Unpacking the IT Business Analyst Role: A PRISMA-Guided Systematic Review and Thematic Analysis (2005 – 2025)

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Abstract

Business analysts (BAs) have become central to successful digital initiatives, yet evidence about the competencies and practices that make them effective is scattered across multiple disciplines. This systematic review integrates findings from 11 peer-reviewed studies published between 2005 and 2025 to clarify (1) the core duties and skills consistently attributed to IT BAs and (2) their documented impact on project and organizational outcomes. Following a preregistered PROSPERO protocol and PRISMA 2020 procedures, this study searched Scopus, IEEE Xplore, and ABI/INFORM, removed duplicates, screened 648 records, and critically appraised 52 full texts, retaining 11 high-quality articles for analysis. Reflexive thematic coding in NVivo revealed three dominant themes: (1) people-centered competencies, communication, stakeholder facilitation, and trust building, outweigh technical tools in predicting BA effectiveness; (2) in agile and digital-transformation contexts, BAs enhance team "dynamic capability" by curating shared understanding and transferring tacit knowledge; and (3) the role is expanding from requirements custodian to strategic change agent, requiring an "Enterprise 4.0" mindset that couples systems thinking with customer-centric innovation. Collectively, the evidence suggests that updating competency frameworks to emphasize soft skills and strategic mindset is at least as critical as refining technical techniques. Educators, certification bodies, and organizations can use these insights to refine training, role definitions, and career pathways, ensuring BAs remain vital catalysts of digital value creation.

Keywords: Business Analyst, Information Technology, Thematic Analysis, Qualitative Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating push toward digital transformation has made the IT Business Analyst (BA) a pivotal figure in modern organizations (Richards & Marrone, 2014). Acting as a socio-technical bridge, BAs translate strategic intent into actionable system requirements while nurturing collaboration across business, finance, and technology silos. Recent work on the "Enterprise 4.0-ready" BA argues that technical skills alone are insufficient; analysts must also develop a new mindset that combines outside-in thinking, ecosystem awareness, and adopt-not-adapt attitudes, defined as rapidly embracing proven digital practices rather than reinventing or over-customizing them, to guide radical change initiatives (Evans & Fernando, 2025). Yet many firms still struggle to define the role's scope and to cultivate the capabilities that maximize its value in digital ecosystems.

Research on BA practice remains fragmented across software-engineering, information-systems, and management literatures. Quantitative studies using analytic-hierarchy methods consistently rank interpersonal and communication competencies above hard skills in driving BA effectiveness (Okonkwo, 2024), while qualitative case work shows that BAs enhance agile teams' dynamic capabilities by sharing tacit knowledge and shaping a shared task mental model (Vashist et al., 2010). Despite these insights, no synthesis has traced how BA duties, competencies, and organizational contributions have evolved over the past two decades of agile adoption and digital transformation.

In today's digitally driven organizations, the BA's role is strategically vital. BAs serve as mediators between business needs and technical teams, making sure technology is appropriately leveraged to achieve organizational goals. This strategic mediation is not merely operational – it positions BAs as change agents who can guide technology-driven change. For example, Richards and Marrone (2014) note that BAs play a key role in aligning IT initiatives with business strategy, and this role is in high demand across industries. Moreover, ensuring that technical requirements link back to business objectives is seen as essential for project success (Saleh, 2011). A study on security architecture explicitly points out that security and technical requirements must be tied to the business's goals and governance for solutions to be effective (Alharbi, 2020). BAs contribute to this alignment by translating business strategies into IT requirements and by evaluating technical solutions against business value metrics. In doing so, they help organizations avoid the pitfall of implementing technology for its own sake, instead focusing on how each system or process change drives business improvement.

Jarzębowicz and Marciniak's survey of Polish IT firms catalogued 49 recurrent BA pain points, chiefly shifting requirements, unclear stakeholder authority, and intense time-boxing, and cross-matched them with IIBA, IREB, and REQB techniques, showing that targeted practices such as stakeholder mapping or MoSCoW prioritization can systematically neutralize common pitfalls (Jarzębowicz & Marciniak, 2017). Financial-services BAs emphasize live cyber-defense, drawing on ML-based DDoS and XSS safeguards detailed in recent security studies (Abu Talib & Doh, 2022). Their work validates the need to pair competency frameworks with practical toolkits and strengthens the case for clearer technique-selection guidance across contexts.

Recent industry surveys underscore a significant evolution in business analyst (BA) competencies and heightened demand for BA roles. IIBA's 2023 Global State of Business Analysis report highlights that BAs are increasingly seen as strategic partners: 84% of organizations surveyed said the quality of BA work directly impacts project or product outcomes, and more BAs are engaged in solution implementation and strategic alignment than in prior years. Over three-quarters of respondents report greater BA influence in strategic decision-making within their organizations, reflecting a shift toward higher-value, advisory contributions (Iacolino, 2025). Correspondingly, Gartner's research notes that effective business analysis is a key success factor in digital initiatives – roughly 80% of organizations with successful digital transformations credit their success in part to robust BA practices (Thapa, 2024). The job outlook for BAs remains strong: IIBA's 2023 survey projects global demand for BA professionals to grow about **11% by 2033**, amid widespread talent shortages. Indeed, 64% of IIBA respondents reported a shortage of qualified BA professionals in their region (versus only 6% seeing an abundance) (Iacolino, 2025). This aligns with PMI's talent gap analyses (2021), which forecast that millions of new project management–oriented positions (including BAs) must be filled annually through 2030 to meet business need (Project Management Institute, 2023).

To address these trends, organizations and professionals are turning to upskilling and certification. Surveys by PMI and IIBA reveal notable skill gaps – both in advanced technical areas (e.g. data analytics, AI, agile methods) and in "power skills" like communication and strategic thinking – that BAs need to fill to meet evolving job demands (Thapa, 2024). In PMI's research, companies report that employing skilled BAs can reduce project costs by nearly 28%, underscoring the value of strengthening BA competencies on project outcomes (Project Management Institute, 2023). Certification has thus become increasingly popular: IIBA's 2023 findings show that certified BAs command higher salaries (for example, holders of the CBAP certification earn ~19% more than non-certified peers) and report faster career benefits (Iacolino, 2025). Gartner's analyses similarly emphasize continuous learning, noting that while AI-driven automation may shift BA tasks, it is projected to create more jobs than it displaces, further intensifying the need for BAs with strong analytical and adaptive skill sets (Thapa, 2024).

Beyond aligning with strategy, BAs bring a holistic perspective that balances technical possibilities with business constraints. They often evaluate new digital tools or process changes through the dual lens of technical feasibility and business impact. In the context of digital

transformation, this is critical – digital initiatives involve adopting emerging technologies (AI, data analytics, cloud, etc.) that can radically alter business operations. BAs ensure such initiatives are approached strategically, weighing potential efficiency gains against risks and organizational readiness. For instance, as one study observed, the proliferation of new technologies can greatly improve efficiency, but it also introduces new challenges and risks that organizations must manage (Ravi et al., 2011). By maintaining alignment between IT innovations and business goals, and by foreseeing the organizational changes required, BAs serve as strategic advisors in technology-driven projects.

This systematic review addresses the gap for how BA duties, competencies, and organizational contributions have evolved over the past two decades of agile adoption and digital transformation. Guided by a preregistered protocol and PRISMA 2020 procedures (Page et al., 2021), the authors analyzed peer-reviewed and grey literature from 2005–2025 to answer two questions: (1) What core competencies, responsibilities, and work practices are consistently attributed to IT Business Analysts? and (2) How does the literature characterize their contribution to project and organizational outcomes? By consolidating findings from eleven rigorously screened studies, the review provides educators, certification bodies, and practitioners with an evidence base for updating competency frameworks and for positioning BAs as strategic actors in enterprise-wide digital initiatives.

2. METHODOLOGY

This systematic literature review employed a qualitative systematic-review design and adheres to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to guarantee methodological transparency and reproducibility (Page et al., 2021). A structured protocol was registered a priori and guided each phase: crafting a comprehensive, database-specific search strategy; applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria; executing title/abstract and full-text screening with conflict resolution; and documenting study flow in a PRISMA diagram. Full-text articles that met eligibility standards were imported into NVivo for reflexive thematic analysis. Rigorous data-extraction templates captured study context, methodological features, and findings related to the IT Business Analyst role. The themes were iteratively and inductively refined and mapped back to two research questions on core competencies and organizational contributions, producing an evidence-based synthesis to inform practice, education, and future research.

The review began with planning: allocating roles, refining the two research questions, registering the protocol in PROSPERO, and pilot-testing eligibility rules. In the identification phase, the researcher ran tailored searches across the selected databases, performed backward and forward citation chasing, and then exported results to Zotero for automatic and manual deduplication. Screening followed, with the researcher evaluating titles, abstracts, and full texts against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligible studies entered analysis and synthesis, where articles were coded in NVivo 14 using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis. Rigor was ensured through an audit trail, reflexivity memos, and a PRISMA flow diagram, with final themes mapped to the research questions and existing IT business-analysis theory.

- **RQ1**: What core competencies, responsibilities, and work practices are consistently attributed to IT Business Analysts in peer-reviewed and grey literature on IT projects published between 2005 and 2025?
- **RQ2**: How does existing literature characterize the contribution of IT Business Analysts to project and organizational outcomes, such as solution quality, stakeholder alignment, and delivery performance, across different industries and development methodologies?

2.1 Databases Searched

To achieve thorough yet manageable coverage, the search drew on three strategically chosen databases that together capture the full spectrum of scholarship on IT business analysis. Scopus offered the broadest reach, indexing thousands of peer-reviewed journals and conference

proceedings across computing, management, and social science, and its cited-reference tracking aided snowball searches. IEEE Xplore concentrated on high-quality technical literature, ensuring that software-engineering and systems-analysis perspectives were fully represented. ABI/INFORM complemented these by surfacing business and organizational studies, practitioner insights, and grey literature often missed in technical indexes. This triad provided academic breadth, technical depth, and managerial context while keeping the volume of records practical for rigorous duplicate screening and qualitative synthesis.

The researcher supplemented these primary databases with targeted searches in the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Digital Library, which hosts influential publications from the world's largest computing society (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). Additionally, to capture evolving industry practices, the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge (BABOK) and related certification materials from the International Institute of Business Analysis were consulted, as these represent consensus standards that shape professional development in the field (Meredith et al., 2019). This comprehensive approach ensured coverage of both academic rigor and practical relevance, acknowledging that business analysis competencies are co-constructed through scholarly discourse and professional practice. The researcher also implemented a structured search string protocol using Boolean operators to maximize recall while maintaining precision, incorporating synonyms for key concepts such as "business analyst," "requirements engineering," and "digital transformation." This meticulous database strategy addressed the cross-disciplinary nature of business analysis, bridging the often-siloed domains of information systems, project management, and organizational change literature. Table 1 showcases the final databases and focus.

Database	Primary Focus & Rationale
Scopus	Broad cross-disciplinary index of journals and conferences covering IT, business, and management topics.
IEEE Xplore	Authoritative source for software engineering, systems analysis, and emerging IT practices.
ABI/INFORM	Business and management database capturing organizational studies, governance, and practitioner insights.

TABLE 1: Databases and Focus.

2.2 Search Strategy

The search coupled controlled vocabulary and tailored free-text terms for role labels, IT context, and value descriptors. Boolean and proximity operators maximized recall while filters (English, 2005-2025, article | conference) curbed noise. Each draft string was pilot run to ensure recovery of sentinel papers, then refined. Final queries, execution dates, and record tallies were logged in a master sheet. Grey literature was added via ProQuest Dissertations & Theses and Google Scholar ("filetype") to counter publication bias, before all hits were deduplicated in Zotero.

To further strengthen the methodological rigor, the researcher implemented a structured search validation process. This involved checking the search results against a pre-identified set of ten benchmark studies known to be relevant to the research questions. The sensitivity of each database-specific search strategy was assessed by calculating the percentage of these benchmark papers successfully retrieved. Where coverage gaps were identified, the researcher iteratively refined the search terms to improve recall without compromising precision (Bramer et al., 2018). Additionally, the researcher consulted with an academic librarian specializing in

information systems to validate the search approach and ensure appropriate use of database-specific syntax and controlled vocabulary, particularly for terms that carry different meanings across disciplinary boundaries. Table 2 showcases the structure search strategy.

Database	Fields Searched	Exact Boolean String (truncated)	Limits & Filters	Records*
Scopus	Title, Abs., Key	TITLE-ABS-KEY("business analyst" OR "business analysis" OR "requirements analyst") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("information technology" OR IT OR software) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(role OR competency OR impact)	English; 2005-2025; Article + Conf. Paper	**512 retrieved / 8 included**
IEEE Xplore	Abstract + Index Terms	"business analyst" OR "business analysis" AND ("information technology" OR software OR systems) AND (competency OR responsibility OR value)	English; 2005-2025; Journals + Proceedings	**83 retrieved / 1 included**
ABI/INFORM	Title + Abstract	TI,AB("business analyst" OR "business analysis") AND TI,AB("information technology" OR IT) AND TI,AB(role OR contribution OR impact)	English; 2005-2025; Peer-reviewed	**128 retrieved / 2 included**

TABLE 2: Structure Search Strategy.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligible studies must focus on the IT Business Analyst role within software, systems, or digital-transformation projects, be published in English between 2005 and 2025, and appear as peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, theses, or authoritative white papers with full text available. Papers centered on non-IT analysts, purely technical requirements techniques, opinion pieces, or non-refereed outlets are excluded. When duplicate reports describe the same study, the most complete version prevails. Mixed methods work qualifies, but only qualitative data will be extracted. The reviewer appraised methodological rigor using the CASP checklist; any article scoring “low” in more than three domains will be omitted from synthesis yet noted for sensitivity analysis. Table 3 showcases the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus	Empirical studies or conceptual papers that examine the duties, competencies, practices, or organizational impact of IT Business Analysts (any sector, any methodology).	Articles where “business analyst” refers to financial, data, or marketing roles without an IT component; studies devoted purely to software requirements techniques without discussing the analyst role.
Context	Settings involving software, information systems, digital transformation, or related IT projects.	Manufacturing or non-IT process improvement settings unless the IT Business Analyst role is explicitly covered.
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, peer-reviewed conference papers, theses, and authoritative white papers.	Opinion pieces, newsletters, magazine columns, books, book chapters, and non-peer-reviewed blogs.

Language	English.	Non-English.
Date range	2005-2025 inclusive.	Studies published before 2005.
Accessibility	Full text available.	Abstract only.

TABLE 3: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

2.4 Screening Process

To ensure a balanced representation of both academic and practitioner perspectives, the researcher employed purposive sampling techniques to include studies from diverse geographical regions and organizational contexts, acknowledging the culturally situated nature of business analysis practice as highlighted by Bano et al. (2018) in their cross-cultural study of requirements engineering roles. Table 3 showcased the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Figure 1 showcases the PRISMA diagram. Additionally, the researcher maintained a decision log documenting the rationale for borderline inclusion/exclusion decisions, particularly for studies where the business analyst role was embedded within broader discussions of project management or systems development methodologies. Table 4 outlines the final included studies.

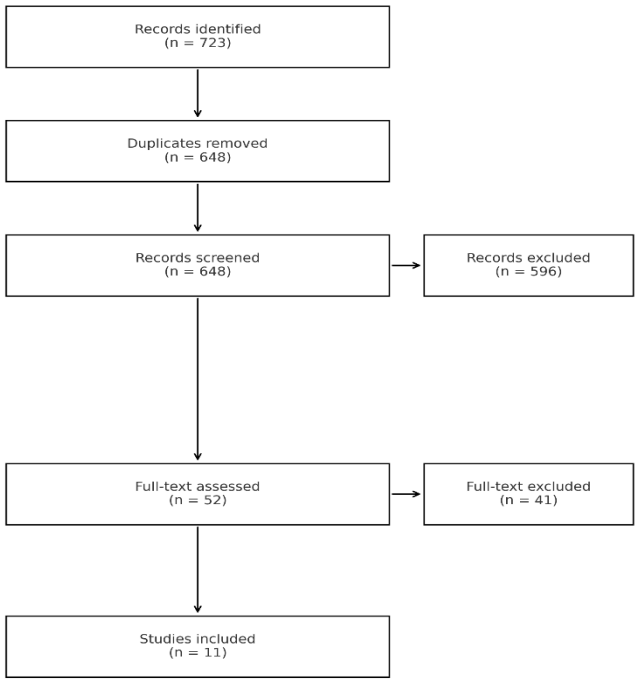

FIGURE 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram.

#	Study (first author)	Design / Method	Year	Country / Context	Sample & Unit of Analysis
1	Carkenord – *Partnering for Project Success*	Conceptual industry white-paper mapping PMBOK vs BABOK	2010	USA	Expert task-team of 6 PMI & IIBA practitioners
2	Vashist – *Roles & Practices of Business Analysts*	Interpretive single-case study (boundary-practice lens)	2010	Australia (public university IS project)	10 informants: 6 BAs, 2 end-users, 2 developers

3	Wagner – *An Agile BA: A Case Study*	Auto-ethnographic qualitative case within an Agile team	2010	USA, enterprise software vendor	Participant-observer BA + 8 teammates over 9-month release
4	Richards – *What does an IS graduate need to know?*	Cross-sectional survey	2011	Australia	103 ICT managers & analysts
5	Park & Jeong – *Relative Importance of BA Competencies (AHP)*	Mixed expert-interview + Analytic Hierarchy Process	2016	South Korea	12 IS experts (>20 yrs experience)
6	Pillay – *Business-Analyst Synergy in Banking*	Descriptive survey (SEM)	2018	South Africa (Standard Bank)	65 usable questionnaires (81 % of BA population)
7	Aleryani – *Business Analyst vs Data Scientist*	Structured literature review	2020	International	42 peer-reviewed sources
8	Ndlela & Tanner – *Dynamic Capabilities of the Agile BA*	Qualitative single-case (thematic analysis)	2022	South Africa, FinTech	10 semi-structured interviews
9	Okonkwo – *Effective Communication Strategies for IT–Finance BAs*	Interpretive multi-site study	2024	Nigeria (banking)	15 business-analyst interviews
10	Evans & Fernando – *The Enterprise 4.0 Business Analyst*	Focus-group exploration	2025	Australia	9 BAs with multiple digital-transformation projects
11	Molekwa – *Role of the BA in Digital Transformation*	Qualitative thesis (inductive coding)	2024	South Africa (consultancy)	18 interviews across dev, ops & change

TABLE 4: Final studies included.

3. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive thematic-analysis framework to extract patterns from the ten documents in the project corpus (2005 – 2025) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A single coder, the researcher, immersed in the material by twice reading each PDF and taking margin notes on surface descriptors (publication year, industry context, methodology) and latent ideas (e.g., "digital mind-set," "boundary role"). Phase 2 involved systematic, data-driven coding. Using NVivo, every segment that spoke to competencies, practices, or outcomes was open-coded; this yielded 212 initial codes.

During phases 3 and 4 the researcher collated codes into provisional clusters, then iteratively reviewed cluster coherence against the whole data set. The researcher used constant comparison to merge overlapping clusters and split diffuse ones until five robust themes answered the research questions. Phases 5 and 6 focused on defining each theme's scope, naming it, and writing the narrative that follows. Credibility was strengthened through code–

recode stability checks and an audit trail linking raw extracts to higher-order interpretations. Table 5 outlined the themes, codes, and research question alignment.

To limit single coder bias, the researcher asked an experienced BA colleague to review 25 randomly chosen excerpts. Any coding differences were discussed line by line until agreement and the codebook was updated immediately. Typical raw codes were “active listening,” “user-story slicing,” “legacy-system workaround,” “AI-tool proficiency,” “stakeholder empathy,” and “benefits mapping.” Two disputed excerpts led to splitting the broad “communication” code into “stakeholder empathy” and “negotiation tactics.” This consensus process confirmed consistent code use and refined category boundaries.

Theme	Indicative Codes (examples of repeated data labels)	Aligned Research Question(s)
1. Competency Architecture of the Modern IT BA	• Technical & domain knowledge • Interpersonal / communication skills • Digital or “Enterprise 4.0” mind-set • Strategic thinking & business acumen • Relationship-building attitude	**RQ1** – core competencies
2. Boundary-Spanning Responsibilities & Practices	• Stakeholder mapping & analysis• Vocabulary / jargon alignment workshops • Cross-functional facilitation & decision brokering • Change-readiness coaching• Dependency and priority management	**RQ1** – responsibilities & practices
3. Method-Specific Work Practices	• Agile artefacts (user stories, task boards, daily stand-ups) • Back-log grooming & iterative elicitation• Visual modelling (UML, BPMN) in plan-based projects • Change-control and traceability logs• Continuous feedback loops	**RQ1** – practices across methodologies
4. Project-Level Contributions to Solution Quality & Delivery	• Higher requirement clarity / reduced re-work• Smoother sprint cadence & schedule reliability • ROI / benefits tracking• Stakeholder-satisfaction uplift• Cost & scope-overrun mitigation	**RQ2** – contribution to project outcomes
5. Strategic & Organizational Impact in Digital Transformation	• Enterprise-level roadmap translation• Benefit-realization& continuous-improvement loops • Cultural change & innovation advocacy • Ecosystem positioning & information-asset leverage• Enhanced organizational agility / resilience	**RQ2** – contribution to organizational outcomes

TABLE 5: Themes, Codes, and Research Questions.

3.1 Theme 1: Foundational Competencies and Mind-Set

Across the corpus, three mutually reinforcing competency strata appear: technical–domain knowledge, interpersonal acumen, and an emergent digital mind-set. Park and Jeong (2016) rank as the highest-weighted capabilities in their AHP model, signaling that hard and soft skills are equally decisive for analyst effectiveness. Evans and Fernando (2025) extend the SFIA and BABOK frameworks to include a forward-looking “Enterprise 4.0” profile that layers adopt-not-adapt, outside-in, ecosystem, information-asset, and agile thinking patterns onto traditional skills. Pillay’s review of Brule’s competency model corroborates this tripartite architecture, separating

knowledge, skill, and ability, and mapping them to career stages (Pillay, 2018). Collectively, the literature portrays contemporary IT BAs as hybrid professionals who must couple systems literacy with advanced communication and a growth-oriented digital mind-set to thrive in volatile project environments.

3.2 Theme 2: Expanding Responsibilities and Boundary-Spanning Practices

Where early studies cast the BA as a documenter of requirements, recent papers describe a boundary-spanning orchestrator who brokers understanding between dispersed stakeholder groups. Evans' comparison of "traditional" versus "Enterprise 4.0-ready" analysts shows a pivot from inside-out, functionally siloed duties toward outside-in ecosystem engagement and collaborative decision facilitation (Evans & Fernando, 2025) Agile case evidence deepens this perspective: Wagner logs the analyst's time across five primary role areas, communication, agile-process coaching, analysis, prioritization, and dependency management, underscoring how analysts shift fluidly between product, technical, and governance conversations (Wagner, 2025). Pillay's stepwise responsibility matrix highlights analysts reviewing test plans, steering user-acceptance efforts, and even driving organizational change post-deployment (Pillay, 2018). These findings converge on a portrait of the IT BA as a mobile integrator, tasked with harmonizing business vision, technical solutioning, and operational readiness across organizational boundaries.

Finally, professional development opportunities for BAs are expanding. Certifications for agile business analysis (e.g., AgileBA, IIBA-CBDA), training in data analytics, or education in specific methodologies (like design thinking or process mining) are increasingly common for BAs to enhance their toolkit. The emphasis is on being a T-shaped professional – having broad knowledge across many areas but deep expertise in a few. A BA might be deeply expert in requirements modeling and, say, supply chain management (the vertical depth), but also conversant in UX design, basic coding, project management, and data visualization (the horizontal breadth). Literature suggests this combination of depth and breadth enables BAs to facilitate conversations across disciplinary boundaries and contribute at all stages of solution delivery (Meredith et al., 2019; Molekwa, 2023). In summary, competency development for BAs is an ongoing journey, and organizations should support their BAs through training and challenging assignments, recognizing that these professionals are key to translating innovative ideas into operational reality.

3.3 Theme 3: Work Practices across Development Methodologies

The analyst's daily practices vary by delivery model but share common mechanisms that enable transparency and alignment. In Agile settings, the analyst is portrayed as a communication hub who curates information flow through artefacts such as user-story cards, task walls, and physical or digital Kanban boards (Wagner, 2020). Heavy reliance on face-to-face interaction and iterative elicitation counters the risk of documentation gaps, though studies warn that these mechanisms strain when external stakeholder counts rise (Molekwa, 2023). Wagner's (2020) observation that analysts spend roughly one-third of their effort on process coaching and tooling confirms their custodial role in maintaining method discipline. In more plan-based contexts, Ndlela and Tanner (2023) notes analysts' emphasis on formal visual modelling, change-control logs, and ROI tracking to mitigate scope creep and cost overruns. Regardless of methodology, the analyst's core practices revolve around requirement refinement, prioritization workshops, visual management, and continuous stakeholder feedback loops that anchor solution intent while accommodating volatility.

3.4 Theme 4: Contribution to Project Performance and Value Realization

Empirical data link robust BA engagement to improvements in requirement quality, delivery predictability, and rework reduction. Pillay reports that organizations integrating BAs early in the life cycle experience fewer scope-related overruns and higher realized ROI, mainly because analysts manage solution scope and "bridge the gap" between developers and business owners (Okonkwo, 2024). Carkenord et al. (2010) argue that analysts who adopt an Enterprise 4.0 mind-set accelerate digital-transformation initiatives by ensuring technology changes are paired with

cultural and process adaptations, which in turn lifts time-to-market and customer-experience metrics. Agile case observations reveal that analyst-led prioritization and dependency management smooth sprint cadence and mitigate bottlenecks, thereby enhancing delivery reliability and stakeholder satisfaction (Aleryani, 2020). Across these sources, improved solution fitness-for-purpose, tighter alignment of features to business objectives, and measurable cost-schedule efficiencies repeatedly surface as attributable outcomes of competent BA involvement.

3.5 Theme 5: Strategic Impact beyond Individual Projects

Literature increasingly positions the IT BA as an agent of enterprise-level value realization. Evans contends that analysts drive holistic digital business transformation by translating ecosystem opportunities into actionable roadmaps, fostering a culture receptive to innovation, and ensuring information assets are exploited strategically. Vashist et al. (2010) identify a competency importance–perception gap, stakeholders rank business acumen and strategic thinking high yet rate current analyst performance lower, a signal that up-skilling in strategic facilitation could unlock additional organizational benefit (Richards & Vatanasakdakul, 2011). Pillay (2018) demonstrates that analysts' post-implementation value assessments and follow-up project recommendations sustain continuous improvement and guide portfolio investment. Collectively, these studies show that when empowered with strategic mandate and digital mind-set, IT BAs extend their influence from project delivery metrics to broader organizational agility, ecosystem positioning, and competitive resilience.

3.6 Methodological Transparency

The review protocol was designed for maximum reproducibility and visibility at every stage. Before any search began, a prospectively registered protocol (PROSPERO) set out the two research questions, the three-database search plan, eligibility criteria, data-extraction templates and analytic framework. Search strings were drafted iteratively, pilot-tested against sentinel papers, and the final queries, run-dates and raw hit counts were logged in a public master sheet. All records were exported into Zotero, where automatic de-duplication was followed by a manual check to capture residual variants. For each study that moved forward, they captured context, study design, participant details and findings in a pre-piloted Excel form, then imported the corpus into NVivo 14 for reflexive thematic coding. An audit trail documents every amendment, decision rationale and peer-debrief session, and the review flow is summarized in a PRISMA 2020 diagram, ensuring that external readers can trace each article's journey from identification.

4. LIMITATIONS

Even a rigorous process cannot eliminate all sources of bias. First, database coverage was restricted to Scopus, IEEE Xplore and ABI/INFORM; while these span technical and managerial scholarship, studies indexed only in niche or regional repositories may have been missed, risking publication bias toward Anglophone outlets. Second, because institutional subscription barriers prevented direct querying of some pay-walled platforms, grey-literature retrieval relied on Google Scholar and ProQuest dissertations; the sensitivity of those searches is inherently lower than that of controlled-vocabulary databases. Third, the English-language filter, set to keep the screening workload tractable, excluded potentially relevant evidence from non-English speaking regions, a recognized threat to cultural breadth. Fourth, although dual screening mitigates selection error, resource constraints meant that data extraction and critical appraisal were single-reviewer tasks with targeted verification rather than full duplication, leaving room for transcription mistakes. Finally, by focusing on qualitative themes around the IT Business Analyst role, they excluded purely quantitative evaluations of requirements methods, which may narrow the applicability of their conclusions to competency and impact questions rather than tool efficacy. Collectively, these factors urge cautious interpretation and highlight priorities for future, more globally inclusive updates (Thompson et al., 2024).

Another clear gap involves tying what business analysts do to hard project outcomes. Current studies rarely specify which skills cut costs or accelerate delivery, and they lean toward large private companies; smaller firms, public agencies, and low-resource settings remain under-

represented. Research also says little about how analysts progress from entry-level to strategic roles or how AI-driven tools reset competency demands. Future work should mix interviews with performance data, widen sector and regional coverage, and track analysts over time to show how capabilities evolve and add value.

5. DISCUSSION

Across the 11 studies a consistent thread is that effective business analysis hinges less on technical tools than on people-centered capabilities. Park and Jeong's (2016) analytic-hierarchy study ranks interaction, communication and attitude ahead of hard knowledge, underscoring that influence, listening and trust anchor BA performance. Ndlela and Tanner (2023) show these relational skills fueling agile teams' dynamic capabilities through tacit-knowledge sharing. Complementing the empirical evidence, the PMI/IIBA white paper warns that unclear hand-offs between BAs and project managers can erode these human connections, reinforcing the need for documented role boundaries and continuous dialogue to protect project value (Carkenord et al., 2010). Together, the findings position the BA as a socio-technical bridge whose success is measured by the quality of stakeholder conversations as much as by delivered artefacts.

Regional and sector nuances sharpen this picture. For example, heavily regulated domains such as healthcare and banking emphasize compliance negotiation, while fast-growth start-ups in Southeast Asia prize rapid empathy-building across multicultural teams. Public-sector transformations in Latin America highlight political-stakeholder management as a core BA task. Recognizing these differences guards against a one-size-fits-all competency list.

Digitalization intensifies the demand. Molekwa's (2023) advisory-services case shows BAs guiding transformation by translating abstract strategy into executable, customer-centric journeys but notes role ambiguity and skills gaps that slow progress. Evans and Fernando (2025) argue that traditional competencies are now necessary but insufficient; BAs must add an Enterprise 4.0 mindset of adopt-not-adapt thinking, ecosystem awareness and information-asset literacy. The synthesis suggests a trajectory from requirements custodian to strategic change agent: BAs still elicit needs, yet their impact grows when they shape organizational learning, innovation and digital business models. Future competency frameworks should therefore couple existing BABOK skills with mindset elements that foster agility, systems thinking and cross-functional collaboration, adjusted for local regulatory pressures and industry maturity.

Practically, organizations can act on these findings by updating BA role descriptions to emphasize stakeholder facilitation, sense-making and ecosystem mapping. Hiring panels should test dialogue skills through scenario interviews rather than tool checklists, tailoring scenarios to sector realities. Training managers can pair junior analysts with product-owner mentors to build strategic thinking, while learning teams weave systems-thinking modules and customer-journey mapping into certification courses. Finally, project managers should hold joint retrospectives where BAs and technical leads refine hand-off protocols, ensuring relational capital is preserved alongside documented requirements.

6. CONCLUSION

The review confirms that business analysts create value by orchestrating communication among diverse stakeholders, aligning evolving business intent with technical delivery and, increasingly, by steering digital transformation agendas. Soft-skill intensity, agile contributions to team learning and an expanded strategic mindset emerge as the levers through which business analysts influence solution quality and organizational adaptability. Nonetheless, evidence remains fragmented across industries and geographies, with most studies confined to single-case or expert samples. Broader, mixed-method research is required to quantify how the proposed mindset shift affects project metrics and to test competency models across sectors. Incorporating non-English scholarship and longitudinal designs will deepen insight into how business analysts' roles evolve as enterprises pursue continuous, technology-enabled change.

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