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Enhancing cybersecurity in Moroccan banking: A strategic integration of AI, blockchain, and business intelligence

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Abstract

The rapid digitization of the banking sector in Morocco has significantly transformed financial services, enhancing accessibility and convenience for customers. However, this shift has also introduced substantial cybersecurity challenges, as financial transactions and sensitive data increasingly migrate online. This paper examines the critical cybersecurity threats facing Moroccan banks, including data breaches, identity theft, and fraud, while highlighting the inadequacies of traditional security measures in addressing these modern threats. To combat these challenges, we propose an integrated cybersecurity strategy that leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain technology, and Business Intelligence (BI). This approach aims to enhance real-time threat detection, secure transactions, and optimize decision-making through data-driven insights. By adopting this comprehensive framework, Moroccan banks can strengthen their cybersecurity posture, protect customer data, and foster trust in an increasingly digitalized financial ecosystem. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implementation strategies necessary for successfully integrating these technologies into banking operations, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, innovation, and adaptability in navigating the evolving cybersecurity landscape.

Keywords: Moroccan banking; Cybersecurity; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Blockchain; Business Intelligence (BI)

1. Introduction

The banking sector in Morocco is undergoing a significant transformation due to rapid digitization, fundamentally altering the landscape of financial services. This shift has resulted in improved accessibility, speed, and convenience for customers. However, the increasing reliance on digital banking platforms has also exposed financial institutions to a myriad of cybersecurity threats. As sensitive data and financial transactions migrate online, Moroccan banks are confronted with an escalating risk of sophisticated cyberattacks. These threats, which encompass data breaches, identity theft, and fraud, pose substantial risks to the integrity and trustworthiness of the financial system, necessitating urgent and strategic responses(1).

1.1. Context and Importance

The digitization of banking services has redefined customer interactions with financial institutions, offering unprecedented convenience and efficiency. In Morocco, the adoption of online and mobile banking has facilitated seamless transactions and 24/7 access to financial resources. However, this digital evolution has not come without its challenges. The increased dependence on digital platforms has rendered banks attractive targets for cybercriminals, leading to a rise in incidents of data breaches and financial fraud. The vulnerabilities inherent in the digital ecosystem underscore the critical need for robust cybersecurity measures to protect both financial institutions and their customers(2).

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Moreover, the governance of the Moroccan banking system, primarily overseen by the Central Bank of Morocco (Bank Al-Maghrib), plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges(3). As the regulatory authority, Bank Al-Maghrib is responsible for ensuring the stability and integrity of the financial system, which includes implementing robust cybersecurity measures to protect against these emerging threats. The central bank's proactive stance in promoting financial inclusion and innovation is essential in navigating the complexities of a rapidly digitizing financial landscape(4).

1.2. Problem Overview

Traditional security measures, once deemed sufficient, are increasingly inadequate in the face of modern cyber threats. These conventional approaches often rely on reactive strategies, addressing security breaches only after they occur. Such delayed responses leave financial institutions vulnerable, heightening the risk of financial losses, reputational damage, and regulatory penalties. Furthermore, many banks continue to operate on outdated systems and siloed processes, which hinder their ability to adapt to the rapidly evolving threat landscape(5). This situation exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and complicates the task of safeguarding sensitive customer information(6).

1.3. Proposed Solution

To effectively combat these pressing cybersecurity challenges, this paper advocates for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain technology, and Business Intelligence (BI) into a cohesive cybersecurity strategy. AI can facilitate real-time threat detection by analyzing extensive datasets to identify suspicious patterns and anomalies. Blockchain technology enhances transactional security through a decentralized, tamper-proof ledger, ensuring the integrity and transparency of financial records. BI complements these technologies by providing actionable, data-driven insights that enable banks to assess risks, identify vulnerabilities, and prioritize mitigation efforts. By adopting this integrated approach, Moroccan banks can significantly bolster their cybersecurity defenses, protect customer data, and enhance resilience against emerging threats. This proactive strategy not only safeguards the financial ecosystem but also fosters trust and confidence among customers and stakeholders in an increasingly digitalized world(7).

1.4. Transformation in Banking

The digitization of financial services has revolutionized the banking landscape, providing customers with unparalleled convenience and efficiency. In Morocco, the rise of online and mobile banking platforms has enabled seamless transactions and personalized services. However, this digital transformation has also introduced significant risks. The increased reliance on digital platforms has made banks prime targets for cyberattacks, with key threats such as data breaches, identity theft, and financial fraud becoming more frequent and sophisticated.

In this context, the governance of the Moroccan banking system, primarily overseen by the Central Bank of Morocco (Bank Al-Maghrib), plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges. As the regulatory authority, Bank Al-Maghrib is responsible for ensuring the stability and integrity of the financial system, which includes implementing robust cybersecurity measures to protect against these emerging threats. The central bank's proactive stance in promoting financial inclusion and innovation is essential in navigating the complexities of a rapidly digitizing financial landscape(8).

1.5. Key Challenges

As Moroccan banks continue their digital evolution, they face a complex array of cybersecurity challenges. Legacy systems, which often lack the capability to address modern threats, exacerbate these vulnerabilities. The interconnected nature of digital banking expands the potential attack surface, creating more opportunities for cybercriminals to exploit system weaknesses. Additionally, the rapid pace of cyber threat evolution often outstrips the ability of traditional security measures to adapt, leaving financial institutions exposed to increasingly complex attack strategies.

Another significant challenge is the management of vast volumes of data generated by digital banking operations. Ensuring the security of this data while maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements is a critical concern for banks. Addressing these challenges necessitates a shift from reactive to proactive security measures, leveraging innovative solutions to preempt potential threats(9).

1.6. Need for Innovation

To navigate the complexities of the modern cybersecurity landscape, Moroccan banks must embrace advanced technologies such as AI, Blockchain, and BI. AI offers the capability to analyze large datasets in real time, detecting anomalies and predicting potential security breaches with precision. Blockchain technology ensures data integrity and

transparency, providing a decentralized and tamper-proof ledger that mitigates the risk of fraud and unauthorized access. BI enables banks to extract actionable insights from their data, allowing them to identify vulnerabilities, optimize security measures, and make informed decisions.

Integrating these technologies into banking operations represents a transformative step toward building a resilient and secure financial ecosystem. By addressing the limitations of traditional security approaches, AI, Blockchain, and BI equip Moroccan banks with the tools necessary to safeguard customer data, maintain regulatory compliance, and foster trust in a rapidly digitalizing world. This innovation is not merely a response to current challenges but a proactive strategy to anticipate and mitigate future risks(10).

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Current Limitations

The Moroccan banking sector, like its global counterparts, faces significant cybersecurity challenges as it embraces digital transformation. Traditional security systems, once considered adequate, are now struggling to contend with the increasing complexity and sophistication of modern cyberattacks. These systems predominantly operate reactively, addressing threats only after they have infiltrated the network. This delayed response amplifies the risks of financial losses, data breaches, and reputational damage(11).

Moreover, many banks continue to rely on outdated frameworks and legacy systems that lack the flexibility and robustness needed to defend against rapidly evolving cyber threats. These systems often lack critical features such as real-time threat detection, predictive analytics, and advanced encryption, rendering them ill-equipped to handle sophisticated attack vectors like phishing, ransomware, and insider threats. As cybercriminals develop more advanced tools and tactics, the gap between traditional security measures and the capabilities required to mitigate these risks continues to widen.

2.2. Call for Proactive Solutions

To effectively address these vulnerabilities, there is a pressing need for Moroccan banks to transition from reactive to proactive cybersecurity strategies. Real-time threat detection, adaptive systems, and integrated security solutions are essential to mitigate risks before they materialize into significant incidents. This shift requires the adoption of advanced technologies such as AI, Blockchain, and BI.

AI's ability to analyze large datasets in real time allows for the identification of anomalies and potential breaches as they occur, enabling swift and effective responses. Blockchain technology offers a decentralized and immutable ledger, enhancing the security and integrity of transactions while reducing fraud and unauthorized access. BI complements these technologies by providing actionable insights derived from data analysis, allowing banks to identify vulnerabilities, prioritize remediation efforts, and optimize their cybersecurity posture(12).

By embracing these proactive and adaptive measures, Moroccan banks can not only safeguard their systems against emerging threats but also build resilience in an increasingly interconnected financial ecosystem. This strategic transformation is critical for maintaining customer trust, ensuring regulatory compliance, and securing the integrity of the nation's financial infrastructure.

3. Objectives

- **Strengthen Cybersecurity**: The primary objective is to fortify the cybersecurity defenses of Moroccan banks by utilizing AI. Through its capacity for real-time threat detection and mitigation, AI can analyze vast datasets, identify anomalies, and predict potential security breaches. This proactive approach enables banks to preemptively address emerging threats, thereby minimizing risks and safeguarding sensitive customer and operational data.
- **Enhance Transaction Security**: Blockchain technology will be employed to ensure secure, transparent, and tamper-proof financial transactions. By leveraging its decentralized and immutable ledger, Blockchain provides robust protection against fraud and unauthorized access. This technology enhances the integrity of banking operations, fostering trust among customers and stakeholders while streamlining processes for cross-border and high-volume transactions.
- **Improve Decision-Making**: BI will be integrated to provide actionable insights derived from advanced data analytics. BI tools will enable banks to identify vulnerabilities, monitor security trends, and optimize their

strategies. By leveraging these insights, banks can make informed decisions to prioritize resource allocation, address security gaps, and enhance their overall cybersecurity posture.

- **Support Regulatory Compliance**: A key objective is to streamline compliance processes by utilizing AI, Blockchain, and BI to meet evolving legal and regulatory standards. These technologies enable efficient monitoring, reporting, and documentation of security measures, ensuring adherence to local and international regulations. By maintaining robust compliance frameworks, banks can reduce legal risks, avoid penalties, and uphold customer trust in a highly regulated financial environment.

4. Literature Review

The integration of AI, Blockchain technology, and BI in banking security has been extensively explored in academic and industry research. These studies highlight the transformative potential of these technologies in mitigating cyber threats, enhancing transactional security, and enabling data-driven decision-making. This review examines the existing body of knowledge on each technology and identifies key research gaps that warrant further investigation.

4.1. AI in Banking Security

AI has emerged as a powerful tool in combating cyber threats within the banking sector. Research demonstrates how AI algorithms can effectively identify fraudulent activities through real-time data analysis and anomaly detection. For instance, a study by Sridhar Madasamy (2022) illustrates the application of machine learning techniques in detecting fraudulent transactions, enabling banks to adapt to evolving risks and making them highly effective in identifying sophisticated attack patterns that traditional security systems often overlook. Furthermore, AI's ability to automate threat detection processes reduces response times and enhances the precision of security measures (13).

4.2. Blockchain Technology

Blockchain technology has been widely recognized for its ability to establish secure, transparent, and tamper-proof transactional frameworks. The decentralized and immutable ledger characteristic of Blockchain is a key factor in preventing unauthorized access and data manipulation. According to Tejal Shah and Shailak Jani (2018), the cryptographic principles underlying Blockchain make it an ideal solution for ensuring the integrity of financial transactions. Additionally, Blockchain has the potential to reduce transaction costs and enhance operational efficiency, particularly in cross-border payments (14).

4.3. Business Intelligence

BI tools play a pivotal role in enabling banks to harness the power of data analytics for cybersecurity. Research illustrates how BI platforms can analyze large datasets to identify security vulnerabilities, detect risks, and optimize response strategies. For example, a study by El modni and El kabbouri (2024) highlights the effectiveness of BI in streamlining reporting and monitoring processes, which is crucial for regulatory compliance. By providing actionable insights, BI empowers financial institutions to prioritize security initiatives, allocate resources effectively, and maintain compliance with stringent industry standards (15).

4.4. Research Gaps Identified

While the existing literature highlights the significant potential of AI, Blockchain, and BI in banking security, several gaps remain unexplored:

- **Limited Real-World Implementation Studies**: Most studies focus on theoretical models and simulations, with limited empirical evidence on the practical application of these technologies in live banking environments(16) .
- **Regulatory Concerns**: There is insufficient research on aligning these advanced technologies with evolving regulatory frameworks, particularly in jurisdictions like Morocco (17).
- **Human-Centric Factors**: Few studies address the role of human behavior, decision-making, and training in the effectiveness of integrated cybersecurity solutions(18) .
- **Emerging Technologies**: The intersection of AI, Blockchain, and BI with new challenges such as quantum computing and IoT remains underexplored .

The literature highlights the potential of AI, Blockchain, and BI as critical components of a robust cybersecurity framework for the banking sector(figure1). However, further research is needed to bridge gaps in practical implementation, regulatory alignment, and human-centric considerations. Addressing these gaps will enable Moroccan

banks to fully harness these technologies, ensuring resilience and trust in an increasingly digitalized financial ecosystem.

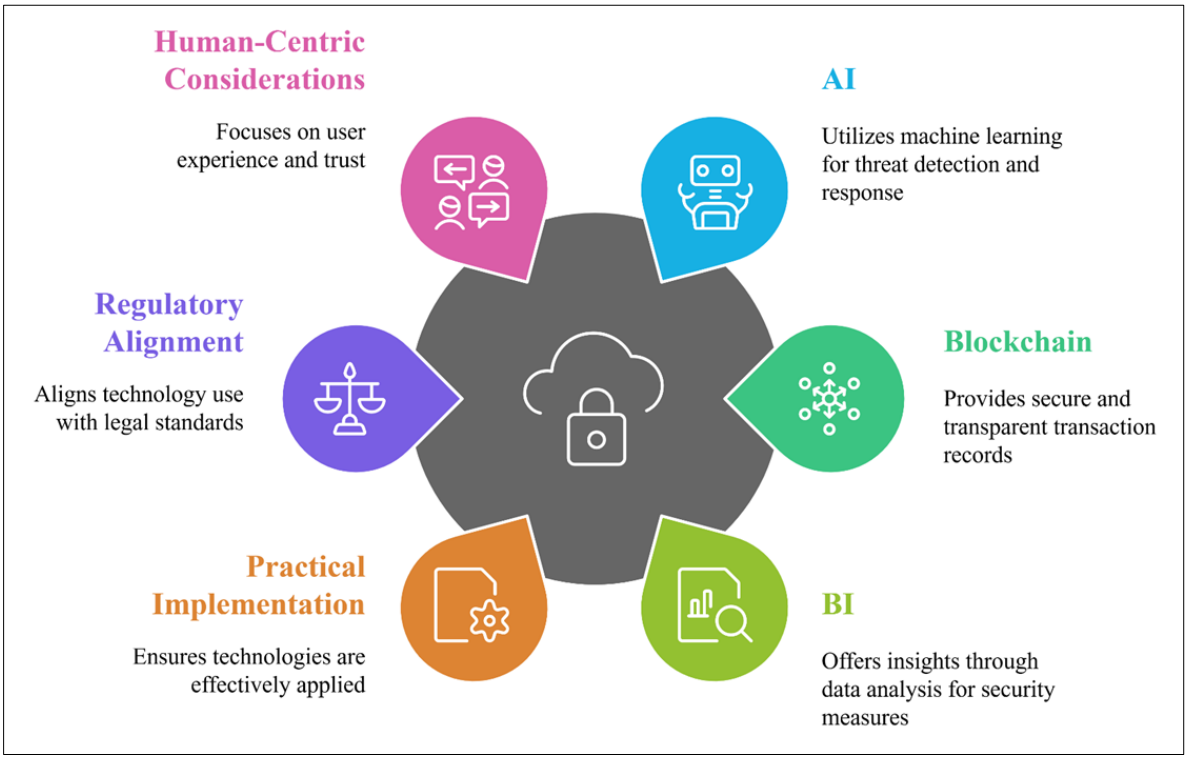

Figure 1 Technologies enhancing Cybersecurity in Banking

5. Challenges

The integration of AI, Blockchain, and BI into banking security frameworks offers significant potential but presents several challenges across technical, organizational, regulatory, and ethical domains. These challenges must be addressed to ensure the effective implementation and sustainable adoption of these advanced technologies in Moroccan banking.

5.1. Technical Challenges

Technical barriers are among the most significant obstacles to the adoption of AI, Blockchain, and BI in banking security. Key issues include:

- **Scalability**: Blockchain systems, while secure and immutable, often struggle to handle the high transaction volumes typical of banking environments. Scaling Blockchain networks without compromising performance remains a key challenge(19).
- **Interoperability**: Integrating Blockchain with existing legacy systems and ensuring seamless communication between different platforms and technologies pose considerable difficulties. AI and BI systems also face interoperability issues when consolidating data from diverse sources(20).
- **Data Management**: AI systems require vast amounts of high-quality data for training and operations. However, banks often deal with fragmented and siloed data spread across multiple systems, making it challenging to aggregate and manage data efficiently.

5.2. Organizational Challenges

Organizational dynamics can significantly impact the successful deployment of integrated cybersecurity solutions(21). Key challenges include:

- **Resistance to Change**: Introducing advanced technologies often encounters resistance from employees and leadership due to concerns over disruption, complexity, or job displacement.
- **Lack of Expertise**: Implementing and managing AI, Blockchain, and BI require specialized knowledge and skills. Many banks lack the internal expertise to deploy and maintain these systems effectively.
- **Legacy Systems**: Many financial institutions still operate on outdated infrastructures that are not equipped to support modern technologies, making integration a slow and costly process.

5.3. Regulatory Challenges

The financial sector operates within strict regulatory environments designed to protect customer data, prevent financial crimes, and ensure market stability(22). Key regulatory challenges include:

- **Diverse and Evolving Frameworks**: Regulatory requirements vary significantly across jurisdictions, making it challenging for banks to implement standardized security measures.
- **Legal Uncertainty**: The rapid advancement of AI, Blockchain, and BI often outpaces the development of regulatory guidelines, creating legal ambiguities around compliance and accountability(23).

5.4. Ethical Challenges

Ethical considerations are critical in the integration of AI, Blockchain, and BI to maintain public trust and ensure responsible technology use(24). Key ethical challenges include:

- **Data Privacy**: The extensive data collection required by these technologies raises concerns about safeguarding sensitive information and preventing misuse.
- **Algorithmic Bias**: AI algorithms may unintentionally reinforce biases present in training data, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes.
- **Accountability**: The use of automated decision-making systems raises questions about responsibility for errors or breaches, particularly when decisions impact customers or financial operations.

The challenges associated with integrating AI, Blockchain, and BI in banking security are multifaceted, requiring a strategic and multi-dimensional approach. Technical innovations must address scalability, interoperability, and data management issues. Organizational change must focus on fostering a culture of innovation and equipping employees with the necessary skills. Regulatory alignment calls for close collaboration with policymakers to ensure compliance with evolving legal standards. Lastly, ethical concerns must be proactively managed through robust frameworks that prioritize transparency, fairness, and accountability. Addressing these challenges is critical for Moroccan banks to successfully implement these transformative technologies and build a resilient financial ecosystem.

6. Methodology

The methodology for implementing an integrated approach to banking security in Moroccan financial institutions involves the strategic deployment of AI, Blockchain technology, and BI. These technologies collectively address the complex challenges of modern cybersecurity, enabling banks to detect threats proactively, secure transactions, and optimize defenses through data-driven insights(25).

6.1. AI Implementation

AI forms the cornerstone of this cybersecurity framework, leveraging machine learning algorithms for real-time threat detection(26). Key components include:

- **Real-Time Monitoring**: Machine learning models are deployed to analyze large datasets in real time, enabling the detection of unusual patterns or deviations that may indicate security breaches.
- **Predictive Analytics**: AI systems utilize predictive analytics to anticipate future risks based on historical and real-time data, enhancing the ability to preemptively address threats.
- **System Refinement**: Continuous training and updating of AI models are essential to ensure adaptability to evolving attack vectors and new cyber threats.

6.2. Blockchain Deployment

Blockchain technology is integral to securing financial transactions by providing a decentralized, transparent, and tamper-proof ledger(27). Key components include:

- **Distributed Ledgers**: Blockchain solutions are implemented to create an immutable record of all transactions, ensuring data integrity and reducing the risk of fraud.
- **Smart Contracts**: Smart contracts automate and secure financial agreements, streamlining operations and minimizing human error.
- **Scalability and Interoperability**: Special attention is given to designing scalable Blockchain networks that can handle high transaction volumes and integrate seamlessly with legacy banking systems.

6.3. BI Utilization

BI tools play a critical role in analyzing and visualizing security data, enabling banks to identify vulnerabilities, detect risks, and optimize their cybersecurity measures(28). Key components include:

- **Data Integration**: BI platforms consolidate data from multiple sources, providing a unified view of the security landscape.
- **Advanced Analytics**: Through data mining and visualization techniques, BI tools uncover hidden patterns and trends, allowing for informed decision-making.
- **Risk Prioritization**: BI insights help banks allocate resources effectively, focusing on high-priority threats and areas of vulnerability.

6.4. Implementation Considerations

For the successful integration of AI, Blockchain, and BI, the following considerations must be addressed:

- **Infrastructure Upgrades**: Banks need to invest in modernizing their technological infrastructure to support the computational demands of these advanced systems.
- **Regulatory Alignment**: Implementation must align with local and international regulatory frameworks, ensuring compliance with data privacy and financial governance standards.
- **Workforce Training**: Employee training programs are essential to equip staff with the knowledge and skills required to manage and optimize these technologies effectively.
- **Collaboration**: Partnerships with technology providers, industry experts, and regulatory bodies can facilitate smoother implementation and the adoption of best practices.

The methodology outlines a comprehensive approach to deploying AI, Blockchain, and BI as an integrated cybersecurity solution for Moroccan banking(29). AI enables real-time threat detection, Blockchain secures transactions through tamper-proof records, and BI provides actionable insights for risk mitigation(figure 2). Successful implementation requires careful planning, significant investments in infrastructure, alignment with regulatory standards, and a commitment to workforce development. This strategic framework aims to enhance the cybersecurity posture of Moroccan banks, ensuring resilience in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

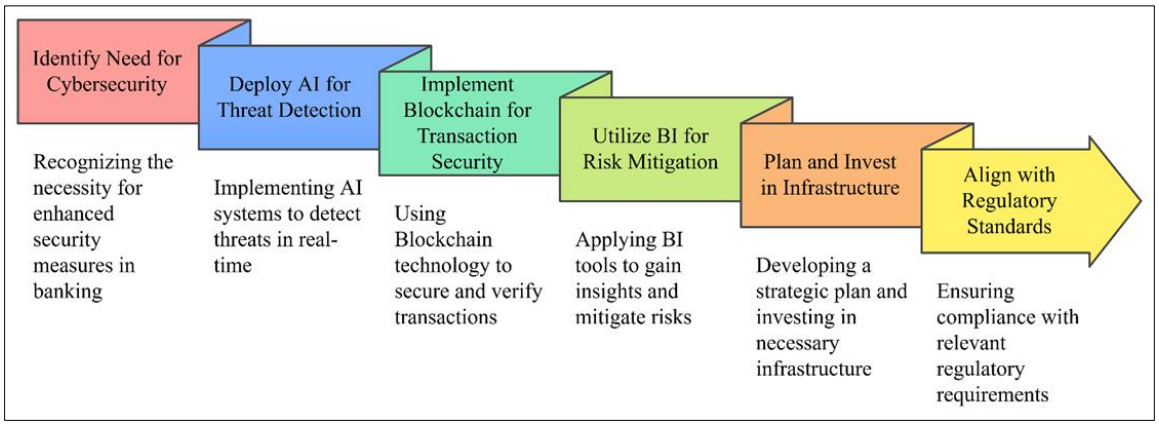

Figure 2 Integrated Cybersecurity deployment for Moroccan Banking

7. Implementation Strategies

The successful integration of AI, Blockchain, and BI into Moroccan banking security requires carefully structured strategies. These strategies must address technological, organizational, and regulatory considerations to ensure a seamless and effective deployment(30). Below are the key implementation strategies.

7.1. AI Deployment

The deployment of AI focuses on creating adaptive models capable of real-time threat detection and proactive risk management(31). Key strategies include:

- **Adaptive Monitoring**: AI systems are designed to continuously monitor network traffic and user behavior to identify anomalies indicative of potential cyber threats. These models leverage machine learning to adapt dynamically to emerging patterns, ensuring responsiveness to new attack vectors.
- **Automated Responses**: AI-powered systems implement automated threat responses, enabling swift mitigation actions to neutralize risks before they escalate.
- **Scalable Solutions**: AI deployments are scaled to handle increasing volumes of data and transactions, ensuring consistent performance across expanding banking operations.

7.2. Blockchain Integration

Blockchain technology is integrated to enhance transactional security, data integrity, and operational efficiency(32). Key strategies include:

- **Scalable Frameworks**: Blockchain solutions are designed to accommodate high transaction volumes, ensuring scalability without compromising performance or security.
- **Interoperability**: Integration strategies prioritize interoperability between Blockchain platforms and existing legacy systems, allowing seamless communication and data exchange.
- **Smart Contracts**: Blockchain implementations include the use of smart contracts for automating and securing financial agreements, reducing manual intervention and associated risks.

7.3. BI Adoption

The adoption of BI tools focuses on extracting actionable insights from complex data to support risk assessment and compliance(33). Key strategies include:

- **Comprehensive Risk Assessment**: Advanced analytics tools are utilized to identify security vulnerabilities and prioritize them based on potential impact.
- **Compliance Reporting**: BI platforms streamline regulatory compliance by generating detailed reports and dashboards, ensuring transparency and adherence to legal standards.
- **Predictive Analytics**: BI tools integrate predictive capabilities to anticipate future risks and recommend proactive measures.

7.4. Strategic Planning

Strategic planning ensures that the implementation of AI, Blockchain, and BI aligns with organizational goals and regulatory requirements(34). Key strategies include:

- **Regulatory Alignment**: Banks work closely with regulators to ensure that the new technologies comply with local and international standards, particularly those related to data privacy and security.
- **Organizational Objectives**: Technology implementations are aligned with the institution's broader objectives, including enhancing customer trust, improving operational efficiency, and fostering innovation.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration**: Collaboration with technology providers, industry experts, and regulatory bodies facilitates the adoption of best practices and ensures a smoother integration process.

The outlined implementation strategies emphasize the need for a coordinated approach to deploying AI, Blockchain, and BI in Moroccan banking(figure 3). By establishing adaptive AI models, designing scalable Blockchain frameworks, adopting advanced BI tools, and aligning technology with regulatory and organizational goals, banks can create a robust cybersecurity infrastructure. These strategies aim to strengthen the resilience of financial institutions, ensuring secure operations and maintaining trust in an increasingly digitalized environment.

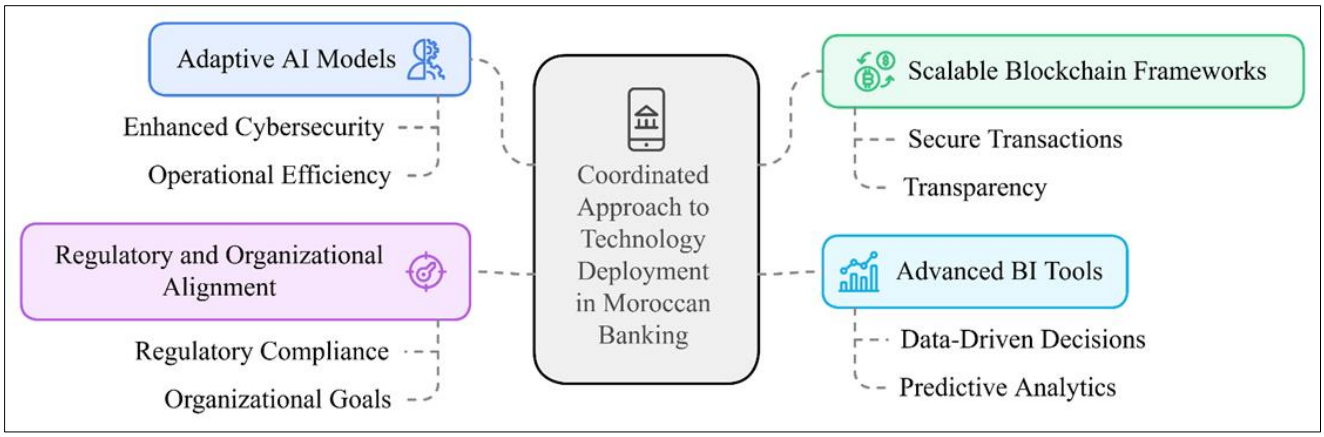

Figure 3 Implementation strategies for Moroccan Banking Technologies

8. Conclusion

The integration of AI, Blockchain technology, and BI represents a transformative approach to addressing the complex cybersecurity challenges faced by Moroccan banks. Together, these technologies provide a unified framework that enhances real-time threat detection, ensures secure and transparent transactions, and enables data-driven decision-making. This holistic strategy not only addresses existing vulnerabilities but also equips financial institutions to anticipate and mitigate emerging risks.

8.1. Summary of Approach

The proposed cybersecurity framework leverages the strengths of each technology: AI for adaptive and real-time monitoring, Blockchain for tamper-proof transaction security, and BI for comprehensive risk assessment and compliance reporting. By integrating these technologies, Moroccan banks can transition from reactive to proactive security measures, significantly improving their ability to protect customer assets and maintain system integrity.

8.2. Critical Success Factors

The successful implementation of this integrated approach relies on three critical factors:

- **Collaboration**: Effective partnerships between banks, regulatory bodies, technology providers, and industry stakeholders are essential to streamline implementation, share expertise, and foster a cohesive response to cyber threats.
- **Innovation**: A commitment to adopting cutting-edge technologies and continuously refining strategies ensures that banks remain ahead of the evolving threat landscape.
- **Adaptability**: Banks must remain agile and responsive to emerging risks, adapting their security measures to address new vulnerabilities and regulatory changes.

8.3. Future Vision

By embracing AI, Blockchain, and BI, Moroccan banks are well-positioned to become leaders in cybersecurity innovation. This forward-looking approach not only ensures the resilience of individual institutions but also strengthens the stability and trustworthiness of the broader financial ecosystem. As digitalization continues to transform the banking industry, these technologies will play a pivotal role in safeguarding operations, protecting customer data, and fostering long-term trust.

In conclusion, the integration of AI, Blockchain, and BI offers Moroccan banks a robust and scalable solution to modern cybersecurity challenges. By prioritizing collaboration, innovation, and adaptability, financial institutions can build a secure and resilient foundation that supports growth, trust, and competitiveness in a rapidly digitalizing global economy.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest has been declared.

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