

Enhancing Bank Performance through Ethical Practices: A Study of Integrity Management and Corporate Culture at Bank Z

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance in Bank Z, a development financial institution in Malaysia, and examines the mediating role of corporate culture. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from managerial staff through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal a significant positive impact of integrity management on organizational performance, with a direct contribution of 44.1%, while corporate culture mediates an additional 23.6%. These results suggest that embedding ethical practices within a strong corporate culture enhances performance by fostering trust, improving employee morale, and reducing reputational risks. The study recommends that organizations focus on integrating integrity into their cultural frameworks and calls for broader research across different financial institutions.

Keywords: Integrity Management, Corporate Culture, Financial Institution, Bank Performance

Introduction

The banking industry in Malaysia is facing increasing pressure to maintain high standards of integrity and ethical conduct, which are critical for sustaining trust and ensuring long-term success. Integrity management practices have emerged as essential tools for fostering a culture of ethics within organizations, particularly in financial institutions where the stakes are high. This study focuses on the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance within Bank Z. Bank Z has encountered substantial challenges concerning ethics and integrity, particularly with reports of questionable lending practices. These include the provision of loans and financing to politically connected parties. The alleged misconduct and insufficient oversight in the approval and disbursement of loans to corporate customers have raised serious doubts about the effectiveness of Bank Z's integrity management practices in preventing unethical behaviour and ensuring compliance with internal policies and procedures. This issue is especially troubling in the banking sector, where strong integrity management practices, along with robust board governance, are essential for

enhancing organizational performance and mitigating risks (Aziz et al., 2022). This research studies how corporate culture may mediate this relationship, providing insights into how organizations can enhance their performance through ethical practices and a strong corporate culture. The study is grounded in the context of Bank Z, where integrity management is crucial for maintaining the confidence of stakeholders, including customers, regulators, and the broader public. Given the increasing emphasis on corporate governance and ethical behaviour, this research is timely and relevant. It addresses the gaps in the existing literature by investigating the mediating role of corporate culture, offering a comprehensive understanding of how integrity management practices contribute to organizational success.

The Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

There is a significant relationship between Integrity management practices and organizational performance at Bank Z.

Hypothesis 2:

There is a significant relationship between Integrity management practices and corporate culture at Bank Z.

Hypothesis 3:

There is a significant relationship between corporate culture and organizational performance at Bank Z.

Hypothesis 4:

There is a mediating effect of corporate culture on the significant relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance at Bank Z.

Literature Review

Organizational performance

The overall success and effectiveness of an organization are typically evaluated using various metrics, including financial indicators, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement (Richard et al., 2022). These dimensions offer a comprehensive perspective on organizational performance. In the context of Bank Z, understanding the factors that influence this performance is crucial for sustaining growth and maintaining a competitive advantage in the banking industry.

Extensive research within the Malaysian banking sector has identified numerous influential factors affecting organizational performance. Anuar et al. (2023) explored the impact of the digital revolution on Malaysian banks, revealing that digital innovation and enhanced customer experience are key drivers of improved performance. The study highlights the necessity of embracing digital technologies to remain competitive in the evolving financial landscape. Banks that invest in digital solutions and prioritize user-friendly interfaces tend to achieve superior performance, underscoring the critical importance of digital adoption in modern banking operations.

Moreover, Zulkifli et al. (2022), examined the relationship between human capital development and organizational performance in Malaysian banks. Their findings indicate that

investments in employee training and development positively affect performance metrics such as productivity and customer satisfaction, reinforcing the strategic importance of human capital. The research suggests that continuous professional development, leadership training, and skill enhancement programs not only improve employee competencies but also foster a culture of ongoing development and innovation. This, in turn, leads to higher employee engagement, better customer service, and overall organizational excellence.

Organizational performance is also closely tied to effective risk management practices, regulatory compliance, and public trust (Abidin et al., 2021). Institutions that manage risks effectively, adhere to regulatory standards, and maintain high integrity and transparency are better positioned for long-term financial stability and growth (Hussain et al., 2023). Additionally, corporate governance practices—such as board independence, executive compensation policies, and stakeholder engagement—are vital in shaping a bank's performance and reputation (Hamdouni et al., 2021). These practices enhance transparency, accountability, and overall governance effectiveness within banking institutions.

Musa et al. (2021), conducted a comparative study on the performance of conventional and Islamic banks in Malaysia, finding that effective risk management practices significantly enhance organizational performance. The research emphasizes the critical role of robust risk management frameworks in maintaining financial stability and growth in the banking sector. By implementing comprehensive risk assessment and mitigation strategies, banks can better manage credit, market, and operational risks, ensuring sound financial health and resilience. The study also underscores the importance of regulatory compliance and governance in supporting effective risk management.

In another study, Zainuddin et al. (2020) investigated the link between organizational culture and performance in Malaysian Islamic banks. The findings demonstrated a significant impact of culture on performance, particularly emphasizing the roles of innovation and risk-taking as crucial contributors to enhanced organizational outcomes. This research highlights the strategic value of fostering a supportive organizational culture that promotes innovative thinking and calculated risk-taking in the banking industry.

Furthermore, Abdullah et al. (2020) explored the role of technological innovation in enhancing bank performance, underscoring the significance of digital transformation for operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Their study found that adopting advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and fintech solutions enables banks to streamline processes, reduce operational costs, and provide personalized services. This technological shift not only enhances efficiency and customer experience but also fosters innovation and agility within the banking sector, allowing banks to adapt more effectively to changing market dynamics and consumer expectations.

Integrity Management Practices

Integrity management practices are a vital component of organizational governance, especially in the banking sector, where public trust and ethical conduct are paramount. These practices encompass a range of strategies and initiatives designed to foster an organizational culture that upholds ethical values, promotes transparency, and ensures compliance with relevant regulations (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2023). According to Bacq et al. (2020), integrity

management practices are essential for maintaining financial stability, protecting stakeholder interests, and mitigating reputational risks associated with unethical or illegal conduct. Furthermore, these practices contribute to long-term sustainability by embedding ethical principles into daily operations, which enhances overall organizational performance and resilience amid challenges and regulatory scrutiny (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2023; Bacq et al., 2020).

Recent studies have underscored the significance of integrity management practices in boosting organizational performance. Latif et al. (2019) found that banks with robust integrity management frameworks experience fewer instances of fraud and misconduct, thereby safeguarding their financial performance and reputation. By proactively addressing potential ethical issues through comprehensive integrity measures, banks can reduce the risks of financial losses and reputational damage. This proactive approach not only protects the bank's assets but also builds a more resilient organization capable of withstanding various internal and external pressures, ultimately leading to sustained performance and growth.

Similarly, Noor et al. (2020) explored the impact of ethical leadership on integrity management in Malaysian banks, revealing that ethical leadership significantly enhances adherence to integrity practices and improves overall organizational outcomes. Ethical leaders set the tone at the top, modeling the behavior expected of all employees and ensuring that integrity policies are effectively communicated and enforced. This leadership approach fosters a work environment where ethical conduct is valued and rewarded, resulting in increased employee morale, higher levels of trust within the organization, and improved overall performance. Such an environment not only supports compliance with ethical standards but also encourages employees to engage in ethical decision-making, thereby strengthening the organization's reputation and operational success (Noor et al., 2020).

Corporate Culture

Recent research has examined the role of corporate culture as a mediating factor in the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance. Studies indicate that a robust corporate culture can significantly amplify the positive effects of integrity management practices. By fostering a supportive environment for ethical behaviour and transparency, a strong corporate culture reinforces and enhances the benefits of integrity practices, leading to improved organizational performance and overall effectiveness.

Ahmad et al. (2024) investigated the mediating role of corporate culture between governance practices and organizational resilience in Malaysian banks. Their findings show that a strong corporate culture amplifies the positive impact of good governance on organizational resilience. This enhanced resilience is closely linked to improved performance, highlighting the interconnected nature of culture, governance, and organizational outcomes in the banking sector. The study emphasizes the importance of cultivating a strong corporate culture to maximize the benefits of governance practices and build resilient, high-performing banking institutions.

In another study, Lim et al. (2023) explored the mediating effect of corporate culture on the relationship between digital transformation initiatives and organizational performance in

Malaysian banks. The study revealed that corporate culture plays a crucial role in facilitating the successful implementation of digital initiatives and translating them into improved performance outcomes. It highlights how a supportive and adaptive organizational culture can enhance the effectiveness of digital transformation efforts, fostering an environment conducive to change and innovation. This finding underscores the importance of cultivating a corporate culture that embraces technological advancements and supports continuous learning and adaptation to maximize the benefits of digital transformation in the banking sector.

Similarly, Ismail et al. (2023) examined the interplay between corporate culture, integrity management, and organizational resilience. Their findings indicated that a strong corporate culture not only reinforces integrity management practices but also enhances organizational resilience, enabling banks to navigate challenges and maintain performance more effectively. A resilient organization is better equipped to respond to and recover from crises, disruptions, and market changes. By fostering a culture that emphasizes integrity and adaptability, banks can build a solid foundation that supports ethical behavior and the ability to thrive in dynamic environments, ensuring long-term success and stability.

Babalola et al. (2022) explored how employee engagement mediates the relationship between corporate culture and organizational performance. This study found that a robust corporate culture significantly boosts employee engagement. When employees feel valued and supported, and when their values align with those of the organization, their engagement levels rise. This increased engagement translates into improved organizational performance, as motivated and engaged workers are more efficient and dedicated to their tasks. The study highlights the importance of fostering a positive corporate culture to enhance employee engagement, ultimately driving better performance and achieving organizational goals.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Corporate Ethical Virtues Model, which provides a foundation for understanding the relationship between integrity management practices, corporate culture, and organizational performance. According to this model, integrity management practices are most effective when they are aligned with the organization's corporate culture, which in turn enhances organizational performance.

Figure 1 below illustrates the theoretical framework of the Corporate Ethical Virtues Model (Kaptein, 2008). This model proposes eight ethical virtues that organizations should cultivate to promote integrity and ethical behaviour: clarity, congruency, feasibility, supportability, transparency, discussability, sanctionability, and ethical sources of authority. These virtues collectively create an environment where ethical standards are clear, supported, and enforced, encouraging ethical behaviour throughout the organization.

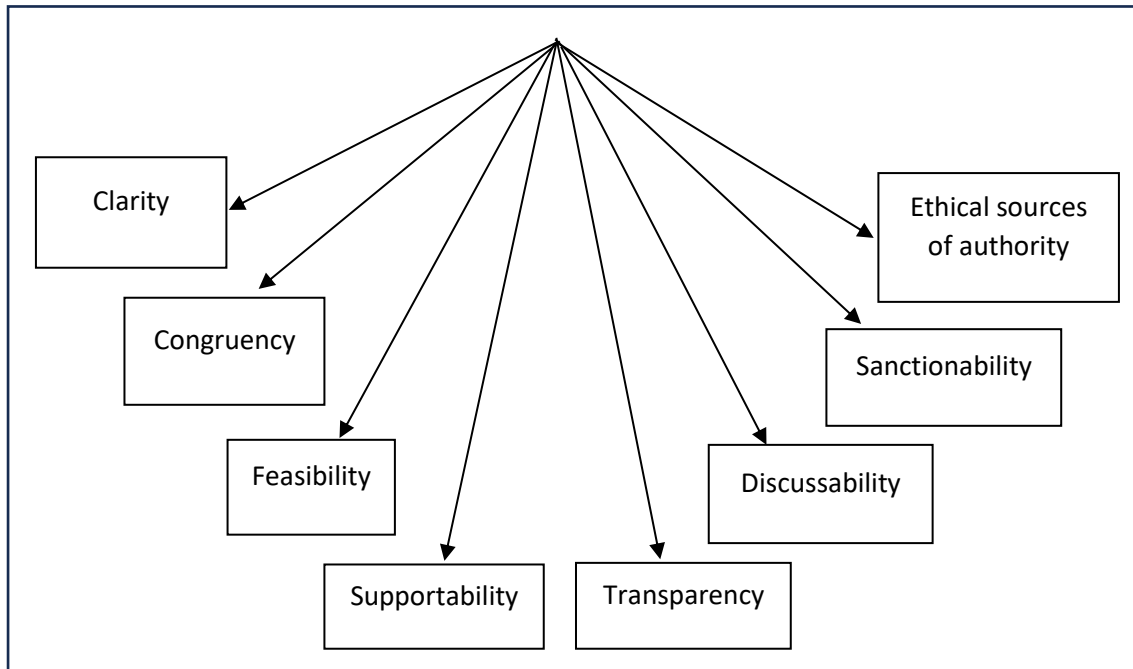
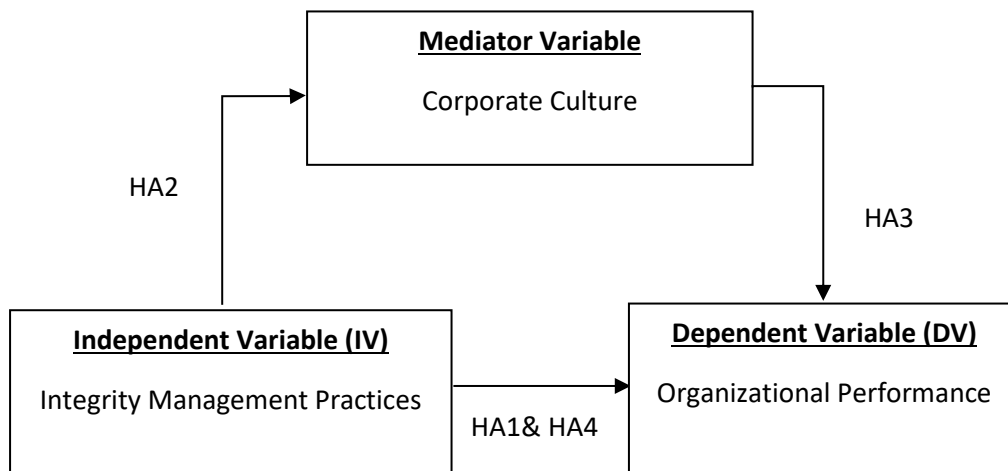


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework
 Source: Corporate Ethical Virtue Model by Kaptein (2008)

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 2 below provides a basis for subsequent investigation and exploration, highlighting the independent variable, dependent variable, and mediating variable. The conceptual framework developed for this study illustrates the relationships between the key variables: integrity management practices (independent variable), corporate culture (mediating variable), and organizational performance (dependent variable). The framework is designed to test the direct effects of integrity management practices on organizational performance, as well as the indirect effects mediated by corporate culture.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Study Indicating Independent Variable, Dependent Variable, and Mediating Variable



The relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance is complex and has garnered significant attention in both research and practice. Previous studies present mixed findings; while some indicate a positive correlation, others report no significant impact (Hoyt et al., 2021). These discrepancies may arise from differing industry contexts, organizational cultures, and measurement approaches. Integrity management is particularly critical in the banking sector, where ethical behaviour and stakeholder trust are paramount (Hoekstra, 2022).

Despite its importance, the potential mediating role of corporate culture in this relationship remains underexplored. Defined as the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors within an organization (Schein, 2021), corporate culture significantly influences how integrity practices are implemented and their effects on organizational performance (Ardichvili et al., 2021). Understanding this relationship in a financial institution like Bank Z could yield valuable insights for optimizing integrity management to enhance performance.

As outlined by Schein (2021), corporate culture shapes organizational behavior and decision-making processes. It plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of integrity management practices. A culture that prioritizes ethical behavior and transparency is more likely to foster robust integrity management practices, while a culture focused on short-term gains may undermine these efforts (Treviño et al., 2020).

The Corporate Ethical Virtues Model (Kaptein, 2008) emphasizes that certain cultural virtues, such as clarity and transparency, are vital for promoting ethical behavior within an organization. Further empirical research is needed to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which corporate culture influences integrity management practices, particularly within the banking sector.

In the banking industry, corporate culture significantly impacts organizational performance. Studies demonstrate that a strong, strategically aligned corporate culture enhances financial performance, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2021). A culture that emphasizes trust, collaboration, and innovation leads to higher employee engagement and better performance metrics (Johnson et al., 2020). Research also highlights the importance of a customer-centric culture in driving positive outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, further strengthening the competitive positioning of banks (Jones et al., 2021).

Recent studies have investigated how corporate culture mediates the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance. Chen et al. (2022) found that a robust, ethics-driven corporate culture significantly enhances the positive effects of integrity management on performance outcomes, including financial performance and employee satisfaction. Similarly, Ali et al. (2020) revealed that a supportive corporate culture amplifies the impact of integrity management on key performance indicators like employee productivity and customer satisfaction. This evidence suggests that a well-aligned corporate culture not only supports but also strengthens the effectiveness of integrity management practices, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design, utilizing a survey to gather data from managerial-level employees at Bank Z. The survey was structured to assess perceptions of integrity management practices, corporate culture, and organizational performance. Participants were selected based on their roles in implementing and overseeing integrity practices within the organization. The design outlines clear research goals, data sources, and potential challenges (Saunders et al., 2019).

A quantitative approach was chosen, focusing on numerical data collection and analysis to explore the relationships among organizational performance, integrity management, and corporate culture. A structured questionnaire was used to gather detailed responses from the managerial staff of Bank Z in Kuala Lumpur, targeting 301 employees involved in strategic decision-making and the enforcement of integrity management practices (Tan et al., 2023; Chiu et al., 2022; Eren et al., 2021). The sample size of 175 was determined based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table, with an additional 10% accounting for non-responses, resulting in 193 distributed questionnaires (Salkind et al., 2019).

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure diverse representation across managerial levels and divisions, minimizing bias and enhancing the generalizability of findings (Alharbi et al., 2021). The sampling data was provided by the Group Human Resources Department.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS Version 29. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic profile, while inferential statistics tested research hypotheses (Pallant, 2016). Normality tests determined appropriate correlation methods (Zhu et al., 2019), and multiple linear regression was used to explore the mediating effect of corporate culture on the relationship between integrity management and organizational performance, allowing for predictions based on the sample data.

Results

Table 1

Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Statements
Integrity Management Practices	0.915	7
Organizational Performance	0.867	7
Corporate Culture	0.938	8

The reliability test conducted in this study was designed to ensure that the results obtained were consistently free from random errors, as noted by Samuel (2018). The Cronbach's alpha

values for the variables examined integrity management practices, organizational performance, and corporate culture were 0.915, 0.867, and 0.938, respectively. These values, which fall within the range of 0.80 to 0.90, suggest a high level of reliability for each construct. According to Hair et al. (2017), a Cronbach's alpha score between 0.70 and 0.80 indicates a reasonable level of dependability.

The measures of central tendency for integrity management practices, organizational performance, and corporate culture were analysed. The findings reveal that all variables had a standard deviation greater than 0.100, indicating a consensus among respondents regarding the statements for each variable (Pallant, 2016). Specifically, integrity management practices had a mean score of 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.748, organizational performance had a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.590, and corporate culture had a mean of 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.725. These results suggest that respondents generally agreed on the measured aspects of these constructs.

Normality Test

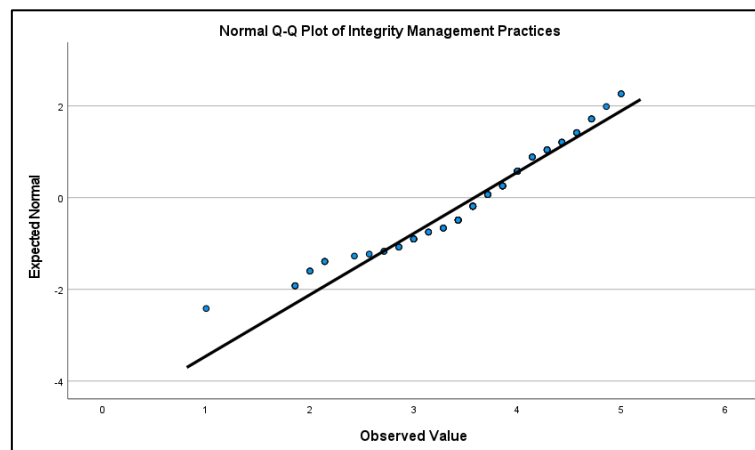


Figure 3: Normal Q-Q Plot for Integrity Management Practices

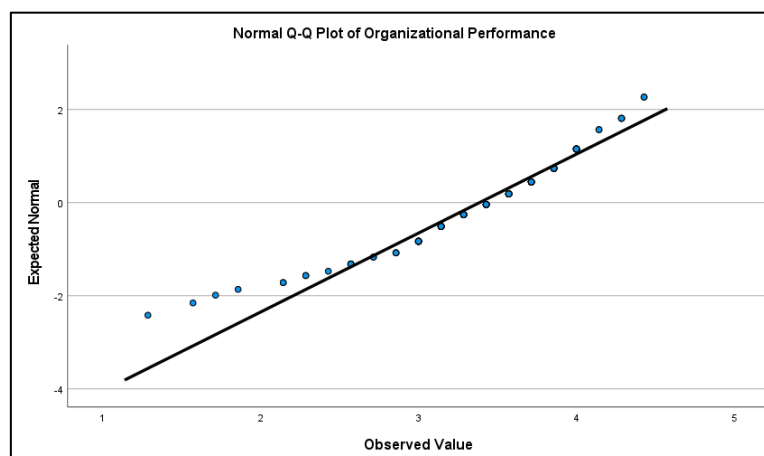


Figure 4: Normal Q-Q Plot for Organizational Performance

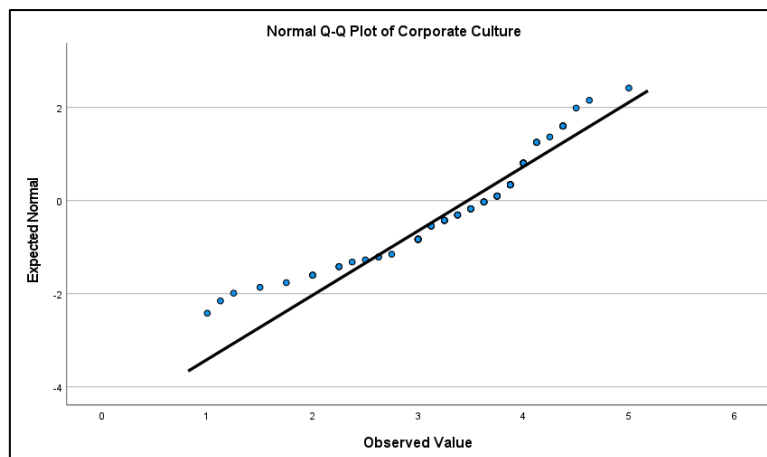


Figure 5: Normal Q-Q Plot for Corporate Culture

The Q-Q Plot was used to assess the normality of data for integrity management practices and organizational performance. The plots showed that all variables were normally distributed, allowing for the use of Pearson Correlation to determine the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance, as the data points aligned closely with a straight line.

Regression Analysis

Table 2

Summary of Regression Model

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.472	0.206		7.143	0.000
Integrity Management Practices	0.348	0.095	0.441	3.680	0.000
Corporate Culture	0.192	0.098	0.236	1.970	0.051

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

The R² value of 65% suggests that the model is quite robust. Hence, the regression analysis of this model also confirmed a significant mediating effect of corporate culture on the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance at Bank Z. Integrity management practices directly influenced organizational performance by 44.1% ($\beta = 0.441$, $p = 0.000$), and corporate culture also had a significant direct effect, contributing 23.6% ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.051$) to organizational performance. These findings led to the acceptance of the fourth hypothesis, affirming the mediating role of corporate culture.

The study confirmed that all four hypotheses were accepted, highlighting strong positive correlations between integrity management practices, corporate culture, and organizational performance at Bank Z. Enhanced integrity management practices were linked to better

organizational performance, likely due to factors such as improved reputation, reduced ethical risks, higher employee morale, and more ethical decision-making. Similarly, the strong correlation between integrity management practices and corporate culture suggests that integrity practices are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the organization, reinforced by a leadership commitment to ethical behaviour.

Moreover, the mediating role of corporate culture was significant in translating integrity management practices into improved organizational performance. This indicates that a strong ethical culture amplifies the positive impact of integrity practices, embedding them into the organization's values and day-to-day operations. The findings align with broader research in the banking sector, where trust and reputation are critical, suggesting that banks can enhance performance by focusing on both integrity management and cultivating a culture that emphasizes ethics. However, while the correlations are strong, causation cannot be definitively established, and the unique context of the Malaysian banking industry may influence these relationships.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research concludes that integrity management practices and corporate culture significantly impact organizational performance at Bank Z, with integrity practices showing a direct influence of 44.1% and corporate culture contributing 23.6%. The study also confirmed the mediating role of corporate culture, emphasizing that a strong ethical culture enhances the positive effects of integrity practices on performance. These findings highlight the importance of embedding integrity into the organizational culture to improve reputation, reduce risks, and boost employee morale. The results underscore the need for continuous focus on both ethical management and cultural development, particularly in the Malaysian banking sector, where trust and reputation are vital.

Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between integrity management practices and organizational performance. Expanding the sample size to encompass a variety of financial institutions will enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, conducting comparative studies across different types of institutions, such as commercial banks and development financial institutions (DFIs), will help identify best practices.

This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of integrity management practices by elucidating their direct impact on organizational performance and the mediating role of corporate culture. It bridges a significant gap in the literature by empirically examining these relationships within the Malaysian banking sector, an area that has been underexplored despite its critical importance. The findings reinforce the importance of embedding integrity practices within corporate culture to create an ethical organizational environment, thereby providing a framework that other institutions can replicate to enhance performance.

Contextually, this study offers valuable insights specific to the Malaysian banking industry, highlighting the unique challenges and dynamics of ethical governance in the region. By focusing on Bank Z, the research underscores the pressing need for robust integrity management systems to address ethical lapses and foster trust among stakeholders. The

results have practical implications, offering policymakers, regulators, and banking institutions evidence-based strategies for improving governance and organizational performance. Additionally, this study serves as a foundation for future research in other sectors or regions, encouraging a broader exploration of the interplay between ethics, culture, and performance in diverse organizational contexts.

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