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The Influence of Corporate Creative Culture and Corporate Integrity Culture on Tax Avoidance with Board Gender Diversity as Moderating Variable

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Abstract

This research seeks to investigate the impact of corporate creative culture and corporate integrity culture on tax evasion, with board gender diversity serving as a moderating variable. The sample for this study comprises companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange from 2019 to 2023, employing panel data regression analysis conducted with Stata 15 software. The findings indicate that neither creative culture nor integrity culture significantly affects tax evasion, suggesting that the levels of creativity and integrity within a company do not directly influence its tax avoidance strategies. The research found that the presence of gender diversity on boards does not impact the relationship between corporate culture and tax evasion; however, profitability does play a role in tax evasion. These results contribute to the existing literature on corporate culture and tax evasion, providing valuable insights for investors, corporate executives, and policymakers who seek to promote ethical governance.

Keywords: *Tax Avoidance, Corporate Creative Culture, Corporate Integrity Culture, Board Gender Diversity.*

INTRODUCTION

Tax avoidance has been widely practiced in several countries. This practice is part of legitimate tax planning, exploiting loopholes in tax regulations (Mappadang, 2021). Through tax avoidance, a company's tax burden is reduced. Consequently, the company's revenue and profits increase, and its cash flow improves. Tax avoidance practices by taxpayers can certainly be detrimental to the state (Hamsyi et al., 2023).

In 2019 and 2020, state revenue in Indonesia fell short of its target. Data obtained by the Tax Justice Network in its report, "The State of Tax Justice 2020: Tax Justice in the Time of COVID-19," shows that Indonesia suffered an estimated US$4.87 billion in losses due to tax avoidance activities. Therefore, one factor contributing to the failure to achieve state revenue targets is tax avoidance practices by corporate taxpayers.Many factors can cause companies to practice tax avoidance, one of which comes from internal factors, such as corporate culture. Corporate culture is a set of values and norms embedded in the company, which defines appropriate attitudes and behaviors for each

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member (Li et al., 2021). Therefore, corporate culture will shape ethical attitudes and decision-making processes, affecting how companies approach tax planning (Bonsall et al., 2021).

Regarding corporate culture, an increasingly modern and competitive business environment encourages companies to adopt a creative culture to maintain corporate excellence. The company's creative culture is characterized by innovation, experimentation, and non-conventional approaches in business operations so that the company can continue to be adaptive (Hasan et al., 2024). A strong creative culture in the company will foster innovative thinking, encouraging employees to explore new approaches to various challenges, including financial management. A critical aspect of such innovative thinking can be developing strategies to reduce the tax burden. Therefore, the creative culture embedded in the company not only encourages market competitiveness and operational efficiency but also encourages the creation of innovative thinking to increase its capacity to reduce the tax burden, ultimately increasing the company's profitability.

Creating a creative environment in an organization requires a strong culture of integrity, which shapes its approach to tax responsibilities. A culture of integrity encompasses the shared values and actions that prioritize compliance, trust, and ethics (Altamuro et al., 2022). This commitment to moral standards fosters long-term sustainable development by building stakeholder trust. By embracing integrity, companies are motivated to fulfill their tax obligations responsibly, recognizing the broader social and economic impacts of their decisions. According to (Chatjuthamard et al., 2024), firms with a strong integrity culture are more likely to prioritize transparency, legal compliance, and ethical decision-making in their tax practices. Consequently, organizations with a solid integrity culture tend to engage less in tax avoidance and demonstrate higher compliance with tax laws.

This study explores how corporate cultures prioritizing creativity and integrity affect tax avoidance, with board gender diversity as a moderating factor. Research by Zhang et al. (2022), Alkurdi et al. (2024), and Rakia et al. (2024) indicates that diverse boards can influence tax strategies by improving governance through different perspectives. The analysis targets companies on the Indonesia Stock Exchange, using quantitative methods to assess secondary data from 2019 to 2023. Here, tax avoidance is the dependent variable, while creativity and integrity cultures are independent variables, with board gender diversity moderating their relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Agency Theory

Agency theory, first proposed by Jensen and Meckling in 1976, describes “a contractual relationship in which a principal delegates authority to an agent, highlighting the potential for conflicting interests between the two parties" (Purnomo and Eriandani, 2022). These conflicts can lead to agency problems, as the principal and agent often have differing goals. In the context of taxation, the government serves as the principal, seeking to maximize tax revenue in accordance with tax laws, while the company acts as the agent, focused on increasing profits and enhancing shareholder value.

This misalignment of interests may prompt management to implement tax avoidance strategies to reduce tax liabilities and improve company performance, often influenced by incentives such as compensation and bonuses (Bimo et al., 2019). As a result, tax avoidance can be viewed as a consequence of the agency conflicts between the government and corporate management.

Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy theory, introduced by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), focuses on the interaction between firms and their surrounding communities. Hamm et al. (2022) state that, according to legitimacy theory, firms must be able to align themselves with societal expectations to maintain their legitimacy and resources. Companies will gain legitimacy by aligning with societal values and norms, highlighting their evolving relationship with the broader social context (Yadav and Srivastava, 2023).

Regarding tax avoidance, legitimacy theory emphasizes the importance of aligning tax strategies with societal norms and values to maintain stakeholder support and approval. Even when carried out legally, tax avoidance strategies can undermine a firm's legitimacy due to negative public perceptions. The ethics of tax avoidance can be a significant concern for stakeholders, who may view tax avoidance activities as a failure to contribute fairly to the stakeholders who benefit from the company.

Corporate creative culture and tax avoidance

A creative corporate culture fosters creativity, opportunity generation, and the development of new products and services (Wang et al. (2021); Hasan et al. (2024)). Furthermore, Wang et al. (2021) explain that a company's creative culture also encompasses the company's ability to adapt to changing market conditions. Therefore, integrating a creative culture into a company will enable the creation of freedom of thought among human resources. A company's creative culture, reflected in various terms in financial statements, such as creativity, adaptation, innovation, elaboration, freedom, etc., is often interpreted as an indicator of a dynamic company. However, these terms can also have negative connotations, especially when applied to a company's tax strategy.

Distinctive methods, challenging norms, and innovative thinking characterize a creative corporate culture (Hasan et al., 2024), which can lead to tax avoidance practices. A creative culture fosters innovative solutions, including financial strategies like tax avoidance, reflected in a lower effective tax rate (ETR) (Cabello et al., 2019). This is consistent with agency theory, where firms pursue innovative tax strategies to boost performance and profitability. Legitimacy theory indicates that while innovative strategies can enhance a company's legitimacy, tax avoidance may damage its reputation. Thus, cultivating a creative culture is essential for tax avoidance. Hasan et al. (2024) found that companies with a creative culture are more prone to significant tax avoidance activities.

H1: Corporate creative culture has a significant positive effect on tax avoidance.

Corporate integrity culture and tax avoidance

Integrity is a culture that forms the basis of corporate behavior and corporate governance, which will significantly affect the ethics of the company. Integrity culture refers to the company's values and behaviors related to compliance, ethics, and trust (Altamuro et al., 2022). The culture of integrity embedded in the company will shape the way each employee at all levels makes decisions and behaves professionally (Izuchukwu & Patricia, 2023). A culture of integrity, tied to compliance, is linked to corporate governance, which aims to improve corporate tax compliance while considering stakeholder interests (Amalya et al., 2023).

The National Policy Committee on Governance introduces five fundamental principles of corporate governance, summarized as “TARIF”, which stands for “Transparency”, “Accountability”, “Responsibility”, “Independency”, and “Fairness”. These principles reflect the integrity culture embedded within the organization. Companies that promote a strong integrity culture are more inclined to comply with applicable tax laws and avoid tax evasion tactics, as indicated by a higher effective tax rate (ETR) (Chatjuthamard et al., 2024). According to legitimacy theory, a culture of integrity helps a company align with societal norms and values. Thus, fostering an integrity-driven culture is crucial for maintaining the company's legitimacy and enhancing its positive reputation.

H2: Corporate integrity culture has a significant negative effect on tax avoidance.

Board Gender Diversity, Corporate Creative Culture, and Tax Avoidance

A culture that fosters creativity and innovation may lead to aggressive financial strategies like tax avoidance. Agency theory suggests conflicts of interest between managers and shareholders, with managers potentially using tax avoidance to boost profits, even if it conflicts with shareholders' long-term goals.

The presence of gender diversity on boards, indicated by the involvement of female directors, introduces varied perspectives and ethical considerations that enhance decision-making balance. Female directors are generally more risk-averse, ethically driven, and focused on long-term sustainability, which promotes compliance and discourages aggressive or unethical financial behaviors (Zhang et al., 2022). This scenario implies that gender diversity on boards can mitigate agency conflicts and curtail tax aggressiveness.

Board gender diversity is expected to reduce the positive effect of a creative corporate culture on tax avoidance. This view is supported by Wongsinhirun et al. (2023), who showed that gender-diverse boards enhance positive cultural aspects, and by Anggraeni & Kurnianto (2020), who found that female directors help lower tax avoidance.

H3: Board gender diversity weakens the positive effect of corporate creative culture on tax avoidance.

Board Gender Diversity, Corporate Integrity Culture, and Tax Avoidance

Legitimacy theory posits that companies need to align with societal values to sustain their legitimacy. A robust culture of integrity can mitigate unethical practices such as tax avoidance. Additionally, having gender diversity on boards can bolster integrity, as female directors tend to be more ethically conscious and emphasize transparency and accountability. These attributes foster open discussions and thorough assessments of tax strategies, thereby decreasing the chances of aggressive tax practices.

Accordingly, "board gender diversity is expected to reinforce the negative effect of corporate integrity culture on tax avoidance". Lee (2024) shows that female directors contribute significantly to organizational transparency, strengthening a firm's commitment to integrity, while Anggraeni & Kurnianto (2020) found that the presence of female directors on the board helps to reduce the level of tax avoidance within companies.

H4: Board gender diversity strengthens the negative influence of corporate integrity culture on tax avoidance.

METHOD

This study makes use of "secondary data" obtained from the "financial statements" of firms listed on the "Indonesia Stock Exchange" over the period 2019–2023. The sample was identified through a "purposive sampling" technique, which selects data according to specific criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The selection requirements were: (1) firms that remained listed on the exchange for the entire 2019–2023 period; (2) firms that consistently issued annual and financial reports in rupiah with a fiscal year ending on December 31; and (3) firms that reported "positive earnings" during each year of the study period.

The variable that depends on other factors in this research is tax avoidance, which is quantified by the "effective tax rate" (ETR). In accordance with Hasan et al. (2024), the "GAAP ETR" is calculated by dividing the total tax expense by the pre-tax income. The independent variables include corporate creative culture and corporate integrity culture. Corporate creative culture is assessed by the ratio of creativity-related terms to the overall number of words in annual reports (Hasan et al., 2024), whereas corporate integrity culture is evaluated by the occurrence of integrity-related phrases within the reports (Chatjuthamard et al., 2024). The moderating variable, which is board gender diversity, is indicated by the proportion of female directors on the board (Jarboui et al., 2020). Furthermore, the control variables encompass firm size, profitability, and leverage. Firm size is determined using the natural logarithm of total assets, profitability is indicated by return on assets (net income divided by total assets), and leverage is characterized as the ratio of total debt to total assets (Laksono & Firmansyah, 2020).

To test the hypotheses in this study, the multiple regression analysis model used is as follows:

1. Model I: $ETR = \alpha + \beta_1\, \textit{Creative} + \beta_2\, \textit{Integrity} + \beta_3 SIZE + \beta_4\, ROA + \beta_4\, LEV + e$
2. Model II: $ETR = \alpha + \beta_1\, \textit{Creative} + \beta_2\, \textit{Integrity} + \beta_3 SIZE + \beta_4\, ROA + \beta_4\, LEV + \beta_1 \textit{Creative}{*}BGD + \beta_2\, \textit{Integrity}{*}BGD + e$

Where:

α	: Constanta
ETR	: Tax Avoidance
Creative	: Corporate Creative Culture
Integrity	: Corporate Integrity Culture
SIZE	: Firm Size
ROA	: Profitability
LEV	: Leverage
BGD	: Board Gender Diversity
β_1 Creative BGD	: Interaction Variable 1
β_2 Integrity BGD	: Interaction Variable 2
e	: Error

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all variables, derived from 925 observations. The mean effective tax rate (ETR) is 0.24629, suggesting an average tax burden of 24.6% from 2019 to 2023, with ETR values spanning from 0.00167 to 0.97221. The average corporate creative culture (Creativity) is 0.00033, with a range of 0.0001 to 0.00319. The average corporate integrity culture (Integrity) stands at 0.00099, ranging from 0.00003 to 0.00383. Firm size (SIZE) has an average of 29.36163, with a minimum of 25.04885 and a maximum of 34.88102. Profitability (ROA) averages 0.63903, with values ranging from 0.00014 to 0.41632. Leverage (LEV) has an average of 0.16620, with a range from 0.00000 to 0.78459. Board gender diversity (BGD), which indicates the percentage of female directors, averages 0.16280, with a minimum of 0.00000 (showing that some firms have no female directors) and a maximum of 0.80000.

Table 1. Statistic Descriptive

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
ETR	925	0.24629	0.13514	0.00167	0.97221
Creative	925	0.00033	0.00025	0.00001	0.00319
Integrity	925	0.00099	0.00048	0.00003	0.00383
SIZE	925	29.36163	1.80327	25.04885	34.88102
ROA	925	0.63903	0.06106	0.00014	0.41632
LEV	925	0.16620	0.17664	0.00000	0.78459
BGD	925	0.16280	0.19460	0.00000	0.80000
Creative BGD	925	0.00006	0.00009	0.00000	0.00059
Integrity BGD	925	0.00017	0.00025	0.00000	0.00167

Source: Data processed with Stata 15. 2025

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Variable	Coef.	Std. Error	t	p-value
Creative	-17.653	20.133	-0.98	0.381
Integrity	-4.433	9.505	-0.47	0.641
SIZE	-0.020	0.016	-1.20	0.231
ROA	-1.051	0.114	-9.20	0.000
LEV	0.825	0.063	1.32	0.187
Creative BGD	-98.744	121.039	-0.82	0.415
Integrity BGD	-19.375	44.951	-0.53	0.667

Source: Data processed with Stata 15. 2025

Table 3. Hypothesis Result

Hypothesis	Statement	Coef.	p-value	Result
H1	Corporate creative culture has a significant positive effect on tax avoidance.	-17.653	0.381	H1 rejected, the negative and insignificant influence between corporate creative culture on tax avoidance.
H2	Corporate integrity culture has a significant negative effect on tax avoidance.	-4.433	0.641	H2 rejected, the negative and insignificant influence between corporate integrity culture on tax avoidance.
H3	Board gender diversity weakens the positive effect of corporate creative culture on tax avoidance.	-98.744	0.415	H3 rejected, the negative and insignificant effect of board gender diversity weakens corporate creative culture on tax avoidance.
H4	Board gender diversity strengthens the negative influence of corporate integrity culture on tax avoidance.	-19.375	0.667	H4 rejected, the negative and insignificant effect of board gender diversity strengthens corporate integrity culture on tax avoidance.

Source: Data processed with Stata 15. 2025

The regression analysis shows that a company's creative culture negatively and insignificantly affects tax avoidance. This culture fosters innovation, risk-taking, and flexible decision-making. While Hasan et al. (2024) argued that creativity could lead to innovative tax strategies and tax avoidance, this study found a contrary result, indicating a negative but insignificant correlation (regression coefficient -17.653; p-value 0.381). For firms on the Indonesia Stock Exchange, creativity is mainly directed towards product development, service improvement, and operational efficiency, rather than aggressive tax strategies (Wang et al., 2021). This suggests that a creative culture does not inherently encourage tax avoidance and may even reduce it when innovation aligns with transparency and regulatory compliance. According to agency theory (Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and legitimacy theory (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975), these findings indicate that a company's ethical framework influences how creativity is utilized. This is consistent with Shafique et al. (2020), who noted that an ethical climate can align creativity with regulatory compliance, highlighting the complex relationship between creativity and tax avoidance, which depends on context.

This analysis also revealed that a corporate integrity culture has a negative, though insignificant, effect on tax evasion. This culture reflects the ethical values and moral principles that guide organizational decision-making, emphasizing honesty, transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance. While the regression coefficient of -4.433 with a p-value of 0.641 indicates that integrity can inhibit tax aggressiveness, the relationship is not statistically significant. This finding is consistent with legitimacy theory (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975), which states that companies with strong ethical foundations prioritize legal compliance as a way to maintain legitimacy and stakeholder trust. Previous research supports this perspective, showing that integrity-driven companies are typically supported by internal controls, ethical decision-making, and governance principles such as fairness and independence (Chatjuthamard et al., 2024; Altamuro et al., 2022). However, contextual factors, such as government tax incentives during the COVID-19 pandemic and market pressures, may have weakened the role of integrity in shaping tax strategies (Purnomo and Eriandani, 2022). Furthermore, measuring integrity culture through textual analysis of annual reports may not fully reflect its operational implementation. Overall, these results suggest that while a culture of integrity has the potential to reduce tax evasion, its effectiveness depends on external conditions and the degree of integration of integrity into broader governance practices.

The interaction between corporate culture and board gender diversity shows a negative, albeit not statistically significant, effect on tax avoidance. Board gender diversity refers to balanced gender representation, specifically the inclusion of women in corporate leadership positions, which is often associated with better decision-making, stronger governance, and greater ethical orientation. Previous research suggests that female directors may reduce aggressive tax practices due to their risk aversion and ethical awareness (Mustapha et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). However, this study found no significant moderating effect of gender diversity on the link between creative culture and tax avoidance (interaction coefficient: -98.744; p-value: 0.415). This indicates that while female directors are expected to enhance ethical oversight and decision-making, their impact may be limited in Indonesia, where women's board representation averages only 16.3%. Additionally, organizational culture and external pressures, such as regulations and market competition, appear to play a more significant role. This aligns with Rakia et al. (2024), who argue that the effect of gender diversity on corporate behavior depends on the specific context and varies by country and industry.

The interaction between corporate integrity culture and board gender diversity also showed a negative, albeit statistically insignificant, effect on tax avoidance. That results showed that board gender diversity did not significantly strengthen the negative effect of integrity culture on tax avoidance (interaction coefficient: -19.375; p-value: 0.667). Although integrity culture emphasizes transparency, accountability, and responsibility (Chatjuthamard et al., 2024), and gender diversity has been associated with greater ethical oversight and broader perspectives (Mustapha et al., 2024; Griffin et al., 2021), its moderating effect may not be apparent in this context. One explanation is that a strong integrity culture may already have its maximum effect, leaving little room for strengthening through board composition (Altamuro et al., 2022). Furthermore, the relatively low proportions of female directors in Indonesia (around 16.3%) and the prevalence of institutional factors, such as the regulatory environment and legal system, may further mitigate the potential influence of gender diversity on tax decisions (Purnomo and Eriandani, 2022). This finding is consistent with Lee (2024), who emphasized that the role of gender diversity as a moderating factor can vary across cultural and institutional contexts.

The regression analysis of the control variables shows that profitability has a statistically significant negative effect on tax avoidance (coefficient -1.051; p-value 0.000), suggesting that more profitable firms are less likely to engage in tax avoidance. In contrast, firm size (coefficient -4.433; p-value 0.231) and leverage (coefficient 0.825; p-value 0.187) do not exhibit significant effects. These findings indicate that profitability is the most important control variable influencing corporate tax behavior, while size and leverage appear to have little impact in this context.

CONCLUSION

This research analyzes how corporate creative and integrity cultures affect tax avoidance, considering gender diversity on boards as a moderating factor, using data from Indonesian companies listed on the Stock Exchange from 2019 to 2023. Findings show that corporate creative culture negatively impacts tax avoidance, though not significantly, indicating that innovation prioritizes operational efficiency and product development over aggressive tax strategies. Similarly, corporate integrity culture shows a negative, albeit insignificant, relationship with tax avoidance, suggesting that although ethical values and regulatory compliance are emphasized, these might not be sufficient to significantly reduce tax avoidance in the face of external pressures such as regulations and market conditions. Furthermore, gender diversity on boards does not significantly moderate the effects of creative or integrity culture on tax avoidance, indicating that the presence of female directors does not substantially alter corporate culture or tax strategies.

The limitation of this study lies in the use of secondary data, which may not fully capture the depth of tax avoidance practices and corporate culture. The data also fail to reflect the internal company dynamics that could influence the observed variables. Furthermore, the study does not consider other contextual factors, such as industry-specific characteristics, which could affect the relationships between variables. Furthermore, the corporate annual reports used in this research follow a standardized format regulated by POJK No. 29/POJK.04/2016 and SEOJK No. 16/SEOJK.04/2021, which could limit this study's ability to capture the nuances of corporate culture through word or phrase analysis.

Consequently, future research may adopt a primary data methodology and concentrate on particular industries to gain insights into more detailed dynamics. Furthermore, in light of the findings from this study, it is recommended that investors take into account factors such as tax transparency and the risks associated with corporate reputation, rather than solely emphasizing financial performance, to guarantee that their investments are directed towards companies exhibiting strong governance. Management within companies must strive to reconcile legal tax efficiency strategies with a dedication to business ethics and social responsibility, ensuring that they not only aim for profit maximization but also uphold the company's reputation.

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