# EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF CEO POWER IN THE OWNERSHIP-SUSTAINABILITY NEXUS: EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIAN PUBLIC LISTED FIRMS

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have checked this thesis and in my opinion, this thesis is adequate in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Malaysia Pahang or any other institutions.

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the most Beneficent"

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate.

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#### **ABSTRAK**

Sebagai tindak balas kepada krisis ekonomi, organisasi antarabangsa telah menggalakkan penciptaan standard kemampanan. Keberhutangan dan defisit yang berlebihan baru-baru ini dikenal pasti sebagai risiko utama bagi Syarikat Tersenarai Awam (PLC). Oleh itu, tesis ini mengkaji tiga jenis pegangan saham iaitu pegangan saham kerajaan, keluarga dan pemilikan asing dan menilai kesan masing-masing terhadap kemampanan kewangan firma syarikat tersenarai awam di Malaysia bagi tempoh 2009-2019. Selain itu, krisis kewangan global 2007-2008 telah menyerlahkan kepentingan kuasa CEO untuk mencapai kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh. Tiga objektif umum tesis ini adalah untuk: (1) mengkaji persatuan linear dan bukan linear antara pegangan saham pemilikan (kerajaan, keluarga dan asing) dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (2) menyiasat persatuan bukan linear antara pegangan saham pemilikan (kerajaan, keluarga dan asing) dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (3) menilai peranan penyederhana CEO berkuasa dalam persatuan antara pegangan saham pemilikan dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh. Tesis ini mengaitkan teori pergantungan sumber dengan hipotesis mengenai kesan linear daripada pegangan saham pemilikan yang berbeza terhadap kemampanan kewangan firma. Secara khusus, tesis ini membina konflik agensi Jenis II untuk menerangkan kesan bukan linear. Tambahan pula, kajian ini mengetengahkan teori kepengurusan dalam menjelaskan pengaruh penyederhanaan CEO yang berkuasa terhadap hubungan antara pegangan saham pemilikan dan kemampanan kewangan firma. Sumber tesis data sekunder terdiri daripada semua PLC yang disenaraikan di Papan Utama Bursa Malaysia kecuali firma daripada amanah kewangan, insurans dan pelaburan hartanah kerana keperluan kawal selia mereka berbeza daripada yang lain. Persampelan daripada 2,830 pemerhatian tahun firma dan dikumpulkan daripada laporan tahunan bagi tahun 2009-2019. Tesis ini merumuskan bahawa: (1) pegangan saham pemilikan kerajaan tidak berkaitan dengan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (2) pegangan saham pemilikan keluarga mempunyai persatuan berbentuk U bukan linear dengan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (3) pemilikan asing tidak berkaitan secara linear atau tidak linear dengan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (4) CEO yang berkuasa memudaratkan kemampanan kewangan firma; (5) Kuasa CEO menyederhanakan perhubungan antara pegangan saham pemilikan kerajaan dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh; (6) di peringkat terendah pegangan saham pemilikan keluarga, CEO bertindak sebagai steward untuk memantau tahap kemampanan kewangan firma; dan (7) Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif yang berkuasa tidak berupaya untuk menyederhanakan perkaitan antara pegangan saham pemilikan asing dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh. Secara keseluruhannya, tesis ini menyumbang kepada peningkatan pengetahuan dalam pegangan saham pemilikan dan kuasa CEO, terutamanya sebagai penyumbang kepada kemampanan kewangan firma dalam beberapa dimensi, iaitu perspektif teori, metodologi dan pengurusan. Secara teorinya, kajian ini menyokong pemahaman teori agensi, teori pengurusan, dan konsep tadbir urus korporat yang diterapkan dalam kesan kuasa CEO dalam menyederhanakan perhubungan antara pegangan saham pemilikan dan kemampanan kewangan yang kukuh. Dari segi metodologi, kajian ini menggunakan beberapa proksi dan kaedah regresi yang berbeza dalam mengkaji perkaitan antara pegangan saham pemilikan, kuasa CEO dan kemampanan kewangan firma dalam PLC Malaysia. Selain itu, secara konseptual, kajian ini memberikan bukti langsung yang menunjukkan bahawa wujudnya hubungan langsung antara kuasa CEO dan kemampanan kewangan firma.

#### **ABSTRACT**

In response to the economic crisis, international organisations have encouraged the creation of sustainability standard. Excessive indebtedness and deficits have recently been identified as major risks for Public Listed Companies (PLCs). Therefore, this thesis examines three types of ownership shareholdings, namely government, family, and foreign ownership shareholdings and evaluate their respective impacts on the firm financial sustainability of publicly listed companies in Malaysia for the period of 2009-2019. Moreover, the 2007-2008 global financial crisis has highlighted the importance of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) power to achieve firm financial sustainability. The three general objectives of this thesis are to: (1) examine linear associations between ownership shareholdings (government, family and foreign) and firm financial sustainability; (2) investigate non-linear associations between ownership shareholdings (government, family and foreign) and firm financial sustainability; (3) evaluate the moderating role of powerful CEO on the association between ownership shareholdings and firm financial sustainability. This thesis links resource dependency theory to the hypotheses concerning the linear effects of different ownership shareholdings on firm financial sustainability. Specifically, this thesis builds on Type II agency conflict to explain the non-linear effects. Furthermore, this study highlights the stewardship theory in explaining the moderating influence of powerful CEO on the relationship between ownership shareholdings and firm financial sustainability. The thesis sources of secondary data consist of all PLCs listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia except for firms from finance, insurance, and real estate investment trust because their regulatory requirements differ from others. Sampling from the 2,830 firm-year observations and collected from annual reports for the year 2009-2019. The thesis concludes that: (1) government ownership shareholdings are not related to firm financial sustainability; (2) family ownership shareholding has a non-linear U-shaped association with firm financial sustainability; (3) foreign ownership is neither linearly nor non-linearly related to firm financial sustainability; (4) a powerful CEO is detrimental to a firm's financial sustainability; (5) CEO power moderates the nexus between government ownership shareholdings and firm financial sustainability; (6) at the family ownership shareholdings' lowest level, CEOs serve as stewards to monitor the level of firm's financial sustainability; and (7) powerful CEO is incapable to moderate the association between foreign ownership shareholdings and firm financial sustainability. Overall, this thesis contributes to the growing body of knowledge in ownership shareholdings and CEO power, especially as the antecedents of firm financial sustainability in several dimensions, namely theoretical, methodological, and managerial perspective. Theoretically, this study supports the understanding of agency theory, stewardship theory, and corporate governance concept applied in the effects of CEO power in moderating the nexus between ownership shareholdings and firm financial sustainability. In terms of methodology, this study applies few different proxies and regression methods in examining the association between ownership shareholdings, CEO power and firm financial sustainability in Malaysian PLCs. Moreover, conceptually, this study provides direct evidence suggesting that the existence of a direct connection between CEO power and the firm financial sustainability. By understanding how ownership shareholdings and CEO power would affect the firm financial sustainability, policymakers or the Malaysia government itself can emphasize the PLCs to be more sustainable in the way that the business is handled.

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