

# Leadership Alignment and Cross-Functional Collaboration: A Review of Organisational and Leadership Interventions

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## Abstract

Leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration are increasingly recognized as essential for achieving strategic coherence and organizational performance, particularly in dynamic sectors such as real estate. Misalignment among leadership teams often manifests through unclear roles, fragmented communication, and inconsistent decision-making, undermining collaboration and strategic execution. This review aims to identify the underlying causes of leadership misalignment, examine effective organizational and behavioral interventions, and explore how learning processes sustain alignment and collaboration within evolving organizations. Using a structured review approach guided by PRISMA 2020 elements, literature from Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar was analyzed. Eight empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 were synthesized, focusing on leadership development, cross-functional collaboration frameworks, and organizational learning practices across multiple sectors. The analysis revealed that leadership alignment, collaboration, and learning are mutually reinforcing processes. Effective interventions such as leadership coaching, reflective learning, integrated decision systems, and participatory governance enhance role clarity, communication coherence, and strategic adaptability. Studies highlighted that digital transformation, when combined with socio-technical alignment and psychological safety, can strengthen collaborative performance. Conversely, siloed structures, hierarchical cultures, and weak feedback loops continue to impede sustained alignment. This review concludes that leadership alignment should be viewed as a dynamic and iterative process rather than a static goal. Embedding reflective learning and adaptive collaboration mechanisms enables organizations, particularly in emerging markets like Malaysia, to achieve sustained strategic coherence, innovation, and resilience in rapidly changing environments.

**Keywords:** Leadership Alignment, Cross-Functional Collaboration, Organizational Learning; Reflective Leadership, Strategic Coherence, Real Estate Sector, Action Research, Adaptive Management

**Introduction**

Leadership alignment is increasingly being recognized as a critical enabler of strategic coherence and organizational performance. In contexts characterized by rapid change and rising complexity, such as the Malaysian real estate sector, firms must ensure that leadership teams operate with a shared vision, coordinated decision-making, and clarity of roles. Misalignment at the leadership level often manifests through inconsistent messaging, overlapping responsibilities, and the fragmented execution of strategic initiatives. These issues can undermine organizational effectiveness, delay decision-making, and erode employee confidence, particularly in firms experiencing structural transitions and leadership role changes (Ayu et al., 2025).

Cross-functional collaboration complements leadership alignment by enabling different departments and units within an organization to work collectively toward common goals. Effective collaboration fosters innovation, enhances problem-solving, and improves adaptability when faced with market and environmental challenges. However, organizational barriers, such as siloed structures, weak communication channels, and limited role clarity, continue to constrain the potential for collaboration in many real estate organizations (Alateeg & Alayed, 2025).

Organizational and behavioral interventions have been widely implemented to address these challenges. Examples include leadership coaching, structured communication processes, participatory decision making, and initiatives aimed at fostering psychological safety and team cohesion. Empirical studies have consistently highlighted the positive impact of these interventions on leadership clarity, role alignment, and collaborative practices across sectors (Shih and Liu, 2025).

This review aims to identify the underlying causes of leadership alignment challenges within organizations, highlight interventions that improve alignment through organizational and behavioral practices, and explore how iterative reflection and learning processes contribute to sustained alignment and development. While this review focuses on empirical studies across diverse sectors, the findings are applied to the context of a Malaysian real estate firm as part of an ongoing Action Research study.

The outcomes of this review provide a conceptual and practical foundation for co-designing and evaluating targeted interventions in publicly listed real estate companies. By synthesizing existing evidence and applying it in practice, this review aims to demonstrate how iterative Action Research cycles can be used to strengthen leadership alignment, support cross-functional collaboration, and embed organizational learning for continuous improvement.

**Methods***Review Approach*

This review was conducted using a structured and transparent approach guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. Although not presented as a systematic review, the application of PRISMA elements, including a clear search strategy, defined eligibility criteria, and structured reporting, to ensure that the review is replicable and rigorous. This methodological approach enables the identification of relevant literature on leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration while minimizing bias and enhancing synthesis quality.

### *Literature Search Strategy*

The literature search was conducted across four major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search covered studies published between 2000 and 2025 to ensure relevance to contemporary organizational contexts. Boolean operators and phrase-based keywords were used to construct the search strings. These included terms such as “leadership alignment,” “cross-functional collaboration,” “organizational intervention,” “change management,” and “leadership development.” Search strings were adapted to the syntax requirements of each database

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of this review were derived from the synthesis of eight empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025, as detailed in the analytical matrix. The findings reveal that leadership alignment, cross-functional collaboration, and organizational learning mutually reinforce processes that shape strategic coherence and adaptability in dynamic environments. The following thematic discussion elaborates on these relationships across seven key themes, highlighting how alignment and collaboration can be developed and sustained within evolving organizational contexts.

### *Leadership and Collaboration Challenges in Dynamic Organizations*

Leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration are increasingly being recognized as critical enablers of strategic coherence in dynamic organizational environments. However, many firms continue to experience a persistent misalignment between leadership intentions and operational execution, particularly under conditions of rapid change and structural transformation. Empirical studies reveal that even when top management agrees on organizational priorities, inconsistencies often arise in how strategies are communicated and enacted across different hierarchical levels (Ford et al., 2021).

Eight empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 were systematically reviewed to identify the recurring patterns and challenges underpinning leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration. Table 1 summarizes these studies, highlighting their organizational contexts, identified challenges, intervention types, and outcomes related to leadership alignment, collaboration, and organizational learning. This synthesis forms the empirical foundation of the following discussion.

Table 1

*Summary of empirical studies (2020–2025) on leadership alignment, cross-functional collaboration, and organisational learning*

| Number of studies | Organization Context                               | Identified challenge  | Intervention Type & Focus  | Leadership Alignment Outcome  | Cross-functional Collaboration Outcome   | Organisational Learning / Reflection Insights   | References                        |
|-------------------|--|---|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1                 | Large firms in Vietnam (emerging market)           | Functions operate in silos; cooperation weak → poor performance                             | Cross-functional cooperation; use of management accounting system (MAS) as mediator                                      | Leadership alignment not explicitly addressed                       | Cooperation among functions improved via MAS → improved organizational performance | Reflection: For emerging markets, collaboration depends on enabling systems (MAS) not just on structure; role of leadership indirect but critical in supporting systems | (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021)       |
| 2                 | Mixed sectors (e.g., service organisations)        | Leadership skills weak; psychological capital lacking; misalignment of leadership behaviour | Leadership development intervention (coaching-based) focusing on behaviours & psychological capital                      | Leadership alignment improved (skills + behaviours more consistent) | Indirect: improved inter-team collaboration through leadership clarity             | Learning: Behavioural interventions (coaching) can strengthen alignment and indirectly support collaboration; emphasises reflective learning                            | (Peláez Zuberbuhler et al., 2020) |
| 3                 | Organisations undergoing change (multiple sectors) | Leadership roles unclear; change initiatives fragmented; cross-unit communication weak      | Organisational & behavioural intervention: leadership behaviours in change programmes – training, role clarity workshops | Improved leadership alignment (roles clearer, messaging aligned)    | Improved collaboration across units engaged in change                              | Learning: Change contexts require iterative reflection and learning loops; leadership alignment and collaboration are mutually reinforcing                              | (Ford et al., 2021)               |
| 4                 | Vietnamese business organisations                  | Cross-functional competition and weak coordination  | Qualitative intervention: exploring coordination mechanisms  | Not primarily focused on leadership alignment                       | Cross-functional coordination improved   | Learning: Insights on how coordination mechanisms   | (Phong Nguyen, 2020)              |

|   |   |   |   |  |  |  |                                   |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
|   | (emerging market)                           | n → limited knowledge sharing & innovation                              | (decentralisation, informal networking)                 |  | knowledge sharing → innovativeness                             | + internal competition impact learning; useful for reflection/learning dimension in your study |                                   |
| 5 | Corporate real estate (CRE) teams           | Misalignment between CRE strategy and corporate objectives              | Multi-disciplinary alignment framework for CRE strategy | Improved leadership consensus on business priorities             | Strengthened integration between CRE, finance, and operations  | Ongoing review cycles reinforced strategic learning  | (Cooke et al., 2021)              |
| 6 | Real estate & facilities management (RE/FM) | Lack of coordination between FM leaders and business units              | RE/FM alignment model linking organizational variables  | Clearer leadership accountability for CRE outcomes               | Greater cooperation between RE/FM and corporate strategy teams | Developed continuous improvement approach  | (Cooke & Appel-Meulenbroek, 2024) |
| 7 | Construction project organizations          | Coordination barriers in early project phases                           | Cross-functional collaboration framework                | Enhanced leadership communication across project functions       | Reduced silo effects among design, procurement, and management | Reflection sessions identified barriers and solutions  | (Yin et al., 2023)                |
| 8 | Construction & infrastructure sector        | Poor digital readiness and unclear leadership during digital transition | Digital leadership taxonomy and training program        | Greater alignment between digital strategy and leadership vision | Improved cross-departmental knowledge sharing                  | Fostered digital learning and adaptation   | (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021)       |

As indicated in Table 1, misalignment within leadership structures often manifests through unclear decision authority, overlapping responsibilities, and fragmented messaging including factors that ultimately hinder strategic implementation (Peláez Zuberbuhler et al., 2020). Aarons et al. (2014) emphasize that alignment across leadership tiers including executive, middle, and operational is necessary to sustain a coherent strategic climate. When vertical alignment is absent, employees receive mixed signals regarding priorities and expectations, leading to confusion, inefficiency, and disengagement (Aarons et al., 2014). These problems are particularly salient in emerging-market and project-based contexts, such as construction and real estate, where leadership transitions and rapid growth magnify the complexity of coordination (Yin et al., 2023).

Beyond leadership cohesion, fragmentation of collaboration across functional boundaries remains a structural and behavioral challenge for many organizations. Cross-functional teams

frequently operate in silos, pursuing localized goals that conflict with broader organizational objectives (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021). Weak communication channels, competition for resources, and limited psychological safety further constrain collaborative effectiveness (Phong Nguyen, 2020). Recent analyses indicate that such misalignment across functions can reduce overall performance and innovation capacity, especially in dynamic industries that require interdepartmental integration (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). It was found that coordination barriers in early project phases, including those stemming from unclear roles and insufficient leadership communication, diminish project agility and increase decision delays. Similarly, research on digital transformation underscores that unclear leadership during periods of technological transition exacerbates silo effects and inhibits organizational learning (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). Collectively, these findings suggest that leadership misalignment and poor cross-functional collaboration are mutually reinforcing barriers that undermine strategic execution, emphasizing the need for integrated interventions that promote role clarity, communication alignment, and reflective leadership at the organizational level.

### *Strategic Alignment in Real Estate and Facility Management*

In contemporary business environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, and rapid change, the fields of corporate real estate (CRE) and facility management (FM) cannot remain peripheral to corporate strategy and must be strategically aligned with overarching business goals. As Corporate Real Estate (CRE) gains recognition as a strategic asset rather than a cost center, organizations face the imperative of ensuring that their property, workplace, and facility decisions support, rather than undermine, strategic flexibility (Cooke & Appel-Meulenbroek, 2024). In an empirical study of higher education institutions in Ghana, for example, the alignment between CRE strategy and corporate strategy was found to be weak: property portfolios were often managed with short-term cost logics rather than strategic value logics, and this misalignment undermined organizational agility and responsiveness (Gadafi et al., 2024). The challenge is exacerbated by the multidimensional and multifunctional nature of CRE and FM, which demands that business units, property managers, finance, and HR coordinate leadership and decision-making processes. Without this coordination, leadership fragmentation, delayed decision-making, and suboptimal space/asset utilization can erode organizational performance (Mishra, 2025).

Organizations must adopt dynamic alignment practices rather than static alignment models to operationalize strategic alignment in real estate and facility management. Cooke et al. (2021) argue that alignment is not a one-off event but an ongoing process of synchronising strategic intent, decision-making structures, and operational execution, particularly in CRE contexts where long-lead spans and high-asset inflexibilities may inhibit responsiveness (Cooke et al., 2021). Empirical research shows that facilitators including leadership clarity, integrated decision metrics and workplace strategy enable alignment, whereas inhibitors such as legacy leases and disconnected cost-centres impede it (Cooke et al., 2021). Moreover, the emerging notion of “transient competitive advantage” emphasizes that CRE and FM strategies must be adaptable and closely aligned with evolving corporate priorities (Cooke and Appel-Meulenbroek, 2024). For real estate organizations in Malaysia and across Southeast Asia, this translates into the need for leadership teams to ensure that FM and property decisions are embedded in the corporate strategic planning process, supported by cross-functional governance, reflective review cycles, and explicit alignment metrics. Without

such a mechanism, the real estate portfolio becomes a structural drag, rather than a strategic enabler.

#### *Leadership Development Interventions for Alignment and Collaboration*

Achieving leadership alignment in dynamic organizations requires more than structural reform; it depends on sustained investment in leadership development interventions that enhance individual and collective capabilities. Such interventions focus on cultivating self-awareness, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and communication competencies that shape how leaders engage with strategic goals and with one another (Cooke et al., 2021). Empirical research across diverse organizational contexts demonstrates that coaching-based leadership programs strengthen psychological capital, including confidence, optimism, and resilience, all of which underpin consistent leadership performance and alignment (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021). When leaders develop these capabilities, they exhibit clearer, more empathetic, and values-driven communication, reinforcing shared purposes and trust across teams. Leadership coaching, mentoring, and feedback processes also enable reflection and recalibration of leadership behaviour, helping executives recognise misalignment and re-orient actions toward collective objectives (Ford et al., 2021).

Beyond individual growth, leadership development interventions establish a shared behavioral and cultural framework that strengthens alignment across hierarchical and functional boundaries. In organizational change contexts, targeted leadership-development programs enhance coordination, role clarity, and cross-unit communication (Ford et al., 2021). Adaptive and transformational leadership models further reinforce alignment by promoting flexibility, participation, and psychological safety conditions that improve collaboration and reduce resistance to change (Chughtai et al., 2024)). Within project-based and digitally transforming sectors, such as construction and infrastructure, initiatives such as digital-leadership training have been shown to synchronize strategic and technological vision, thereby fostering innovation and knowledge sharing (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). From an organizational-learning perspective, these interventions foster double-loop learning, where leaders not only correct actions but also examine the underlying assumptions that drive their decisions ( Nguyen, 2020). In Malaysia's real-estate context, embedding leadership development programs within corporate governance and strategic planning systems could help cultivate alignment, enhance collaboration, and institutionalize reflective practices as a continuous driver of organizational improvement.

#### *Leadership Alignment as a Catalyst for Effective Organizational Change*

Organizational change initiatives frequently fail not because of flawed strategic intent but because of misalignment among leaders responsible for executing transformation. When leadership teams interpret change objectives differently or communicate inconsistent messages, employees experience uncertainty, which erodes trust and weakens engagement (Ford et al., 2021). Leadership alignment, therefore, functions as a critical connective tissue between change design and implementation. Aligned leadership teams demonstrate shared commitment to the transformation's purpose, clarity in role expectations, and coherence in messaging all of which sustain momentum throughout the change process (Aarons et al., 2014). Empirical evidence suggests that in contexts of restructuring and digital transformation, consistent leadership behavior across hierarchical levels significantly

enhances employees' sense of direction and confidence, leading to smoother adaptation and reduced resistance (Chughtai et al., 2024).

The studies reviewed in Table 1 underscore that leadership alignment enables strategic sensemaking, a process through which leaders collectively interpret environmental complexity and translate it into actionable decisions. Ford et al. (2021) found that structured leadership workshops and communication training promote a shared understanding of change priorities and strengthen collaboration across functional units (Ford et al., 2021). Similarly, adaptive leadership interventions, including emphasizing flexibility, emotional intelligence, and participative dialogue, have been shown to increase leaders' capacity to coordinate their actions under uncertainty (Chughtai et al., 2024). These approaches encourage two-way communication and psychological safety, conditions that allow employees to voice concerns and contribute ideas, thereby enhancing the collective ownership of change. In project-based industries such as construction and real estate, where leadership transitions are common, establishing alignment through shared leadership frameworks has been linked to greater decision coherence and improved project integration (Yin et al., 2023).

Sustaining alignment during change requires iterative reflection and feedback mechanisms that enable leaders to reassess progress and recalibrate strategies in real-time. Action Research frameworks and learning-oriented leadership programs provide such mechanisms by embedding reflection into organizational routines (Hamzah, 2025). Through these cycles, leadership teams develop agility to adapt their communication, redistribute authority, and realign priorities as changes unfold. For organizations in emerging markets such as Malaysia, where structural reforms and digital transitions occur rapidly, institutionalizing reflective leadership practices can bridge the gap between strategic ambition and implementation capability. Ultimately, leadership alignment is not a static condition, but a dynamic, continuously renewed process that transforms episodic change efforts into sustained organizational development (Ude et al., 2020).

#### *Cross-Functional Collaboration Framework for Organizational Integration*

Cross-functional collaboration has emerged as a cornerstone of organizational agility and strategic performance in complex, fast-changing business environments. Effective collaboration across departments enables the integration of diverse knowledge domains, accelerates problem solving, and strengthens innovation. However, achieving such collaboration remains challenging because organizational structures and incentive systems often reinforce functional silos and competitive mindsets (capability (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021). When departments prioritize local goals over shared strategic objectives, communication breakdowns, resource duplication, and delayed decision making become inevitable. These coordination failures are particularly detrimental in industries such as construction and real estate, where interdependent tasks demand high levels of synchronization between design, procurement, finance, and operations teams (Yin et al., 2023). As shown in the reviewed studies (Table 1), cross-functional fragmentation commonly manifests through weak leadership communication, ambiguous role boundaries, and the absence of shared accountability mechanisms factors that collectively diminish organisational performance (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021; Yin et al., 2023).

To address these barriers, scholars have proposed cross-functional collaboration frameworks that combine structural integration mechanisms with behavioural enablers. Structurally, organizations must design governance systems, including cross-functional committees, integrated project delivery models, and collaborative digital platforms that facilitate transparency and joint decision-making (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). Behaviorally, collaboration depends on shared mental models and trust among teams, which can be cultivated through leadership interventions that promote psychological safety and open dialogue. It can be seen that early phase coordination meetings and reflection sessions significantly improved collaboration by aligning expectations across functional boundaries. Similarly, participatory decision-making processes enable mutual understanding of constraints and priorities, ensuring that departments perceive success as collective rather than individual (Ford et al., 2021). Integrating digital tools also enhances cross-functional coordination by reducing information asymmetry and enabling real-time communication, an approach that is increasingly vital in digitally transforming industries (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021).

From an organizational-learning perspective, effective collaboration frameworks extend beyond procedural integration to embed reflective learning loops in interdepartmental interactions. This means collaboration is not treated as a one-off coordination exercise but as a continuous process of adaptation, feedback, and learning (Chughtai et al., 2024). Reflection meetings, debrief workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms create opportunities for departments to reassess assumptions, improve processes, and institutionalize lessons learned (Cooke et al., 2021). For emerging market organizations, including those in Malaysia's real estate sector, where leadership hierarchies are traditionally top-down, adopting cross-functional frameworks that combine structured governance with reflective dialogue can foster both efficiency and innovation. In such contexts, collaboration is not merely an operational practice, but a strategic capability that underpins organizational resilience and long-term competitiveness.

#### *Systemic Enablers of Cross-Functional Collaboration*

Sustaining effective collaboration across organizational functions requires more than interpersonal trust or leadership alignment; it depends on enabling systems that the formal and informal structures, technologies, and management processes that support information flow, decision-making, and shared accountability. These systems provide the infrastructure through which cross-functional collaboration becomes embedded in organizational routines rather than remaining dependent on individual relationships ( Hoai & Nguyen, 2021). Management accounting systems (MAS), enterprise resource planning (ERP) tools, and integrated performance dashboards serve as key enablers of collaboration by enhancing visibility, clarifying responsibilities, and aligning departmental objectives with corporate strategy (Thanh Hoai & Nguyen, 2021). When effectively implemented, such systems convert dispersed data and tacit knowledge into actionable insights, improving coordination between departments and reducing the cognitive and structural barriers that typically fragment organizational communication ( Nguyen, 2020).

Technological and digital infrastructure increasingly function as catalysts for cross-functional integration. The rapid digitalization of industries such as construction, real estate, and manufacturing has transformed collaboration from physical co-location to virtual

coordination, which requires digital leadership competencies and interoperable communication platforms (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). Cloud-based collaboration tools, building information Modelling (BIM), and shared data environments have proven particularly effective in synchronizing workflows across design, procurement, and project management teams (Yin et al., 2023). These technologies not only enable real-time coordination, but also generate digital transparency, which supports collective accountability and performance monitoring. However, technology alone is insufficient; digital systems must be supported by socio-technical alignment, that is, the integration of the human, technical, and procedural dimensions of collaboration (Ude et al., 2020). Organizations that fail to adapt their cultural and behavioral norms to the new digital environment risk replicating silos through technological means rather than dismantling them.

From an organizational design perspective, enabling systems also include governance mechanisms that institutionalize collaboration. These mechanisms, including cross-functional steering committees, shared scorecards, and participatory budgeting, will promote transparency and joint decision making (Cooke & Appel-Meulenbroek, 2024). When embedded within leadership processes, such governance structures facilitate horizontal alignment and ensure that decisions reflect multistakeholder perspectives. Importantly, these systems must be adaptive and reflexive; they should allow periodic review and recalibration of collaborative processes through structured feedback and learning cycles (Aarons et al., 2014). In emerging sectors, such as Malaysia's real estate industry, where firms navigate both digital transformation and cultural inertia, developing integrated information systems, transparent decision frameworks, and reflective learning loops is critical. Collectively, these enabling systems transform collaboration from ad hoc interpersonal activity into a systemic organizational capability that sustains agility, innovation, and strategic coherence over time.

#### *Organizational Learning and Reflection*

Organizational learning and reflective practice serve as dynamic mechanisms through which leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration are sustained over time. While alignment and collaboration can be achieved through structural systems or leadership interventions, maintaining them requires continuous cycles of reflection, learning, and adaptation (Nguyen 2020). Through such cycles, organizations convert episodic interventions into enduring capabilities. Reflection enables leadership teams to critically evaluate not only *what* was achieved but *also how* collective behaviors and decisions contributed to those outcomes, creating feedback loops that strengthen strategic coherence. In project-based and knowledge-intensive contexts, reflection-in-action and after-action reviews are particularly valuable for embedding experiential learning into future decision-making processes (Ford et al., 2021).

Learning organizations therefore cultivate alignment not as a static state but as an evolving social process grounded in dialogue, experimentation, and shared sense. Psychological safety is a prerequisite for effective learning. When leaders model vulnerability and openness to feedback, employees are more likely to question entrenched assumptions and contribute insights that refine strategic decisions (Chughtai et al., 2024). Adaptive leadership also facilitates organizational learning by encouraging flexibility, participative decision making, and continuous self-evaluation. From an Action Research perspective, iterative learning cycles, including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, enable leadership teams to

remain responsive to emerging challenges while aligning daily practices with long-term organizational goals ( Nguyen, 2020). Within the Malaysian real estate sector, where firms often operate amid market volatility and hierarchical cultures, institutionalizing structured reflection mechanisms such as leadership retrospectives, learning workshops, and collaborative debriefs could transform reactive alignment efforts into proactive, evidence-based organizational learning. Ultimately, organizational learning and reflective practice function as the cognitive infrastructure that renews alignment and collaboration, embedding adaptability, innovation, and resilience at the core of the organizational strategy.

### *Challenges and Future Perspectives*

Despite increasing attention paid to leadership alignment and cross-functional collaboration, organizations continue to face persistent challenges in operationalizing these concepts within complex and evolving environments. A recurring barrier is the fragmented nature of organizational structures, where siloed departments and overlapping authority lines limit the flow of information and hinder coordinated actions (Ford et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2023). This structural fragmentation is often reinforced by competing performance metrics and unclear accountability, preventing leaders from achieving a shared strategic intent. Moreover, leadership misalignment, particularly between executive vision and middle management implementation, remains a critical obstacle in dynamic and project-based sectors, such as real estate and construction (Cooke & Appel-Meulenbroek, 2024). In emerging markets such as Malaysia, these issues are compounded by hierarchical organizational cultures that prioritize compliance over collaboration, constraining upward communication, and collective problem-solving (Hamzah, 2025).

Technological transformation presents both an opportunity and challenge for alignment and collaboration. While digital platforms and integrated management systems can facilitate coordination, many organizations struggle to integrate technology with the human and cultural dimensions of work (Zulu & Khosrowshahi, 2021). Without appropriate digital leadership skills and psychological readiness, technology adoption risks reinforcing rather than dismantling silos. Similarly, leadership development programs frequently focus on technical competence rather than the reflective and relational capabilities necessary for sustained alignment (Zuberbuhler et al. 2020). The challenge lies in fostering socio-technical alignment, where digital systems, governance structures, and leadership behaviors are co-designed to support collaborative learning and adaptation.

Future research should focus on developing longitudinal and context-sensitive alignment models that capture the dynamic interplay between leadership, collaboration, and learning over time. Empirical evidence remains limited in emerging economy contexts, especially within Southeast Asian real estate sectors, where cultural norms and institutional environments shape collaboration differently. Applying Action Research and learning organization frameworks can generate practical insights into how reflection and feedback cycles drive sustainable alignment ( Nguyen 2020). Additionally, comparative studies across industries can clarify how enabling systems, including digital infrastructure, governance mechanisms, and leadership development pathways, mediate alignment outcomes. Finally, integrating psychological safety and inclusive leadership perspectives may deepen understanding of how diverse teams can co-create alignment in the face of uncertainty (Ford et al., 2021)

In summary, addressing these challenges requires a multidimensional approach that combines structural reform, technological integration, and leadership learning. Organizations that embed continuous reflection and adaptive collaboration into their culture will be better positioned to sustain strategic coherence and resilience amid accelerating change.

### **Conclusions**

This study synthesized recent empirical evidence on leadership alignment, cross-functional collaboration, and organizational learning to develop an integrated understanding of how these mechanisms collectively enhance strategic coherence in dynamic organizations. The thematic analysis of eight empirical studies (2020–2025) revealed that alignment and collaboration are interdependent processes sustained through continuous learning, reflection, and adaptive systems. The conceptual framework developed from this synthesis positions leadership alignment as the foundation of organizational coherence, cross-functional collaboration as the operational bridge connecting leadership intent to execution, and organizational learning as the reinforcing cycle that renews both.

Across diverse sectors, including construction, higher education, and real estate, the findings emphasize that sustainable collaboration depends on shared leadership, transparent communication, and systemic enablers such as digital platforms and governance structures. Leadership development interventions, particularly those that incorporate coaching, adaptive learning, and reflection, have been shown to be critical for building alignment capacity and psychological safety across teams. These insights hold significant implications for emerging economies, such as Malaysia, where hierarchical cultures and rapid industrial transitions heighten the need for integrative leadership and collaborative agility.

By framing alignment and collaboration as iterative learning processes rather than as static management outcomes, this study contributes to advancing the theoretical and practical understanding of leadership systems. The proposed conceptual framework offers a foundation for future empirical validation and Action Research initiatives aimed at cultivating reflective and adaptive leadership practices. Ultimately, organizations that embed reflection, dialogue, and feedback into their everyday leadership and collaboration routines are more likely to sustain strategic coherence, innovation, and resilience in the face of accelerating change.

### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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### **Authorship Contribution Statement**

All authors have critically revised the important intellectual content, read and approved the final manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the article were appropriately investigated and resolved.

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### Informed Consent

Informed consent is not applicable

### Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request

### Ethical Approval

The conducted research is not related either human and animal use

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