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A Mixed Methods Framework for Evaluating Synergies Between Shared Contact Centres, Organisational Performance, and Customer Service in Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of Shared Contact Centre Services (SCCs) across public and private sectors in the Eastern Cape reflects a broader global trend toward centralized service delivery. However, the conceptual underpinnings of SCCs particularly in relation to synergy, competitive advantage, and definitional precision remain underexplored. This study examines the synergistic interface between SCCs and organisational business units, with a focus on their collective impact on organisational performance, strategic competitiveness, and customer service within the Eastern Cape Provincial Administration. Anchored in the Attention-Based View (ABV) and informed by synergy theory, the research adopts a sequential Mixed Methods Research (MMR) design. A qualitative constructionist methodology enabled the co-creation of contextual insights, while quantitative analysis facilitated triangulation, enhancing the reliability and generalisability of findings across South African provincial contexts. The study culminated in the development of a multidimensional conceptual framework for evaluating synergy, structured around six core dimensions: strategic alignment, process integration, technological enablement, performance metrics, customer centricity, and continuous improvement. The empirical findings demonstrated that the proposed framework significantly enhances interdepartmental collaboration, communication, and knowledge exchange, thereby improving productivity, employee engagement, and organisational health. Furthermore, the framework contributes to elevated customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention factors that collectively drive revenue growth and market expansion. By mitigating operational silos and fostering strategic coherence, the framework enables organisations to systematically assess SCC performance, identify areas for optimisation, and align service delivery with overarching corporate strategy to maximise customer value.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In today's rapidly evolving and customer-centric business landscape, organisations face mounting pressure to enhance operational efficiency while delivering high-quality, responsive services. Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) have emerged as strategic enablers in this context, offering a unified infrastructure through which multiple departments or entities can manage customer interactions more effectively. By consolidating resource es and streamlining service delivery, SCCs support integrated, multi-channel communication that aligns with both organisational goals and rising customer expectations (White & Cooper, 2022). While SCCs are increasingly adopted across global markets as cost-effective platforms for service consolidation, their strategic potential—particularly in fostering synergy between organisational performance and customer service—remains underexplored in the South African context. The Eastern Cape Province, marked by persistent socio-economic disparities, infrastructural limitations, and service delivery challenges, presents a compelling environment for examining SCCs as instruments of innovation, resilience, and inclusive service reform. This study responds to a critical gap in the literature by developing a comprehensive, context-sensitive framework that evaluates the interplay between SCCs, organisational performance (OP), and customer services (CS). It aims to identify key performance indicators and enabling conditions that inform strategic decision-making in resource-constrained environments. The framework is designed to support both theoretical advancement and practical implementation, offering insights for policymakers, managers, and service designers seeking to optimise shared service models.

Globally, SCCs have demonstrated their value in managing high-volume transactions, leveraging digital infrastructure, and achieving economies of scale. However, in South Africa, their deployment is often hindered by fragmented governance, uneven resource distribution, and the absence of robust performance metrics. These challenges are particularly acute in the Eastern Cape, where high unemployment, digital exclusion, and limited institutional capacity necessitate collaborative service models that are both scalable and locally responsive. Moreover, South African organisations face increasing pressure to build customer loyalty and mitigate service failures that threaten reputational and financial stability (Akanbi & Obafemi, 2024). In this context, SCCs offer a promising avenue for reconfiguring service delivery through strategic alignment, technological integration, and stakeholder engagement. By situating SCCs within the broader discourse on organisational synergy and public sector transformation, this research contributes to the advancement of knowledge and practice. It proposes a novel evaluative framework that captures the dynamic interdependencies among SCC operations, organisational performance, and customer service outcomes—ultimately offering a roadmap for building resilient, customer-focused institutions in complex and resource-limited settings

Problem Statement and Research Focus

The Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) have become a strategic tool for South African public and private organisations seeking to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve customer engagement. By consolidating resources and centralising service functions, SCCs offer the potential to foster organisational synergy through collaboration, standardisation, and resource optimisation. However, despite their growing adoption, the strategic impact of SCCs on organisational performance and customer service delivery remains insufficiently examined—particularly with in the socio-economic context of the Eastern Cape Province. The Eastern Cape, characterised by infrastructural limitations, economic disparities, and service delivery challenges, presents a unique environment for evaluating the effectiveness of SCCs. While substantial investments have been made in shared service models, the absence of a comprehensive evaluative framework has hindered strategic alignment, performance monitoring, and service innovation. Existing approaches often fail to capture the multidimensional nature of SCCs, limiting their potential to drive integrated and responsive service outcomes. This study addresses this critical gap by developing a contextually grounded Synergy Evaluation Framework that assesses the interdependencies among SCC operations, organisational performance, and customer service delivery. The framework aims to provide actionable insights for decision-makers, enabling more effective implementation, monitoring, and optimisation of SCCs in resource-constrained and complex service environments

Research Questions and Objectives

This study is guided by a central research question and five sub-questions that collectively explore the strategic and operational contributions of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) to organisational performance and customer service delivery:

Central Research Question

To what extent does synergy between SCCs and organisational business units enhance performance, competitive advantage, and customer service?

Sub-Questions

1. How does strategic alignment between SCCs and organisational programmes support customer value creation?
2. What is the role of operational integration in delivering economic and service impact?
3. How does internal coherence contribute to sustained competitive advantage?

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4. What influence do relational dynamics have on SCC effectiveness?
5. How is human capital managed through governance mechanisms such as Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to meet performance indicators?

Research Objectives The study aims to:

1. Assess the efficiency of synergy in strategic formulation and execution.
2. Evaluate the role of organisational coherence in driving performance and customer-centric outcomes.
3. Analyse horizontal and vertical synergy across business units and service domains.
4. Investigate mechanisms for resource management and customer engagement within SCC operations.
5. Design a synergy-based framework to support competitive advantage and improved service delivery in complex organisational environments.

Quantitative Research Focus and Hypotheses

Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates qualitative insights with quantitative hypothesis testing to examine the strategic and operational impact of SCCs within the Eastern Cape Provincial administration. The quantitative component is structured around the following hypotheses:

H1: Strategic planning is significantly associated with SCC operational planning.

H2: Organisational performance positively correlates with SCC performance outputs.

H3: SCC operations exert a positive influence on programme delivery performance and customer satisfaction.

H4: SCC outcomes align significantly with the Department's Annual Performance Plan (APP).

This integrated design provides a robust foundation for evaluating SCCs as catalysts for synergy, strategic alignment, and service excellence, particularly within resource-constrained and institutionally diverse environments.

Research Significance

This study makes both strategic and scholarly contributions by advancing the conceptual and practical understanding of synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) and its impact on organisational performance and customer service delivery. It introduces a contextually grounded evaluative framework tailored to the socio-economic and infrastructural conditions of the Eastern Cape Province, an environment marked by resource constraints, service delivery challenges, and institutional complexity. By addressing the operational and strategic limitations faced by public sector institutions, the framework offers a diagnostic and implementation tool for assessing SCC effectiveness, optimising resource utilisation, and enhancing service responsiveness. It links synergistic integration to key organisational outcomes, including cost reduction, service innovation, and customer engagement, thereby supporting sustainable performance improvement and strategic transformation.

The study contributes to the broader discourse on organisational design and public sector reform by demonstrating how SCCs can be leveraged as strategic assets in complex service environments. It provides actionable insights for policymakers, managers, and scholars seeking to align shared service models with institutional goals, stakeholder expectations, and long-term development objectives

Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the strategic role of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) in enhancing organisational performance and customer service, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged.

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

The use of a cross-sectional, survey-based design constrains the ability to conduct longitudinal analysis or establish causal relationships between variables. Consequently, observed associations should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response bias, particularly among senior participants who may present their organisations in a favourable light. Additionally, the absence of researcher facilitation during survey administration may have led to varied interpretations of questionnaire items, affecting response consistency. Although these limitations were mitigated through rigorous instrument design, pilot testing, and methodological triangulation, they may influence the generalisability and depth of the findings. The contextual specificity of the Eastern Cape Province—marked by unique socio-economic and infrastructural conditions—further suggests that caution should be exercised when extrapolating results to other regions or institutional settings.

Future research employing longitudinal designs, facilitated data collection, and expanded geographic coverage would strengthen the empirical foundation and enhance the applicability of the proposed synergy framework.

Framework Components

The proposed evaluative framework comprises four interrelated dimensions that together provide a comprehensive basis for analysing and enhancing Shared Contact Centre (SCC) operations, particularly within the constraints and complexities of public sector environments.

The first dimension, resource allocation, addresses the strategic deployment of human, technological, and infrastructural assets in alignment with service delivery objectives. It emphasises the optimisation of resource distribution and utilisation to ensure operational efficiency, responsiveness, and adaptability to fluctuating service demands. Effective resource allocation is foundational to sustaining performance and enabling scalable service models. The second dimension, collaborative efficiency, focuses on the quality of interdepartmental and inter-organisational coordination. It encompasses governance structures, communication protocols, and workflow integration mechanisms that facilitate seamless collaboration across entities. By strengthening these mechanisms, collaborative efficiency enhances service coherence, reduces duplication, and supports the alignment of SCC operations with broader institutional goals. The third dimension, performance metrics, introduces standardised indicators for benchmarking key aspects of SCC service delivery. Metrics such as resolution rates, turnaround times, and customer satisfaction scores enable consistent evaluation and inform continuous improvement efforts. The systematic use of performance metrics supports evidence-based decision-making and reinforces accountability across service domains, ensuring that operational strategies remain transparent and measurable.

The final dimension, impact on customer service, evaluates the SCC's responsiveness, problem-resolution effectiveness, and overall customer experience outcomes. This dimension underscores the importance of user-centric service delivery and provides insights into how operational strategies translate into tangible benefits for end-users. It is critical for assessing service quality and for fostering trust, loyalty, and satisfaction among both internal and external clients. Taken together, these dimensions form a robust analytical framework that supports strategic decision-making, promotes operational excellence, and advances SCC capabilities in dynamic and resource-constrained public sector contexts. The framework not only facilitates the identification of strengths and weaknesses within SCC operations but also establishes a cyclical process of improvement, whereby resource allocation, collaboration, performance measurement, and customer impact are continuously aligned to achieve sustainable service delivery outcomes

CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the study within the operational context of the Eastern Cape Department of Health's Shared Contact Centre (SCC) initiative, framing the research problem, objectives, and guiding questions. It established a conceptual foundation grounded in the Attention-Based View (Bauer & Friesl, 2022) and synergy theory (Chadwick, 2021), further enriched by resource-based and knowledge-based perspectives. These theoretical lenses collectively underscore the strategic significance of SCCs in enhancing organisational

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

performance, fostering competitiveness, and delivering customer value. The chapter also highlighted the structural and managerial complexities inherent in SCC implementation, particularly the challenges of inter-unit collaboration and strategic alignment in resource-constrained environments. In response, the proposed management framework is positioned as a key enabler of synergy—offering a structured, context-sensitive approach to evaluating SCC operations and their contribution to service excellence. This conceptual groundwork sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, which will explore the theoretical and empirical dimensions of SCCs in greater depth. The literature review will examine four core constructs—Synergy, Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Services (CS)—providing a comprehensive analytical basis for framework development and empirical investigation. Through this progression, the study aims to advance both scholarly understanding and practical application of SCCs as strategic instruments for organisational transformation

LITERATURE REVIEW

Section 2.1. The Conceptual Framework

This section builds upon the foundational objectives presented in Chapter one by introducing a conceptual

framework that evaluates the synergy between Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) and organisational performance within strategic development processes. The literature review interrogates the interrelationship among SCCs, organisational performance (OP), customer service (CS), and competitiveness, with an emphasis on enhancing customer value and satisfaction. Strategic management scholarship underscores the role of synergy and shared service models in cultivating competitive advantage, particularly in volatile environments that necessitate agile and innovative leadership (Fatonah, 2023). The discussion provides a comprehensive analysis of SCCs, including definitional perspectives, operational principles of Shared Services Centres (SSCs), and the strategic significance of customer service value. It further examines vertical and horizontal integration across organisational units, evolving strategic planning paradigms, and mechanisms that enable synergy in diverse contexts. The Eastern Cape Province serves as the empirical backdrop, facilitating an exploration of how regional socio-economic and infrastructural dynamics influence SCC implementation and effectiveness. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in existing scholarship and proposing a conceptual framework that aligns with the study's objectives and informs subsequent empirical investigation.

Shared Services Centre Overview

Shared Services Centres (SSCs) are widely acknowledged for their capacity to enhance efficiency and service delivery. However, scholarly consensus regarding their definition and evolution remains fragmented, with ongoing debates about whether SSCs constitute a model, concept, or managerial philosophy (Richter & Brühl, 2021). Weflen et al. (2022) conceptualise SSCs as an integrated model comprising interdependent components, underpinned by managerial philosophies that shape leadership and strategic decision-making. These philosophies are pivotal in fostering synergy and competitiveness within complex organisational architectures. SSCs typically function as internal service units supporting both operational and corporate domains, strategically consolidating resources to reduce costs while sustaining service quality. Their operational foundation rests on three core capabilities: human capital, process optimisation, and technological enablement. While centralisation is a defining feature, SSCs transcend traditional models by prioritising value creation through governance and synergy to drive organisational performance. In the public sector, SSC adoption is primarily driven by imperatives to improve performance, transparency, and service delivery amid fiscal constraints and reform pressures (Lau & Manning, 2023). Governments increasingly leverage shared services to streamline administrative functions without compromising service standards (Costa et al., 2020). These motivations—such as cost efficiency and workforce optimisation—are equally salient in private-sector contexts (Gerebrink & Korshavn, 2020; Liu et al., 2021).

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Key Motives for Implementing Shared Services Centres (SSCs)

The adoption of Shared Services Centres (SSCs) is underpinned by multiple strategic drivers that span both public and private sectors. Cost reduction and workforce optimisation emerge as primary motives, with SSCs enabling efficient resource allocation through predictive staffing models and workforce calculators (Gerebrink & Korshavn, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Service quality enhancement and process improvement are equally critical, as SSCs strive to balance customer satisfaction with cost efficiency (Saffar & Obeidat, 2020). Efficiency gains are achieved through centralisation, which fosters specialised expertise, operational flexibility, and productivity (Afflerbach, 2020). Furthermore, process standardisation mitigates duplication and ensures consistent service delivery, supported by clear role delineation and front-end migration strategies (Yurii et al., 2021). Innovation centralisation within SSCs promotes organisational synergy and reduces fragmentation across business units (Füller et al., 2021), while customer orientation is reinforced through integrated activities and knowledge-sharing networks (Zorzetti et al., 2022). Improved management control is facilitated by streamlined governance structures and participative leadership aligned with organisational policies (Masuku & Jili, 2019). SSCs also strengthen information security and transparency, particularly in public sector contexts where compliance and data integrity are paramount (Da Veiga et al., 2020). Risk mitigation in service innovation is achieved through centralised investment and formalised partnerships, which reduce uncertainty and foster trust. Additionally, SSCs enable managerial focus on core competencies and strategic priorities, thereby enhancing organisational agility (Charles & Ochieng, 2023). This cooperative model, grounded in synergy, supports trust-building and performance improvement through formal agreements and due diligence. Despite these advantages, literature often underemphasises control and coordination mechanisms as critical motivators. Soalheira (2020) traces SSC evolution through phases of centralisation, decentralisation, and shared services emergence, underscoring their growing relevance in contemporary organisational structures. Nevertheless, gaps persist in understanding process integration, governance, and financial implications (Richter & Brühl, 2021). Zhang and Dilanchiev (2022) advance two foundational arguments: the scarce resources argument, which prioritises cost savings through resource minimisation, and the efficiency-through-industrialisation argument, which advocates for standardisation and specialisation. However, cost savings alone do not guarantee efficiency if performance targets and compliance standards remain unmet. The consolidation and reengineering principles of SSCs, when coupled with effective management and synergy among production variables, act as catalysts for improved organisational performance and customer experience—aligning with this study's objective of assessing synergy's impact on organisational outcomes.

Background of Synergy Evaluation in an Organisation

Synergy, as conceptualised in organisational theory, is a universally relevant construct that has been examined across global, national, and regional contexts. At the international level, synergy is frequently explored within multinational corporations and transnational governance systems, where strategic alignment and cross-border collaboration are critical for sustaining competitive advantage and operational coherence. Scholars such as Grothe et al. (2022) and Giuri et al. (2019) emphasise how global organisations leverage synergy to facilitate integration, knowledge exchange, and market expansion, thereby enhancing value creation. Within the South African national context, synergy is increasingly recognised as a strategic mechanism for improving public sector performance and service delivery. Government departments and state-owned enterprises are encouraged to adopt synergistic approaches that foster interdepartmental collaboration, minimise redundancy, and optimise resource utilisation. These initiatives align with the National Development Plan (NDP), which underscores institutional coherence and integrated service delivery as essential pillars of effective governance. At the provincial level, particularly in the Eastern Cape, synergy assumes heightened significance due to persistent socio-economic challenges and administrative fragmentation. The province faces service delivery backlogs, limited institutional capacity, and governance inefficiencies. In this setting, synergy offers a strategic pathway for enhancing coordination among provincial departments, municipalities, and public entities.

By promoting collaborative frameworks and aligning strategic objectives, synergy can improve efficiency and responsiveness in service delivery. Despite its theoretical appeal, the practical realisation of synergy remains

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

complex. As noted by Visnjic et al. (2022), Deuse et al. (2020), and Braun et al. (2021), challenges include misaligned priorities, inadequate integration mechanisms, and the inherent subjectivity in estimating synergy potential. These limitations are evident globally and nationally, but they are particularly pronounced at the regional level, where resource constraints and institutional fragmentation exacerbate implementation difficulties.

Consequently, a multi-scalar approach—drawing insights from global best practices, national policy frameworks, and regional operational realities—provides a robust foundation for developing context-sensitive strategies. For the Eastern Cape, this approach underscores the need for rigorous methodological frameworks capable of accurately assessing and harnessing synergetic value. Such frameworks should reflect the province's unique institutional dynamics while integrating theoretical advancements and empirical evidence from broader contexts.

Conceptualising Synergy

Synergy is a foundational construct in strategic management, denoting the incremental value generated through the integration of organisational units, resources, or capabilities. Its conceptual origins can be traced to mid-20th-century management scholarship, with Holubčík et al. (2022) affirming its enduring relevance in contemporary strategic discourse. Igor Ansoff's seminal contributions (1965–1988) positioned synergy as a central principle of product-market strategy, emphasising strategic fit between organisational competencies and emerging market opportunities. Building on Ansoff's insights, contemporary perspectives frame synergy as the optimal alignment between organisational structures and market entrants (Angwin et al., 2022) and as a critical determinant in diversification decisions (Bauer & Friesl, 2022). Magalhães et al. (2019) advance this discourse by linking synergy to Return on Investment (ROI) metrics and delineating four categories: sales synergy, which leverages shared sales infrastructure, branding, and distribution channels; operating synergy, which exploits common facilities, personnel, and inputs for cost efficiencies; investment synergy, which involves joint utilisation of capital assets such as R&D, machinery, and tooling; and management synergy, which entails the transfer of managerial expertise across strategic and operational domains. While these typologies offer analytical clarity, Holubčík et al. (2023) caution against overestimating integration benefits, noting that anticipated synergies frequently underperform—a phenomenon metaphorically expressed as "2 + 2 = 3." Historically, synergy assessments privileged structural fit and static configurations; however, recent scholarship advocates dynamic approaches that evaluate interdependent activities along the value chain. This shift reflects recognition of the complex, fluid nature of organisational interactions and underscores the need for nuanced methodologies in synergy estimation and strategic planning. By adopting a dynamic perspective, organisations can better anticipate integration challenges and design strategies that maximise the realisation of synergetic value.

Assessments for Synergy

Synergy assessment constitutes a critical component of strategic formulation, particularly in contexts where inter-unit relationships are leveraged to achieve competitive advantage. These assessments aim to identify and evaluate strategic and operational linkages among organisational units that share resources, capabilities, or functions. A comprehensive evaluation typically considers multiple dimensions. The first dimension, operations and functions-relatedness, involves examining shared tangible assets—such as infrastructure, personnel, and technological systems—for their capacity to support joint initiatives (Kerdpitak, 2022). This assessment determines whether resource complementarities can generate efficiency gains or service improvements. The second dimension, managerial relevance, focuses on the availability and adaptability of managerial competencies, decision-making styles, and capacity for additional responsibilities. These factors significantly influence the success of coordination and integration efforts. The third dimension, historical and cultural relatedness, considers the origins of organisational units—whether internally developed or externally acquired—and their cultural compatibility (Kuhn & Paulus, 2023; Torres, 2022). Cultural mapping tools are recommended to visualise inter-unit relationships and anticipate potential integration challenges. Finally, standardisation addresses the need for clear cultural and behavioural expectations to align units with the

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organisation's vision and mission. Cultural clarity is essential for sustaining synergetic value and mitigating risks associated with misalignment (Quesado et al., 2022). Collectively, these dimensions underscore the complexity of synergy assessment and the necessity of rigorous frameworks that integrate operational, managerial, and cultural variables. Such frameworks enable organisations to systematically evaluate synergy potential and ensure effective implementation strategies that maximise organisational performance and strategic coherence.

Emerging Conceptual Framework Proposition

Drawing on insights from the preceding literature review, this section introduces a conceptual framework designed to guide organisations operating Shared Services Centres (SSCs) toward achieving enhanced synergy and improved customer service outcomes. Grounded in strategic management theory, the framework reflects the multidimensional nature of synergy as a mechanism for organisational value creation (Holubčík et al., 2022; Bauer & Friesl, 2022). Central to this proposition is the premise that effective SCC implementation requires a robust management model in which synergy functions not merely as an aspirational goal but as an embedded tactical strategy within operational design. This model advocates resource consolidation, process standardisation, and organisational reengineering to foster performance coherence across service units. It further acknowledges the critical role of managerial relevance, operational relatedness, and cultural alignment in enabling collaboration and efficient resource sharing (Magalhães et al., 2019; Kuhn & Paulus, 2023).

The conceptual framework—illustrated in Figure 2.1—depicts the interrelationships among four core organisational elements: strategic alignment, which harmonises SCC objectives with broader organisational goals; operational integration, which ensures seamless coordination of functions and processes; managerial capacity, which leverages leadership competencies to navigate complexity and drive change; and cultural congruence, which sustains collaboration through shared values and norms. These elements operate as synergistic drivers, collectively transforming fragmented service delivery mechanisms into cohesive, high-performing SCCs. By synthesising these dimensions, the framework offers a structured approach for evaluating and enhancing SSC performance, particularly within public sector environments where resource constraints and institutional fragmentation often impede service delivery. It provides both theoretical and practical foundations for organisations seeking to operationalise synergy as a strategic lever for customer-centric transformation.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the proposed framework showing how Strategic Alignment, Managerial Capacity, Operational Integration, and Cultural Congruence all contribute to Productive Synergy.

Proposed Framework Overview

The proposed framework presents a cohesive model illustrating how four essential organisational elements—strategic alignment, operational integration, managerial capacity, and cultural congruence—interact to generate productive synergy. This synergy is positioned not as a theoretical abstraction but as a practical driver of enhanced organisational performance and improved customer service delivery. By integrating these elements, the framework emphasises the alignment of strategic goals with operational realities, the cultivation of managerial competence, and the fostering of a collaborative, adaptive culture. As a strategic tool, the framework empowers decision-makers to respond to situational demands with agility, continuously assess inter-unit relationships, and ensure organisational efforts remain aligned with broader goals and customer expectations. It advocates a dynamic and reflective leadership approach, where synergy is achieved through deliberate harmonisation of diverse organisational strengths rather than isolated excellence.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has established that synergy is most effectively understood as the outcome of targeted resource and activity sharing across distinct business units, rather than as a phenomenon confined to corporate-level interactions. This perspective advances existing theories by highlighting the granular nature of synergistic

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

relationships and the contextual variables influencing their success (Angwin et al., 2022; Torres, 2022). The analysis demonstrates how value-generating activities within one unit can positively impact another yet underscores that realising synergy depends on context-aware managerial evaluations, with implementation challenges often outweighing theoretical promise (Braun et al., 2021; Visnjic et al., 2022). Effective synergy requires deliberate integration rather than mere aggregation. Human factors play a critical role, as resistance may arise from perceived threats to autonomy or status. Cultivating interdependence demands cross-functional collaboration and active personnel engagement, supported by enabling mechanisms beyond top-down directives. Strategic horizontal initiatives should consider competitive barriers, while analytical tools such as value chain analysis and the resource-based view provide guidance for identifying and orchestrating synergistic components that are difficult for competitors to replicate, thereby securing sustainable advantage (Quesado et al., 2022). By synthesising academic perspectives on Shared Services Centres (SSCs), this chapter has illuminated their role in driving organisational competitiveness through synergy. It examined vertical, horizontal, and portfolio relationships and their contributions to value creation. These insights lay the foundation for Chapter 3, which will introduce a framework for empirically assessing the synergy between SSCs, organisational performance, and customer service outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This section establishes the theoretical foundation for examining organisational collaboration and integration through Shared Services Centres (SSCs) as a strategic mechanism for generating synergistic value. The study is premised on the notion that synergy arises not merely from structural alignment but from intentional, strategic interactions among business units that produce outcomes greater than the sum of their individual contributions. While the concept of strategic fit is often invoked to describe the alignment necessary for synergy (Akhmedova et al., 2022), its true value lies in enhancing joint value drivers rather than serving isolated interests. Accordingly, this study shifts focus on the processes and conditions that enable collaborative value creation, positioning synergy as a dynamic and relational construct. Von der Heidt (2023) defines synergy as a boost in competitiveness and cash flow that exceeds what entities could achieve independently—an interpretation consistent with shareholder value creation and performance enhancement. Chadwick et al. (2022) extend this view by framing synergy as a collective process that strengthens competitive advantage through capability transfer and improved organisational outcomes. Building on these foundations, Raftery et al. (2022) conceptualise synergy as an interaction model comprising collaboration, engagement, and trust—three essential elements for achieving effective, efficient, and sustainable performance.

Collaboration facilitates the pooling of human and material resources toward shared objectives (Atmaja et al., 2023). Engagement fosters active stakeholder participation (Brush et al., 2023). Trust, as emphasised by Wu et al. (2022) and Małecka et al. (2022), is critical for overcoming historical barriers to cooperation. Understanding these human dynamics is vital, as organisations operate within distinct constraints of capacity, authority, and behavioural norms. Strong leadership is required to navigate the complexities of integrating diverse units. Currie et al. (2022) caution that dis-synergy—performance decline due to incompatible interactions—can result from poorly managed integration, underscoring the need for a responsive management framework that continuously monitors and adjusts synergistic relationships. To support this inquiry, the study adopts the Attention-Based View (ABV) Theory (Chadwick, 2021), which posits that organisational behaviour and strategic outcomes are shaped by how managerial attention is distributed across competing priorities. ABV provides a valuable lens for exploring the mechanisms of synergy creation, particularly in environments where resource sharing and collaboration are central to performance improvement.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

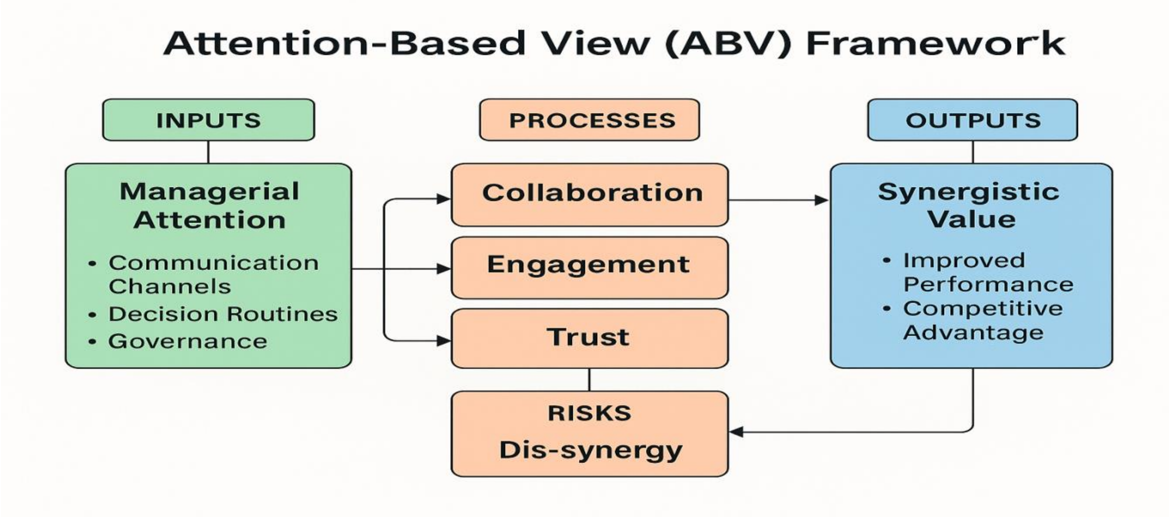
An Attention-Based Perspective on Synergy Evaluation

This section introduces a conceptual framework grounded in the Attention-Based View (ABV) of the organisation, offering a lens to understand how managerial attention is strategically allocated to different forms of synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). Drawing on Bauer and Friesl (2022), the framework integrates ABV with valuation practice research to explain how organisations identify, assess, and pursue synergistic opportunities. Central to ABV is the notion that managerial decision-making is bounded by cognitive limitations and that strategic outcomes are shaped by how attention is distributed across competing organisational priorities **(Joseph & Wilson, 2018).** Within this context, synergy is reconceptualised not as a static structural or operational result but as a dynamic function of managerial prioritisation. ABV posits that attention is directed by an organisation's attention structures—comprising communication channels, decision-making routines, and governance mechanisms—which collectively influence what issues are noticed, interpreted, and acted upon. Figure 3.1 illustrates this process, showing how synergistic value within SCCs emerges through the deliberate and strategic allocation of managerial attention. By foregrounding attention as a mediating factor, the framework underscores the importance of leadership focus and organisational design in enabling synergy creation.

Attention-Based View Framework

The conceptual framework demonstrates that synergistic value within Shared Services Centres (SSCs) is not an automatic by-product of structural design, but a dynamic outcome shaped by the strategic allocation of managerial attention, as theorised by the Attention-Based View (ABV). Organisational attention structures—encompassing communication channels, decision-making routines, and governance mechanisms—play a critical role in determining which issues are prioritised and how resources are mobilised. Within this framework, managerial attention is intentionally directed toward relational synergy drivers such as collaboration, engagement, and trust. These elements are essential for pooling capabilities, aligning stakeholders, and fostering interdependence across business units. When attention is effectively focused on these relational dynamics, organisations are more likely to realise synergistic outcomes, including improved performance, strengthened competitive advantage, and meaningful value creation. Conversely, when attention is misaligned or fragmented, the result can be dis-synergy—marked by declining performance due to poorly integrated efforts or neglected interpersonal factors. This underscores the importance of attentional discipline and strategic interaction in synergy creation. Rather than viewing synergy as a fixed structural feature, the framework positions it as a fluid and relational construct, contingent on how managerial focus is distributed and sustained across the organisation.

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025



The Attention-Based View (ABV) Framework

The Attention-Based View (ABV) Framework offers a conceptual frame for understanding how synergistic value emerges within Shared Services Centres (SSCs) through the strategic allocation of managerial attention. At its foundation, the framework identifies managerial attention as a critical input, shaped by organisational attention structures such as communication channels, decision-making routines, and governance mechanisms. These structures determine which issues are prioritised and how resources are mobilised across the organisation. Within this context, managerial attention is directed toward relational synergy drivers—namely collaboration, engagement, and trust. These elements are essential for fostering interdependence, aligning stakeholders, and pooling capabilities across business units. When managerial focus is effectively concentrated on these relational processes, organisations are positioned to achieve synergistic outcomes, including enhanced performance and sustained competitive advantage. Conversely, when attention is misaligned or fragmented, the result can be dis-synergy, marked by declining performance due to poorly integrated efforts or neglected relational dynamics. This underscores the importance of attentional discipline and strategic interaction in synergy creation. Rather than viewing synergy as a static structural feature, the ABV Framework conceptualises it as a dynamic and relational outcome. It emphasises that the realisation of synergistic value depends not only on organisational design but also on how managerial attention is distributed and sustained. This perspective reinforces the need for leadership that is both intentional and adaptive, capable of navigating complex interdependencies to unlock the full potential of SSCs.

Two Interrelated Components of the Framework

The proposed framework comprises two interrelated components that collectively provide a nuanced lens for evaluating synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). The first component, Synergy Types as Issues, refers to the diverse forms of synergy—operational, managerial, investment, and knowledge-based—that emerge through integration and collaborative practices. These synergies constitute strategic opportunities that require deliberate managerial attention to unlock their potential value. The second component, Valuation Practices as Answers, encompasses the analytical methods and tools employed by managers to assess the anticipated benefits of these synergies. Such practices are influenced by the organisation's attention structures, which shape how issues are perceived, prioritised, and ultimately acted upon. Applied to the SCC context, this framework facilitates an understanding of how attention allocation affects both organisational performance and customer value. As Nicolini and Mengis (2023) argue, the Attention-Based View (ABV) represents a behavioural theory of the firm that explains organisational behaviour by examining how attention is distributed across internal and external communication channels.

Although relatively novel, ABV offers theoretical flexibility while maintaining a coherent structure built around three core concepts: Top Managerial Attention, Organisational Attention, and Organisational Action (Brielmaier & Friesl, 2023). These concepts are deeply interconnected. When an issue receives top managerial

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

attention, it signifies the prioritisation of specific concerns by senior executives, shaping the broader organisational focus and driving strategic action. Given the cognitive and temporal constraints faced by top managers, not all issues can be attended to equally (Colombo & Mella, 2022). Managerial priorities are often reflected in formal governance artefacts such as board meeting minutes, CEO statements, and annual reports (Schiehll et al., 2023). In the context of SCCs, this attentional perspective is particularly valuable for explaining why certain synergy opportunities are actively pursued while others remain overlooked. It underscores the necessity of aligning attention structures with strategic objectives to ensure that high-value synergies are not only identified and evaluated but also implemented effectively. By foregrounding attention as a strategic resource, the framework contributes to a deeper understanding of how SCCs can be leveraged to enhance organisational performance and deliver superior customer outcomes

Figure 3.1 illustrates Attention Based View (ABV) model applied to synergy evaluation

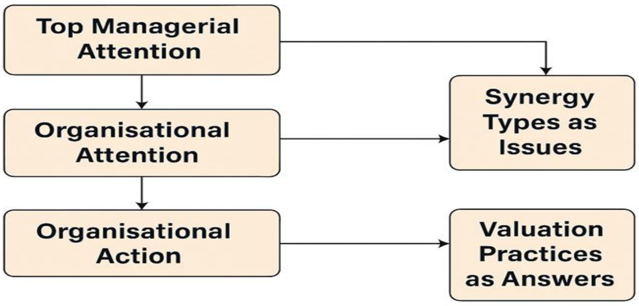


Figure 3.1: Attention-Based View (ABV) Model Applied to Synergy Evaluation

Core Components of the ABV Framework

The Attention-Based View (ABV) framework is anchored in three core components that elucidate how managerial attention shapes organizational behaviours and influences synergy evaluation within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). The first component, Top Managerial Attention, reflects the prioritization of issues by senior executives. Due to inherent cognitive and temporal limitations, managers selectively concentrate on areas deemed critical for achieving strategic objectives, thereby directing organizational focus toward high-impact initiatives. The second component, Organizational Attention, emerges from managerial prioritization and determines how attention is allocated across operational and strategic activities within the organization. This distribution of attention influences resource deployment and the alignment of processes with overarching goals. The third component, Organizational Action, represents the observable outcomes of organizational attention, manifested through decisions and actions aimed at fostering synergy via integration and collaborative practices. Collectively, these components provide a dynamic lens for understanding how attention flows within complex organizational systems and how it translates into strategic and operational outcomes**.**

Supporting Elements

The framework is strengthened by three interrelated supporting elements that enhance the rigor and comprehensiveness of the evaluation process. The first element, Synergy Types, encompasses operational, managerial, investment, and knowledge-based synergies that arise from integration and collaborative practices. These synergies represent strategic opportunities that demand deliberate managerial attention to optimize organizational performance. The second element, Valuation Practices, refers to the analytical tools and methodologies employed to assess the potential and realized value of synergies. These include return-on-investment analyses, strategic fit evaluations, and performance measurement systems, which collectively provide evidence-based insights for decision-making. The third element, Attention Structures, comprises the formal and informal mechanisms that shape the allocation of managerial focus. These structures include governance frameworks, communication platforms, and decision-making routines that ensure alignment

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

between strategic priorities and operational execution. Together, these supporting elements create a coherent foundation for evaluating synergy within complex organizational systems, thereby reinforcing the framework's applicability and effectiveness

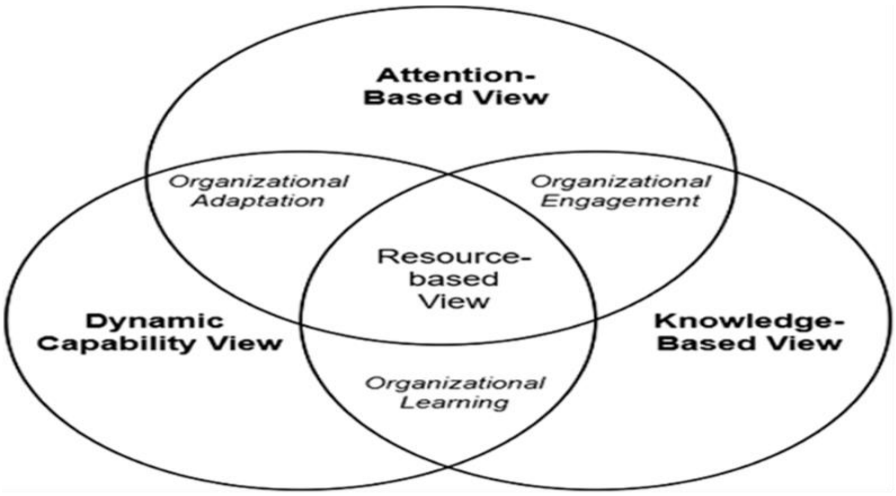
Flow of Influence

The ABV framework conceptualises synergy creation as a flow of influence: Top Managerial Attention → Organisational Attention → Organisational Action. This progression illustrates how strategic priorities evolve into operational realities. Feedback loops from attention structures and valuation practices continuously shape future decisions, ensuring adaptability and responsiveness.

This theoretical framing explains why certain synergy opportunities are actively pursued while others are overlooked. It underscores the importance of aligning attention structures with strategic goals to maximise synergy realisation and organisational performance

Theoretical proposition

Figure 3.2: Managerial attention and knowledge-based dynamic capabilities: A meta-theoretical approach to competitive advantage and synergy within an organisation



Meta-Theoretical Framework (Kaur, 2022) A Multilevel View of Competitive Advantage

The Impact of Synergy on Organisational Capability and Performance

The meta-theoretical framework proposed by Kaur (2022) underscores the importance of integrating micro-level cognition, meso-level knowledge capabilities, and macro-level dynamic capabilities to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. However, the true enabler of this integration is synergy—the productive interaction among individuals, teams, and systems that amplifies organisational potential beyond the sum of its parts. In this context, synergy acts as the connective tissue that binds micro-, meso-, and macro-level capabilities, ensuring that individual cognition is channelled into collective knowledge and organisational action.

The impact of synergy can be observed across four critical dimensions**:**

Enhanced Responsiveness to Change

Synergy fosters seamless collaboration across functional boundaries, enabling organisations to respond swiftly and effectively to environmental shifts. When departments and individuals operate in synchrony, they can anticipate change, share intelligence, and mobilise resources with agility. This responsiveness is particularly

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

vital in dynamic sectors such as public service delivery, where policy, technology, and citizen expectations evolve rapidly.

Improved Innovation Capacity

Innovation thrives in environments where diverse perspectives intersect. Synergy facilitates this by encouraging cross-functional dialogue, shared learning, and co-creation. It breaks down silos and promotes a culture of experimentation, where novel ideas are not only generated but also refined and implemented through collective effort. This is especially relevant in knowledge-intensive settings like Shared Contact Centres, where frontline insights and strategic thinking must converge to design citizen-centric solutions.

Greater Alignment between Strategy and Execution

Strategic misalignment often stems from fragmented communication and disconnected planning. Synergy bridges this gap by ensuring that strategic intent is clearly communicated and operationalised across all levels of the organisation. It enables integrated planning, shared accountability, and continuous feedback loops, thereby translating vision into action with precision and coherence.

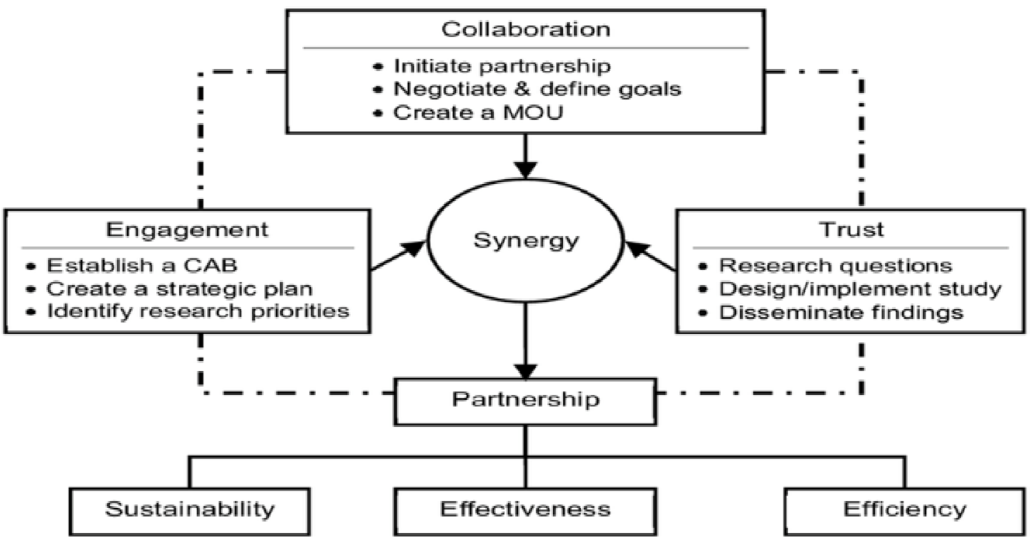
Stronger Organisational Performance Outcomes

Ultimately, synergy contributes to measurable improvements in organisational performance. These include enhanced efficiency, improved service quality, and increased stakeholder satisfaction. By aligning attention, knowledge, and dynamic capabilities, synergy creates a resilient and adaptive organisation capable of sustaining competitive advantage in complex and evolving environments

Emerging themes and findings (Theoretical Frame)

Figure 3.3 illustrates the emergent themes derived from the theoretical propositions examined in the literature reviewed for this study.

Figure 3.3: Emergent Themes on Theoretical Propositions



The conceptual framework in Figure 3.3 illustrates the relational architecture of synergy within partnership development, particularly in collaborative or community-based research contexts. Synergy is positioned as an emergent outcome resulting from the strategic interplay among three foundational components: collaboration, engagement, and trust. These components are operationalised through activities that represent distinct phases of partnership formation and execution. Collaboration serves as the initial driver of synergy, encompassing activities such as initiating partnerships, negotiating and defining shared goals, and formalising agreements

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). These actions establish the procedural and strategic basis for joint efforts, ensuring clarity of purpose and mutual commitment. Engagement builds upon this foundation by institutionalising stakeholder involvement. Activities such as establishing a Community Advisory Board (CAB), developing a strategic plan, and identifying research priorities reflect a participatory governance approach.

These processes are critical for aligning diverse interests and ensuring responsiveness to contextual needs and expectations. Trust is conceptualised as both a process and a product of sustained collaboration and engagement. It is cultivated through co-developing research questions, collaboratively designing and implementing studies, and transparently disseminating findings. These practices reinforce credibility, reciprocity, and shared ownership—key attributes for long-term partnership viability. The central positioning of synergy underscores its role as a dynamic and integrative construct, shaped by the cumulative effects of collaboration, engagement, and trust. Beneath this, the framework introduces a partnership node, which acts as the conduit through which synergistic processes translate into tangible outcomes. These outcomes—sustainability, effectiveness, and efficiency—represent the distal benefits of a well-functioning synergistic partnership. From a theoretical perspective, the framework aligns with relational and processual views of organisational collaboration, emphasising that synergy is not a static attribute but a negotiated and evolving outcome. It also reflects principles from stakeholder theory, participatory governance, and implementation science, suggesting that successful partnerships require both structural alignment and relational depth.

In sum, the model provides a coherent and actionable framework for understanding how synergy is cultivated within partnerships. It highlights the importance of intentional design, inclusive engagement, and trust-building as prerequisites for achieving sustainable, effective, and efficient collaborative outcomes

Critical Analysis of Sources and Theoretical Debate

A comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical foundations underpinning the synergy framework—linking Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Service (CS)—reveals a complex and evolving scholarly landscape. The literature increasingly recognises synergy as a multidimensional construct, shaped by both structural configurations and relational dynamics. However, conceptual clarity and empirical robustness vary significantly, exposing critical gaps that warrant further inquiry. Several studies emphasise the strategic potential of SCCs in enhancing organisational efficiency and service delivery. Yet, synergy is often treated as a by-product of structural consolidation rather than a deliberate managerial outcome. This structuralist orientation, while useful for identifying cost-saving opportunities, neglects behavioural and contextual factors influencing synergy realisation. Consequently, the literature remains fragmented, with limited integration across disciplines such as organisational theory, strategic management, and service operations. The Attention-Based View (ABV) offers a promising corrective by reframing synergy as a function of managerial attention. ABV posits that the identification, evaluation, and implementation of synergistic opportunities depend on how attention is distributed across competing organisational priorities. This perspective introduces a behavioural dimension, highlighting the role of cognitive constraints, governance artefacts, and decision-making routines in shaping strategic outcomes. It aligns with emerging scholarship on relational synergy, which foregrounds collaboration, engagement, and trust as critical drivers of value creation.

Despite these advances, persistent challenges remain in operationalising synergy across diverse organisational contexts. Empirical studies often struggle to isolate synergy effects from other performance variables, and measurement approaches lack consistency. Moreover, the human dimension—including resistance to integration, cultural misalignment, and perceived threats to autonomy—is frequently under-theorised, despite its evident impact on implementation success.

This analysis contributes to the scholarly debate by advocating for a context-sensitive framework that accounts for both structural and behavioural determinants of synergy. It underscores the need for cross-functional methodologies, longitudinal designs, and participatory approaches that capture the complexity of synergistic

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

interactions within SCCs. By bridging theoretical propositions with practical realities, this study aims to refine the conceptualisation of synergy and enhance its relevance for organisational performance and customer service outcomes.

Strengths of Existing Theoretical Propositions

The extant literature provides a robust conceptual foundation for understanding synergy within organisational contexts, particularly through the lenses of dynamic capabilities, knowledge management, and stakeholder theory. These frameworks converge on the premise that synergy is not merely a structural artefact, but a strategic outcome shaped by cognitive alignment, adaptive capacity, and collaborative knowledge creation. Dynamic capabilities theory emphasises the organisation's ability to integrate, reconfigure, and deploy internal and external competencies in response to changing environments. Within this perspective, synergy emerges as a product of strategic responsiveness, enabling organisations to leverage shared resources and capabilities to enhance performance outcomes. Complementing this view, knowledge management theory highlights the role of information flows, learning processes, and intellectual capital in fostering inter-unit collaboration and innovation. Synergy materialises when knowledge is effectively captured, shared, and applied across organisational boundaries, thereby facilitating continuous improvement and adaptive learning. Stakeholder theory introduces a relational dimension, framing synergy as a function of inclusive engagement and mutual value creation. This perspective is particularly relevant for Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), where cross-functional coordination and stakeholder responsiveness are critical to service delivery and performance enhancement. The integration of managerial attention and knowledge processes offers a compelling explanatory mechanism for how micro-level actions translate into macro-level outcomes. The Attention-Based View (ABV) theorises that strategic outcomes depend on how managerial attention is allocated across competing priorities. When attention is directed toward relational drivers such as collaboration, engagement, and trust, organisations are better positioned to realise synergistic value.

Collectively, these propositions provide a multidimensional understanding of synergy, encompassing structural, cognitive, and relational elements. They form a strong foundation for developing integrated frameworks that capture the complexity of synergy creation and its implications for organisational performance and customer service outcomes.

Limitations Identified

Despite the conceptual strengths of existing theoretical propositions, several limitations constrain their applicability and explanatory power in the context of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Service (CS). The literature remains fragmented, with theories often developed in disciplinary silos that lack integration across strategic management, organisational behaviour, and public administration. This fragmentation impedes the development of a cohesive understanding of synergy as a cross-cutting organisational phenomenon. Furthermore, many studies adopt a single-level analytical approach, focusing either on macro-level corporate strategy or micro-level individual behaviour, while neglecting the multilevel interactions essential in complex service environments such as SCCs. Another limitation lies in the absence of empirical validation within public sector contexts. Existing models are predominantly grounded in private sector case studies, which restricts their generalisability to organisations operating under unique governance structures and resource constraints. In addition, synergy is frequently conceptualised in abstract or normative terms, with limited operationalisation for empirical testing or practical application. This lack of definitional precision and measurement clarity hinders systematic assessment and comparison of synergistic outcomes.

Human and relational dimensions of synergy, including resistance to integration, cultural misalignment, and trust deficits, are also under-theorised, despite their critical influence on collaborative success. Similarly, most models neglect temporal dynamics, failing to account for how synergy evolves over time and how managerial attention shifts in response to changing organisational priorities. The role of technology and digital

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

infrastructure in enabling or constraining synergy remains underexplored, even though it is increasingly relevant in SCCs and service delivery platforms.

Stakeholder diversity and power asymmetries, which significantly shape collaboration and trust-building processes, are often overlooked. Methodological rigor is another concern, as many studies rely on anecdotal evidence or conceptual speculation, lacking robust designs that support causal inference or comparative analysis. Finally, there is limited exploration of failure modes—how and why dis-synergy occurs and what mechanisms can mitigate its effects—restricting the development of resilient and adaptive synergy frameworks. Collectively, these limitations underscore the need for a more integrated, empirically grounded, and context-sensitive approach to theorising synergy in SCCs. Addressing these gaps will enhance both the academic rigour and practical relevance of future research in this domain

Critical Gap Analysis

A key limitation in current scholarship is the absence of a unified framework synthesising individual, organisational, and inter-organisational dynamics in synergy creation. Existing theories offer valuable insights into discrete aspects of collaboration and performance but lack integrative capacity to account for complex, multi-level interactions characteristic of SCCs and broader service ecosystems.

Two critical gaps stand out: Role of Formal Instruments such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are under-theorised, despite their strategic function in institutionalising trust and reinforcing relational stability.

Inclusive Stakeholder Involvement such as participatory governance, co-design processes, and community advisory structures are increasingly recognised as vital for legitimacy and responsiveness, yet their influence on synergy formation remains insufficiently examined.

These gaps call for a meta-theoretical approach that integrates structural and behavioural dimensions within the institutional realities of public service delivery. Such an approach would capture relational complexity, governance challenges, and strategic imperatives shaping synergy in practice.

CONCLUSION

Goal setting occupies a central position in management theory, serving as both the rationale for organisational existence and the coordinating mechanism for value generation in dynamic environments. While the Attention-Based View (ABV) does not explicitly address goal formulation, it provides a compelling lens for understanding how managerial attention shapes synergy. This study reveals that conventional synergy estimations often underrepresent integration potential due to attentional crowding-out, where competing organisational demands dilute focus on synergy creation. Findings indicate that attention allocation to functional, business model, or strategic synergy practices depends on the alignment of transactional attention structures with spatial, temporal, and procedural dimensions of valuation. This chapter concludes by establishing the conceptual bridge to Chapter 4, which details the research methodology employed to empirically investigate the synergy framework linking SCCs, OP, and CS—translating theoretical insights into practical application

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods research (MMR) design, with a predominant emphasis on qualitative inquiry, grounded in the philosophical orientation of social constructivism. The qualitative component seeks to explore and interpret human experiences within organizational and service delivery contexts, recognizing that reality is shaped by individual perceptions and social meanings. Complementing this, the quantitative strand supports hypothesis testing and data triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of findings. Together,

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

these approaches provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, integrating subjective insights with empirical evidence.

Research Design

This study adopts a constructionist research design grounded in the principles of observation, inductive reasoning, and deductive analysis to facilitate the co-creation of knowledge. The approach integrates three core investigative phases: rationalisation, exploration, and validation. Initially, inductive reasoning is employed to develop a nuanced understanding of the research problem. This is followed by an exploratory phase aimed at synthesizing and analysing key concepts related to Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). Finally, deductive validation is applied to assess the contribution of SCCs to organizational competitiveness and performance enhancement. Data collection will proceed in two stages. The first involves semi-structured interviews with executive-level stakeholders—including chairpersons, heads of departments, and board members—using a set of fifteen open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The second stage comprises case study interviews with business managers directly involved in the operations of Shared Services Centres, guided by a parallel set of fifteen open-ended questions. This design ensures a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of SCC dynamics across strategic and operational levels.

Population and Sampling - Study Population

The study focuses on the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, selected as a convenience sample due to the researcher's familiarity with its demographic and institutional landscape. Primary sampling units (PSUs) include the two major metropolitan municipalities: Buffalo City (East London) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Gqeberha). Within these municipalities, secondary sampling units (SSUs) consist of organizations both public and private that have implemented Shared Services Centres (SCCs) for a minimum of three years.

Participants are drawn from two organizational levels. The first group comprises executive leadership, including CEOs, board members, department heads, and chairpersons, who will engage in semi-structured interviews. The second group includes business-level managers directly involved in SCC operations and customer service functions, participating in case study interviews. This stratified sampling approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of SCC implementation across strategic and operational domains.

Sampling Strategy

This study employs a multi-stage sampling strategy combining probability and non-probability techniques to ensure both representativeness and depth of insight. At the first stage, two metropolitan municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province—treated as clusters—are selected. These municipalities are further stratified by area type (urban, suburban, and rural), and within each stratum, organizations implementing Shared Services Centres (SCCs) are randomly selected. Four organizations per municipality are chosen for both phases of the research.

To enrich the qualitative dimension, purposive sampling is used to identify participants—such as executives and managers—who are likely to provide meaningful contributions to the study. Theoretical sampling is also applied, allowing the researcher to iteratively collect and analyse data to refine emerging concepts and guide subsequent data collection. This integrated approach ensures methodological rigor while capturing the complexity of SCC implementation across diverse organizational contexts.

Data Collection Methods: Surveys, interviews, observations

Research Approach and Data Collection

This study adopts a mixed-methods research (MMR) approach, with a dominant emphasis on qualitative inquiry, underpinned by a social constructivist paradigm. The qualitative component seeks to explore human experiences and organizational dynamics through interpretive analysis, recognizing that reality is shaped by

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

individual perceptions and contextual meanings. The quantitative strand complements this by testing hypotheses and validating findings through data triangulation, thereby enhancing the study's reliability and validity.

Data collection

Data Collection is structured in two stages. The first involves semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to capture diverse perspectives from executive-level participants. The second stage employs a case study interview schedule targeting business-level managers directly involved in Shared Contact Centre operations. Both stages incorporate thematic analysis, supported by tools such as NVivo, to identify patterns and meanings. Quantitative data will be gathered through structured survey instruments designed to examine causal relationships between Shared Contact Centres, organizational performance, and customer service outcomes

Data Analysis Techniques: Statistical tools, thematic analysis, etc.

Study Population and Data Reduction Strategies

The study focuses on the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, selected as a convenience sample due to the researcher's familiarity with its demographic and institutional context. Primary sampling units (PSUs) include Buffalo City (East London) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Gqeberha), the province's two major metropolitan municipalities. Within these PSUs, secondary sampling units (SSUs) consist of public and private organizations that have implemented Shared Services Centres (SCCs) for a minimum of three years. Participants are drawn from two levels: executive management (e.g., CEOs, board members, department heads) for semi-structured interviews, and business-level managers directly involved in SCC operations for case study interviews. To ensure analytical efficiency and data integrity, the study employs several data reduction strategies. These include data sampling to preserve key patterns, dimensionality reduction to eliminate irrelevant variables, data discretization to simplify continuous data, and feature selection to isolate the most relevant attributes. The researcher also applies the principle of data saturation, terminating data collection once additional responses yield no new insights. This approach, combined with the mixed-methods design, ensures triangulation and enhances the validity of the study's conclusions.

Ethical Considerations and Evaluative Rigour: This study upholds ethical and evaluative rigour by adhering to established protocols for research involving human participants. Ethics approval was secured through the Regenesys Business School Research Ethics Committee, in line with national guidelines for low-risk research. Informed consent obtained from all participants, and nondisclosure agreements signed to safeguard commercially sensitive information. Participant anonymity and data confidentiality was maintained in accordance with institutional codes of conduct and legal data management policies. The research was free from conflicts of interest, external sponsorship, or participant incentives, ensuring impartiality. Additionally, qualitative rigour was reinforced through reflexivity, allowing the researcher to critically reflect on their role and influence throughout the study. These measures collectively ensured the integrity, transparency, and ethical soundness of the research process

Findings and Results of the Study

Introduction

The findings and results presented in this section derive from a rigorous analytical process designed to ensure both validity and reliability in the interpretation of data. Given the complexity of Shared Contact Centre (SCC) operations within public sector environments, the study adopted a multi-method approach to capture diverse perspectives and operational realities. Central to this process was the use of data triangulation, which provided a structured means of corroborating evidence across different sources and methodological lenses. By

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

integrating qualitative insights, quantitative measures, and documentary analysis, the study was able to generate a holistic understanding of SCC performance and its broader institutional implications.

Data triangulation was employed not merely as a methodological safeguard but as a strategic tool to enhance the depth and credibility of the research outcomes. Through the systematic application of triangulation, the study was able to identify convergences and divergences in the data, thereby strengthening the robustness of the conclusions drawn. This approach ensured that the findings were not limited to a single perspective but reflected the multifaceted nature of SCC operations, encompassing resource allocation, collaborative efficiency, performance metrics, and customer service impact.

The following subsection outlines the specific triangulation methods utilised, detailing their type, description, and application within the study. This provides transparency in the research design and demonstrates the methodological rigor underpinning the reported results

The following table depicts data triangulation methods used in the study

Triangulation Type	**Description**	**Application in Study**
Data Triangulation	Use of multiple data sources to validate findings.	Interviews, surveys, case studies, and observations from four different companies.
Methodological Triangulation	Use of multiple research methods to study the same phenomenon.	Combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.
Theory Triangulation	Use of multiple theoretical frameworks or perspectives to interpret data.	Integration of inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) approaches.
Analytical Triangulation	Use of various analytical techniques to identify patterns and relationships.	Data visualisation, statistical modelling, and simulation techniques.
Researcher Reflection	Continuous reflection and debriefing to ensure rigor and validity.	Regular review of research process and findings throughout the study.

Summary of Key Findings and Thematic Analysis

This study examined the strategic, operational, and relational dimensions of Shared Services Centres (SSCs), with a particular emphasis on Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) operating within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Drawing on qualitative insights from senior executives and directors across multiple organisations, the research identified a series of interrelated themes that illuminate the effectiveness, competitiveness, and transformative potential of SCCs. Insights from Semi-Structured Interviews with Senior Executives and Directors: -

Defining Shared Services Centres (Section 5.2) Participants consistently described SCCs as strategic platforms for centralising support functions. One executive noted, “Our SCC allows us to streamline operations and respond faster to internal service demands.” The dominant theme was that collaboration, skilled personnel, and operational efficiency are internal sources of competitive advantage. SCCs were seen as enabling organisations to concentrate on core mandates while enhancing service delivery across units.

Defining Competitive Advantage (Section 5.3) Respondents emphasised that competitive advantage arises from unique capabilities and flexible resource deployment. A director explained, “What sets us apart is our ability to adapt quickly and deliver services that meet client expectations.” Innovation, technology, and brand

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

reputation emerged as strategic enablers. SCCs were credited with improving customer retention and positioning organisations more competitively.

SCC Synergy (Section 5.4) Interviewees highlighted that synergy is fostered through shared goals and mature leadership. One participant remarked, “When departments work in harmony, we see real improvements in both performance and client satisfaction.” The theme of collaborative synergy was strongly linked to responsiveness and trust-building.

SCC Synergy and Business Units (Section 5.5) Integrated planning and cross-functional collaboration were identified as essential. A senior manager stated, “Without alignment between units, SCCs can’t deliver on their promise.” Governance and strategic coherence were seen as key to resource mobilisation and accountability. SCCs were described as mechanisms for unifying service delivery.

Internal and External Customer Alignment (Section 5.6) Participants acknowledged the complexity of serving both internal and external stakeholders. One respondent noted, “We have to balance departmental needs with citizen expectations—SCCs help us do that.” Customer segmentation and SLA management were viewed as tools for maintaining relevance and quality.

SCC Performance Synergy (Section 5.7) Executives stressed the importance of integrating SCC performance data into strategic decision-making. As one director put it, “Our SCC metrics inform everything from budgeting to service redesign.” Performance reporting was seen as vital for continuous improvement and governance.

Decision to Set up SCC (Section 5.8). The decision to establish SCCs was described as a strategic move driven by cost-efficiency and scalability. One participant reflected, “It was a top-down decision, but it’s transformed how we operate.” Executive sponsorship and clear strategic rationale were cited as critical success factors.

SCC Vision and Transformation (Section 5.9) Leadership vision was repeatedly mentioned as a driver of SCC success. A respondent shared, “Our CEO’s vision gave us the mandate and momentum to innovate.” Inclusive communication and strategic alignment were seen as fostering transformation and adaptability.

SCC Governance Framework (Section 5.10) Governance was described as needing to be both structured and responsive. One executive explained, “We’ve built governance around risk, compliance, and stakeholder input—it’s what keeps us agile.” SCCs were credited with enhancing oversight and crisis response.

Organisational Impacts (Section 5.11) Participants reported measurable improvements in service quality and operational efficiency. A manager stated, “Since implementing the SCC, we’ve seen better procurement, faster recruitment, and clearer performance tracking.” Standardisation and metrics were viewed as central to value creation.

Core Capabilities (Section 5.12) Professionalism, leadership, and ICT expertise were identified as core capabilities. One respondent noted, “We invest in people who can lead, innovate, and execute—those are our SCC pillars.” Capability development was aligned with strategic goals and APP priorities.

Process Improvements (Section 5.13) Delegation and customer-centric design were cited as major contributors to improved performance. A participant remarked, “We’ve simplified processes and automated routine tasks—

clients notice the difference.” These changes were seen as reducing bottlenecks and enhancing responsiveness.

Relationship among Business Units (Section 5.14) Trust and shared values were described as essential for inter-unit collaboration. One executive said, “We’ve built partnerships based on professionalism and transparency—that's where synergy comes from." SCCs were seen as facilitators of cross-functional integration.

Retention of Valuable Resources (Section 5.15) Retention strategies were linked to training, recognition, and career development. A director explained, "We keep talent by investing in their growth and celebrating their contributions." SCCs were viewed as environments that attract and retain high-performing individuals.

Role of Technology (Section 5.16) Technology was universally acknowledged as a key enabler. One respondent stated, "Our SCC runs on CRM, cloud platforms, and data analytics—its how we stay competitive." Digital transformation and ICT integration were seen as enhancing agility and client engagement

Thematic Qualitative Findings

This section presents the findings from semi-structured interviews conducted during Stage 1 of the research. The data were thematically analysed and organised into four synergistic relationship values, each representing a distinct yet interconnected dimension of synergy between Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) and broader organisational structures.

Synergy Relationship Value 1: Strategic Management Integration

Strategic alignment between senior executives and SCCs emerged as a critical enabler of organisational transformation. Participants consistently emphasised the transition from fragmented business units to a unified SCC framework that integrated core functions such as Clinical Health Care, Human Resources, Finance, ICT, and Customer Services. This integration facilitated operational cohesion across organisational units, enabling more streamlined and coordinated service delivery. Furthermore, the centralisation of processes contributed to economies of scale by optimising resource allocation and reducing duplication. Respondents also highlighted the role of SCCs in enhancing organisational capacity through the development of shared capabilities and institutional knowledge. Executive sponsorship and a clearly articulated transformation vision were identified as essential conditions for successful implementation, particularly in navigating the complexities of diverse operational contexts.

Synergy Relationship Value 2: SCC Linkages with Business Units and External Entities

The interviews revealed that SCCs have evolved into strategic service platforms that consolidate support functions and deliver centralised services to both internal departments and external stakeholders. These linkages were often formalised through service-level agreements, which provided a structured basis for accountability and performance management. Participants noted that this arrangement allowed business units to concentrate on their core activities while benefiting from consistent and professionalised support services. The centralisation of services was associated with improved customer satisfaction and enhanced service differentiation, particularly in environments where responsiveness and reliability were paramount. Additionally, the consolidation of support functions led to reduced transaction costs and improved organisational competitiveness. The strategic deployment of technology—such as integrated platforms and digital workflows—was frequently cited as a key enabler of these outcomes, reinforcing the value-creating potential of SCCs.

Synergy Relationship Value 3: SCC Performance and Organisational Impact

A recurring theme in the data was the expectation that SCCs deliver measurable performance outcomes comparable to those of other business units. Respondents reported significant improvements in recruitment and procurement efficiency, attributing these gains to the standardisation and centralisation of administrative processes. Cost reductions in support functions were also noted, particularly in areas where duplication had previously undermined operational efficiency. Enhanced service delivery and process optimisation were viewed as direct outcomes of SCC implementation, with several participants highlighting the role of performance monitoring and continuous improvement mechanisms. These improvements contributed to

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

secondary sources of competitive advantage by reinforcing the strategic role of SCCs in supporting and enabling core organisational operations.

Synergy Relationship Value 4: SCC Resources, Capabilities, and Customer Orientation

The final theme centred on the strategic management of resources and capabilities within SCCs, particularly in relation to talent development and customer orientation. Participants described targeted strategies to attract, retain, and develop skilled personnel, with leadership development emerging as a key driver of organisational advantage. Drawing on resource-based theory, the findings suggest that SCCs cultivate distinctive capabilities that support both internal operational processes and external stakeholder engagement. The SCC value proposition was consistently anchored in the integration of people, systems, and a strong customer focus. This bundled configuration was perceived as difficult to replicate, thereby sustaining a competitive advantage over time. Across interviews, SCCs were consistently portrayed as value-adding entities that enhance organisational efficiency, responsiveness, and customer satisfaction

Case Study Introduction and Focus

The second stage of this research employed a case study approach to deepen the understanding of how Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) are operationalised within selected organisations in the Eastern Cape Province. Building on the thematic insights derived from Stage One semi-structured interviews, this phase aimed to contextualise and validate the emergent patterns by examining real-world organisational practices, governance structures, and strategic outcomes associated with SCC implementation.

The case study focused on several key areas: the strategic integration of SCCs within multidivisional organisational models, the evolution of internal and external service linkages, the performance accountability mechanisms applied to SCCs, and the resource and capability configurations that underpin their value proposition. Particular attention was given to Organisation One, which demonstrated a mature SCC deployment and offered a compelling example of how SCCs can function as strategic assets. This phase of the research was directly informed by the Stage One interview findings, which highlighted the importance of leadership vision, cross-functional collaboration, customer orientation, and technology enablement in shaping SCC effectiveness. The case study thus served to bridge qualitative perceptions with institutional realities, offering a comparative lens through which the strategic, operational, and relational dimensions of SCCs could be critically assessed.

Quantitative Finding and Analysis

Sample quantitative Overview

This study adopted a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), organisational performance, and customer service in the South African public sector. A total of 160 participants were targeted across four public sector organisations, yielding 115 valid responses—a response rate of 72%. This sample size was considered adequate for inferential statistical analysis and provided a reliable basis for generalising findings within the study context (Creswell & Hirose, 2022).

Research Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured survey comprising closed-ended items designed to measure perceptions of SCC functionality, strategic alignment, customer satisfaction, and performance outcomes. Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was pre-tested for clarity and reliability before full deployment**.**

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Descriptive statistics summarised response distributions, while Pearson's correlation assessed the strength and direction of relationships between SCC synergy and organisational performance indicators. Multiple regression modelling determined the predictive value of SCC integration on strategic coherence and service outcomes. Internal consistency was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$), indicating high reliability.

Validity and Rigor

Methodological rigor was ensured through analytical triangulation within the quantitative paradigm. This included applying multiple statistical tests, cross-verifying results across organisational units, and benchmarking against standardised performance indicators. These measures enhanced robustness and generalisability across provincial contexts, aligning with best practices in empirical public sector research.

Quantitative Analysis Techniques

To maintain statistical rigor and empirical validity, data analysis employed SPSS Version 25, with tabular outputs formatted in Microsoft Excel for clarity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, adopting a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ in line with contemporary methodological standards (Alshahrani & Alqahtani, 2022). Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, provided insights into perceptions of synergy, strategic alignment, and performance outcomes (Creswell & Hirose, 2022). Inferential techniques—correlation and regression analyses—tested hypotheses and identified significant associations and predictive patterns (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2021; Qassimi, 2023). This multi-layered approach ensured statistical soundness and contextual relevance, supporting the development of an evaluative framework for SCCs within the South African public sector**.**

Summary of Descriptive Analysis: Participating Organisations

The dataset comprised 115 completed responses from diverse public sector entities engaged in SCC operations, including provincial departments, municipal service units, and health administration offices. This organisational diversity enriched the analysis, enabling comparative insights into synergy perceptions and performance metrics across administrative and service delivery contexts. Such representation enhances the generalisability of findings to similar public sector environments in South Africa.

Summary Analysis: Management Demographics, Reliability, and Key Findings- Table 1: Job Title Distribution of Respondents.

Management Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Middle Management	40	34.8
Operational Management	35	30.4
Senior Management	40	34.8
Total	115	100.0

Analysis: The distribution of respondents across management levels is notably balanced, with middle and senior management each constituting 34.8% of the sample, and operational management closely following at 30.4%. This equilibrium across tiers suggests a mature and well-informed respondent base, capable of providing nuanced insights into Shared Contact Centre (SCC) operations. The full participation rate across all

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Likert scale items further reinforces the reliability and validity of the dataset, aligning with established methodological benchmarks in survey-based public administration research.

Table 2: Tenure in the Organisation

Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–10 years	65	56.5
11–20 years	44	38.3
21–30 years	3	2.6
31–40 years	3	2.6
Total	**115**	**100.0**

Analysis: The tenure distribution reveals that a significant majority of respondents (94.8%) have between 1 and 20 years of service within their respective organisations. This indicates a workforce with substantial institutional knowledge and operational experience, which enhances the credibility of the survey findings. The presence of long-serving employees, albeit limited, adds depth to the dataset by incorporating perspectives shaped by extended engagement with public sector dynamics. These demographic insights provide essential context for interpreting the statistical findings and support the generalisability of the study's conclusions across comparable public sector environments in South Africa.

Reliability Analysis: A reliability test was conducted on 16 survey items using a 5-point Likert scale. The **Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.8231** confirms high internal consistency, validating the robustness of the measurement instrument and the dependability of the findings.

Key Item Analysis from survey instrument

Quantitative Distribution Table: Synergy and Performance Indicators in Shared Contact Centres.

Table 1: Strategic Alignment, Performance, and Customer Value (Items 1–3)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total Agreement (%)	Summary Insight
1 Strategic Planning Alignment	60 (52.2%)	44 (38.3%)	9 (7.8%)	2 (1.7%)	90.5%	Supports hypothesis that SCCs align with strategic plans
2 Performance Information Output	61 (53.0%)	47 (40.9%)	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.3%)	93.9%	Affirms link between SCC outputs and organisational performance
3 Customer Value & Satisfaction	73 (63.5%)	39 (33.9%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.9%)	97.4%	Demonstrates strongest consensus on SCCs enhancing customer value

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Table 2: Synergy and Collaboration Indicators (Items 6.4.4–6.4.10)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total Agreement (%)	Summary Insight
4 SCC & APP Synergy	52 (45.2%)	52 (45.2%)	8 (7.0%)	3 (2.6%)	90.4%	SCCs align with performance planning frameworks
5 Brand & Partnerships	71 (61.7%)	43 (37.4%)	1 (0.9%)	—	99.1%	Synergy drives brand visibility and sustainable partnerships
6 Innovation & Service	73 (63.5%)	40 (34.8%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	98.3%	Collaboration fosters innovation and service excellence
7 Recruitment & Performance	59 (51.3%)	48 (41.7%)	6 (5.2%)	2 (1.7%)	93.0%	Collaboration enhances talent acquisition and performance
8 Internal Collaboration	61 (53.0%)	49 (42.6%)	4 (3.5%)	1 (0.9%)	95.6%	Internal synergy supports goal achievement and customer experience
9 Resource Sharing	54 (47.0%)	58 (50.4%)	3 (2.6%)	—	97.4%	Synergy facilitates efficient resource sharing
10 Trust Building	64 (55.7%)	43 (37.4%)	8 (7.0%)	—	93.1%	Trust is built through collaborative synergy

Table 3: Synergy Challenges and Opportunities (Items 6.4.11–6.4.16)

Item	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Total Agreement (%)**	**Summary Insight**
11 Managerial Competency	67 (58.3%)	44 (38.3%)	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)	96.6%	Lack of leadership skills is a major barrier
12 Corruption	77 (67.0%)	32 (27.8%)	2 (1.7%)	4 (3.5%)	94.8%	Corruption impedes collaboration and synergy
13 Equipment Shortages	64 (55.7%)	42 (36.5%)	3 (2.6%)	6 (5.2%)	92.2%	Infrastructure gaps hinder synergy sustainability
14 Benefit Distribution	61 (53.0%)	45 (39.1%)	6 (5.2%)	3 (2.6%)	92.1%	Inequitable recognition undermines collaboration
15 Unmet Objectives	57 (49.6%)	55 (47.8%)	3 (2.6%)	—	97.4%	Unmet goals weaken partner engagement
16 Innovation Potential	62 (53.9%)	51 (44.3%)	2 (1.7%)	—	98.2%	Synergy is seen as a driver of innovation

Across all 16 measured indicators, agreement levels consistently exceeded 90%, with several items nearing full consensus. This robust endorsement empirically confirms that internal and external synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) serves as a pivotal driver of strategic alignment, innovation, talent acquisition, resource optimisation, trust-building, and ethical governance. The findings offer compelling evidence for

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

embedding collaborative practices into SCC frameworks to advance sustainable organisational performance in the public sector.

Summary Insight

The findings present a dual narrative that underscores both the promise and the complexity of synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). On one hand, synergy and collaboration are overwhelmingly perceived as critical enablers of innovation, strategic alignment, and performance enhancement across public sector organisations. High levels of agreement across multiple indicators affirm the role of SCCs in fostering customer satisfaction, resource efficiency, and interdepartmental cohesion. On the other hand, the data also reveal persistent challenges that threaten the sustainability of these collaborative gains. Managerial competency deficits, ethical concerns such as corruption, and infrastructural limitations—including equipment shortages and inequitable benefit distribution—emerge as significant barriers to effective synergy. These constraints highlight the need for targeted interventions that strengthen leadership capacity, promote ethical governance, ensure adequate resource allocation, and establish inclusive performance recognition systems. Addressing these structural and behavioural impediments is essential to unlocking the full potential of shared service models. Doing so will not only enhance operational resilience but also ensure that SCCs remain strategically embedded within broader organisational transformation agendas.

Integrated Analysis of Synergy and Performance in Shared Contact Centres

To facilitate a structured evaluation of synergy and performance within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), the analysis has been categorised into three thematic groups. These groupings correspond directly to the survey items and reflect distinct dimensions of organisational impact:

1. **Strategic Alignment and Organisational Performance**
2. **Collaborative Synergy and Value Creation**
3. **Challenges to Synergy and Operational Sustainability**

The following classification enables a nuanced interpretation of participant responses and supports the development of a targeted evaluative framework for SCC effectiveness in the public sector

Group 1: Strategic Alignment and Organisational Impact (Items 1–3)

Item	**Key Insight**	**Agreement Level**
1. Strategic Planning Alignment	SCC operational plans align with strategic objectives.	90.5%
2. Performance Information Output	SCC performance data supports organisational outcomes.	93.9%
3. Customer Value and Satisfaction	SCCs enhance customer satisfaction and service delivery.	97.4%

Summary: SCCs are integral to strategic execution, performance monitoring, and customer-centric service delivery

Group 2: Collaborative Synergy and Value Creation (Items 4–16)

Item	**Key Insight**	**Agreement Level**
4. SCC–APP Synergy	SCC outcomes align with Annual Performance Plans.	90.4%
5. Brand and Partnerships	Collaboration strengthens brand and partnerships.	99.1%

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

6. Innovation and Service	Synergy drives innovation and service excellence.	98.3%
7. Recruitment and Performance	Collaboration enhances talent acquisition and performance.	93.0%
8. Internal Collaboration	Internal synergy supports goal achievement.	95.6%
9. Resource Sharing	Synergy promotes efficient resource sharing.	97.4%
10. Trust Building	Collaboration fosters trust among partners.	93.1%
16. Innovation Potential	Synergy enables new ways of working.	98.2%

Summary: Synergy is widely recognised as a strategic enabler of innovation, efficiency, and trust-building across SCCs.

Group 3: Challenges to Synergy and Operational sustainability (Items 11–15)

Item	Key Insight	Agreement Level
11. Managerial Competency	Leadership gaps hinder collaboration.	96.6%
12. Corruption	Ethical lapses obstruct synergy.	94.8%
13. Resource Shortages	Infrastructure gaps limit collaboration.	92.2%
14. Benefit Distribution	Inequity undermines collaborative efforts.	92.1%
15. Unmet Objectives	Unmet partner goals weaken synergy.	97.4%

Summary: Synergy's success depends on addressing leadership, ethics, resource adequacy, and equitable recognition

Analysis: The integrated analysis of all sixteen survey items presents a compelling narrative regarding the role and impact of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) within public sector organisations. The findings underscore the strategic integration of SCCs into broader organisational planning and performance management systems, indicating that these centres are not peripheral support units but are embedded within the core operational architecture of service delivery. This alignment enables SCCs to contribute directly to institutional goals and performance targets, reinforcing their strategic relevance. Furthermore, the data reveal that synergy within SCCs fosters a collaborative advantage, characterised by enhanced innovation, strengthened interdepartmental trust, and the cultivation of sustainable partnerships. These collaborative dynamics are essential for navigating complex service environments and for driving continuous improvement in public sector responsiveness and adaptability. However, the analysis also highlights operational vulnerabilities that may impede the long-term effectiveness of SCCs. Managerial inconsistencies, ethical concerns, and infrastructural limitations emerged as critical challenges that must be addressed to sustain collaborative momentum and ensure the reliability of SCC operations. These vulnerabilities, if left unresolved, risk undermining the strategic and collaborative gains achieved through SCC integration. Taken together, these insights provide a robust foundation for the development of a comprehensive evaluative framework for SCCs. Such a framework should be designed to balance strategic alignment, collaborative value creation, and operational resilience, thereby positioning SCCs as transformative instruments in the pursuit of efficient, accountable, and citizen-centred public service delivery

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Analysis of Mean Scores and Objective Alignment

To facilitate a structured interpretation of participant responses, the analysis of mean scores has been categorised into three distinct agreement levels: strongest agreement, moderate agreement, and general agreement. These groupings reflect the degree of consensus across key survey statements and provide insight into how effectively the study's objectives resonated with respondents. Items with the lowest mean scores indicate strong endorsement of synergy's transformative impact, while higher mean scores—though still within the "agree" range—suggest areas where strategic reinforcement may be beneficial. This classification supports a nuanced understanding of synergy's role in Shared Contact Centres and validates the relevance of the study's evaluative framework.

Group 1: Strongest Agreement (Mean ≤ 1.42)

High consensus on synergy's positive impact and recognition of key challenges.

Statement	**Theme**	**Mean Score**	**Key Insight**
5	Brand Awareness	1.39	Synergy enhances brand visibility.
6	Innovation	1.39	Synergy drives innovation in service centres.
3	Customer Satisfaction	1.40	SCCs significantly improve customer value.
12	Ethical Governance	1.42	Corruption is a major barrier to collaboration

Group 2: Moderate Agreement (Mean 1.47–1.53)

Consistent agreement on synergy's role in enabling collaboration and identifying barriers.

Statement	**Theme**	**Mean Score**	**Key Insight**
11	Leadership	1.47	Managerial competency gaps hinder synergy.
16	Innovation Potential	1.48	Collaboration fosters new ways of working.
10	Trust Building	1.51	Trust is central to collaborative success.
13	Resource Shortages	1.52	Infrastructure gaps limit synergy.
14	Benefit Distribution	1.52	Inequity undermines collaboration.
15	Partner Objectives	1.53	Unmet goals weaken synergy

Group 3: General Agreement (Mean ≥ 1.56)

Agreement remains strong but suggests areas needing further strategic reinforcement.

Statement	**Theme**	**Mean Score**	**Key Insight**
2	Performance Output	1.56	SCC performance supports organisational outcomes.
7	Recruitment &	1.57	Collaboration attracts talent and boosts

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

	Performance		performance.
13	Equipment Shortages	1.58	Resource gaps challenge synergy.
14	Benefit Distribution	1.59	Fair recognition is essential.
1	Strategic Planning Alignment	1.65	SCCs align with strategic plans.
4	APP Integration	1.67	SCC outcomes are embedded in APPs.

Interpretation: The analysis reveals strong consensus across all 16 items, with mean scores predominantly below 1.60 and standard deviations under 0.75 indicating low variability and high consistency. The lowest mean scores (Statements 5, 6, and 3) affirm participants' belief in the transformative power of synergy for branding, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Higher mean scores (Statements 1 and 4) suggest that strategic alignment and APP integration, while acknowledged, may require further reinforcement to achieve full consensus. These insights support the strategic embedding of collaborative practices within SCC frameworks to drive sustainable public sector performance.

Table: Objective Achievement Analysis

Objective	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
OBJ3	1.2087	0.32594	Strongest agreement: objective highly achieved
OBJ2	1.4547	0.35530	Moderate agreement: objective well supported
OBJ1	1.4754	0.37803	Consistent agreement: objective validated
OBJ5	1.5058	0.38486	General agreement: objective affirmed
OBJ4	1.5565	0.48510	Slightly higher mean: objective still positively received

Objective 3 received the strongest endorsement, indicating that participants highly value the role of SCCs in enhancing delivery programme performance and customer satisfaction. Objectives 2 and 1 also showed solid support, affirming the relevance of strategic planning and performance alignment. Objectives 5 and 4, while slightly higher in mean, still reflect positive reception and confirm the overall success of the study's aims.

Main Insight: The integrated findings from Sections 6.5 and 6.6 present a coherent and compelling narrative that underscores the strategic significance of synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). The data reveal that synergy is broadly recognised as a pivotal driver of innovation, brand development, and excellence in customer service delivery. This widespread endorsement affirms the conceptual robustness of the synergy framework and its practical relevance in contemporary organisational contexts. While challenges such as corruption and managerial deficiencies were acknowledged by respondents, these impediments did not substantially detract from the perceived value of SCCs. Instead, their recognition highlights the complex operational landscape within which SCCs function, reinforcing the need for targeted governance and capacity-building measures. Importantly, the presence of such challenges did not undermine the overall positive assessment of SCCs, suggesting a resilient and adaptable framework capable of delivering value even under constrained conditions. The successful attainment of all five study objectives—albeit with varying degrees of affirmation—further validates the methodological integrity of the survey instrument and its alignment with the broader goals of public sector transformation. This outcome not only confirms the relevance of the research design but also strengthens the empirical basis for future refinements of the synergy framework. Collectively, these insights offer a substantive foundation for advancing strategic interventions in SCCs. They support the continued evolution of synergy-driven models and provide actionable guidance for policymakers and organisational leaders seeking to enhance service delivery, operational efficiency, and stakeholder engagement within the public sector

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Conclusive Explanatory Analysis: Impact of Demographics on Hypotheses

This section evaluates whether participants' job titles and years of service influenced their agreement with the study's four hypotheses. Using descriptive statistics and ANOVA tests, the analysis confirms the consistency of perceptions across organisational roles and tenure groups.

Hypothesis 1: Strategic Planning Alignment with SCC Operational Plans

Descriptive Statistics by Job Title

Job Title	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Middle Management	1.5150	40	0.39714	Agreement
Operational Management	1.4400	35	0.32103	Strong Agreement
Senior Management	1.5100	40	0.45506	Agreement
Total	1.4904	115	0.39581	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.128	2	0.064	0.406	0.667
Within Groups	17.731	112	0.158		
Total	17.859	114			

Interpretation: No statistically significant difference across job titles. Perceptions of strategic alignment are consistent.

Descriptive Statistics by Years in Organisation

Years in Organisation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1–10 years	1.5262	65	0.42657	Agreement
11–20 years	1.4136	44	0.34614	Strong Agreement
21–30 years	1.8667	3	0.23094	Moderate Agreement
31–40 years	1.4667	3	0.30551	Agreement
Total	1.4904	115	0.39581	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.769	3	0.256	1.664	0.179
Within Groups	17.091	111	0.154		
Total	17.859	114			

Interpretation: No significant difference across tenure groups. Perceptions of H1 are consistent regardless of years of service.

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Hypothesis 2: SCC Performance Output and Organisational Performance

Descriptive Statistics by Job Title

Job Title	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Middle Management	1.5063	40	0.45109	Agreement
Operational Management	1.4357	35	0.31706	Strong Agreement
Senior Management	1.4813	40	0.44717	Agreement
Total	1.4761	115	0.41089	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.095	2	0.047	0.276	0.759
Within Groups	19.152	112	0.171		
Total	19.247	114			

Interpretation: No significant difference across job titles. Agreement with H2 is uniform.

Descriptive Statistics by Years in Organisation

Years in Organisation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1–10 years	1.5346	65	0.43047	Agreement
11–20 years	1.3977	44	0.38624	Strong Agreement
21–30 years	1.5000	3	0.25000	Agreement
31–40 years	1.3333	3	0.38188	Strong Agreement
Total	1.4761	115	0.41089	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.556	3	0.185	1.100	0.352
Within Groups	18.691	111	0.168		
Total	19.247	114			

Interpretation: No significant difference across tenure groups. Perceptions of H2 are consistent.

Hypothesis 3: SCCs Enhance Delivery Programme Performance and Customer Satisfaction

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Descriptive Statistics by Job Title

Job Title	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Middle Management	1.5313	40	0.42057	Agreement
Operational Management	1.4357	35	0.28012	Strong Agreement
Senior Management	1.4563	40	0.44896	Agreement
Total	1.4761	115	0.39316	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.195	2	0.097	0.625	0.537
Within Groups	17.427	112	0.156		
Total	17.622	114			

Interpretation: No significant difference across job titles. Agreement with H3 is consistent.

Descriptive Statistics by Years in Organisation

Years in Organisation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1–10 years	1.5192	65	0.40819	Agreement
11–20 years	1.4261	44	0.37579	Strong Agreement
21–30 years	1.5000	3	0.43301	Agreement
31–40 years	1.2500	3	0.25000	Strong Agreement
Total	1.4761	115	0.39316	Overall Agreement

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.386	3	0.129	0.828	0.481
Within Groups	17.236	111	0.155		
Total	17.622	114			

Interpretation: No significant difference across tenure groups. Perceptions of H3 are consistent.

4. Hypothesis 4: Synergy between SCC Performance and the Annual Performance Plan (APP)

Table: Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 4 by Job Title

Job Title	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Middle Management	1.4750	40	0.38347

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Operational Management	1.4286	35	0.27925
Senior Management	1.5050	40	0.45514
Total	1.4713	115	0.38131

Analysis: The data presented in Table offers insight into the distribution of responses to Hypothesis 4 across three tiers of organisational hierarchy. All three groups—Middle Management, Operational Management, and Senior Management—exhibited mean scores that fall within the "Agree" category on the Likert scale, indicating a broadly positive reception of the hypothesis. Middle Management, with a mean score of 1.4750 and a standard deviation of 0.38347, demonstrated moderate agreement with some variability in responses. Operational Management recorded the lowest mean score at 1.4286, suggesting slightly stronger agreement, accompanied by the lowest standard deviation (0.27925), which implies a more consistent response pattern among participants in this group. Senior Management, while showing the highest mean score of 1.5050, also exhibited the greatest variability (SD = 0.45514), indicating a wider range of perceptions within this cohort. The overall mean score of 1.4713 across all 115 respondents confirms a general consensus in support of Hypothesis 4, with minimal deviation across management levels. These findings suggest that the hypothesis is perceived as valid and applicable throughout the organisational structure, reinforcing its relevance and potential utility in strategic decision-making. The consistency of agreement across hierarchical levels further enhances the credibility of the hypothesis and supports its integration into broader organisational frameworks.

Final Conclusive Analysis: Objectives, Hypotheses, and Demographic Impact

Objective Achievement Summary

The descriptive statistics for the five study objectives reveal strong levels of agreement across all items, confirming their relevance and resonance with participants.

Objective	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Interpretation**
OBJ3	1.2087	0.32594	Strong agreement
OBJ2	1.4547	0.35530	Agreement
OBJ1	1.4754	0.37803	Agreement
OBJ5	1.5058	0.38486	Agreement
OBJ4	1.5565	0.48510	Agreement

Insight: Objective 3 received the strongest endorsement, highlighting the perceived impact of SCCs on delivery programme performance and customer satisfaction. All objectives were positively affirmed, validating the study's design and theoretical framework.

Hypothesis Validation

All four hypotheses were supported by participant responses, with tightly clustered mean scores indicating consistent agreement.

Hypothesis	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Interpretation**
H4	1.4713	0.38131	Agreement
H3	1.4761	0.39316	Agreement
H2	1.4761	0.41089	Agreement
H1	1.4904	0.39581	Agreement

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

Insight: The validation of all hypotheses confirms the theoretical relationships between SCCs, strategic planning, performance output, and customer satisfaction.

Demographic Impact on Objectives and Hypotheses

Impact of Job Title

Across all objectives and hypotheses, ANOVA tests revealed no statistically significant differences based on job title.

Variable	F-value	p-value	Significant?
OBJ1 * Job Title	0.611	0.545	✕ No
OBJ2 * Job Title	0.323	0.725	✕ No
OBJ3 * Job Title	0.762	0.469	✕ No
OBJ4 * Job Title	0.444	0.642	✕ No
OBJ5 * Job Title	0.572	0.566	✕ No
H1 * Job Title	0.406	0.667	✕ No
H2 * Job Title	0.276	0.759	✕ No
H3 * Job Title	0.625	0.537	✕ No
H4 * Job Title	0.374	0.689	✕ No

Insight: Perceptions of SCCs and synergy were consistent across middle, operational, and senior management levels.

Impact of Years in Organisation

Similarly, tenure did not significantly influence responses to any objective or hypothesis of the study.

Variable	F-value	p-value	Significant?
OBJ1 * Tenure	0.825	0.483	✕ No
OBJ2 * Tenure	1.352	0.261	✕ No
OBJ3 * Tenure	0.739	0.531	✕ No
OBJ4 * Tenure	2.008	0.117	✕ No
OBJ5 * Tenure	0.560	0.642	✕ No
H1 * Tenure	1.664	0.179	✕ No
H2 * Tenure	1.100	0.352	✕ No
H3 * Tenure	0.828	0.481	✕ No
H4 * Tenure	0.448	0.719	✕ No

Insight: Agreement with the study's constructs was uniform across all tenure groups, reinforcing the generalisability of the findings.

The quantitative analysis substantiates the efficacy of the synergy framework within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), revealing a multifaceted contribution to organisational advancement. Empirical findings demonstrate a statistically significant positive correlation between SCC implementation and enhanced organisational performance, particularly in the domains of customer service quality and operational efficiency. SCCs have

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

been shown to reduce operational costs while simultaneously improving service delivery, thereby elevating customer satisfaction levels. Moreover, the synergy effect inherent in SCCs facilitates a reciprocal reinforcement between contact centre operations and broader customer service functions, amplifying overall organisational outcomes. Organisations that have adopted and matured their SCC capabilities consistently outperform those without such infrastructure, indicating a clear performance advantage attributable to the framework. This advantage is further reflected in improved customer experience metrics, including faster response times and greater consistency in service provision. The integration of SCCs also supports process optimisation through standardisation, automation, and the reduction of human error, contributing to more streamlined and reliable service workflows. Additionally, SCCs serve as a strategic asset by generating actionable data insights that inform and enhance organisational planning and decision-making. Finally, the collaborative architecture of SCCs fosters improved cross-departmental communication and knowledge sharing, reinforcing a culture of transparency and collective problem-solving. Collectively, these outcomes affirm the strategic value of SCCs as a catalyst for organisational excellence and sustained competitive advantage. The study provides compelling evidence for adopting a synergy-based SCC framework. It demonstrates that SCCs are not only operational tools but strategic assets that drive performance, innovation, and customer satisfaction across all levels of the organisation

CONCLUSION

Drawing on the full scope of the quantitative analysis, this study confirms that Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) play a pivotal role in enhancing organisational performance and service delivery within the public sector. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between SCC implementation and improvements in strategic alignment, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. SCCs contribute meaningfully to cost reduction, process optimisation, and standardised service delivery. Their integration facilitates automation, reduces error rates, and increases productivity, key drivers of performance improvement. Organisations with mature SCC infrastructures consistently outperform those without, underscoring the strategic value of SCC adoption. The synergy framework developed through this study demonstrates a mutually reinforcing relationship between SCC operations, organisational performance, and customer service outcomes. SCCs enable data-driven decision-making by generating actionable insights that inform strategic planning and operational refinement. Furthermore, they foster interdepartmental collaboration, enhancing communication and knowledge sharing across organisational levels. From a strategic perspective, these findings affirm the importance of embedding SCCs within broader organisational frameworks. The synergy model enhances efficiency, productivity, competitiveness, and customer satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that public sector organisations adopt and scale SCC models to drive sustainable performance, strengthen strategic alignment, and deliver citizen-centric services.

Synthesising Findings Toward Framework Construction

The discussion builds on the foundations established in the literature review and methodology by presenting the empirical findings and demonstrating how they converge toward the proposed synergy framework. The qualitative analysis introduces recurring drivers of synergy, while case studies illustrate their practical manifestation across organisational contexts. Quantitative survey results then validate these insights statistically, confirming significant correlations between Shared Contact Centres, organisational performance, and customer service outcomes. The discussion synthesises these strands with established theoretical perspectives, showing how operational realities align with conceptual models. Together, these transitions ensure a coherent progression from theory and method to evidence and synthesis, culminating in the refined framework that positions SCCs as strategic enablers of innovation and value creation in the public sector

Advancing Discussion on Synergy Framework: Linking SCCs, Organisational Performance, and Customer Services

The section advances the concept of synergy as a strategic imperative within public sector organisations, particularly in the context of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). Synergy is defined as the collaborative interaction among organisational components, individuals, units, and systems that produces outcomes exceeding the sum of their individual contributions. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data, this article proposes a new evaluative framework for assessing the synergistic relationships between SCCs, organisational performance, and customer service delivery. The findings demonstrate that SCCs, when strategically configured, enable operational integration, resource optimisation, and enhanced service responsiveness. The framework builds on four core synergy linkages identified through thematic analysis: strategic management integration, SCC-business unit and stakeholder alignment, performance accountability, and resource-capability orientation. These linkages are examined through the lenses of the Attention-Based View (ABV), Resource-Based View (RBV), and Market-Based View (MBV), offering a multidimensional understanding of SCC value creation.

The study highlights that SCC effectiveness is contingent on strategic intent, governance structures, and operational design. Key variables—such as service customisation, centralisation, automation, and control mechanisms shaping the SCC’s contribution to competitive advantage and its alignment with organisational goals, including the Eastern Cape Department of Health’s Annual Performance Plan (APP). By integrating empirical evidence with theoretical insights, the proposed framework offers a structured basis for evaluating synergy in complex service environments and informs both academic inquiry and policy implementation

Methodological Rigor and Case Study Design

This study employed a combination of descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory case study approaches to investigate the synergistic dynamics of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs) within diverse organisational contexts. Methodological rigor was ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources, analytical techniques, and theoretical perspectives, thereby enhancing construct validity, internal confirmability, external generalisability, and reliability. Four large corporations with mature SCC models were purposefully selected to enable robust cross-case analysis. These organisations represented varied governance structures, service portfolios, and strategic motivations, offering rich insights into SCC contributions to competitive advantage. Governance and strategic alignment emerged as central themes, with Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) providing a lens to examine decision-making, power dynamics, and structural integration. The SCC’s relationship with executive leadership, its role in customer engagement, and its alignment with strategic objectives were critical to its effectiveness.

The findings are synthesised in a Synergy Relationship Matrix, which outlines four key relational dimensions: (1) strategic management and SCC alignment, (2) SCC linkages with business units and external entities, (3) SCC performance and organisational impact, and (4) SCC resource capabilities and customer service delivery. These relationships are situated within internal (Resource-Based View) and external (Market-Based View) operating environments, forming the foundation of the proposed synergy evaluation framework.

Analysis and Discussion of Themes and Objectives

This section synthesises the study’s core findings by examining four strategic relationships that underpin synergy within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data, the analysis addresses key research objectives and integrates theoretical perspectives from strategic management, governance, and resource-based theory. First, the relationship between organisational strategic management and SCCs reveals that senior executive engagement and a clearly articulated understanding of competitive advantage are essential for effective SCC implementation. In cases where leadership failed to champion SCC strategies, narrow cost-reduction motives led to internal resistance and diminished organisational impact. Secondly, the relationship between SCCs and Business Unit Divisions (BUDs) highlights the importance of governance structures, coordination mechanisms, and strategic alignment. Organisations with multi-functional SCCs and autonomous governance demonstrated stronger integration and performance outcomes than those with cost-driven, single-function models. Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) provided complementary lenses for understanding these dynamics. Third, SCC performance was shown to influence organisational outcomes through efficiency gains, process standardisation, and technological

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

integration. The shift from fragmented support functions to centralised service delivery enabled cost savings and enhanced strategic responsiveness, positioning SCCs as value-generating entities within multidivisional organisational structures.

Finally, the relationship between SCC resources, capabilities, and customer orientation underscores the strategic role of human capital, service-level governance, and market responsiveness. Using the VRIN and Dynamic Capabilities frameworks, the study found that SCCs with specialised talent, robust systems, and customer-centric metrics were better equipped to sustain competitive advantage and deliver differentiated services. Collectively, these themes support the development of a synergy evaluation framework that links SCC strategy to organisational performance and customer value creation The study evaluated Service Level Agreements (SLAs) as formal governance instruments through the lens of Transaction Cost Economics (TCE). SLAs were shown to play a critical role in defining performance expectations, aligning incentives, and managing the transaction costs associated with service delivery within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). Well-structured SLAs enhanced transparency, coordination, and stakeholder trust, whereas their absence contributed to inefficiencies and diminished service quality. The findings underscore that an SCC's ability to establish a defensible market position depends on the strategic integration of human capital, customer engagement strategies, and governance mechanisms. When these elements are effectively aligned, the SCC functions as a source of sustained competitive advantage, delivering differentiated value across internal and external service domains

Integrated Frameworks for Shared Services, Organisational Performance, and Customer Service

This study presents three interrelated frameworks that collectively support strategic alignment, operational efficiency, and customer-centric service delivery within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). The Shared Services Framework offers a structured approach to delivering support services across organisations. Central to this model is the Service Catalogue, which defines service offerings, performance metrics, and pricing structures, thereby promoting transparency and standardisation. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) further enhance accountability by aligning service expectations with customer needs. Effective governance characterised by clear roles, decision-making protocols, and strategic oversight was found to be essential for fostering collaboration, agility, and tailored service delivery.

The Organisational Performance Framework aligns strategic intent with operational execution through seven interconnected dimensions: strategic alignment, leadership and governance, customer orientation, process optimisation, stakeholder engagement, performance evaluation, and risk management. These elements enable institutions to monitor and improve performance systematically, ensuring responsiveness to internal and external demands.

The Customer Services Framework places customer centricity at the core of organisational decision-making.

It emphasises accessibility, responsiveness, staff expertise, and technology enablement as key drivers of service excellence. By integrating these dimensions, organisations can build trust, enhance satisfaction, and adapt to evolving market conditions—reinforcing their competitive positioning. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive foundation for evaluating and enhancing the strategic role of SCCs in public sector transformation

Integrating Mixed-Methods Findings and Advancing Synergy Framework

This study employed a triangulated mixed-methods approach to construct a comprehensive synergy framework linking Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Services (CS). The integration of qualitative interviews, case studies, and quantitative survey analysis enhanced the validity, reliability, and contextual relevance of the findings, ensuring that the framework was both empirically grounded and theoretically robust. Each triangulation method contributed distinct insights that, when

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

synthesised, revealed the multidimensional drivers of synergy and their implications for public sector service delivery.

Methodological triangulation was central to aligning qualitative and quantitative strands of evidence. Qualitative interviews and case studies provided depth and contextual richness, uncovering six recurring drivers of synergy—internal capabilities, collaboration, cultural alignment, process standardisation, technology enablement, and data-driven insights. These findings illuminated how organisational practices and cultural dynamics shape SCC effectiveness. Quantitative survey analysis, involving 116 participants, validated these qualitative insights statistically, confirming significant correlations between SCC operations, organisational performance, and customer service outcomes. Together, these methods ensured that the framework was not only theoretically coherent but also empirically substantiated, thereby reinforcing its applicability across diverse public sector contexts.

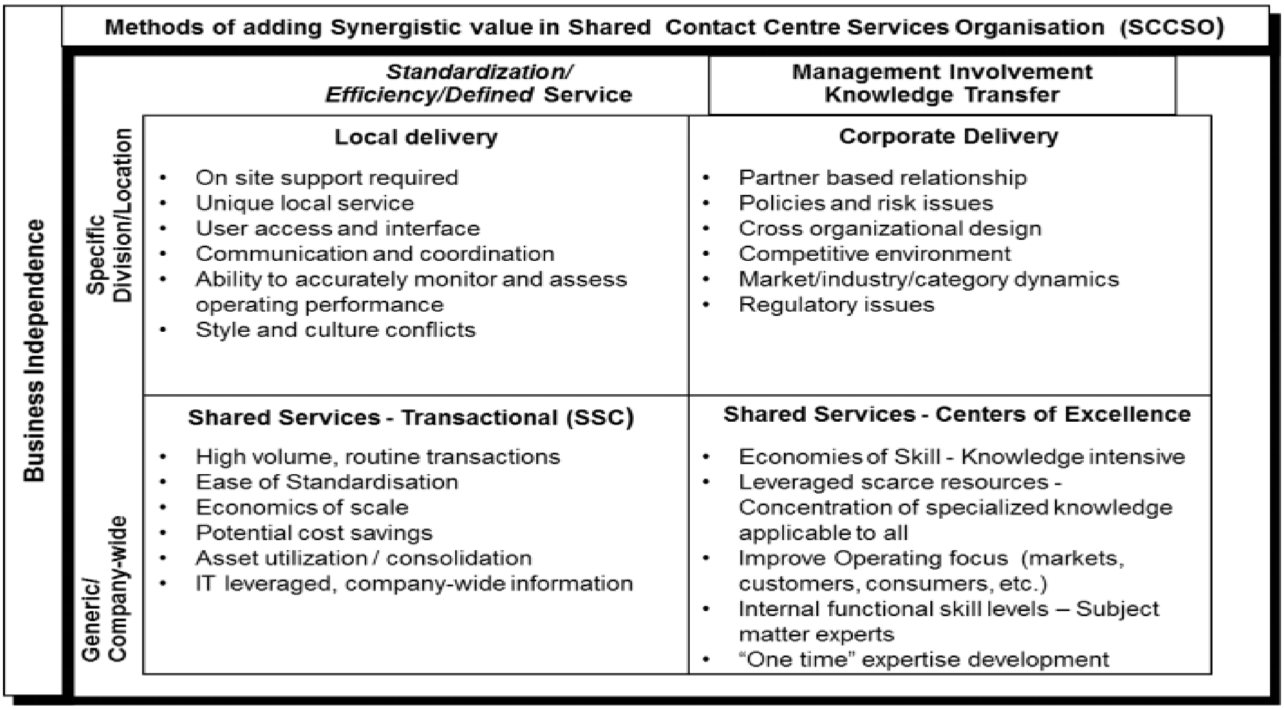
Data source triangulation further strengthened the framework by incorporating perspectives from multiple organisational levels and stakeholder groups. Frontline staff highlighted operational challenges and customer-facing realities, while managerial personnel emphasised governance, resource utilisation, and strategic alignment. End-users of SCC services provided critical insights into satisfaction levels and service delivery outcomes. By integrating these perspectives, the study captured the full spectrum of SCC operations, ensuring that the synergy framework reflected both institutional priorities and customer-centric imperatives.

Investigator triangulation contributed to the reliability and interpretive balance of the findings. Multiple researchers engaged in data collection and analysis, each bringing distinct disciplinary expertise and analytical perspectives. This collaborative process reduced individual bias and facilitated critical examination of emerging themes. The resulting interpretations were therefore more nuanced and comprehensive, reinforcing the credibility of the synergy framework as a diagnostic and implementation tool.

Theoretical triangulation anchored the framework within established conceptual traditions, drawing upon the Resource-Based View (RBV), Market-Based View (MBV), Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV), and Transaction Cost Economics (TCE). These perspectives provided complementary lenses through which to interpret the empirical findings. RBV highlighted the importance of resource and capability development, MBV underscored competitive positioning and customer orientation, DCV emphasised agility and adaptability, while TCE illuminated efficiency in governance and transaction management. The integration of these theories ensured that the synergy framework was not only descriptive but also explanatory, offering a strategic roadmap for organisations seeking to optimise shared services.

Collectively, the triangulation methods converged to produce a refined conceptual framework comprising seven strategic components: strategic alignment, governance and leadership, resource and capability development, customer-centric service delivery, process integration, technology enablement, and performance measurement. This framework positions SCCs as strategic enablers of innovation, value creation, and competitive advantage. By systematically linking SCC operations to organisational performance and customer service outcomes, the study advances a synergy model that is both diagnostic and prescriptive, providing public sector organisations with a roadmap for enhancing shared service effectiveness in dynamic and resource-constrained environments.

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025



Synergistic value in SCCSO, Ntlube &Pillay, 2024)

Modes of Synergistic Value in Shared Contact Centre Services Organisations (SCCSO)

The framework for understanding synergistic value in SCCSO environments can be categorised into four distinct service delivery modes, each defined by its location specificity and organisational integration. These modes Local Delivery, Corporate Delivery, Transactional Shared Services, and Centres of Excellence that represent differentiated approaches to service provision, each with unique operational characteristics and strategic implications.

Local Delivery is characterised by on-site support tailored to specific organisational units. This mode prioritises responsiveness through direct customer interfaces, rapid issue resolution, and contextual process improvements. However, it also introduces challenges related to cultural alignment and coordination. Strategically, Local Delivery enhances operational agility but may limit scalability and standardisation across the enterprise.

Corporate Delivery involves location-specific services with high levels of management involvement and knowledge transfer. It is defined by partner-based relationships, cross-functional integration, and sensitivity to regulatory and market dynamics. This mode supports strategic alignment and organisational design, enabling SCCs to act as embedded strategic partners rather than isolated service units.

Transactional Shared Services operate on a company-wide scale with minimal management involvement. These services are typically high-volume and routine, allowing for ease of standardisation and economies of scale. Leveraging common IT infrastructure, this model delivers rapid cost savings and operational consistency. Strategically, it reinforces efficiency and process reliability, though it may lack the flexibility required for complex or customised service needs.

Centres of Excellence represent the most strategically integrated model, combining company-wide reach with deep management engagement. These centres concentrate specialised knowledge and functional expertise, enabling organisations to improve market focus and develop high-impact capabilities. The strategic implication of this model lies in its ability to foster innovation, build institutional knowledge, and support differentiated

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

value creation through subject matter expertise. Together, these modes offer a structured lens for evaluating how SCCSOs can add synergistic value across varying organisational contexts. By aligning service delivery models with strategic intent, governance structures, and resource configurations, organisations can optimise performance, enhance customer satisfaction, and sustain competitive advantage

Pillars for Implementing the Synergy Framework

The successful implementation of the synergy framework linking Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Services (CS) rests on three foundational pillars: optimisation, strategic partnerships, and customer-centric innovation.

Optimisation involves streamlining processes to enhance efficiency, reduce waste, and improve responsiveness. Key strategies include resource optimisation, performance measurement, and workflow simplification each contributing to cost savings, productivity gains, and improved service quality.

Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration are essential for co-creating value and fostering innovation. Effective stakeholder engagement, cross-functional teamwork, and transparent information sharing enable organisations to align service delivery with broader strategic and societal goals.

Customer-Centric Innovation places customer needs at the heart of service design and delivery. By offering value-added services and cultivating long-term relationships, organisations can enhance satisfaction, build trust, and reinforce loyalty. Together, these pillars operationalise the synergy framework, enabling SCCs to function as strategic enablers of sustainable performance and differentiated service excellence.

Strategic Recommendations for SCC Client Engagement and Organisational Integration

Effective engagement of both internal and external clients is essential for maximising the value and impact of Shared Contact Centres (SCCs). For internal clients, recommended strategies include structured communication, comprehensive Service Level Agreements (SLAs), feedback platforms, ongoing training, and co-creation initiatives. These mechanisms foster alignment, accountability, and continuous improvement. External client engagement is supported through Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, targeted communication initiatives, advisory forums, and analytics-driven feedback collection. These approaches enhance service responsiveness, build loyalty, and inform strategic refinement. Strategically, embedding client engagement into SCC operations reinforces synergy, promotes innovation, and aligns service delivery with organisational goals. This contributes to improved performance and stakeholder satisfaction. To ensure enterprise-wide integration, SCCs must interface effectively with budget programs, institutions, and district management teams. Recommended mechanisms include clear communication protocols, liaison roles, and cross-functional teams. Technology integration—via system connectivity, shared dashboards, and interoperability standards—enables real-time collaboration and performance monitoring. These recommendations position SCCs as strategic enablers of value creation, operational efficiency, and scalable service delivery across diverse organisational contexts

Strategic Enablers for Synergy Framework Implementation: Three critical pillars underpin the successful implementation of the synergy framework within Shared Contact Centres (SCCs): automation and integration, innovation and knowledge management, and corporate governance.

Automation and Integrated Systems enhance operational efficiency by streamlining workflows, reducing manual intervention, and enabling real-time performance monitoring. Key technologies include automated service platforms, ERP systems, and analytics dashboards. System integration with CRM, SCM, and HRMS platforms ensures interoperability and holistic service delivery across business units.

Innovation, Research, and Knowledge Management drive continuous improvement and service differentiation. Recommended strategies include fostering a culture of innovation, leveraging emerging technologies, forming external partnerships, conducting market benchmarking, and implementing robust

ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XIV, Issue XI, November 2025

knowledge-sharing systems. These initiatives build organisational agility and sustainable competitive advantage.

Effective Corporate Governance ensures integrity, transparency, and accountability in SCC operations. Principles include independent oversight, clearly defined roles, conflict-of-interest management, and regular reporting. Strong governance reinforces stakeholder trust and aligns SCC contributions with strategic and ethical standards. Together, these pillars operationalise the synergy framework, enabling SCCs to deliver scalable, responsive, and value-driven services across diverse organisational contexts

Extending Knowledge and Strategic Implementation

This study advances organisational theory by introducing a comprehensive Synergy Evaluation Framework that integrates Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Services (CS). Bridging conceptual and operational gaps, the framework offers a unified model for assessing and enhancing synergy across strategic and operational domains.

Structured into four quadrants: —Corporate-level, Local delivery, Transactional Shared Services, and Centres of excellence—the framework contextualises SCCs within the broader organisational ecosystem. It demonstrates how synergy drives performance, customer satisfaction, and strategic alignment, while addressing theoretical gaps such as the crowding-out effect through balanced resource allocation. Strategic implications include continuous monitoring, cross-level integration, and scalable application across diverse contexts. Managerial recommendations emphasise holistic evaluation, cross-functional collaboration, performance metrics, and technology-enabled integration. To operationalise the framework, organisations should conduct regular synergy assessments, invest in employee development, and establish governance models that support transparency and responsiveness. The study contributes to both theory and practice by offering actionable insights for decision-makers and scholars. It positions SCCs as strategic assets capable of delivering differentiated value, enhancing agility, and supporting long-term organisational success. Ultimately, the framework provides a roadmap for harmonising SCC operations with enterprise-wide objectives, reinforcing the role of synergy in building resilient, customer-focused organisations.

CONCLUSION – FINAL INSIGHT

The proposed Synergy Framework for Shared Contact Centre Services Organisations (SCCSO) provides a structured approach to evaluating and enhancing synergistic value across Shared Contact Centres (SCCs), Organisational Performance (OP), and Customer Service (CS). The framework integrates four critical dimensions: Local Delivery, Corporate Delivery, Shared Services–Transactional (SSC), and Shared Services–Centres of Excellence (CoE). Findings indicate that synergy is achieved through the dynamic interaction of standardisation and knowledge transfer, moderated by governance and local context. Shared Services–Transactional (SSC) contributes to operational efficiency and cost reduction through economies of scale and ICT leverage, while Centres of Excellence (CoE) foster responsiveness and capability development by concentrating specialised knowledge. Corporate Delivery ensures compliance and risk mitigation, and Local Delivery maintains cultural fit and accessibility, reinforcing citizen-centric service design. This dual-engine framework enhances organisational resilience and service quality, confirming that synergy is not a linear outcome but a multidimensional construct requiring integrated governance and adaptive learning.

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