

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF SAFARICOM PLC, KENYA

BY

*Kadiri, Francis Omondi¹, Dr Jennifer Wangari Wairiuko, Dr. Catherine Binelli

**Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Social Sciences and Development Studies, Nairobi, Kenya.*

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between strategic alignment and organizational performance of Safaricom PLC in Kenya. The study sought to answer the question: What is the extent of influence of strategic alignment on the performance of Safaricom PLC? The convergent parallel mixed method design was used. The data collection methods adopted included semi-structured questionnaire for quantitative data and key informant interviews and document review for qualitative evidence, from the employees of Safaricom PLC in Nairobi City County. A total of 5,492 employees was the target population, and a sample of 359 employees was determined, of which 344 answered the questionnaires, corresponding to a 95.8% response rate. Twelve key informants comprising senior managers, departmental heads and project managers participated in interviews. The data were analysed quantitatively (descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression), and qualitatively (thematic analysis). The qualitative and quantitative data were then integrated with the quantitative results. The strategic project planning dimension with the highest mean was strategic alignment ($M = 3.8802$, $SD = 0.3481$). It, however, had a weak negative association with organizational performance ($r = -.122$, $p = .023$) and was statistically significantly negative predictor in the multiple regression model ($B = -.123$, $\beta = -.123$, $t = -2.293$, $p = .022$). The full regression model was statistically significant, $F(4,339) = 2.564$, $p = .038$, although it explained only 2.9% of the variance in organisational performance. Qualitative evidence showed that managers saw strategic alignment as important for efficiency in using resources, for servicing, for decision making and for achievement of strategic goals, but poor communication from the top to the bottom of the organization was an issue. The results indicate that strategic alignment might not be enough to account for differences in organizational performance in the experienced telecommunications organization. The study suggests that there is a need to improve the mechanisms of cascading the strategy and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems from strategic objectives to project activities, project outputs, project intermediate outcomes, and project organizational outcomes. The study also helps to monitor and evaluate because it proves the need to test the entire result chain and not take for granted that a plan-level alignment will automatically lead to an organization-level gain in performance.

Keywords: strategic alignment; organizational performance; telecommunications; project planning; monitoring and evaluation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Strategic Projects are becoming a crucial component for the realization of the organizational goals into operational activities, investments, and measurable results. A critical element of this is strategic alignment, which is about how close project goals, initiatives, roles, and outcomes are to organizational goals. In theory, aligning the gap between strategy formulation and implementation by ensuring that projects and the resources allocated to it are in tune with agreed directions of the organization.

This link between strategic alignment and organizational performance can, however, be more complex. The literature shows that there are overall benefits of organizational alignment, and that this can

lead to better organizational effectiveness, decision-making, competitive advantage, and project outcome. The strategic alignment and university organizational performance were found to be significantly related in Ethiopian universities by Gede and Huluka (2023), and Ghonim et al. (2022) reported that strategic alignment positively impacted decision effectiveness. Strategic alignment was also found to be related to sustainable competitive advantage via information technology implementation success and managerial resources in this study (Hartani et al., 2021). The results indicate that value can be created when strategic priorities are appropriately transformed into organizational action through alignment.

The Kenyan telecoms environment also suggests that there is a need for alignment. In Kenya's telecommunications sector, Osendi et al. (2024) found that strategic alignment has a positive association with project performance, especially with regard to project completion and schedule adherence. This evidence is relevant, but speaks to project-level performance, while organizational performance reflects all of the following: operational efficiency, achievement of performance targets, etc., productivity and customer-related outcomes. This means that a project can be targeted and completed even if the organization's overall performance is not improved. The seeming opposition could be partially due to the different levels of performance measured. Even if a positive link exists between alignment and project performance, it does not necessarily mean that there is a positive direct link between alignment and organization-wide performance.

The term strategic alignment can also mean something different in an established organization. If the process of planning, project governance and implementation of project strategy is already built into the organization, then the alignment might be considered as the minimum organization requirement that does not variably influence the performance a lot. This can be a relatively small gap in perceptions of alignment that could have only a small explanatory impact on differences in organizational performance. Technological conditions, competition, regulation, organizational capabilities, and market dynamics are other factors that can affect the performance, aside from strategic project planning.

There are a number of ways to conceptualise this relationship within the theoretical literature. Under the Resource Based View (RBV) organizational resources and capabilities can offer sustained competitive advantage, which is defined as a valuable and hard-to-replicate resource or capability (Barney, 1991). Strategic alignment, viewed this way, can help with performance as it is an organizational capability that allows for the effective deployment of resources. If, however, the alignment is already deeply embedded, it can be more of an organization's core competency than a source of competitive advantage to performance.

The Dynamic Capabilities perspective additionally proposes that, in addition to aligning resources and actions with the present strategy, organizational performance relies on the organization's capacity to sense shifts, seize chances and reconfigure its resources to respond to changing environments (Teece et al., 1997). Strategic goals and operational requirements may shift due to technology, competition, and regulations, and this is relevant to telecommunications companies. For situations in

which performance relies on the organization's adaptability, static alignment with current priorities might be inadequate.

The Theory of Change is another monitoring and evaluation lens that focuses on the causal links between activities and outputs, outcomes, and more long-term results (Weiss, 1995). When used for strategic project planning, the theory calls for alignment not to be an end point. It is, however, a component of a results chain, which links strategic goals with project activities, outputs, intermediate results, and organizational outcomes. This is crucial as it is highly unlikely that good alignment at the planning stage will automatically ensure that the anticipated organizational outcomes are realized.

The current study aims to tackle this problem by drawing on the data from Safaricom PLC, one of the leading telecom companies in Kenya. The study is specifically designed to assess the contribution of strategic alignment to organizational performance, not project performance. The strategic alignment was concretized by the alignment between project objectives and organizational strategy; consistency of project activities with organizational priorities; employees' awareness of their role in the project's strategic objectives; alignment of performance targets; strategic guidance of implementation decisions; and consistency of role and in long-term organizational strategy.

The research question for the study was: What is the extent of the influence of strategic alignment on the performance of Safaricom PLC? Levels of the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach were employed to integrate employee survey evidence with organizational managers and project leaders' qualitative accounts. The study adds to the body of knowledge by testing if there is a significant difference between the positive perceptions of strategic alignment and organizational performance, and by exploring the implications of this for strategic monitoring and evaluation of projects.

The quantitative results indicated that the strategic alignment was highly rated with a weak negative correlation with organizational performance. Qualitative results, on the other hand, showed that organizational managers and project leaders believed alignment is crucial for resource efficiency, service delivery, decision making, and strategic goal achievement. The study thus not only investigates the extent to which an alignment exists, but also whether variations in alignment are correlated with variations in organizational performance in general.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Strategic alignment and organizational performance

Strategic alignment is a general term that describes the congruence of organizational strategy and strategy implementation activities, decisions, resources, and objectives. In the context of project settings, alignment means that project goals and actions are related to overall organizational goals and actions. It assumes that any organization with a clear set of strategic goals that is focused on resources and activities will work better.

The empirical evidence overall suggests that there is a positive relationship between strategic alignment and organizational performance. Gede and Huluka (2023) studied Ethiopian universities to find that there is a significant relationship between strategic alignment and organizational performance. Their conclusion indicates that activities and decisions that are linked to strategic priorities are good for organizational units. In line with this, Ghonim et al. (2022) showed that strategic alignment is linked to the effectiveness of decision making, which indicates that strategic alignment can enhance the consistency between organizational goals and managerial decisions.

A similar viewpoint comes from Hartani et al. (2021) when they discuss the strategic alignment and sustainable competitive advantage. The results show that information technology implementation success and managerial resources are important factors relating to alignment and competitive advantage. This means that alignment does not necessarily mean improved performance as a linear function. Rather, it is possible that its contribution could be contingent on the capacities and mechanisms of action of the organisation that enables strategic priorities to be transformed into organisational outcomes.

The literature has thus demonstrated the significance of strategic alignment and further indicated that alignment should be seen in the context of an implementation system. When organizational performance relies on intermediate capabilities, processes and outcomes, measures of alignment with the capability may not fully account for variation in organizational performance.

2.2 Strategic alignment and project performance

Project level strategic alignment has also been looked at. Osendi et al. (2024) have confirmed that strategic alignment has a positive correlation with project performance in telecommunication sector of Kenya. They conclude that link to organizational strategy can be a useful indicator of the likelihood of reaching project performance outcomes (like timely completion) at the project level if it is appropriate to the project.

However, performance in project and organizational should be differentiated. Project performance usually is about whether a project meets given project-level objectives, deliverables, schedules, and other project-level targets. Organizational performance can be wider and include operational efficiency, productivity, customer results, competitiveness and meeting strategic goals. Therefore, the drivers of successful project delivery are likely not the same as the ones that explain the organization's overall performance.

This is especially important for the current research. The findings reported by Osendi et al (2024) are related to strategic alignment and project performance, while the study in this paper focuses on strategic alignment and organizational performance. One explanation for the lack of replication of a positive relationship is that the level of analysis and outcome construct differs.

2.3 Strategic alignment, teams, and adaptive implementation

The implementation of the strategy into performance also relies on the understanding and practice of strategic priorities by teams. Marques-Quinteiro et al. (2022) highlight the need for leadership transitions and team processes for organization functioning. Thommes et al. (2024) also show that in a dynamic context, a team might need to adjust its leadership style with changing circumstances.

These are relevant since not everyone in the organization necessarily understands what they do to achieve the goals. There can be gaps in communication, interpretation, and implementation at operational levels if it is not aligned at the corporate planning level. Under these conditions, however, there is no guarantee that strategically aligned projects will automatically lead to increases in overall performance. The adaptive implementation approach is thus complemented by the literature on the conventional perspective of alignment. In sectors undergoing dynamic change, performance will need to be good both by being aligned with the strategic aims and also by adapting these strategic aims as well as the resources, responsibilities and methods of implementation that are available.

2.4 Theoretical perspectives

2.4.1 Theory of Change

Theory of change is a tool to help clarify the expected results of interventions (Weiss, 1995). It is relevant to strategic project planning because of its focus on sequencing of inputs, activities, and outputs to intermediate and longer-term outcomes.

Strategic alignment is about conceptualizing alignment as part of a larger results pathway. For a project to support an organizational goal, it needs to be connected to it via relevant activities and outputs

before it can help achieve organizational outcomes. The theory, then, favours a monitoring and evaluation strategy that follows through the results chain, and does not consider strategic alignment as proof of successful performance.

2.4.2 Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View first posits that valuable resources and capabilities of the organization can be used to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage if they have attributes that render them difficult to imitate and substitute (Barney, 1991). Strategic alignment may be considered a capability in which organizing around organizational priorities is done with the help of coordinating resources and activities.

The RBV, however, also provides some insights into why the correlation between alignment and performance may be low in established organizations. If strategic alignment is already established as a part of organizational practices, it might be a low-hanging fruit skill that is required, but not necessarily rare or unique. There might then be little variation in organizational performance, due to variation in perceived alignment.

2.4.3 Dynamic Capabilities

Dynamic Capabilities theory stresses the importance of the capability of an organization to sense opportunities and threats, seize opportunities and reconfigure resources when the environment changes over time (Teece et al., 1997). The focus is on adaptation instead of consistency with a current strategy, as it is in conventional strategic alignment.

In telecommunications, alignment can thus be a very useful tool when it allows the organisations to find ways to continuously adapt to changes in projects, resources, and implementation priorities. The implication is that static alignment might not necessarily reveal the full extent of the capabilities necessary to achieve better organizational performance.

2.5 Research gap

Strategic alignment is generally claimed to be useful for organizational effectiveness, decision making, competitive advantage and project performance (Rosen and Rozelle, 2019). But there are three deficits.

The first is that much of the evidence regards the strategic alignment as positively correlated with performance without properly separating the project level performance from organizational level performance. Second, little emphasis is placed on instances where the strategic alignment has been fully institutionalized to the extent that there is less employee or organizational unit variation in the strategic alignment. Third, there is a lack of strategic alignment with monitoring and evaluation logic that clearly describes the links from strategic goals through

project activities and outputs to organizational outcomes.

This study fills these gaps by investigating strategic alignment vis-à-vis organization level performance in Safaricom PLC. It also employs mixed-methods evidence to contrast the statistical relationship with managerial accounts of the ways in which alignment occurs in practice. In this way, the study offers empirical evidence whether high levels of perceived congruence necessarily led to high levels of organizational performance.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design

The study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy and a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed separately before being integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between strategic alignment and organizational performance.

The mixed-methods approach was appropriate because the study sought both to quantify the relationship between strategic alignment and organizational performance and to understand how organizational managers and project leaders perceived the practical role of strategic alignment. The quantitative component provided measures of association and prediction, while the qualitative component provided contextual evidence concerning strategy implementation.

3.2 Study setting and population.

The study was conducted in the Nairobi city County, Kenya and specifically targeted Safaricom PLC. The target population comprised 5,492 employees, based on the Safaricom PLC workforce figure dated 31 March 2025. Data collection occurred in 2026. The focus of the unit of analysis was the organization, and the employees were the main observation units in the quantitative part.

The sample size was calculated as 359 with the Cochran's formula considering finite population correction. Disproportionate stratified random sampling was used, with respondents selected from senior managers, project or middle managers, departmental heads, and departmental staff.

The qualitative part was sampled using purposive sampling, with a total of twelve key informants. They were senior managers, departmental heads, and project managers who had the direct responsibility and/or experience of strategic project planning, resource mobilization and approval, risk oversight, stakeholder coordination, or implementation.

3.3 Data collection

A semi-structured questionnaire (Google forms) was used to gather primary quantitative data.

Questionnaires were sent via official organizational e-mails and participation was not compulsory. A total of 359 questionnaires were sent out and 344 were returned (95.8%).

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative evidence from twelve key informants. The interviews centred on the importance of strategic alignment in the implementation of projects, the utilization of resources, the efficient operation of projects, the decision-making process, the delivery of services and the achievement of projects' organizational goals.

Secondary documentary evidence was also included such as strategy statements, implementation reports, risk registers, stakeholder engagement strategies, and performance reports within the context of the study.

3.4 Measurement of strategic alignment

Strategic alignment was measured using ten questionnaire items on a five-point Likert scale. The items assessed the extent to which:

- project objectives were linked to company strategic goals.
- project activities were designed in line with organizational priorities.
- employees understood how project responsibilities contributed to strategic objectives.
- project performance targets reflected broader organizational goals.
- strategic priorities guided decision-making during implementation.
- projects were implemented without clear reference to strategic directions.
- employees were unclear about how project activities supported organizational strategy.
- projects were approved despite mismatches with organizational priorities.
- team roles supported achievement of project goals; and
- project planning was consistent with the organization's long-term strategy.

The strategic alignment was represented by a composite score given to the ten questionnaire items as reported in the study.

Both negatively worded and positively worded items were used. The present article does not assume or claim that reverse coding was performed with the negatively worded items as this is not explicitly reported in the original analysis documentation. This measurement problem is thus addressed as a constraint and a place for replication and sensitivity analysis.

3.5 Organizational performance measurement

The following employee perceptions of outcomes of organizational performance were used to measure organizational performance: project timelines,

efficiency in service delivery, meeting performance targets, productivity, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness. Some of the negatively worded items in the scale were delays, not getting the expected results, customers being less satisfied, and a reduced competitive position.

This organizational performance measure was thus more of a perceptual evaluation of an organization's overall performance than an assessment of finances or operations.

3.6 Validity and reliability

The instrument was reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure content validity and was refined. A pre-test involving eight respondents from Airtel Kenya was carried out to test the reliability of the questionnaire.

The Cronbach's alpha was .73 for ten items on the strategic alignment scale. The alpha coefficients for resource planning, risk management planning, and stakeholder involvement were .71, .73 and .79, respectively. The strategic alignment reliability estimate was deemed acceptable for the study, but the pilot sample size is very small, so the estimate should be viewed as a provisional estimate rather than a stable estimate.

3.7 Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize strategic alignment and organizational performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the bivariate relationship between the two constructs.

Multiple regression was then used to assess the statistical contribution of strategic alignment while accounting for the other strategic project planning dimensions examined in the parent study: resource planning and allocation, risk management planning, and stakeholder involvement. The model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

where Y represents organizational performance, X_1 represents strategic alignment, X_2 represents resource planning and allocation, X_3 represents risk management planning, X_4 represents stakeholder involvement, and ε represents the error term.

Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$. Because the study used cross-sectional observational data, the regression estimates were interpreted as statistical associations and predictive relationships rather than evidence of causality.

Qualitative interview data were analysed thematically. Quantitative, qualitative, and documentary evidence were subsequently integrated using a joint display approach to identify areas of convergence and divergence.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The study followed relevant institutional and research-ethics procedures. The permission was obtained using the proper university and national research processes (NACOSTI requirements) and organizational authorization was obtained from Safaricom PLC. All participants gave informed consent and the participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and research data were managed safely.

4.0 FINDINGS/RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive findings

Strategic alignment recorded a mean score of 3.8802 with a standard deviation of 0.3481. Among the strategic project planning dimensions assessed in the parent study, strategic alignment recorded the highest mean.

Organizational performance recorded a mean score of 3.8407 with a standard deviation of 0.3484.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for strategic alignment and organizational performance

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Strategic alignment	3.8802	0.3481
Organizational performance	3.8407	0.3484

The descriptive results showed relatively high average scores for both strategic alignment and organizational performance.

4.2 Correlation between strategic alignment and organizational performance

Pearson correlation analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $r = -.122$, with $p = .023$ and $n = 344$.

Table 2. Correlation between strategic alignment and organizational performance

Variables	r	p-value	N
Strategic alignment – organizational performance	-.122	.023	344

The correlation coefficient was negative and statistically significant at the .05 level.

4.3 Multiple regression findings

The multiple regression model incorporating strategic alignment, resource planning and allocation, risk management planning, and stakeholder involvement produced $R = .171$, $R^2 = .029$, and adjusted $R^2 = .018$. The standard error of the estimate was .34525.

The model was statistically significant, $F(4, 339) = 2.564$, $p = .038$.

Table 3. Multiple regression model summary

Statistic	Value
R	.171
R ²	.029
Adjusted R ²	.018
Standard error of estimate	.34525
F (4, 339)	2.564
p-value	.038

Strategic alignment had a regression coefficient of $B = -.123$, with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = -.123$. The coefficient was statistically significant, $t = -2.293$, $p = .022$. The tolerance value was .996 and the VIF was 1.004.

Table 4. Strategic alignment regression coefficient

Predictor	B	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Strategic alignment	-.123	-.123	-2.293	.022	.996	1.004

The model explained 2.9% of the variance in organizational performance.

4.4 Qualitative findings

Qualitative evidence suggested that strategic alignment was found to be important with regard to the functioning of the organization, as perceived by managers and project leaders. A project manager saw a connection between project goals and organizational strategic goals with resource efficiencies, revenue growth, service delivery, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness.

A senior manager also said that integrating day-to-day operations with organizational goals could enhance operational efficiency, resource allocation, decision making and the realization of organizational goals.

Qualitative evidence highlighted at the same time the problem of communicating strategic priorities down to frontline staff. The evidence also indicated that there were gaps in the utilization of stakeholder feedback in the implementation process.

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of the strategic alignment finding.

The study revealed a negative correlation existed between strategic alignment and organizational performance, but it was weak ($r = -.122$, $p = .023$). Strategic alignment also was statistically significant with a negative coefficient in the multiple regression model ($\beta = -.123$, $p = .022$). This is not in line with most of the existing literature, which has tended to link

strategic alignment with positive organizational or project outcomes.

Higher strategic alignment scores were associated with slightly lower organisational-performance scores in the observed sample. This association was weak and should not be interpreted as evidence that strategic alignment caused a reduction in organisational performance. This was a cross-sectional study and largely used perceptual measures.

Also, the utility of the statistical relationship is constrained by the ability of the model to explain the relationship. The entire model was statistically significant but accounted for only 2.9% of variance in organizational performance. The term "statistical significance" should not be confused with "practical explanatory importance". The strategic project planning variables accounted for only 2.9% of the variance in organisational performance, while 97.1% remained unexplained by the model.

5.2 Restricted variation and institutionalization of alignment

A possible explanation for the weak association is the restricted variation in strategic alignment scores. Respondents reported relatively high and closely clustered scores, which may have limited the variable's ability to explain differences in organisational performance. The mean value of strategic alignment was 3.8802, and the standard deviation value was 0.3481 only. This suggests that the scores of the respondents were relatively centred around a high score.

If a capability is well-institutionalized, it may not be able to account for significant performance differences. An RBV view of strategic alignment can be seen as a baseline capability of the organization that is required for effective operation but is not, in itself, unique enough to explain better performance (Barney, 1991).

This should not imply that alignment is not important. Instead, it indicates that the value of alignment may become more apparent if the analysis reflects what happens after alignment has been achieved: the effectiveness of execution of projects; use of outputs; realization of intended outcomes; and whether outcomes lead to organizational goals.

5.3 Project performance versus organizational performance

The results also emphasize the need to differentiate project performance from organizational performance. Osendi et al. (2024) concluded that there is a positive association between strategic alignment and project performance in the Kenyan telecommunications sector. However, the present study looked at organizational performance and not project performance.

These two constructs are in different realms. Strategic alignment can increase the chances of a project reaching the defined objectives, deliverables and timeframe of the project but have a less direct link to organization-wide performance. A successful project can be just a part of a larger organizational performance system. Further adoption, use, integration and reaction by customers and the wider market may be required for the anticipated organizational benefits to be achieved.

It is important to point out, therefore, that the present results do not necessarily contradict evidence of strategic alignment's effect on project performance. Rather, they propose that this association could be weaker if it were assessed at the organization level.

5.4 Qualitative evidence and the strategy-cascading problem

The qualitative results are valuable in contrast to the statistical results. Managers and project leaders saw strategic alignment as significant in terms of both resource efficiency and service delivery as well as in terms of decision making and of achieving strategic aims. In line with the theory and empirical evidence on alignment, this is a managerial evaluation.

Qualitative evidence suggested, at the same time, that there were difficulties in conveying strategic priorities to front-line staff. This implies a potential alignment versus understood alignment. Projects may be formally linked to strategic priorities, but employees tasked with implementing projects might not be fully aware of the contribution of their individual projects to strategic priorities.

This is significant in order to understand the quantitative result. This is perhaps because of lack of formal planning alignment that does not necessarily ensure operational level alignment and implementation. This is not necessarily a causal finding but is a reasonable interpretation and should be tested directly in future work.

5.5 Static alignment and adaptive alignment

The findings can be interpreted by the theory of Dynamic Capabilities. Capable of adapting resources and capabilities to changing environments is crucial to organizational performance, as stated by Teece et al. (1997). When facing a changing telecommunications landscape, alignment with an existing strategic plan alone is not enough if the market, technology, or regulatory landscape evolves while working toward the implementation.

In the same vein, Thommes et al. (2024) illustrate the significance of adaptive leadership processes in dynamic contexts. This implies that strategic project planning might need more than just the condition that projects are in sync with a previously planned organization's priority. It is also important for

organisations to have a process for recognising when the assumptions in their strategy have altered and for modifying projects, resources, and targets, as appropriate.

Strategic alignment can then be viewed as a process, rather than as a planning requirement. Monitoring should therefore look at projects' adherence to the strategy, as well as at the appropriateness of the relationship with the strategy if implementation conditions change.

Table 5. Monitoring and evaluation implications of strategic alignment

Results-chain level	Strategic alignment focus	Illustrative M&E indicator
Strategic objective	Organizational priorities clearly defined	Percentage of project portfolio linked to strategic priorities
Project objective	Project objectives correspond to strategic objectives	Percentage of projects with documented strategic alignment
Activities	Project activities reflect organizational priorities	Percentage of sampled activities mapped to strategic objectives
Outputs	Planned project deliverables achieved	Completion rate, schedule adherence, and deliverable achievement
Intermediate outcomes	Outputs translate into operational improvements	Service efficiency, productivity, and customer-related indicators
Organizational outcomes	Projects contribute to broader organizational performance	Strategic target achievement, operational efficiency, and competitiveness

This approach prevents the assumption that alignment itself constitutes performance. Instead, it enables managers and evaluators to determine where the expected causal pathway is functioning and where it may break down.

5.7 Practical implications

For project and organizational managers, the results show that strategic alignment is important, but it should not be considered as a measure of project or organizational success. Whenever organizations are undertaking alignment assessments, they should supplement this with measures of implementation quality, output achievement, outcome realization, organizational value.

In particular, strategy-cascading mechanisms are crucial. Senior level strategic objectives need to be broken down into specific departmental, team and individual responsibilities. Employees should be able to explain how their project work contributes to achieving particular project goals and how their project output contributes to measurable organisational outcomes.

The findings also provide for improved monitoring of value realization. Organizations should not end evaluation at the end of the project but rather determine if project outputs are adopted and if they produce the desired operational, customer/strategic benefits.

5.6 Implications for monitoring and evaluation

The findings have a direct implication for monitoring and evaluation. Strategic alignment is an input/process-level indicator, whereas organizational performance is an outcome-level construct. Treating the two as if they were adjacent measures can obscure the mechanisms through which performance is expected to emerge.

The Theory of Change perspective suggests that monitoring should follow the complete results chain.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study determined the relationship between strategic alignment and the performance of Safaricom PLC and the question that was addressed was what extent does strategic alignment influence the performance of Safaricom PLC?

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design that included survey data from 344 employees and interview data from twelve key informants and documentary analysis. Respondents felt a strong connection between project planning and organizational strategy, having given it a highly positive rating with a mean of 3.8802.

In spite of this high degree of alignment, there was a weak negative correlation between the strategic alignment and the organizational performance ($r = -.122$, $p = .023$). In a multiple regression analysis, strategic alignment also had a statistically significant negative coefficient ($\beta = -.123$, $p = .022$). The model however accounted for only 2.9% of the variance in organizational performance. The findings are thus of limited use in support of the hypothesis that the strategic alignment itself is a major cause of significant differences in overall organizational performance.

The qualitative evidence gave a different, but complementary viewpoint. Strategic alignment was identified as being important to resource efficiency, service delivery, decision-making, and achieving organizational goals, with challenges in communicating the organization's strategic priorities to the frontline identified.

The final answer is that strategic alignment can be a necessary but not sufficient factor for enhanced organizational performance. In a well-established organization, alignment could be well entrenched and established as a core part of the organization, rather than a key differentiator. After alignment, issues such as implementation quality, adaptive capability, resource utilization and stakeholder response, operational integration and external environmental conditions have more significant effects on performance.

The study therefore makes a contribution to monitoring and evaluation because it focuses on strategic alignment as a part of a results chain and not an indicator of organizational performance. The critical question of evaluation is not just whether projects are in line with strategy, but whether projects are effectively transformed into activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes, measurable organizational results.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Strengthen strategy-cascading mechanisms.

Safaricom PLC should improve its communication structures to ensure that strategic objectives are cascaded from the top management to project teams, departments, and employees. Each project team should have clear definition of the strategic objective the project will achieve and should know the part they will play in that effort.

6.2.2 Monitor the complete strategic results chain.

Monitoring and evaluation systems need to go beyond assessing project alignment to strategy. They should monitor and trace from strategic objectives, project activities and outputs to intermediate outcomes and organisational outcomes. This would help the management to determine the areas where the expected outcomes are not being strengthened or lost.

6.2.3 Evaluate project-to-organization value realization.

Project evaluation needs to go beyond completion, schedule, and deliverable measures. A post-implementation review should be conducted to see if the project outputs have provided the anticipated operational, customer and strategic benefits. This would give more clarity on the strategic projects' contribution to overall performance.

6.2.4 Strengthen adaptive alignment.

Strategic alignment should not be done as a one-off planning activity but is an ongoing process. Project governance mechanisms need to provide an

opportunity for modification of priorities, targets, resources, and approaches to implementation when the technology, competition, regulatory or market environment is changing.

6.2.5 Improve future measurement of strategic alignment.

Future research should include clear coding of the questionnaires, especially for the negatively worded items. If there are alternative coding treatments, then sensitivity analyses should be performed. In addition, researchers should examine the use of perceptual measures as well as objective organizational performance measures.

6.3 Limitations and future research

There are some limitations of the study. First, it was narrowed to a single organisation in the city of Nairobi in the county of Nairobi, hence findings cannot be generalized to other telecommunications organisations and/or other sectors and geographical areas. Second, with a cross-sectional design, the changes in strategic alignment and performance over time can not be assessed. Third, organizational performance was measured almost entirely by employee perception of organizational performance, and not by any independent auditing of organizational performance data.

Fourthly, the strategic alignment scale pilot reliability assessment was done on only eight respondents, so the reliability estimate is provisional. Fifth, there is no documentation of how the negatively worded items on the questionnaire were handled computationally. This does not affect the validity of the reported results but provides an additional measurement problem that needs to be addressed in replication studies by explicit coding documentation and sensitivity testing.

Longitudinal studies could be conducted to determine whether the shift in strategic alignment is a precondition for a change in organizational performance. Research should also examine indirect relationships, such as the relationship between strategic alignment and performance through implementation quality, utilization of resources, and project success, and strategic understanding and realization of employee value. The pattern observed at Safaricom PLC would be better substantiated if comparisons are made among several telecommunications companies to determine if it is an organization-specific phenomenon or the pattern would be more sectoral in nature.

As for this, objective performance indicators and multi-level data should also be included in future research. Incorporating the strategic linkage of project level and team level to operational and organisation-wide outcomes would offer a better test of the results chain suggested in this study.

REFERENCES

- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99-120.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Gede, D. U., & Huluka, A. T. (2023). The impact of strategic alignment on organizational performance: The case of Ethiopian universities. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(2), 2247873.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2247873>
- Ghonim, M. A., Khashaba, N. M., Al-Najaar, H. M., & Khashan, M. A. (2022). Strategic alignment and its impact on decision effectiveness: A comprehensive model. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 17(1), 198-218.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-04-2020-0364>
- Hartani, N. H., Haron, N., & Tajuddin, N. I. I. (2021). The impact of strategic alignment on sustainable competitive advantages: Mediating role of IT implementation success and IT managerial resource. *International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies*, 13(1), 78-96.
<https://doi.org/10.34111/ijebe.202113104>
- Marques-Quinteiro, P., van Dijk, H., Peterson, D. R., Adamovic, M., Buengeler, C., & Santos, C. M. (2022). A model of leadership transitions in teams. *Group & Organization Management*, 47(2), 342-372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011221082394>
- Osendi, A., Ndururi, M., Sagasi, T., & Mutua, J. (2024). Strategic alignment and project performance in the telecommunication industry in Kenya. *East African Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 7(5), 172-177.
<https://doi.org/10.36349/easjebm.2024.v07i05.003>
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, 2, 53-55.
<https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd>
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509-533.
[https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199708\)18:7<509:AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509:AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z)
- Thommes, M. S., Uitdewilligen, S., Rico, R., & Waller, M. J. (2024). Switching gears: How teams co-construct adaptive leadership style transitions in dynamic contexts. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 14(4), 542-570.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866231214238>
- Weiss, C. H. (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families. In J. P. Connell, A. C. Kubisch, L. B. Schorr, & C. H. Weiss (Eds.), *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts* (pp. 65-92). Aspen Institute.