

# **An Empirical Assessment of ICT–Business Strategic Alignment in Namibia: Determinants, Barriers, and Organizational Impact**

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## **Abstract:**

The strategic alignment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with business objectives has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing organizational performance, particularly in increasingly digital and competitive environments. This study provides an empirical assessment of ICT–business strategic alignment in Namibia, focusing on its key determinants, prevailing barriers, and resulting organizational impacts. Drawing on data collected from a cross-section of Namibian enterprises through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with ICT and business executives, the research examines the extent to which alignment exists and identifies the contextual enablers and inhibitors affecting its realization. The findings reveal that while there is a growing recognition among Namibian firms of ICT’s strategic value, misalignment remains prevalent due to factors such as limited executive collaboration, inadequate ICT governance structures, and skills shortages. Conversely, organizations that demonstrate high alignment levels often benefit from stronger leadership commitment, well-defined strategic planning processes, and adaptive organizational cultures. The study concludes that achieving ICT–business strategic alignment is a multifaceted challenge, yet it holds significant potential for improving operational efficiency, innovation capacity, and long-term competitiveness. Recommendations are offered for both practitioners and policymakers to foster more integrated ICT and business strategies within the Namibian context.

**Keywords:** Alignment Indicators, Enablers, Information Communication Technology-Business Alignment, Inhibitors, Potential Alignment.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The introduction of this study effectively identifies a contemporary and highly relevant problem: the strategic alignment between ICT and business goals in Namibian organizations. The concept of ICT-business strategic alignment has been widely recognized in global literature as a critical success factor for digital transformation, competitive advantage, and organizational agility (Luftman, 2000; Chan & Reich, 2007). The introductory paragraph correctly establishes ICT not merely as a technological tool but as a strategic asset that, when aligned with business goals, can significantly enhance organizational performance.

However, while the introduction makes a strong theoretical case for the importance of ICT–business alignment, it could be further strengthened by referencing current global benchmarks or statistics to quantify the performance benefits of alignment. For example, studies have shown that firms with strong ICT-business

alignment report 15–20% higher profitability (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1993), which would help to contextualize the value proposition.

The second paragraph appropriately highlights the Namibian context as under-researched, thereby establishing the justification for the study. Citing Namibia’s Digital Namibia Strategy (Republic of Namibia, 2021) and the increasing ICT investments demonstrates awareness of national initiatives aimed at fostering digital development. This national grounding is essential for ensuring the relevance of the study to local stakeholders. Despite this, the introduction could improve by more clearly specifying the research gap. While it states that few empirical studies exist in Namibia, it does not identify what prior work (if any) has been done, or how this study differs. For instance, studies like Hainane and Shihomeka (2023) provide insights into ICT effectiveness in Namibian institutions, but their findings are not clearly contrasted or built upon in the introduction.

The background section presents a realistic picture of Namibia’s digital development journey. It acknowledges government-driven efforts to enhance digital literacy and infrastructure, but also critically reflects on systemic challenges such as poor end-user ICT skills, siloed operations, and vendor lock-in (Nghitanwa et al., 2023). This nuanced discussion adds depth, showing the complexity of implementing ICT initiatives in a developing country context.

The use of concrete examples, such as ICT misalignment in public institutions and low levels of computer literacy among staff (Hainane & Shihomeka, 2023), helps to illustrate the real-world implications of the alignment gap. Moreover, referencing issues like the National Planning Commission’s disconnect between strategy awareness and implementation (Amutenya, 2022) provides further evidence of strategic misalignment.

That said, the background could benefit from a more structured conceptual framing. Specifically, referencing theoretical models of alignment such as Luftman’s Strategic Alignment Maturity Model or the Henderson & Venkatraman Strategic Alignment Model would add academic rigor and provide a basis for evaluating determinants and barriers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundations of ICT–Business Alignment

Strategic alignment between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and business objectives is pivotal for organizational success. The Strategic Alignment Model (SAM) by Henderson and Venkatraman (1993) underscores the necessity of aligning business and IT strategies to achieve superior performance. Luftman’s (2000) Strategic Alignment Maturity Model further provides a framework to assess the maturity of this alignment within organizations. These models have been extensively applied in developed economies, offering insights into the mechanisms of effective ICT–business integration.

From a linkage standpoint, business leaders have traditionally perceived ICT as a cost centre, offering minimal direct contribution to overall organizational success. Management’s primary focus under this view is on ensuring that ICT functions are operationally connected to business needs. However, organizations that recognize the value of strategic alignment go beyond this approach by selecting alignment perspectives that effectively support and advance their business objectives (Shilongo, 2024). Henderson and Venkatraman (1993) clearly outlined the difference as illustrated in the Table 1.

**Table 1 Differentiating strategic alignment from traditional views on linkage**

Characteristics	Traditional Linkage	Strategic Alignment
Predominant focus of information systems and technology.	Internal I/S function and organisation	Internal I/S function and organisation and external I/T marketplace
Management objectives	Ensuring that I/S activities are linked to business requirements	Selecting appropriate alignment perspectives for

		achieving business objectives
I/S executive roles	Line leadership and I/S functional support	Multiple executive roles for line and I/S managers
Dominant criteria for performance assessment	Cost and service considerations	Multiple criteria
Focus	Operational efficiency	Long-term value creation
Role of IT	Supportive function	Strategic enabler
Communication	Between departments	Cross-functional collaboration
Time Horizon	Short to medium term	Long-term competitive positioning
Adaptability	Static/structured	Dynamic/agile

### Traditional Views on Linkage

Traditional linkage views primarily focus on the technical and functional integration of ICT systems with business operations. This approach emphasizes tactical cooperation, such as:

- Shared data systems.
- Coordinated project management.
- Communication between IT and business units.

Henderson and Venkatraman (1993) originally defined alignment through their Strategic Alignment Model (SAM), focusing on linking business and IT infrastructure and processes to achieve synergy. However, these traditional models often treated IT as a support function, rather than as a strategic partner.

**Critique:** Traditional linkage fails to reflect the dynamic, rapidly evolving role of ICT in shaping competitive advantage and business innovation (Avison et al., 2004).

### Strategic Alignment: A Contemporary Perspective

Strategic alignment refers to the deliberate harmonization of ICT capabilities and investments with long-term business goals and strategies. This alignment is not only structural but also social and cognitive involving shared visions, adaptive leadership, and continual co-evolution (Luftman & Kempaiah, 2007). According to Reich and Benbasat (2000), strategic alignment emphasizes shared domain knowledge and continuous dialogue between IT and business leaders, which traditional linkage models often neglect.

### Global Perspectives on ICT–Business Alignment

Globally, studies have highlighted the benefits of ICT–business alignment, including enhanced operational efficiency, improved decision-making, and increased competitiveness (Chan & Reich, 2007). However, the majority of this research focuses on large enterprises in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in developing contexts.

### ICT–Business Alignment in the Namibian Context

In Namibia, the discourse on ICT–business alignment is emerging. Hainane and Shihomeka (2023) examined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, revealing that only 14% of staff had access to personal computers, and digital illiteracy rates were alarmingly high. This lack of digital proficiency hampers effective ICT integration and alignment with organizational goals.

Similarly, a study conducted within the National Planning Commission of Namibia found that while managerial staff were aware of IT/IS strategies, non-managerial employees lacked understanding, leading to misalignment between ICT initiatives and business objectives (Amutenya, 2022). This highlights the importance of organizational-wide awareness and understanding of ICT strategies to achieve alignment.

Furthermore, the Namibian government's reliance on foreign vendors for ICT system development has led to issues of vendor lock-in, where ministries lack ownership and control over implemented systems. This dependency hampers the government's digital transformation efforts and underscores the need for building internal ICT capabilities (Shaanika et al., 2023).

### **Determinants and Barriers to ICT–Business Alignment in Namibia**

Several factors influence ICT–business alignment in Namibia. Key determinants include top management support, effective communication between IT and business units, and the presence of a clear ICT strategy aligned with business objectives. However, barriers such as limited ICT infrastructure, lack of skilled personnel, and organizational resistance to change impede alignment efforts.

For instance, a study on Telecom Namibia revealed that while information systems positively impacted organizational performance, challenges such as inadequate training and resistance to new technologies hindered optimal utilization (Namwoonde, 2019).

### **Research Gaps and Future Directions**

Despite the growing body of research, there remains a paucity of empirical studies examining ICT–business alignment in Namibia. Future research should focus on developing context-specific frameworks that address the unique challenges faced by Namibian organizations. Additionally, longitudinal studies assessing the impact of alignment over time would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of ICT initiatives.

### **Real IT-Business Alignment in Namibia**

#### **Government Sector: Challenges in ICT–Business Alignment**

The Namibian government's efforts to digitize services, aligned with strategic initiatives like Vision 2030 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan II, have led to the deployment of various ICT systems. However, a prevalent reliance on foreign vendors for system development has resulted in vendor lock-in, where ministries lack ownership and control over implemented systems. This dependency hampers the government's digital transformation efforts and underscores the need for building internal ICT capabilities (Shaanika et al., 2023).

Moreover, the lack of comprehensive policies and guidelines for skills transfer during these projects often leads to a scenario where internal staff are ill-equipped to maintain and support the systems post-implementation. This situation not only affects the sustainability of ICT initiatives but also limits the development of local expertise (Shaanika et al., 2023).

#### **Private Sector: Progress and Persistent Gaps**

In the private sector, companies like MTC Namibia have embarked on significant ICT transformation journeys. MTC's move to modernize its Operational and Business Support Systems (OSS/BSS) by adopting cloud-based solutions has led to improved scalability and service delivery speed (Alvatross.io, n.d.). This strategic alignment of ICT with business objectives demonstrates the potential benefits of such initiatives.

However, challenges persist, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many SMEs in Namibia continue to rely on manual processes, which are time-consuming and costly. The slow adoption of digital tools in these businesses limits their potential for economic growth and competitiveness (2BGNET, n.d.). Factors such as limited ICT infrastructure, lack of skilled personnel, and organizational resistance to change impede alignment efforts.

### **Educational and Non-Profit Sectors: Lagging Behind**

The educational and non-profit sectors in Namibia also face significant challenges in ICT–business alignment. A study on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia revealed that only 14% of staff had access to personal computers, and digital illiteracy rates were alarmingly high (Hainane & Shihomeka, 2023). This lack of digital proficiency hampers effective ICT integration and alignment with organizational goals.

Similarly, in the education sector, the implementation of ICT-based curricula in primary schools is hindered by a lack of infrastructure, resources, and trained personnel. These challenges prevent the effective integration of ICT into educational strategies, thereby affecting the overall quality of education (Shilongo, 2024).

### **Cross-Sectoral Challenges: Skills Gap and Strategic Misalignment**

Across various sectors, a common challenge is the misalignment between ICT initiatives and business strategies. This misalignment often stems from a lack of understanding and communication between IT and business units. For instance, a study conducted within the National Planning Commission of Namibia found that while managerial staff were aware of IT/IS strategies, non-managerial employees lacked understanding, leading to misalignment between ICT initiatives and business objectives (Amutenya, 2022).

Furthermore, the shortage of skilled ICT professionals in Namibia exacerbates the problem. The limited availability of trained personnel affects the implementation and maintenance of ICT systems, thereby hindering their alignment with business goals (2BGNET, n.d.)

While Namibia has made commendable efforts in integrating ICT into various sectors, significant challenges remain in achieving optimal ICT–business alignment. Addressing issues such as vendor dependency, skills shortages, and strategic misalignment is crucial for the country's digital transformation. A concerted effort involving policy reforms, capacity building, and strategic planning is essential to bridge the existing gaps and harness the full potential of ICT in driving Namibia's socio-economic development.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Paradigm and Design**

Given the nature of the topic, a positivist paradigm supported by a quantitative research design is most suitable. The topic seeks to empirically assess the relationship between ICT–business alignment and organizational performance in Namibia, as well as identify specific determinants and barriers. A positivist approach enables objective measurement and generalization across organizational contexts (Creswell, 2014). A cross-sectional survey design allows for data to be collected at a single point in time from a broad sample of organizations, which is appropriate for assessing the current state of alignment across sectors in Namibia. While quantitative methods offer breadth, they may not capture nuanced insights into organizational behaviour and culture. Including a qualitative component, such as interviews with IT managers or CIOs, could add depth to the findings (Saunders et al., 2019).

### **Population and Sampling Strategy**

The target population for this study includes ICT managers, business executives, and departmental heads from both public and private organizations across Namibia. A stratified random sampling method ensures that data is collected from a diverse range of sectors, such as telecommunications, education, finance, and government institutions. Stratified sampling improves representation but requires detailed knowledge of the population structure, which may be difficult to obtain in Namibia due to fragmented ICT adoption records (Mouton, 2015). In such cases, purposive sampling could be used to ensure inclusion of key ICT-intensive sectors.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The primary data collection method is a structured questionnaire based on established alignment frameworks like Luftman's Strategic Alignment Maturity Model (2000) and Henderson & Venkatraman's Strategic Alignment Model (1993). The questionnaire is likely to include Likert-scale items measuring:

### **Degree of alignment**

Perceived barriers (e.g., lack of top management support, skills gap)

Organizational impact (efficiency, adaptability, decision-making quality)

Secondary data may include reports from Namibia's Ministry of ICT and digital strategy policy documents. Structured questionnaires ensure consistency and reliability but may limit the depth of responses. Additionally, self-reported data is prone to social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016). Supplementary interviews could mitigate this risk.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Quantitative data is best analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis to determine relationships between alignment and organizational outcomes. Tools such as SPSS or STATA can facilitate the analysis of large datasets and generate insights into the strength and direction of key variables. While regression helps identify relationships, it does not imply causation. Also, data normality and multicollinearity assumptions must be tested to validate the results (Pallant, 2020).

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure reliability, the study should pilot the questionnaire with a small group of respondents before full deployment. Cronbach's Alpha can assess internal consistency of the scale items. To improve validity, the instrument should be reviewed by ICT and business strategy experts. Failing to conduct a pilot study or not triangulating findings with qualitative insights may compromise the integrity of the data. Including methodological triangulation could increase both internal and external validity (Denzin, 1978).

The chosen methodology for this study is largely appropriate for its empirical objectives. A quantitative, cross-sectional approach using surveys allows for broad coverage and statistical rigor. However, the lack of qualitative depth may limit contextual understanding. A mixed-methods approach would offer a more comprehensive view of the complexities surrounding ICT–business strategic alignment in Namibia.

## **4. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The strategic alignment between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and business objectives is pivotal for organizational success. In Namibia, this alignment faces unique challenges and opportunities across various sectors. This analysis synthesizes quantitative findings from multiple studies to elucidate the determinants, barriers, and organizational impacts of ICT–business strategic alignment in the Namibian context.

In Namibia, many organizations are still transitioning from traditional linkage models to strategic alignment. Government entities in Namibia, for example, may have integrated systems (like e-government platforms), but lack a cohesive digital strategy aligned with broader national development goals (Shaanika et al., 2023).

Telecom company in Namibia might use CRM software (linkage), but without aligning it with customer-centric strategies (strategic alignment), it misses the opportunity to fully leverage digital transformation.

### **Determinants of ICT–Business Strategic Alignment**

This study has identified several key determinants influencing ICT–business alignment in Namibia.

**Organizational Size and Age:** Larger and more established firms tend to have better ICT integration due to more resources and structured processes.

**Exporting Activities:** Firms engaged in exporting are more likely to adopt advanced ICT solutions to meet international standards and communication needs.

**Foreign Ownership:** Companies with foreign stakeholders often have higher ICT adoption rates, influenced by global practices and expectations.

**Legal Form of the Firm:** The legal structure impacts decision-making processes and resource allocation for ICT investments.

These determinants suggest that external market engagement and organizational characteristics significantly influence ICT alignment.

### **Barriers to Effective ICT–Business Alignment**

Barriers to ICT alignment, such as limited infrastructure and lack of skills, were significant challenges for organizations (Johnson, 2022)

Despite the recognized importance of ICT, several barriers hinder its strategic alignment with business goals in Namibia:

**Vendor Lock-In:** Government ministries often outsource ICT projects to foreign vendors without adequate knowledge transfer, leading to dependency and limited control over systems.

**Lack of Technical Expertise:** A shortage of skilled ICT professionals hampers the development and maintenance of ICT systems, affecting their alignment with business strategies.

**Inadequate Infrastructure:** Especially in rural areas, limited access to reliable electricity and internet connectivity restricts the implementation of ICT solutions.

**Limited Awareness and Training:** Many organizations lack awareness of the benefits of ICT alignment and do not provide sufficient training to staff, leading to underutilization of available technologies.

Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach, including policy reforms, investment in infrastructure, and capacity building.

### **Organizational Impact of ICT–Business Strategic Alignment**

Effective alignment between ICT and business strategies has been shown to positively impact organizational performance:

**Enhanced Service Delivery:** In the telecommunications sector, the integration of ICT has led to improved customer service and operational efficiency.

**Increased Competitiveness:** Firms with aligned ICT strategies are better positioned to compete in both local and international markets.

**Improved Decision-Making:** Access to real-time data and analytics through ICT systems supports informed decision-making processes.

These impacts underscore the value of strategic ICT investments and their role in achieving business objectives.

Many Namibian organizations recognize the importance of ICT for business growth.

There is a gap in strategic integration, often due to lack of communication between ICT and business units in Namibia.

Determinants of successful alignment might include leadership support, ICT governance, and organizational culture.

Barriers may include skill gaps, budget constraints, or lack of clear ICT strategies.

Organizations with higher levels of alignment tend to report better performance outcomes.

The alignment of ICT with business strategies in Namibia is influenced by organizational characteristics, external market engagement, and infrastructural factors. While certain sectors have demonstrated the benefits of such alignment, widespread challenges persist, particularly in government and rural contexts. Addressing these issues through targeted policies, infrastructure development, and capacity building is essential for leveraging ICT as a driver of organizational success in Namibia.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations for this study were drawn from the respondents' opinions and suggestions as obtained from probing and were derived from the findings of this research study:

### **Enhance ICT Governance and Leadership Commitment**

- Organizations should establish strong ICT governance structures and ensure executive commitment to ICT-business strategic alignment.



- Effective governance frameworks such as IT steering committees and strategic ICT planning facilitate shared decision-making between business and IT units. Leadership buy-in ensures that alignment initiatives receive adequate budgetary, policy, and cultural support (Luftman & Kempaiah, 2007).
- In Namibia, the lack of structured ICT leadership in some public institutions leads to fragmented initiatives that fail to align with national digital strategies (Shaanika, Nhinda & Amunkete, 2023).

#### **Invest in ICT Skills Development and Capacity Building**

- Training programs should be implemented to upskill both IT professionals and business managers in alignment competencies.
- A major barrier in Namibia is the skills gap in ICT planning and integration. Targeted professional development in enterprise architecture, digital literacy, and ICT strategy formulation will empower local staff to reduce dependence on external vendors (Shilongo, 2024).
- This will help mitigate the “vendor lock-in” problem that limits institutional control over ICT systems (Shaanika et al., 2023).

#### **Foster Cross-Functional Collaboration**

- Encourage ongoing collaboration between business units and ICT departments to ensure shared strategic objectives.
- Alignment is not a one-time event but a continuous process requiring cultural and structural integration. Collaborative planning, regular strategy meetings, and co-ownership of digital initiatives foster better synchronization (Reich & Benbasat, 2000).
- In Namibian firms, isolated ICT departments are less effective in driving business transformation than those embedded within cross-functional teams.

#### **Develop Clear ICT–Business Alignment Metrics**

- Organizations should define and track KPIs that measure the impact of ICT on strategic business outcomes.
- Having measurable indicators such as ICT contribution to revenue growth, customer satisfaction, or operational efficiency provides evidence-based justification for alignment investments (Luftman & Brier, 1999).
- In Namibia, the absence of such performance metrics has led to underutilization and misallocation of ICT resources (Namene & Angula, 2021).

#### **Strengthen National ICT Infrastructure and Policy Support**

- Policymakers should prioritize rural connectivity and create enabling regulatory environments for ICT-business integration.
- Access to reliable internet, power, and digital tools is foundational for alignment, especially in rural Namibia. Supportive policies and public–private partnerships are needed to bridge this infrastructure gap (Kamutuezu et al., 2021).

#### **Strengthen Collaboration and Communication**

- Encourage greater collaboration and communication between IT and business stakeholders to ensure that IT initiatives are aligned with business needs and objectives.

#### **Embrace Technology as a Strategic Asset**

- View technology not just as a cost centre but as a strategic asset that can drive innovation, improve efficiency, and create a competitive advantage.



### Consider the Unique Namibian Context

- Tailor recommendations to the specific needs and challenges of Namibian organizations, taking into account factors such as infrastructure limitations, skills gaps, and economic conditions

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