

Evaluating Integrated Governance Practices in Multi-Functional Units of UiTM Perak: Toward Institutional Efficiency and Accountability

Penilaian Amalan Tadbir Urus Bersepadu dalam Unit Pelbagai Fungsi di UiTM Perak: Ke Arah Kecekapan dan Akauntabiliti Institusi

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 10th December 2025

Revised: 23rd Mac 2026

Accepted: 23rd April 2026

Published: 27th April 2026

KEYWORDS

integrated governance
public university
administrative departments
stakeholder theory
mixed methods

ABSTRACT - This study investigates the execution and perception of integrated governance practices among eight principal administrative departments of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch. The research used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data from 264 academic and non-academic workers with qualitative insights from nine comprehensive interviews with senior administrators. Quantitative results demonstrate that governance practices are widely regarded as effective and uniform across demographic categories, with no statistically significant variations related to job grade or length of service. Critical domains such as compliance, ethical leadership, and adherence to standard operating procedures reflect the university's dedication to integrity and responsibility. Qualitative findings reveal operational issues such as restricted two-way communication, inconsistent staff participation in decision-making, inadequate digital governance frameworks, and limitations in resource management. The ideas were analysed and interpreted using Stakeholder Theory, Agency Theory, and principles of New Public Management. The study provides specific recommendations that correspond with the Ministry of Higher Education's Higher Education 2025 strategic objective, highlighting leadership development, inclusive planning, and digital transformation. The results enhance the discussion on public sector governance in higher education and offer practical ideas for improving institutional efficacy and stakeholder involvement.

INTRODUCTION

Effective governance is a cornerstone of institutional success, particularly within the public sector where accountability, transparency, and responsiveness are fundamental expectations. In the context of higher education, governance is not only about regulatory compliance but also about fostering environments that support strategic decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement. At Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak, governance duties are allocated among various functional departments, including but not limited to General Administration, Academic Affairs (HEA), Student Affairs (HEP), the Industry, Community and Alumni Network Office (PjIMA), the Treasury, the Library, and the Infotech Unit. Each department significantly contributes to the university's mission and operational viability, yet they operate under separate mandates, administrative structures, and organizational cultures. This decentralized framework, while essential, engenders complexity and potential fragmentation in governance procedures.

The growing complexity of administrative functions at UiTM Perak has heightened the necessity for integrated governance, a framework that prioritizes alignment, collaboration, and accountability across departmental divisions. Although national governance frameworks and institutional policies exist to direct administrative action, their execution frequently differs significantly among departments. This variation can lead to gaps in coordination, unclear lines of authority, inconsistent performance monitoring, and duplication of efforts. These inefficiencies undermine operational performance and jeopardize stakeholder confidence and institutional legitimacy. For a branch campus such as UiTM Perak, which reflects the governance framework of the main campus while addressing its unique contextual challenges, including limited personnel, restricted budgets, and infrastructural constraints, the necessity for a cohesive and flexible governance strategy is increasingly critical.

Furthermore, many existing governance models do not fully accommodate the functional diversity or participatory needs of departments such as PjIMA, the Treasury, or the library, whose roles extend beyond traditional administrative boundaries and increasingly require collaborative engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. Current procedures prioritize top-down compliance over inclusive, cross-functional governance that utilizes the combined experience of both academic and non-academic personnel. Consequently, choices may be rendered in isolation, constraining the organization's capacity to respond effectively to shifting priorities.

This study aims to systematically evaluate governance procedures throughout essential administrative entities at UiTM Perak to address these concerns. The primary objective is to examine the implementation, interpretation, and experience of governance mechanisms, including policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and reporting systems, at the departmental level. It's also aimed to evaluate staff perceptions of the effectiveness, clarity, and ethical integrity of existing governance systems. The study examines essential organizational challenges, such as communication failures, coordination deficiencies, and procedural discrepancies that may obstruct successful governance results. The research provides a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current governance frameworks by using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The study also aims to present evidence-based recommendations for improving integrated governance at UiTM Perak. These proposals seek to foster a governance ecosystem that is more responsive, inclusive, and performance-driven, aligning with national policy goals and theoretical best practices while reflecting the actual experiences of operational staff. Through such improvements, UiTM Perak can strengthen its institutional resilience, service quality, and long-term sustainability in a competitive and evolving higher education landscape.

Scope and Significance of the Study

This study focuses on fourteen key administrative and academic departments at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak, namely: General Administration, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, the Industry, Community and Alumni Network Office (PjIMA), Treasury, Facilities Management, Library, Infotech, Auxiliary Police, Quality Unit, Islamic Affairs Unit (UHEI), Corporate Unit, Internal Audit, and the academic Faculties. The research population comprises both academic and non-academic staff from these departments, with particular emphasis on individuals in managerial and supervisory positions, as well as operational-level personnel. This comprehensive sampling strategy is intended to capture a holistic understanding of how governance is implemented and experienced across various

departmental functions. While the study excludes student respondents, it remains attentive to how governance structures and decisions indirectly influence student services, academic quality, and institutional outcomes.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform institutional leadership by offering empirical evidence on the strengths and limitations of current governance practices within a complex, multi-unit campus environment. The insights generated from this study can support strategic decision-making by highlighting areas for improvement in interdepartmental coordination, communication flow, and role clarity. Furthermore, the findings aim to encourage a culture of shared responsibility and participatory governance by drawing attention to inclusive and performance-oriented practices. Ultimately, this study aspires to serve as a reference model for other UiTM campuses and Malaysian public universities seeking to strengthen their governance systems through improved departmental integration, policy coherence, and leadership alignment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective governance is increasingly viewed as a critical enabler of institutional excellence, particularly in the context of higher education. It ensures transparency, accountability, and responsiveness while aligning administrative functions with strategic goals (OECD, 2019; Wook et al., 2022). In Malaysian public universities such as Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), governance encompasses more than regulatory compliance; it includes academic leadership, resource management, student welfare, and community engagement, each of which requires both structured oversight and cross-functional collaboration.

This study is guided by three key theoretical lenses: Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), which emphasizes alignment and accountability between institutional leaders and oversight bodies; Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which promotes inclusivity and participatory governance; and New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1995), which advocates for efficiency, transparency, and service-oriented practices. These theories collectively inform the design and interpretation of this research but are discussed in detail in the Theoretical Framework section.

Globally, organizations like the OECD and UNESCO have outlined key principles for effective higher education governance, emphasizing values such as transparency, inclusivity, strategic leadership, and accountability (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2009). These principles advocate for not only formalized governance systems but also active stakeholder participation and adaptive institutional cultures. In the Malaysian context, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has established frameworks like the Malaysian Code of University Good Governance (MCUGG), which highlights the importance of institutional autonomy, ethical governance, and stakeholder engagement (MoHE, 2019). Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), governed by the Universiti Teknologi MARA Act 1976 (Act 173), follows a centralized statutory framework while permitting decentralized operations at its branch campuses, including UiTM Perak. This decentralized approach demands strong coordination among departments and alignment of governance practices to manage diverse functions and operational complexities effectively.

A number of studies have highlighted both progress and limitations in governance practices across Malaysian higher education institutions. For instance, Ghasemi et al. (2018) observed that while strategic plans are often well-articulated, they frequently fall short in terms of inclusive implementation and feedback integration. Similarly, Yidana et al. (2023) pointed out persistent silos among academic, administrative, and support departments, limiting cross-functional synergy.

Wan et al. (2020) found that decentralized governance often results in unclear decision-making authority and weak accountability mechanisms at the faculty or departmental level. These findings highlight the importance of structured communication and institutional alignment, especially relevant in a multi-department setting like UiTM Perak. In addition, Rohana and Mazni (2019) underscored the value of transformational leadership, noting that trust-building, shared vision, and collaborative management significantly enhance effectiveness of governance.

While much of the literature provides national-level or institutional-level perspectives, fewer studies examine department-specific governance dynamics within public university branches. UiTM Perak, with

its diverse administrative divisions, ranging from Academic Affairs and Treasury to Library Services and PJiMA, requires a governance model that addresses functional diversity, resource allocation, and inter-unit coordination.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by empirically exploring the operational realities and staff perceptions of governance at the departmental level. By doing so, it seeks to identify gaps, inefficiencies, and opportunities for integrated and participatory governance, thus supporting UiTM Perak's strategic goals and operational sustainability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in three interrelated governance theories; Agency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the New Public Management (NPM) model. Each theoretical lens contributes uniquely to understanding and evaluating institutional governance practices at UiTM Perak, guiding both the conceptual orientation and methodological execution of the research.

Agency Theory, introduced by Jensen and Meckling (1976), emphasizes the relationship between principals (e.g., governing bodies, ministry officials) and agents (e.g., university administrators). The theory highlights the potential for information asymmetry and goal misalignment, underscoring the need for monitoring mechanisms and incentive structures to ensure agents act in the best interests of the principals. Within this study, Agency Theory informs the design of data collection instruments, particularly items related to role clarity, transparency, and accountability.

Stakeholder Theory, as posited by Freeman (1984), expands governance analysis beyond the principal-agent relationship by recognizing the legitimate interests of multiple stakeholders, including academic staff, administrators, students, and external partners. This theory underpins the study's mixed-methods approach and the purposive sampling strategy that ensures the inclusion of diverse departmental perspectives. It supports the examination of participatory practices, equity in representation, and shared decision-making processes.

The NPM model, articulated by Hood (1995), introduces private-sector efficiency principles into public institutions. It promotes performance measurement, decentralization, transparency, and customer orientation. In this study, NPM informs the investigation of administrative coordination, responsiveness, digital governance, and innovation. Survey and interview instruments were designed to assess role clarity, collaboration mechanisms, and continuous improvement efforts aligned with performance goals. The integration of these three theoretical frameworks underpins the study's use of a mixed-methods approach. Agency Theory emphasizes accountability within hierarchical structures; Stakeholder Theory promotes inclusive engagement; and New Public Management (NPM) encourages a focus on performance and innovation. Collectively, these frameworks inform the design of research instruments and guide data analysis, thereby strengthening the study's conceptual foundation and methodological robustness.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design to provide a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of governance practices at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data was instrumental in capturing not only the measurable indicators of governance performance but also the contextual realities and operational challenges faced by various administrative units.

Quantitative Phase

The quantitative component of the study aimed to evaluate staff perceptions across key governance dimensions, including compliance with regulations, clarity of roles, transparency, accountability, communication, collaboration, feedback mechanisms, resource allocation, ethical leadership, reporting practices, and overall governance integrity. A structured questionnaire containing 11 constructs was developed and validated, utilizing a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

A total of 1,136 questionnaires were disseminated to both academic and non-academic personnel across eight primary administrative units from 1 June to 30 June 2025. These units included Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, PJiMA (Entrepreneurship & Industry Network), Treasury, Library, Unit Hal Ehwal Islam, Administration, and Security. From the distributed instruments, 264 valid responses were collected and analyzed, yielding a response rate of 23.2%.

Data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) were computed to establish general trends, while inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were applied to examine relationships and differences based on demographic variables such as job grade and years of service. Notably, the ANOVA results revealed no statistically significant differences across groups, indicating a consistent perception of governance practices regardless of grade or tenure.

Qualitative Phase

To complement and contextualize the quantitative findings, the qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected senior officers and administrators. The interviews were conducted between 15 June and 1 July 2025 and included representatives from diverse units such as Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, PJiMA, Treasury, and the Library. The selection strategy aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences regarding the implementation and effectiveness of governance mechanisms.

To investigate crucial issues, including leadership style, interdepartmental coordination, communication methods, digitalization problems, and staff engagement in decision-making, interview protocols were established. The interviews were conducted in person, audio-recorded with informed consent, and verbatim transcribed. Thematic analysis was performed manually in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step technique. Emergent themes were synthesised to identify repeating patterns and problems, which were further triangulated with the survey data to facilitate a robust interpretation. The study used data triangulation to improve the credibility and reliability of its findings. Quantitative results supported governance effectiveness and consistency across demographic groups, while qualitative insights highlighted areas for improvement in communication flow, participatory governance, resource optimization, and digital readiness. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the governance ecosystem at UiTM Perak, aligning with Stakeholder Theory and Agency Theory's emphasis on accountability mechanisms. All research activities were conducted in accordance with UiTM's ethics policies and the Malaysian Code of Responsible Conduct in Research. Participation was voluntary, and data was securely stored for academic and institutional development purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire (N = 264) indicate a generally positive perception of governance practices at UiTM Perak. As summarized in Table 1, the overall grand mean was 4.41 on a 5-point Likert scale, reflecting a strong agreement with key indicators of integrated governance. The highest-rated items were "I comply with clear governance policies and procedures" (M = 4.58, SD = 0.64) and "Roles and responsibilities in my department/unit are clearly defined" (M = 4.54, SD = 0.68), highlighting strong procedural clarity and formal compliance, core elements of New Public Management (NPM) as posited by Hood (1991). However, lower scores were reported for items such as "Financial resources are allocated fairly and transparently" (M = 4.12, SD = 0.89) and "Feedback from top management is sufficient" (M = 4.30, SD = 0.80), suggesting room for improvement in resource equity and upward communication.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Integrated Governance Practice (N = 264)

No	Item	M	MD	SD
1	I comply with clear governance policies and procedures.	4.58	5.00	0.64
2	Roles and responsibilities in my department/unit are clearly defined.	4.54	5.00	0.68
3	Decisions are made transparently at the departmental/unit level.	4.44	5.00	0.76
4	I understand the reporting and accountability mechanisms in my department/unit.	4.40	5.00	0.73
5	Communication across departments/units is clear and accurate.	4.37	5.00	0.77
6	My department/unit collaborates effectively with other departments.	4.47	5.00	0.74
7	Feedback from top management regarding department/unit issues is sufficient.	4.30	4.00	0.80
8	Financial resources are allocated fairly and transparently to departments/units.	4.12	4.00	0.89
9	Staff are consulted or involved in departmental/unit decision-making processes.	4.27	4.00	0.84
10	Ethical practices are consistently enforced in my department/unit.	4.41	5.00	0.76
11	I feel comfortable reporting governance-related concerns or issues.	4.24	4.00	0.90
12	Overall, my department/unit practices good governance.	4.41	5.00	0.75

Note. M = Mean; Mdn = Median; SD = Standard Deviation. Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Governance by Job Category

When analyzed by job category (see Table 2), variations emerged in governance perceptions. Management and professional staff reported the highest overall mean (M = 4.53), followed by support staff (M = 4.38), while lecturers reported the lowest mean (M = 4.28). These results suggest that managerial-level personnel perceive governance more positively, likely due to their closer involvement in decision-making processes. This discrepancy aligns with Agency Theory, which postulates differences in governance experience based on hierarchical position (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Table 2: Mean Scores of Governance Practice Items by Job Category

No	Governance Item (Shortened)	Lecturer (Gred ≥ 11)	Support Staff (Pelaksana)	Management (Gred 9–13)
1	Compliance with policies	4.60	4.53	4.74
2	Clarity of roles and responsibilities	4.55	4.50	4.72
3	Transparency in decision-making	4.31	4.45	4.56
4	Understanding of accountability mechanisms	4.29	4.38	4.64
5	Interdepartmental communication	4.35	4.34	4.56
6	Collaboration between departments	4.47	4.42	4.69
7	Top management feedback	4.15	4.35	4.33
8	Fair allocation of financial resources	3.89	4.20	4.10
9	Staff involvement in decision-making	4.09	4.29	4.41
10	Ethical enforcement	4.36	4.39	4.56
11	Comfort in reporting issues	4.00	4.29	4.36
12	Overall governance quality	4.33	4.38	4.64
	Overall Mean Score	4.28	4.38	4.53

Note. Data are mean scores (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Governance by Length of Service

Table 3 presents the results by length of service. Staff with less than one year of experience reported the highest satisfaction with governance practices (M = 4.53), while those with 6–10 years reported the lowest (M = 4.22). This pattern may reflect either initial optimism among newer staff or growing awareness of institutional limitations over time. Despite this variation, all groups demonstrated relatively high mean scores, suggesting a baseline level of governance satisfaction across tenure categories.

Table 3: Mean Scores of Governance Practice Items by Length of Service

No	Governance Item (Shortened)	<1 Year	1–5 Years	6–10 Years	>10 Years
1	Compliance with policies	4.67	4.45	4.58	4.59
2	Clarity of roles and responsibilities	4.33	4.39	4.42	4.58
3	Transparency in decision-making	4.67	4.33	4.31	4.47
4	Understanding accountability	4.33	4.33	4.31	4.42
5	Interdepartmental communication	4.67	4.18	4.27	4.41
6	Interdepartmental collaboration	4.67	4.42	4.35	4.50
7	Feedback from top management	4.33	4.33	4.19	4.31
8	Fair financial allocation	4.00	4.30	3.81	4.13
9	Staff involvement in decisions	4.67	4.30	4.08	4.28
10	Ethical enforcement	4.67	4.33	4.15	4.46
11	Comfort in reporting issues	4.67	4.21	4.04	4.27
12	Overall governance quality	4.67	4.30	4.19	4.45
	Overall Mean Score	4.53	4.33	4.22	4.41

Note. Mean scores represent average ratings on a 5-point Likert scale.

ANOVA by Job Grade

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess whether staff grade significantly influenced perceptions of governance (see Table 4). Results showed no statistically significant differences across the three job categories for any of the governance constructs assessed, including compliance, $F(2, 261) = 1.606$, $p = .188$, and overall governance, $F(2, 261) = 2.004$, $p = .114$. Although resource allocation ($p = .074$) and reporting ($p = .085$) approached significance, the differences were not statistically meaningful, indicating consistent governance perceptions regardless of position.

ANOVA by Length of Service

A second one-way ANOVA tested differences across length-of-service categories. The analysis revealed no significant differences in governance perception across tenure groups. For instance, perceptions of compliance yielded $F(3, 260) = 0.472$, $p = .702$, and overall governance yielded $F(3, 260) = 1.208$, $p = .307$. These results suggest a uniform experience of governance practices regardless of staff tenure.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Results for Governance Dimensions by Staff Grade and Length of Service

Governance Dimension	Grade (F)	Grade (p)	Service Length (F)	Service Length (p)
Compliance	1.606	0.188	0.472	0.702
Clarity	2.032	0.110	1.142	0.333
Transparency	1.617	0.186	0.668	0.573
Accountability	2.087	0.102	0.292	0.831
Communication	1.583	0.194	1.133	0.336
Collaboration	1.887	0.132	0.428	0.733
Feedback	0.934	0.425	0.188	0.904
Resource Allocation	2.338	0.074	1.578	0.195
Staff Involvement	1.224	0.302	0.698	0.554
Ethical Practices	0.879	0.452	1.476	0.221
Reporting	2.235	0.085	0.724	0.538
Overall Governance	2.004	0.114	1.208	0.307

Qualitative Findings

A total of 264 open-ended responses were analyzed to complement the quantitative findings. Thematic coding revealed four prominent themes: role clarity, decision-making transparency, feedback and communication, and ethical leadership.

Most respondents expressed satisfaction with clearly defined roles and responsibilities within their respective departments. This sentiment is echoed in comments such as, "Setiap staf telah diberikan tugas yang jelas dan mengikut skop tugas" ("Each staff member has been given a clear task according to their job scope"). Another respondent remarked, "Saya faham akan tanggungjawab saya dalam melaksanakan tugas yang diamanahkan," confirming alignment between job expectations and institutional directives.

However, there were also concerns related to communication inefficiencies and lack of feedback from higher administration. For example, one respondent noted, "Tiada maklum balas terhadap pandangan yang diberi," suggesting a top-down communication style with limited two-way engagement. This issue was particularly salient in discussions of staff involvement in strategic planning, where some respondents perceived decision-making as overly centralized.

The theme of ethical leadership also emerged, with one participant stating, "Kami mengamalkan prinsip kerja yang beretika dan berintegriti tinggi," which underscores a general commitment to integrity. Nevertheless, a few respondents highlighted the need for more consistent ethical guidance and greater role-modeling from top management.

Insights from Semi-Structured Interviews

To deepen understanding, 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted with department heads, administrative officers, and lecturers. The qualitative data reinforced the earlier themes while adding nuance (summarised in table 5).

Interviewees consistently emphasized the importance of role clarity, describing organizational charts and job descriptions as helpful tools. A department head shared, "Kami menggunakan carta organisasi yang jelas bagi memastikan setiap pegawai faham fungsi masing-masing." This clarity reportedly improves accountability and workflow efficiency.

Yet, interviewees also raised challenges, particularly around the perceived lack of participatory governance. Several lecturers and junior staff felt excluded from important decision-making processes. As one interviewee noted, "Sebahagian keputusan strategik tidak melibatkan kami walaupun kesannya dirasai oleh semua." This indicates a need for more inclusive mechanisms that engage staff at all levels.

The feedback loop was another concern. While staff were encouraged to provide input through meetings and online platforms, some expressed skepticism about whether their feedback led to meaningful change. As one senior officer reflected, "Maklum balas diberi, tapi tindakan susulan tidak sentiasa berlaku." These perceptions suggest a gap between feedback collection and its integration into policy or operational adjustments.

Finally, interviewees generally affirmed a commitment to ethical governance, although a few noted inconsistencies in practice. For example, some highlighted disparities in how ethical breaches were addressed across departments, pointing to a need for standardized enforcement.

Table 5: Summary of Semi Structured Interviews

Theme	Description	Example Response(s)
Governance Structure	Existence of formal hierarchy and functional division of duties	"Operasi dijalankan mengikut punca kuasa yang diberikan." "Tugas diagih berdasarkan struktur organisasi."
Communication and Transparency	Methods and clarity of interdepartmental communication and top-down updates	"Komunikasi berlaku secara bersemuka dan atas talian, sangat berkesan." "Kurang komunikasi dan ketelusan."
Accountability and Monitoring	Practices for tracking performance and enforcing compliance	"Pemantauan melalui aduan dan pemerhatian." "Tiada sistem pemantauan rasmi."

continued

Challenges in Governance	Internal limitations affecting governance effectiveness	"Sumber yang terhad mengekang urus tadbir." "Staf bersikap pasif dan tidak memberi kerjasama."
Staff Involvement	Extent of participation in decision-making and policy planning	"Kakitangan diberi ruang menyuarakan pandangan." "Tidak semua staf dilibatkan dalam perbincangan."
Identified Strengths	Positive aspects of current governance practices	"Kepimpinan telus, komunikasi yang baik dan kerja berpasukan." "Staf berpengalaman dan komited."
Areas for Improvement	Suggestions for reform and future governance enhancements	"Perlu latihan urus tadbir secara berkala." "Perlu giliran dalam memegang jawatan penyelarasan/unit."
Digital Transformation	Demand for online systems to enhance efficiency and documentation	"Keperluan sistem digital bagi proses pemantauan dan kelulusan."

Note. Responses were translated and paraphrased for clarity. Original data collected from open-ended feedback by PTJs (N = 9).

The convergence of both data sources suggests a well-established governance framework that is perceived positively by most UiTM Perak staff. Quantitative results show high mean scores across all dimensions, including compliance, transparency, accountability, and communication. These perceptions are reinforced by qualitative evidence of clear roles, ethical work culture, and structured governance processes.

However, both data types also expose critical areas for improvement, especially in relation to participatory decision-making and responsiveness to feedback. Staff across grades and service lengths consistently highlighted a need for more open dialogue and equitable resource allocation. These gaps suggest that while formal governance structures are in place, the relational and inclusive dimensions of governance require further strengthening.

The findings align closely with several theoretical frameworks underpinning public sector governance. The principles of New Public Management (NPM), which emphasize role clarity, performance accountability, and ethical leadership (Hood, 1991), are evident in both the survey and interview data. Staff generally reported that governance policies are clearly defined and followed, suggesting successful institutionalization of NPM principles.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) also provides a valuable lens, particularly in understanding staff expectations around inclusiveness. The repeated calls for improved participation in decision-making processes highlight the importance of recognizing diverse internal stakeholders, not only top management, as legitimate contributors to governance. This supports the use of purposive sampling and mixed-methods research to capture these multifaceted perspectives.

Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) is relevant in interpreting the differences observed across job grades. Managers and professional staff reported slightly more favourable views on governance, possibly due to their proximity to policy formulation, whereas lecturers and support staff expressed less optimism, reflecting a potential information asymmetry or limited involvement in strategic matters.

Together, these theories offer a coherent explanation of the findings, suggesting that while procedural compliance is strong, improvements in stakeholder engagement and ethical consistency could enhance the overall governance climate at UiTM Perak.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the implementation of governance principles within selected departments at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the research explored dimensions such as role clarity, transparency, accountability, communication, collaboration, ethical leadership, and staff involvement.

Quantitative findings demonstrated that staff generally perceive governance practices positively, particularly in terms of role clarity, compliance with policies, and ethical standards. Although no statistically significant differences were found across job grades or service durations, the data did indicate minor variations in perceptions, with managerial staff often reporting slightly more favourable views compared to support staff and lecturers.

Qualitative data enriched these insights by revealing underlying challenges, including limited staff participation in strategic decision-making, insufficient feedback loops, and inconsistent communication practices across departments. Respondents emphasized the need for stronger interdepartmental coordination and more inclusive leadership practices that actively engage all organizational layers.

The integration of these findings with theoretical frameworks such as New Public Management (NPM), Stakeholder Theory, and Agency Theory offers a robust interpretation of the results. While NPM principles appear to be institutionalized, there is room to advance governance maturity by operationalizing stakeholder-inclusive strategies and minimizing informational asymmetries between organizational levels.

Overall, the study underscores that UiTM Perak's governance system possesses strong foundational structures but would benefit from initiatives aimed at deepening staff engagement, enhancing communication mechanisms, and reinforcing ethical consistency. By addressing these areas, the university can cultivate a more cohesive, transparent, and participatory governance culture aligned with contemporary expectations of public sector accountability and performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the integrated governance study conducted at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch, it is evident that while the overall governance practices are satisfactory and in alignment with the Universiti Teknologi MARA Act 1976 (Act 173), as well as existing administrative regulations and institutional policies, several areas require strategic enhancement. The current organizational structure, adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the presence of ethical leadership reflect a strong institutional commitment to accountability and integrity. However, opportunities exist to further strengthen governance practices, particularly in areas related to participatory decision-making, digital transformation, leadership development, and inclusive communication.

These recommendations are framed within the strategic priorities outlined in the Ministry of Higher Education's Higher Education 2025 agenda, particularly the 7 Key Focus Areas and 10 Transformation Agendas (MOHE, 2023). They are also aligned with core governance theories including New Public Management, Stakeholder Theory, and Agency Theory. Four strategic recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Two-Way Communication and Institutional Governance.**

Aligned with Key Focus Area 5 and Transformation Agenda 7, UiTM Perak should institutionalize regular communication platforms, including town hall sessions, digital suggestion boxes, and departmental feedback forums. These platforms would enhance transparency, foster a culture of listening, and encourage active staff participation in university decision-making processes. Strengthened two-way communication is expected to elevate institutional trust, increase policy acceptance, and positively impact the overall employee well-being and Happiness Index.

2. Enhance Leadership Development and Academic Credibility.

In line with Key Focus Area 2 and Transformation Agendas 1 and 2, the university is encouraged to design structured leadership development programs. These may include mentoring initiatives, leadership competency training, job rotation schemes, and targeted succession planning. Such efforts will support talent development, increase career mobility, and build a sustainable pipeline of capable leaders within both academic and administrative domains.

3. Accelerate Digital Transformation and Infrastructure Modernization.

Consistent with Key Focus Area 7 and Transformation Agenda 6, UiTM Perak should prioritize the development of an integrated digital governance system. This system should facilitate streamlined administrative processes, digital documentation, real-time performance tracking, and automated reporting. By leveraging digital tools, the university can enhance operational efficiency, reduce bureaucratic delays, and ensure greater transparency and data-driven decision-making.

4. Reinforce Inclusive Governance and Knowledge Exchange.

Reflecting Key Focus Area 3 and Transformation Agenda 3, the university is advised to establish inclusive planning forums or cross-functional governance committees. These bodies should engage diverse staff levels in discussions on institutional policy development, innovation strategies, and governance reforms. This participatory model promotes shared ownership of outcomes, respects freedom of expression, and cultivates a constructive culture of knowledge transfer and intellectual openness across departments.

Collectively, these recommendations aim to support UiTM Perak's aspiration to remain a premier institution anchored in good governance, integrity, and service excellence. They also reflect a commitment to continuous improvement, institutional agility, and collaborative leadership. By addressing the highlighted areas for enhancement and aligning efforts with national higher education policies and theoretical governance frameworks, UiTM Perak can further solidify its role as a leading contributor to Malaysia's public sector transformation and the broader Malaysia Madani vision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch for providing institutional support and research facilities throughout the duration of this study. Special gratitude is extended to the Office of the Rector, the Administration Department, and all participating departments and staff members who contributed valuable insights through surveys and interviews. The authors also acknowledge the constructive feedback received from the Research Management Unit (RMU) of PJIIMA, which greatly improved the quality of this work. This study was not supported by any grants from funding bodies in the public, private, or non-profit sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or publication of this research. The study was carried out independently, and no financial or personal relationships could have influenced the results or interpretations presented in this paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed substantially to the development of this study.

- Nur Hisham Ibrahim led the conceptualization and research design.
- Mohamed Imran Mohamed Arif and Mohd Azian Zaidi managed data analysis and statistical interpretation.
- Muhamad Abdul Aziz Ab Ghani and Ahmad Zoolhelmi Alias coordinated the qualitative phase, data triangulation, manuscript structuring, and presented the paper at the conference.
- Jona Hidayati Qamaruzzaman contributed to data collection and administrative coordination.
- Mohamad Hussaini Mohd Saleh provided financial and institutional governance insights and contributed to the discussion and recommendations.

All authors reviewed, edited, and approved the final manuscript prior to submission.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using the ChatGPT, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

Not applicable.

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