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**AGE AND GENDER DIVERSITY OF THE BOARD AND SOLVENCY OF
COMPANIES IN ENERGY SECTOR IN MALAYSIA.**

By

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UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

Thesis Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates at how board diversity, specifically age and gender influence the solvency of Malaysia public listed companies in energy sector. The primary goal is to examine whether diversity in board composition affects a company's financial health. Using secondary data collected from the annual reports of 33 public listed companies in energy sector in year 2023, the study used multiple regression analysis to test three hypotheses about the average age of board members, the percentage of female representation, and the combined effect of both diversity dimensions on solvency, as measured using the debt-to-asset ratio. The theoretical foundation of this study is resource dependency theory, which states that diverse boards can give a larger range of knowledge, resources, and viewpoints that improve organizational outcomes. The study found no statistically significant association between age or gender diversity and company solvency when the diversity factor stands alone. However, when diversity factor of age and gender are combined, there is statistically significant association with company solvency. These findings suggest that in Malaysia's energy sector, demographic board diversity alone may not have a direct or immediate influence on financial health. The study contributes to the discourse on corporate governance. However, the study adds to ongoing governance conversations by underlining the importance of considering other potential mediators or industry-specific issues such as education and background. Future research should look into various types of diversity, use longitudinal data, and make cross-industry comparisons to gain a better understanding of board dynamics and financial performance.

Keywords: Board diversity, Age diversity, Gender diversity, Solvency, Debt-to-asset ratio, resource dependency theory, corporate governance, Energy sector.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyiasat bagaimana kepelbagaian lembaga pengarah, khususnya umur dan jantina, mempengaruhi solvabiliti syarikat tersenarai awam Malaysia dalam sektor tenaga. Matlamat utama adalah untuk mengkaji sama ada kepelbagaian dalam komposisi lembaga memberi kesan kepada kesihatan kewangan sesebuah syarikat. Dengan menggunakan data sekunder yang dikumpul daripada laporan tahunan 33 syarikat tersenarai awam dalam sektor tenaga pada tahun 2023, kajian ini menggunakan analisis regresi berganda untuk menguji tiga hipotesis berkaitan umur purata ahli lembaga, peratusan wakil wanita, dan kesan gabungan kedua-dua dimensi kepelbagaian terhadap solvabiliti, yang diukur menggunakan nisbah hutang kepada aset. Asas teori kajian ini adalah teori kebergantungan sumber (resource dependency theory), yang menyatakan bahawa lembaga yang pelbagai dapat memberikan rangkaian pengetahuan, sumber, dan pandangan yang lebih luas untuk meningkatkan hasil organisasi. Kajian ini mendapati tiada kaitan signifikan secara statistik antara kepelbagaian umur atau jantina dengan solvabiliti syarikat apabila faktor kepelbagaian berdiri sendiri. Walau bagaimanapun, apabila faktor kepelbagaian umur dan jantina digabungkan, terdapat kaitan signifikan secara statistik dengan solvabiliti syarikat. Penemuan ini mencadangkan bahawa dalam sektor tenaga Malaysia, kepelbagaian demografi lembaga sahaja mungkin tidak mempunyai pengaruh langsung atau segera terhadap kesihatan kewangan. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada perbincangan mengenai tadbir urus korporat. Namun, kajian ini menambah perbincangan tadbir urus yang sedang berjalan dengan menekankan kepentingan mempertimbangkan faktor perantara lain atau isu khusus industri seperti latar belakang pendidikan dan pengalaman. Kajian masa depan disarankan untuk meneliti pelbagai jenis kepelbagaian, menggunakan data longitudinal, dan membuat perbandingan merentas industri untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai dinamik lembaga dan prestasi kewangan.

Kata kunci: Kepelbagaian lembaga pengarah, Kepelbagaian umur, Kepelbagaian jantina, Solvensi, Nisbah hutang kepada aset, Teori kebergantungan sumber, Tadbir urus korporat, Sektor tenaga.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

1.0 Introduction

Gender diversity related research has been receiving a lot attentions in recent years. Many countries in the world including Malaysia have been revising the law to mandate the corporation to increase the number of female board member on the corporate board due to the under representation of female board member on board. As a result, research pertaining to boardroom diversity has been rising after the law has been enacted (Jadhav, 2019). Hence, this study has been designed to examine the association between the gender and age diversity of the board and the solvency of public listed companies in the energy sector.

1.1 Background of Study

In the present research by Brahma (2021), gender diversity shows a positive association to the firm's financial performance using two ratios namely the Tobin's Q and ROA. The impact of gender diversity on board became more obvious while two or more female board member are sitting in the corporate board. The impact is less significant in firms where the female board representation is lower (SanjuktaBrahma, 2021).

Female board member with in certain age, executive position and level of education does having positive influence on their performance. (SanjuktaBrahma, 2021). Female board member received higher education degree such as MBA degree will generally perform better as a result of greater knowledge and intellectual capability. These groups of female board member have greater ability to make good business decision for the company due to their high cognitive ability. Increasing female board member into the corporate board brings several benefits such as it will help to lead positive and sustainable change to the company, compliance

5.5 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to look into the association between board diversity, specifically age and gender, and solvency in Malaysian public-listed energy firms. The study tested three primary hypotheses using parametric statistical methods on a sample of 33 companies. The findings demonstrated that neither board age diversity nor gender diversity, alone or in combination, had a statistically significant influence on solvency, as measured by the debt-to-asset ratio.

The findings show that in the energy sector, the age and gender mix of boards alone may not have a direct impact on a company's solvency but when two diversity factors are combined, it shows a direct impact on the company's solvency. In the study, the average age of female board members is significantly related to a company's solvency, where younger female directors are associated with a lower debt-to-asset ratio, thereby improving solvency and reducing financial risk. This suggests that younger board members may bring more contemporary perspectives, adaptability, and openness to innovative financing strategies that rely less on debt. This is consistent with Muthia (2024), who stated that experienced board members can boost governance effectiveness and long-term performance. In contrast, the percentage of female directors on the board did not appear to have a direct impact on solvency. This finding is consistent with Garcia-Blandon (2024), who observed no significant change in solvency indicators after increasing female representation through policy implementation.

In conclusion, while the analysis only found significant evidence associating age and gender diversity to solvency when two diversity factors are combined, it does contribute to the expanding body of literature asking for more detailed, sector-specific research. Future study could use a broader collection of financial metrics, longitudinal data, or qualitative insights to better understand how diversity affects organizational resilience and performance.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of public listed energy companies

Company
Yinson Holdings Berhad
SAPURA ENERGY BERHAD
BOILERMECH HOLDINGS BERHAD
ENRA GROUP BERHAD
SOLARVEST HOLDINGS BERHAD
CYPARK RESOURCES BERHAD
DIALOG GROUP BERHAD
ALAM MARITIM RESOURCES BERHAD
BARAKAH OFFSHORE PETROLEUM BERHAD
SAMAIDEN GROUP BERHAD
RESERVOIR LINK ENERGY BHD
Hibiscus Petroleum Berhad
CARIMIN PETROLEUM BERHAD
UZMA BERHAD
SCOMI ENERGY SERVICES BHD
PROPEL GLOBAL BERHAD
TRIVE PROPERTY GROUP BERHAD
RENEUCO BERHAD
MALAYSIA MARINE AND HEAVY ENGINEERING HOLDINGS BERHAD
ILB GROUP BERHAD
DELEUM BERHAD
DAYANG ENTERPRISE HOLDINGS BERHAD
WASCO BERHAD
PETRON MALAYSIA REFINING & MARKETING BHD
HENGYUAN REFINING COMPANY BERHAD
PERDANA PETROLEUM BERHAD
COASTAL CONTRACTS BHD
VELESTO ENERGY BERHAD
BUMI ARMADA BERHAD
KINERGY ADVANCEMENT BERHAD
T7 GLOBAL BERHAD
ICON OFFSHORE BERHAD
PETRA ENERGY BERHAD