

## The Hidden Costs of Cloud Security Based on Understanding Financial Implications for Businesses

Thangaraj Petchiappan\* 

Chief Technology Officer -SIMS, iLink Digital

\*Corresponding author: Thangaraj Petchiappan, Chief Technology Officer -SIMS, iLink Digital. Email: Thangaraj.it@gmail.com

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### Abstract

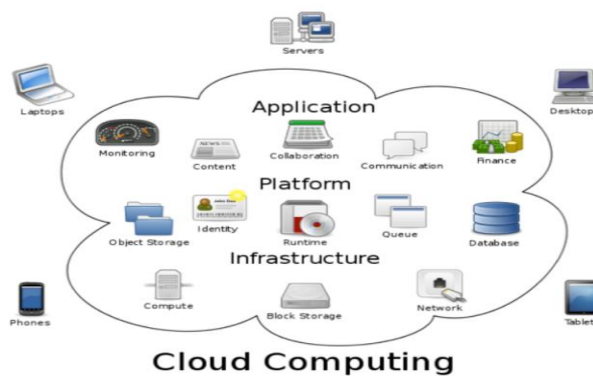
Cloud computing has become an essential asset for modern businesses, offering scalability, flexibility, and cost savings. However, the adoption of cloud services introduces a complex array of security challenges, which can have hidden financial implications for organisations. This study explores the financial implications of cloud security, focusing on the less visible expenses associated with protecting data and systems in the cloud. These hidden costs include advanced security tools, compliance with industry regulations, managing security incidents, and potential losses from data breaches. By examining these financial factors, the research aims to provide a clearer picture of the total cost of ownership for cloud services. This understanding helps businesses make better-informed decisions, ensuring a balance between security and cost-effectiveness while maintaining robust cloud environments. This research highlights the importance of evaluating these hidden costs when selecting cloud service providers, implementing security measures, and devising risk mitigation strategies. The findings emphasise that understanding the financial implications of cloud security is crucial for optimizing costs and ensuring sustainable cloud operations.

**Keywords:** Cloud Security, Financial Implications, Hidden Costs, Cloud Computing, Data Protection, Cybersecurity Expenses, Cost-Effectiveness, Cloud Services.

### 1. Introduction

In today's hyper-competitive landscape, driven by globalisation and digitalisation, rapid technology adoption is no longer a luxury but a necessity for survival. This is especially true for the banking sector, a critical industry managing vast assets and heavily reliant on software. For years, information technology (IT) has dominated the banking landscape, but the emergence of cloud computing has sparked a revolutionary shift. By offering flexible and scalable resources on-demand[1], cloud computing provides significant benefits to both banks and their customers. For years, the need for a more agile and dynamic IT landscape has fueled the demand for cloud computing[2][3]. This innovative technology delivers flexible and scalable resources (storage, computing power, and software) as virtual services over the Internet. Its emergence isn't just a trend; industry experts foresee a revolutionary impact on how organizations utilize IT services, potentially transforming the entire sector [4].

Among the most impressive innovations, cloud computing has piqued the interest of computer scientists everywhere. No business can afford to disregard the security risks posed by cloud computing despite the fact that it offers several benefits, including scalability, rapid elasticity[5], quantifiable services, and, most significantly, a promise of cost savings. It seems that businesses are reluctant to embrace cloud computing, despite its many advantages, due to security worries [6] that derive from the wide variety of vulnerabilities that exist in every Cloud computing system. Figure 1 displays the many parts of cloud computing [7] [8].



**Figure 1:** Cloud computing components.

Sustainable challenges globally will force all entities in the financial sector to do things that are competitive, dynamic and active. Accounting information systems provide financial data that serves several purposes, including management, decision-making, and company evaluation [9][10]. Cloud Accounting is a new pattern where the software is hosted on a remote server and has replaced desktop-based accounting software, thereby reducing the cost of providing an accounting system[11][12]. Users may manage their transactions from any location with an internet connection thanks to cloud accounting, which involves transferring data to the cloud and processing it further[13].

## 2. Security in Cloud Computing

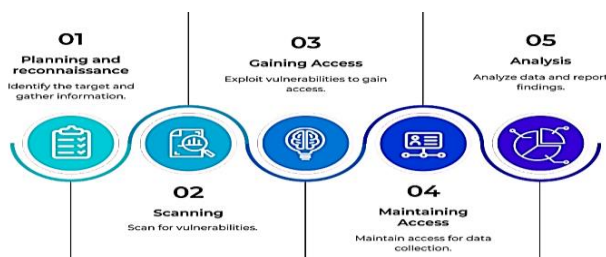
The term computing cloud is one of the most common terms and concepts that have been shrouded in obscurity over the past period and also one of the most prevalent, and it reflects a concept or concept about services, applications, software, hardware, hardware and resources that are available via the Internet and managed by a third party called the provider in Its data centres and the customer who is called a “subscriber” gets all of this or some of it according to the payment system according to the usage, which is often approved, where companies pay for obtaining the cloud computing service and the compensation is estimated according to what each customer consumes from the processing capabilities[14][15][16].

### A. Cloud Security Techniques of The Financial Implications for Businesses

This section illustrates cloud security approaches, facilitating comprehension of the financial implications for businesses. Technologies related to cloud security assessment methodologies include:

#### 1) Penetration Testing

Penetration testing is a method for evaluating cloud security that involves simulating an attack by a malicious actor [17]. This procedure makes it easier to find both known and unknown security holes in the cloud environment, such as improper setup, insufficient authentication, insecure APIs, data breaches, and many more. As seen in Figure 2, it consists of five steps. Cloud security and resilience may be enhanced with the help of insights and recommendations gleaned from penetration testing, which finds weaknesses that bad actors might exploit. There are several different levels within a cloud system that may be penetrated, including the network, application, data, and user layers. The perspective from which penetration testing is carried out—black box, white box, or grey box—is dictated by the test's scope and objectives. A five-step procedure for conducting a penetration test is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Five stages of penetration testing process.

Blackbox testing involves simulating an adversary's actions from the outside without knowing anything about the cloud environment. White-box testing involves acting out the actions of an insider threat actor who is familiar with the cloud's design and has access to all of its resources [18][19]. "Gray-box" testing involves creating a virtual environment where an adversary has partial information and no access to the cloud infrastructure. One example of a cloud-based penetration test is AWS' PE Testing service[20][21].

#### B. Vulnerability scanning

vulnerability scanning is a process for systematically finding, assessing, and reporting security vulnerabilities in a cloud setting. Consequently, companies do a better task of finding

security flaws in their cloud services, infrastructure, and applications and fixing them before data, operations, or availability are jeopardised [22]v. The scanning of vulnerabilities also aids businesses in meeting the requirements of security standards and laws like PCI DSS, HIPAA, GDPR, and many more. Methods and techniques such as automatic scanners, code reviews, human audits, and ethical hacking are all within our toolbox for vulnerability scanning [23]. There are two main categories of vulnerability scanning: active and passive. The goal of active scanning is to identify security holes and quantify their severity by querying or probing the cloud environment. In order to detect security flaws and other abnormalities, passive scanning includes keeping an eye on the cloud's records or network activity.

## 3. Financial Data Security in Cloud Computing

It is critical to be able to verify the identity of users in the financial services sector when dealing with customers' sensitive financial and personal information stored in the cloud [24]. Assuring that all measures are in place to avoid additional data losses during a cyber-attack is facilitated by contractual agreements that pertain to data security [25].

### a. Security Awareness

The main vulnerability to security is people. Among the best resources for addressing human threats are knowledge and culture [26][27]. The organisation may be exposed to a variety of security threats that humans, rather than system or application concerns, represent as hazards and entry points if those who may need them are not properly informed and trained. Ineffective security awareness programs may lead to social engineering assaults, underreporting, a delayed reaction to suspected security events, and unintentional consumer data exposures[28][29].

### b. Secure Deletion of Information

After reaching the aim, banking and financial services remove pertinent information gathered for usage. Deleting this data is a practical activity and should be done to save space for storing new data. To avoid any future use and manipulation in future, it is essential for the data stored on the cloud to be accessed and deleted in a secure channel[30]. Third-party operated cloud infrastructure makes it imperative to make sure data is erased and cannot be retrieved. Should the data not be erased, it might be retrieved later and used to create fictitious client accounts and identities [31]. This will exacerbate the issue of financial crime while also increasing faith in cloud infrastructure. Delete secure data to keep data safe.

### c. Data Security

One major concern of consumers is the usage of cloud services in the security domain to protect their data because security issues have always been of keen interest to users. Many of these concerns relate to personal information[32][33], which may be used for specific purposes or provide information about other affected organisations, individuals, or companies. Therefore, there are concerns about user data if any particular method is used to address these concerns. Therefore, data security must be addressed at all levels of cloud computing.

- **Level 1:** Responsible for user authentication, the digital certificate issued, and user permissions report.
- **Level 2:** Responsible for protecting user data through encryption and then protecting user accounts, representing user account security with encryption.
- **Level 3:** Responsible for rapid decryption and recovery of user data.

*a. Account Hacking*

Password reuse and other forms of inadequate password security are common among users. The ability to use a stolen password for several accounts makes this vulnerability more vulnerable to phishing and data breaches. As more and more businesses depend on cloud infrastructure and apps for essential operations, account theft has emerged as a major concern about cloud security. While compromised client credentials provide the hacker full access to their online account, compromised employee credentials grant the attacker access to sensitive data or functions. Moreover, unlike their on-premises infrastructure, organisations' cloud architecture isn't always up to the task of identifying and responding to these threats [31].

*b. State-sponsored attacks*

Some cyberattacks are inspired and initiated by foreign governments, despite the fact that many people consider hackers to be a single organisation or gang of criminals seeking financial benefit. Cyberspace has been officially designated as the fifth theatre of warfare by NATO due to the rising frequency of such assaults. This recognition is based on the fact that a nation's infrastructure is crucial to its stability. In an effort to sow economic instability and panic among a country's populace, foreign groups may target financial institutions such as banks and stock exchanges [34].

Governments may hire their own hackers to attack other countries' financial sectors with malware. Others may spread false information about the market to change the amount of dealing that happens. Nonetheless, academics from Yale and MIT's Sullivan School of Management discovered that fictitious articles caused more market disruption than the real thing and that article authors' prior influences significantly impacted unexpected corporate behaviour.

*c. Credential theft and identity theft*

An example of a user-threatening cyber security risk is account takeover, in which an imposter obtains control of a user's account and modifies its details to make them inaccessible to the rightful owner. This kind of attack often occurs when hackers use a computer to input several credentials in an attempt to get into an account. The fact that many people use the same combination of username and password across many platforms makes it easy for fraudsters to access additional accounts held by customers using this login information. Identity theft is another possible use of the data obtained[31].

**4. Cloud Security Implications for Finance AI Services for Businesses**

Companies across all sectors are quickly realising the importance of cloud computing for their information technology operations and as a means to reduce server hardware spending by 2020. Mobile solutions, real-time data analysis, and the newest application breakthroughs are just a few examples of how the public cloud is helping organisations stay competitive

via more flexibility, simpler upgrades, and lower capital investment needs[35]. A move to the cloud has also proven to be a more secure and cost-effective alternative to maintaining outdated systems for organisations that have acquired legacy systems [36][37]. Even though the banking and insurance industries are only starting to make the transition to the cloud, the majority of businesses already have a cloud strategy in place, often using a mix of private and public cloud infrastructure with on-premises (on-prem) components[38].

Regulations governing financial services include a broad spectrum of issues, such as privacy, disclosure, anti-money laundering, fraud prevention, anti-terrorism, anti-usury lending, and anti-lending discrimination[39][40]. The sheer volume of institutions globally, especially in the US, where regulations are enforced not just at the federal level but also at the state and municipal levels, contributes to the complexity of the financial services regulatory environment, as Table I shows[41].

**TABLE 1: PRIMARY REGULATIONS THAT IMPACT FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPANIES.**

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Areas covered/requirements</b>	<b>Cloud security considerations</b>
Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS)	Sensitive consumer data must be protected by all organisations that receive, obtain, transmit, handle, or retain cardholder information.	Make sure that nested third-party connections (sub-vendors) are recognised and made aware of their commitments and that expectations are stated in well-written contracts.
Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX)	Immediate notification of compromised sensitive data; responsibility for financial reporting and oversight	Encrypt data at rest and other in-scope data, restrict access so that only authorised users may decode it, keep monitoring logs secure, and evaluate incident response procedures.
Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLB, GLBA, or the Financial Services Modernization Act)	Specifically addresses the handling of non-public personal data pertaining to US financial institutions, including customer financial records and other personal details.	

**a. Maintaining Cloud Security and Regulatory Compliance for financial services organisations**

Financial services organisations have a heavy burden in ensuring data privacy, security, and compliance due to the large amount of personal information and money involved, the many laws that impact the business, and the stringency of these rules.

However, as Table II explains, there are practical measures that businesses may take to safeguard their data and systems, both on-site and in the cloud, and to comply with the law[41]:

**TABLE 2: DATA CHALLENGES WITH MITIGATION APPROACH IN FINANCIAL SERVICES.**

Data Challenge	Mitigation Approach
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data encryption that is strong enough to prevent data loss and theft, taking into account the sensitivity of the data it aims to secure.</li> <li>Consider Scenarios for                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data in transit</li> <li>Data at rest</li> </ol> </li> <li>ISO 27002 and the NIST 800 series 1 frameworks.</li> <li>Penetration testing and regular key control validations</li> <li>Online account access 2-factor authentication</li> </ul>
Early detection (of unusual activity or unauthorised data access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEIM system has audit trail features that allow it to record and analyse instances of various data categories accessed (what, when, and by whom) as well as modifications to information.</li> <li>Incident Response processes (people and governance)</li> <li>The ability to conduct technological analyses in order to</li> </ul>

	analyse evidence of a possible data breach is known as forensics.
System vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting risk assessments and analyses on a regular basis, along with system audits</li> <li>Regular checks of user access (since access privileges are always needed)</li> <li>Validation of security and privacy at each stage of system development (SDLC, tollgates, milestones)</li> <li>Top systems (current systems) undergo code reviews and penetration tests on a regular basis</li> <li>The data collecting point, storage places, and transmission to systems upstream and downstream are all part of the inventory and map.</li> </ul>
Human error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee education (to forestall rumours, accidental data leaks, loss, noncompliance with policies, phishing, and social engineering)</li> </ul>

### 5. Hidden Costs of Cloud Security and Their Financial Implications for Businesses

The hidden costs of cloud security can be significant for businesses, extending beyond the obvious expenditures like subscription fees for security software or managed services. Here’s a breakdown of the key financial implications that businesses often face, discussed in Table III:

**TABLE 3: HIDDEN COSTS OF CLOUD SECURITY FOR FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS IN BUSINESSES.**

Category	Details	Financial Implications
Data Breach Costs	Financial impact of breaches, notification costs, and credit monitoring	Legal fees, fines, customer compensation, credit monitoring services
Compliance and Regulatory Costs	Ongoing compliance audits, adherence to regulations	Audit costs, regulatory fines, legal liabilities
Vendor Lock-In Risks	Migration complexities, custom integrations tied to specific providers	High switching costs, time-intensive transitions
Data Transfer and Bandwidth Costs	Egress charges, increased data bandwidth needs due to security tools	Data transfer fees, increased bandwidth expenses
Advanced Security Features	Premium features like AI-driven threat detection and encryption	Higher subscription costs for advanced security packages
Personnel and Training Costs	Hiring security experts, training IT staff, and maintaining incident response teams	Salaries for specialists, ongoing training expenses
Cloud Security Misconfigurations	Addressing configuration errors, remediation, and architecture adjustments	Costs for audits, consultants, remediation, and recovery
Third-Party Tools and Integrations	Integration of third-party tools like SIEM, IAM, vulnerability scanners	Software licensing, maintenance, and compatibility management
Operational Downtime	System outages and performance degradation due to security incidents	Loss of revenue, productivity impacts, customer dissatisfaction
Insurance Premiums	Cyber insurance for mitigating risks	High insurance premiums, especially if vulnerabilities exist
Backup and Disaster Recovery	Data redundancy, disaster recovery plans, and regular testing	Expenses for backups, redundancy, testing, and maintenance of disaster recovery
Maintenance of Security Updates	Automated patching, continuous vulnerability management	Costs for monitoring, patch management, and ensuring system updates

*a. Mitigating Financial Impact*

To minimise the hidden costs of cloud security, businesses can adopt the following strategies:

**6. Regular Risk Assessments:** Conduct thorough risk assessments to understand the specific vulnerabilities and tailor security investments accordingly.

**7. Effective Security Posture Management:** Implement robust cloud security posture management tools to identify and mitigate risks proactively.

**8. Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Regularly perform a cost-benefit analysis of security investments versus potential financial impact from breaches.

**9. Negotiate Contracts:** When choosing cloud providers, negotiate contracts to limit vendor lock-in and data egress charges.

**10. Leverage Multi-Cloud Strategies:** Utilize a multi-cloud or hybrid cloud approach to reduce dependency on a single provider and balance costs.

**11. Invest in Training:** Prioritize staff training to build internal expertise, reducing reliance on third-party services over time.

Addressing these hidden costs early and proactively can help businesses navigate the complexities of cloud security while managing their financial bottom line.

**6. Literature Review**

This section encapsulates the literature review available on cloud security based on comprehending financial implications for business. Table IV summarises the literature review on cloud security, focusing on its implications for business.

This paper, Songyue and Lei, (2018) strives to avoid or lessen the impact of threats to the security of financial data stored in the cloud. Businesses in the modern age of "Big Data, Intellectualisation, Mobile Internet and Cloud Computing" are systematically establishing financial sharing facilities. The accounting sector is undergoing a revolutionary change because of the financial cloud. Nevertheless, the potential threat to the security of financial data stored in the cloud warrants our consideration. An examination of the financial cloud model's internal controls and IT audits led to this conclusion[42].

This study, Masa'Deh et al., (2024) investigated, on an individual level, the factors that influence the adoption and utilisation of FIS by accounting department staff in SMEs in Jordan. Results from a survey of 436 Jordanian SMEs revealed that intentions to adopt FIS were influenced by COVID-19 risk, trust, performance expectation, and perceived severity but were unaffected by effort expectancy and perceived vulnerability. Recent developments in the Financial Information System (FIS) have a major impact on the sustainable manufacturing method

that companies use. Businesses often use FIS to automate their operational activities, boost corporate efficiency, and enhance the quality and sustainability of their output[43].

This study Desai and Hamid, (2021) looks at the problems that banks and other financial institutions have with storing data and information that is considered sensitive on public cloud servers and offers solutions to those problems. To gather real-life data, senior stakeholders from significant UK organisations were interviewed. Comparing learnings to industry best practices validates. This article discusses recommended practices for storing sensitive data in the public cloud to help other financial institutions utilise the cloud. The banking sector has been slow to accept new technologies. However, financial institutions are ready to utilise the cloud due to its many benefits and chances. These organisations face issues storing sensitive financial data and PII in public clouds[44].

This study, Ang, Rana and Hameed, (2023) explores the use of cloud computing to enhance scalability, agility, cost-efficiency, and web application availability for FSSC. Although cloud computing offers substantial benefits, FSSC must remain cautious about potential challenges like organisational commitment and vendor lock-in. Additionally, the emergence of AI has a potential to redefine the landscape of cloud computing. Hence, future research should investigate how edge intelligence (EI), artificial intelligence of things (AI-OT), and tiny machine learning (tiny-ML) might impact FSSC in the context of cloud computing. Similarly, it is worth exploring the potential benefits that cloud services like MLaaS and AIaaS can bring to FSSC[45].

This study, Joe-Ibekwe, (2024) presents a bibliometric study that investigates potential solutions to cloud security issues by doing a comprehensive literature review on the topic, with an emphasis on protecting APIs, in order to benefit American businesses. To provide a thorough examination within the context of this issue, this literature review will compare a variety of works from different authors (e.g., books, conference materials, essays, other literature reviews, empirical investigations, and scientific journals) published during the previous 21 years. Cloud security, privacy, threats, alliances, encryption, cryptography, issues, and virtualisation are some of the cloud security-related topics covered in this work, which employ bibliometric analysis techniques to investigate these problems. The purpose of this research was to improve cloud security via the use of protected APIs by establishing bibliometric analysis procedures and using a statistical analysis tool[46].

**TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF RELATED WORK FOR CLOUD SECURITY AND THEIR FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESSES.**

Study Reference	Objective	Target Group	Key Insights	Challenges Identified	Recommendations	Future Research Directions
[42]	To analyse risks of financial information security in cloud environments	Accounting firms and enterprises	Financial clouds revolutionise accounting, but security risks must be addressed.	Lack of robust risk management frameworks.	Develop comprehensive risk management strategies tailored for financial cloud.	Explore innovative risk mitigation techniques in cloud computing

						for financial data security.
[43]	To examine the intention to use Financial Information Systems (FIS) in SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	Factors like trust and performance expectancy significantly influence the intention to adopt FIS.	COVID-19 has altered perceptions of risk and technology adoption.	Focus on building trust and performance in FIS adoption strategies for SMEs.	Investigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 on FIS adoption among SMEs.
[44]	To explore best practices for storing financial data in public clouds	Financial institutions in the UK	Financial institutions face significant challenges in securely storing sensitive data in public clouds.	Hesitancy in adopting cloud technologies due to security concerns.	Implement industry best practices for data storage and security in the cloud.	Assess the effectiveness of security frameworks across various cloud providers.
[45]	To evaluate the benefits of cloud computing for Financial Shared Service Centers (FSSC)	Financial organisations	Cloud computing enhances scalability, agility, and cost-efficiency for FSSC.	Organisational commitment and vendor lock-in remain significant challenges.	Promote cloud literacy and management strategies to mitigate vendor lock-in risks.	Examine the role of AI technologies in transforming cloud services for FSSC.
[46]	To conduct a bibliometric analysis of cloud security challenges	Business enterprises in the USA	Securing APIs is crucial for addressing cloud security challenges; a comprehensive literature review.	Diverse security challenges and varying standards across sectors.	Establish clear guidelines for API security within cloud services.	Investigate the role of emerging technologies in enhancing cloud security measures.

## 7. Conclusion and Future Work

The financial implications of cloud security extend beyond the visible costs of implementing security solutions, revealing several hidden expenses that businesses must account for. This study shows that data breaches, compliance requirements, incident response, and security infrastructure upgrades significantly impact the total cost of ownership for cloud services. Additionally, security measures can affect performance and lead to operational inefficiencies, resulting in unexpected costs. Businesses must adopt a proactive approach, performing thorough risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses to choose the right cloud service providers and implement effective security strategies. A well-planned investment in cloud security not only prevents financial losses from potential security breaches but also ensures regulatory compliance and the long-term sustainability of cloud operations. By understanding and addressing the hidden costs of cloud security, businesses can make more informed decisions, balance security needs with budget constraints, and leverage cloud technologies effectively.

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