guidance of formal frameworks and the practical realities of organisational implementation, and maintaining the momentum necessary to sustain long-term improvement trajectories.

The relationship between information system security auditing frameworks and the broader practice of IT service governance was examined by Spremić (2011), who argued that effective service management implementation required integration with security assurance frameworks to produce comprehensive governance that addressed both service quality and risk management objectives. This integration represented an important implementation practice that distinguished mature governance programmes from those that addressed service delivery and risk management as separate and parallel concerns. The cumulative evidence on critical success factors thus converges on a consistent message: that successful IT service management implementation is fundamentally a leadership and change management challenge, in which the technical aspects of framework deployment are secondary to the governance architecture, cultural conditions, and stakeholder engagement strategies that determine whether new processes are adopted and sustained.

## 8. IT Service Management in Developing Economies

The experiences of organisations in developing and transitional economies represent an increasingly important but historically underrepresented dimension of the IT service management literature. As digital transformation accelerates across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, the governance of technology service delivery is becoming a strategic priority for organisations operating in contexts characterised by distinct resource constraints, institutional variability, and technological infrastructure challenges. Evidence from East Africa provided important empirical grounding for understanding IT service management in developing economy contexts. Mwangi (2019) <sup>[48]</sup> examined the relationship between IT service

management practices and business performance in Kenyan commercial banks, finding that structured service governance approaches contributed measurably to service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency, confirming the applicability of service management principles in the African financial services sector. Their research demonstrated that the core value proposition of structured service governance was transferable across economic development contexts, notwithstanding the additional challenges posed by infrastructure limitations and skills constraints.

The challenges of enterprise system adoption in cross-national contexts provided relevant analogies for understanding the dynamics of IT service management adoption in diverse institutional environments. Ifinedo and Sundberg (2012) [34] examined the determinants of enterprise resource planning system implementation success in developed economy contexts, identifying a set of organisational and institutional factors—including executive commitment, change management investment, and the availability of skilled implementation resources—that closely mirrored the critical success factors identified in the service management literature. The convergence of implementation success determinants across different technological domains suggested that the challenges of governed technology adoption shared common structural features regardless of the specific technology being implemented, a finding with implications for the design of capacity-building programmes in developing economies.

The strategic dimensions of information systems adoption in developing economy organisations were examined by Doherty and Mark (2009) [18], who argued that IS strategy played a critical role in leveraging business and IT alignment in organisations navigating digital transformation. Their research highlighted the importance of strategic orientation as a prerequisite for effective technology governance, suggesting that developing economy organisations seeking to implement structured service management frameworks must first establish coherent IS strategies that provide the directional foundation for governance investment. This finding pointed to a sequencing challenge in developing economy contexts, where the institutional prerequisites for effective service management governance may themselves require deliberate developmental investment.

The specific context of small and medium-sized enterprises in Asia provided important evidence on the dynamics of IT service management adoption in resource-constrained environments. Heikkinen and Zimmer (2011) [27] investigated the understanding and application of IT service management concepts in SME contexts in the Asia-Pacific region, finding that while SME leaders recognised the potential value of structured service governance, the complexity and resource requirements of mainstream frameworks created significant barriers to adoption. Their research identified an important gap in the available literature between the experiences of large enterprise adopters—which dominated the empirical evidence base—and the realities of SME adoption, a gap that limited the practical utility of existing guidance for the majority of organisations operating in developing economy contexts.

Evidence from Bhutan provided a uniquely detailed account of the challenges and success factors associated with IT service management adoption in a least-developed country

context. Wangchuk and Kim (2012) [71] documented an ITIL implementation in a Bhutanese organisation, finding that the adoption of structured service management principles produced meaningful improvements in service delivery consistency and stakeholder satisfaction, but that the implementation journey required substantially greater investment in awareness building, cultural adaptation, and localised training than comparable implementations in more technologically mature environments. This case highlighted the importance of contextual sensitivity in implementation planning and the need for framework guidance that explicitly addresses the prerequisites for adoption in low-resource and institutionally nascent settings.

The challenge of adopting multiple IT process improvement frameworks simultaneously in developing economy contexts was examined by Cater-Steel, Tan, and Toleman (2006) [9], whose research in organisations attempting to implement combinations of ITIL, COBIT, and other frameworks found that multi-framework adoption created additional governance complexity that was particularly difficult to manage in organisations with limited dedicated IT governance resources. Their findings suggested that developing economy organisations might benefit from a more sequential and prioritised approach to framework adoption, establishing a firm foundation in one framework before extending governance coverage to additional standards. This staged adoption strategy represented an important practical adaptation of the comprehensive frameworks designed for resource-rich enterprise environments.

Empirical evidence from Nigerian financial institutions provided direct insight into the relationship between ICT governance frameworks and strategic organisational performance in a Nigerian context. Apulu (2012) [3] found that the adoption of formal ICT governance frameworks was positively associated with improvements in service delivery quality and strategic positioning among Nigerian financial service organisations, confirming that the governance value proposition of structured IT management frameworks was applicable in the Nigerian institutional context. Their research also identified significant variation in adoption depth among Nigerian financial institutions, with larger and more internationally integrated organisations demonstrating stronger governance maturity than smaller or domestically focused counterparts, a pattern consistent with evidence from other developing economy contexts.

The relationship between IT investment and firm performance in developing economy contexts was examined by Osei-Bryson and Ko (2004) [50], whose research using regression splines analysis provided evidence that the performance impact of IT investments was non-linear and context-dependent, with the relationship between investment level and performance outcome varying significantly with the maturity of the governance structures through which IT investments were managed. This finding has important implications for developing economy organisations, suggesting that the returns to IT investment are substantially enhanced when complemented by mature governance disciplines, and that the governance capacity to absorb and leverage technology investments is itself a critical determinant of the value realised from digital transformation expenditure. The cumulative evidence on IT service management in developing economies thus supports a nuanced picture in which the core principles of structured

service governance are broadly applicable across economic development contexts, but in which effective implementation requires deliberate adaptation to local institutional conditions, resource constraints, and infrastructure realities.

### 9. Future Directions and Emerging Trends

The future development of IT service management as a scholarly and practitioner discipline is shaped by a confluence of technological, organisational, and institutional trends that are collectively redefining the scope, methods, and governance architecture of technology service delivery. As digital transformation accelerates across sectors and geographies, the intellectual resources of the field are being tested and extended in directions that hold significant promise for both theoretical development and practical impact. Peppard (2018) <sup>[51]</sup> argued for a fundamental reconceptualisation of the IS organisation in response to the digital transformation of business, contending that the traditional boundaries between IT and business functions were dissolving in ways that required new governance models and a rethinking of the organisational identity and strategic role of technology service functions. This reconceptualisation has profound implications for the future architecture of IT service management governance, which must evolve to accommodate the blurring boundaries between technology providers and technology consumers within organisations.

The enterprise governance of information technology, as a broader framework within which service management practice is embedded, represents an important domain for future theoretical and empirical development. Van Grembergen (2009) <sup>[69]</sup> provided a comprehensive account of enterprise IT governance mechanisms, including board-level oversight structures, management processes, and relational mechanisms, that collectively determine the strategic effectiveness of IT investments and governance frameworks. Their research pointed to the importance of understanding IT service management not in isolation but as a component of a broader enterprise governance architecture that extends from the boardroom to the operational service desk, and in which the effectiveness of service-level governance is ultimately determined by the quality of strategic governance above it.

The alignment between IT strategy and business strategy, as a foundational objective of enterprise IT governance, represents a persistent focus for future research. Chan and Reich (2007) <sup>[12]</sup> synthesised two decades of research on IT alignment, identifying enduring challenges and productive research directions that remain relevant to the service management literature. Their review found that alignment was best understood as a dynamic and multi-dimensional construct encompassing intellectual alignment, social alignment, and operational alignment, each of which required distinct governance mechanisms and measurement approaches. Future IT service management research would benefit from incorporating this multi-dimensional alignment perspective, which offers a theoretically richer account of the governance context within which service management frameworks operate than the simpler alignment models that have historically dominated the field.

The development of leaner and more contextually differentiated IT governance frameworks represents an important practical direction for future work, particularly in

the context of resource-constrained organisations in developing economies. Bartens *et al.* (2015) examined the feasibility of implementing a minimum baseline version of the COBIT 5 governance framework, finding that organisations could achieve meaningful governance improvements by selectively implementing a carefully chosen subset of COBIT controls rather than attempting comprehensive framework deployment. This minimum viable governance approach has important analogies for the future development of IT service management frameworks, suggesting that the field would benefit from the development of graduated and modular implementation guidance that provides viable adoption pathways for organisations at all maturity levels.

The integration of agile principles into the governance of IT service delivery represents a significant future direction for both practice and scholarship. Moe, Aurum, and Dybå (2012) <sup>[47]</sup> examined the challenges of shared decision-making in agile software development, identifying governance tensions between agile autonomy and the process standardisation required for consistent service delivery. These tensions are directly relevant to the future of IT service management in agile organisations, where the prescriptive process governance of traditional frameworks must be balanced against the adaptive and iterative governance approaches that enable organisational agility. Future research that explicitly theorises the relationship between service management governance and organisational agility would make a significant contribution to the field.

The governance dimensions of business process management and their relationship to IT service management represent a productive theoretical intersection for future investigation. Van Grembergen and De Haes (2010) <sup>[68]</sup> argued that enterprise IT governance research needed to grapple more explicitly with the mechanisms through which governance structures produced value, rather than simply documenting their presence or absence. This call for mechanism-oriented research is equally applicable to the service management literature, where the mediating processes through which implementation produces performance improvements remain inadequately theorised. Future research that employs causal modelling approaches to examine the mechanisms linking governance inputs to performance outcomes would substantially advance the field's theoretical development.

The relationship between business process management and IT service governance as complementary disciplines for organisational performance was examined by Vom Brocke and Rosemann (2010) <sup>[70]</sup>, whose comprehensive handbook on business process management identified strategic alignment, governance, and cultural transformation as central themes in the management of technology-enabled business processes. The convergence of BPM and ITSM as governance disciplines offers significant opportunities for integrated research that examines how organisations can leverage the complementary strengths of process-oriented and service-oriented governance approaches.

The importance of business and IT strategy alignment as a contextual enabler of IT service management effectiveness was examined by Gartlan and Shanks (2007) <sup>[25]</sup>, whose research in Australian organisations identified the conditions under which strategic alignment produced measurable improvements in IT and business performance. Their findings reinforced the importance of contextual alignment

as a prerequisite for effective service governance and pointed to the need for future research that examines how the effectiveness of service management frameworks varies with the quality of the strategic alignment environment in which they are deployed. Future research that integrates strategic alignment, enterprise governance, and service management perspectives within a unified theoretical framework would represent a significant contribution to the field and provide practitioners with more integrated guidance for managing the full complexity of technology service governance in contemporary organisations.

## 10. Conclusion

This review has synthesised a substantial body of scholarly evidence to provide a comprehensive account of the theory, practice, challenges, benefits, opportunities, and implementation dynamics associated with the governance of technology-enabled service delivery in contemporary organisations. The accumulated evidence confirms that structured approaches to technology service governance create measurable and durable organisational benefits when implemented with appropriate leadership commitment, cultural sensitivity, and process rigour. The core value proposition of structured service governance—that systematic management of technology service processes produces improvements in service quality, operational efficiency, and stakeholder value—is supported by evidence drawn from diverse national, sectoral, and organisational contexts, and appears to be broadly generalisable across the heterogeneous landscape of contemporary organisations.

At the same time, the review has documented the persistent and multifaceted challenges that impede the full realisation of these benefits in practice. Cultural resistance, resource constraints, skills deficits, and the complexity of managing large-scale organisational change in the face of competing operational demands collectively produce implementation environments in which the aspirations of formal frameworks frequently outpace the organisational capacity to realise them. The review has also established that these challenges are differentially distributed across organisational types, with small and medium-sized enterprises and organisations in developing economies facing systematically greater implementation barriers than large enterprises in technologically mature economies.

Several productive directions for future scholarly investigation have been identified. First, the field would benefit from more rigorous causal modelling that explicates the mechanisms through which governance structures produce performance outcomes, moving beyond the predominantly descriptive accounts that characterise much of the current literature. Second, there is a need for substantially greater investment in empirical research situated in developing economy contexts, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, where the governance of technology services is becoming increasingly strategically important but where the scholarly evidence base remains thin relative to the practical challenges being confronted. Third, the integration of agile, cloud, and digital transformation dynamics into service governance frameworks represents an important frontier for both theoretical development and practical guidance.

The enduring significance of structured technology service governance as an organisational competence is beyond scholarly dispute. As organisations navigate an era of

accelerating digital change, the capacity to govern, deliver, and continuously improve technology services will determine not only operational performance but strategic adaptability and institutional resilience. The theoretical and empirical foundations laid by two decades of scholarship provide a solid basis for this continuing work, and the field is well-positioned to make substantial contributions to both academic knowledge and practical governance in the years ahead.

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