FACTORS INFLUENCING CORPORATE ETHICAL VALUES DISCLOSURES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to review the research patterns that examined factors influencing ethical values and practices disclosures among public listed companies in Malaysia. Through a systematic literature review (SLR) process, the paper reports a step-by-step approach to examining past studies and theories by utilizing the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) method. Past articles were identified through Scopus, Web of Sciences, and Google Scholar, which cover a period from when the Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance (MCCG) was established in 2000 until 2021. The results of our systematic literature review managed to categorize these factors into internal (board commitment, board characteristics, and company characteristics) and external (regulatory framework and international guidelines). While the sub-categories in each factor were mostly driven by compliance with the MCCG 2012 and MCCG 2017, the items on ethical practices and actions require more attention for further research. This paper recommends more studies to be conducted to examine these factors from the perspectives of board commitment, board characteristics, and firm characteristics as moderating variables. Our paper recommends large companies to adopt integrated reporting based on a globally recognised framework in promoting greater transparency and accountability as well as reducing duplication. The recommendations in this regulatory framework may influence the Board of Directors' commitment to report more reflections of quality, and ethical values voluntarily. This paper is among the first of its kind to present a systematic literature review, which examines factors influencing ethical values and practices on disclosures, specifically in developing countries.

Keywords: Ethical values, disclosure, corporate governance, systematic literature review.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate failure has been argued to harm a wide range of stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, and suppliers, as well as local and international communities (Sulaiman &Ahmad, 2017). The Asian financial crisis in 1997-1998 was a turning point for corporate governance in Malaysia, which urged the country to reform and improve its corporate governance practices (Corporate Governance Asia, 2010). The crisis introduced 'corporate governance' to Malaysia and drew the public's attention to the weaknesses of Malaysian corporate governance practice (Abidin & Ahmad, 2007). Malaysia's effort to reform its corporate governance practices included introducing the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance (MCCG) in March 2000 which was later replaced by the revised Codes in 2007, 2012, and 2017. Its first introduction was in self-regulation, meaning that there were no state-sanctioned penalties for any contravention of the regulation (Salim, 2011), and was made compulsory beginning 31st December 2012 (Lode & Noh, 2020). The mandatory imposition seems to be associated with the regulators and policymakers' severe endeavours to enhance the stakeholders' value for public listed companies in Bursa Malaysia (Lode & Noh, 2020). Listed companies are required under the listing requirements of Bursa Malaysia to include in their annual reports a narrative account of how they have applied the principles, and best practices set out in the code and to identify and provide reasons for areas of non-compliance, together with alternative practices adopted.

The code was revised several times to improve the effectiveness of the audit committee and board of directors. The first revision was made in 2007 to enhance the board of directors' accountability generally and the audit committee, particularly (Husnin et al., 2016; Asmuni et al., 2015). The second revision in 2012 focused on clarifying the directors' role, especially concerning the issues of independent directors, board composition, commitment to safeguarding shareholders' rights, and corporate disclosure policies. The latest revision in 2017 has heightened the importance of having substantial internal control and risk management functions to effectively monitor its risk management framework, policies, and implementation. The MCCG 2017 requires all businesses to establish a Risk Management Committee (RMC) that comprises the most independent directors (Rimin et al., 2019). Suggestions and commentaries are available for each principle in the Code to help firms understand the recommendation. It includes concepts and specific standards of effective corporate governance that are expected from the firms. The principles under the current code include board leadership and effectiveness, effective audit and risk management, integrity in corporate reporting, and meaningful relationship with stakeholders (Securities Commission, 2017).

Corporate ethics values are the foundation of companies' ethics culture (Abidinet al., 2019). If an organisation wants to take ethics seriously, it must identify its core values or principles to which it wishes to commit and held accountable. Ethical values are communicated through its vision and mission statements (Melé et al., 2006). Schwartz (2004) proposed universal moral standards which include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, while Laouisset (2009) included integrity, courage, compassion, loyalty, honesty, forgiveness, trust, optimism, and resilience as ethical values. These values are promoted in companies in their effort to establish a healthy business environment. Through the strategy of disclosing information about ethics, the company will create value for its shareholders (Ho & Taylor, 2013). Malaysian companies are aware of the importance of disclosures related to corporate strategies (Zaini et al., 2019). Therefore, the management needs to be highly committed and supports ethical values. It can form an ethical culture within the organization (Driskill et al., 2019) while creating value for the company.

Despite the significant initiatives executed by the regulators in strengthening corporate governance, unethical practices remain unsolved (Abidin et. al., 2019). This can be exemplified from the recent corporate scandals in Malaysia, namely 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), Lembaga Tabung Haji, and Khazanah National Berhad, in which those cases have proven that even large companies related to the government cannot escape issues of mismanagement and unethical conduct.

The year 2017's report of the Malaysia-ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard provides evidence of an increase in corporate governance practices in the five years from 2013 to 2017 (Minority Shareholder Watchdog Group [MSWG], 2018). However, in 2017, the score fell slightly from 66.52 in 2016 to 62.20 percent (%) for all public listed companies. Even though the overall corporate governance score increased for all public listed companies, only the top companies had better disclosures, implying there is still low awareness of the importance of ethical practices disclosures among the companies. The scenario above reflects that complying with corporate ethical conduct for disclosures among Malaysian companies is still a problem. This finding is consistent with the National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2023 or NACP on the lack of control and transparency in corporate governance (Abidin et al., 2019). This gives rise to why there is still low awareness of the importance of ethical practices disclosures among companies. However, MCCG has been revised several times to strengthen corporate governance practices. This shows that disclosures on ethics practices have not been communicated clearly to the companies. There is no ethical communication, and its importance is still underestimated.

Ethical communication can be defined as a framework or set of acceptable communication principles that align with an enterprise's overarching code of conduct or ethics (Mandelbaum, 2020). Ho's (2010) studies of other researchers on the use and effectiveness of corporate ethics codes between 1977 and 2008 found that effective communication is crucial for the effectiveness of a code of ethics. Adam and Rachman-Moore (2004) and Etheredge (1996) claimed that regulations could be effective only if communication channels were effective. Employees were found to better understand what is right (Chonko et al., 2003) and wrong when the organisation's corporate codes are well-communicated compared to those without such codes (Somers, 2001). A code of ethics will also increase the employees' familiarity with the code. When the employees are not familiar with the code, they will not internalise the ethical concepts (Kohut & Corriher, 1994; Nwachukwu & Vitell, 1997). Lastly, Ho (2010) believed that communicating an ethical code contributes directly to its success or failure in instilling this ethical corporate culture.

Ethical values can be communicated through both formal and informal channels (Brenner, 1992). The formal channel includes a code of ethics, employees training, and seminars. On the other hand, the informal channel comprises corporate culture, leadership, and management behaviour (Abidin et al., 2019). However, the availability of two communication channels and organisation communication through formal channels have failed to indicate many essential aspects of communication. The failure of highlighting the important aspects of communications suggests the need for systematic works of literature. A systematic literature review is crucial so that comprehensive elements of ethical communication can be justifiably deduced to ensure that factors influencing ethical values disclosures can be determined.

This paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ethical values disclosure in several ways. Firstly, this paper makes an effort to systematically examine the influencing factors and the theoretical stance, that exists in the corporate ethical values disclosure in Malaysia for 20 years i.e. from the introduction of MCCG in 2000 till the present. Secondly, this paper adds to the existing literature by showcasing the major theories to explain corporate ethical values disclosure. By doing so, the understanding of the effectiveness of these theories in explaining corporate ethical values and disclosure practices in an emerging economy context could be enhanced. Thirdly, by identifying research gaps, this paper recommends future research opportunities in the area of corporate ethical values disclosure.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Need for a Systematic Literature Review

The literature review is a necessary feature of academic research that enables the researcher to gain prior existing work, identify gaps to explore, test a specific hypothesis, and develop new theories (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Through literature review, the validity and quality of existing work against a criterion reveals weaknesses, inconsistencies, and contradictions (Paré et al., 2015).

Systematic (also known as “structured”) literature review (SLR) enters management research as a promising methodology for reviewing previous literature to bring the field closer together (Tranfield et al., 2003). SLR summarises, analyses, and combines accessible or available research findings to produce robust results for the research question, which is done quantitatively or qualitatively (Petrosino et al., 2001). Its purpose is to locate and synthesise related research or previous studies comprehensively by adopting organised, transparent, and replicable procedures throughout each step in the process (Samsuddin et al., 2020).

There are noticeable differences between a systematic review and a formal review. The purpose of the systematic review is to “answer a specific question, to reduce bias in the selection and inclusion of studies, to appraise the quality of the included studies, and to summarise them objectively (Petticrew, 2001, p. 99)”. In contrast, the traditional review typically provides a subjective summary of evidence on a research topic using informal methods of collecting, interpreting, and summarising the studies. These different types of literature review differ in terms of the outcome whereby systematic reviews build a more complete and objective knowledge from a holistic view of existing research, while traditional reviews result in fragmented and potentially biased conclusions drawn with a purpose from a partial examination of existing research (Clark et al., 2020).

Compared to the traditional literature review, the systematic review provides several benefits. Mallett et al. (2012) identified three uses of the systematic review. Firstly, the systematic review can reduce implicit bias among researchers as it is conducted by adopting broad search strategies, predefined search strings, and consistent inclusion and exclusion of criteria. Furthermore, it also forces researchers to analyse previous studies beyond their subject areas. Consequently, this increases the chances of producing more transparent and objective answers to the formulated research question(s). Secondly, the systematic review encourages researchers to prioritise empirical evidence rather than preconceived knowledge. This leads to more quality and robust results since the study focuses heavily on evidence, impact, validity, and causality. Thirdly, the systematic review adopts a more precise protocol to guide researchers throughout the review process. Gough and Elbourne (2002) indicated that adopting a registered protocol in the study improves methodological transparency and allows replication in future research.

Other benefits of the systematic review include producing precise delivery and providing a comprehensive overview of available evidence on a given topic (Peričić &Tanveer, 2019). It helps in identifying research gaps in the current understanding of a field. Methodological concerns in research studies that can improve future work in the topic area can be highlighted through the systematic review (Eagly & Wood, 1994). Lastly, Chalmers and Glaziou (2009) stated that the systematic review could be used to identify questions for which the available evidence provides clear answers. Thus, further research is not necessary. For new authors, the process of conducting systematic reviews will be a worthwhile endeavour, as it helps refining their knowledge of the subject area of interest, developing new research ideas, and gaining critical skills in synthesising existing literature (Peričić & Tanveer, 2019).

To develop a relevant systematic review, this paper was guided by the primary research objective – identifying research patterns on factors influencing the communication of Malaysian companies' ethical values from 2001 to 2021 (since the inception of the Malaysian Codes on Corporate Governance and before the MCCG 2021). This study focuses mainly on ethical value communication because disclosure is still lacking (Abidin et al., 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the step-by-step approach to conducting and reporting the systematic literature review (SLR) in the context of factors that influence corporate ethical values communication (or disclosures) in Malaysia. Following Ah Choi and Joseph (2020), Shaffril et al. (2019), and Shaffril et al. (2018), the PRISMA method was used, which includes systematic procedures for resource extraction, review processes (identification, screening, and eligibility) and data abstraction, as well as the analysis.

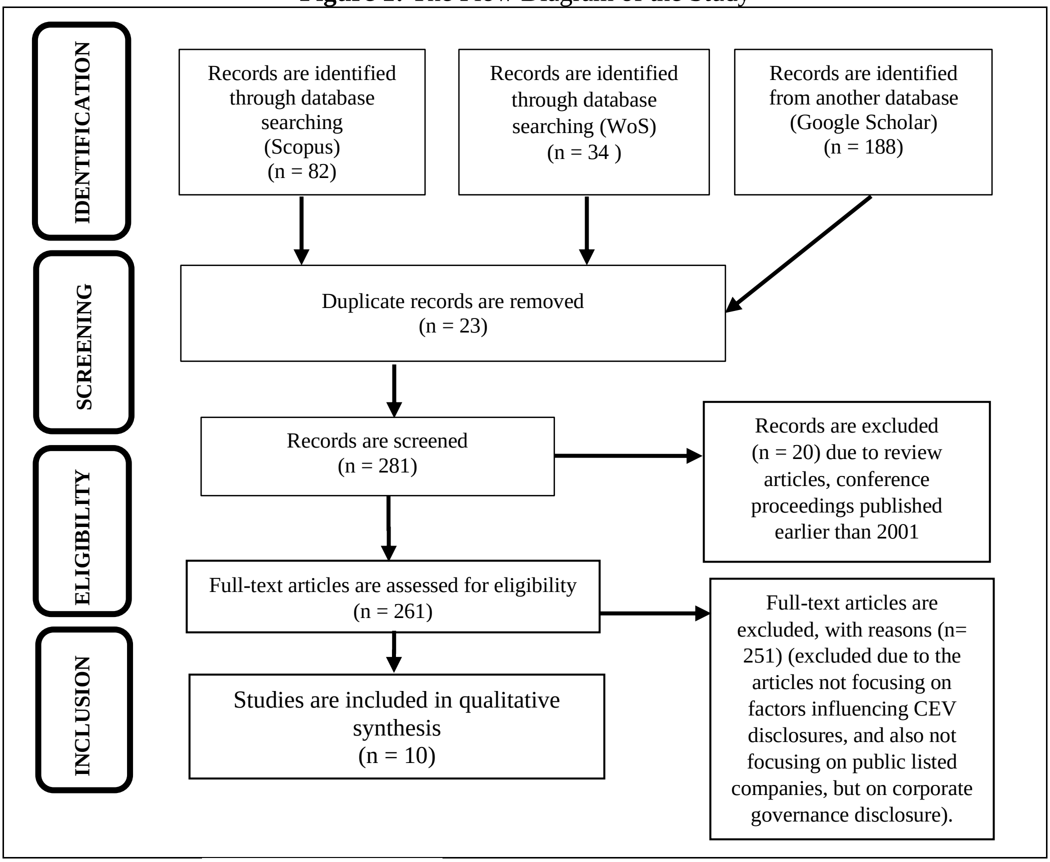
3.1 PRISMA

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is a published standard with the purpose to guide researchers in conducting a systematic literature review (Shafrill et al., 2019). The standard approach was introduced by a team of authors, methodologists, clinicians, medical editors, and consumers (Moher et al., 2009). Commonly used to review reports in clinical trials and other medical studies, the PRISMA method is now extensively being used as the fundamental in reporting systematic reviews for other types of research, such as environmental management (Shaffril et al., 2019), accounting disclosure (Ah Choi & Joseph, 2020), and finance (Bhowmik & Wang, 2020).

A step-by-step publication standard is necessary to provide guidance to researchers with useful information in evaluating and examining the quality and rigor of a review (Shaffril et al., 2019). As stated by Shaffril et al. (2018), the PRISMA method offers the benefits of 1) clarifying the research questions that allow systematic research, 2) determining a clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, and 3) allowing a large database of scientific literature to be examined in a defined time.

We find that PRISMA guideline has enabled us to thoroughly search for terms related to the factors influencing corporate ethical values communication among Malaysian publicly listed companies. The PRISMA method can be further illustrated in Figure 1**.**

Figure 1: The Flow Diagram of the Study



***Source*:** Adapted from Ah Choi and Joseph (2020).

3.2 Material Resources

We utilized two main databases for our review method: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. These two databases are chosen due to their highly regarded scholarly literature, especially among academic researchers. However, it should be noted that no one database is perfect for an exhaustive material search (Shaffril et al., 2019). Empirical materials, particularly in the study areas that are relatively recent, may require more databases in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining more relevant articles (Younger, 2010). Thus, we added Google Scholar (GS), which is an open and more simplified search engine platform that can potentially provide more comprehensive coverage of the scientific and scholarly literature (Martín-Martín, Orduna-Malea, Thelwall, & López-Cózar, 2018). These three databases are in performing systematic literature review for business-related areas (see Ah Coi & Joseph, 2020; Yusof & Joseph, 2021). Also, it is asserted by Wahh, Sek-Khin & Abdullah (2020) to at least utilized two databases in searching for literature to minimize the risk of publication bias as a result of the non-inclusion of relevant studies.

3.3 Systematic Review Process

As shown in Figure 1, the systematic literature review process in selecting the relevant articles for our study involves three main stages (Shaffril et al., 2019). They are the Identification stage, the Screening stage, and the Eligibility stage.

3.3.1 Identification Stage

The first stage involves the identification of keywords, synonyms, and related terms used by past research or literature to identify information on corporate ethical values disclosures and factors that influence the disclosures. The search strings have been developed since February 2021 by combining keywords, synonyms, and similar terms.

Web of Science (WoS). Article search through WoS involves search strings on key terms and synonyms that include "business ethics and values", "ethical practice disclosure", "ethical conduct and commitment", "corporate ethical standard", "ethical management reflection", "factors determining", and "ethical commitment disclosure". The article search also includes "Malaysia" and "MCCG" since our study is confined to Malaysia and ethical values disclosures as recommended by the Code of Corporate Governance (MCCG). The search strings (see Table 1) of these keywords and synonyms successfully produced a total result of 42. Of the 42 articles, 34 and 2 are identified under the Business Economics research area and Social Sciences research area, respectively, which will be included for screening purposes (see Table 2).

Scopus. Article search through Scopus involves similar titles, keywords, and synonyms as applied in our WoS search above (see Table 1). The search strings successfully resulted in a total of 82 documents, dated from 1999 through 2021. Table 3 details Scopus's search results by subject areas. The majority of the documents are grouped and intertwined in three main subject areas, namely, (i) Business, Management, and Accounting (61 documents), (ii) Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (31 documents), (iii) and Social Sciences (19 documents). Since our SLR focuses on these three areas, these documents will be included for screening purposes.

Google Scholar. Article search through Google Scholar involves key terms that are also guided by synonyms and thesaurus. They include "corporate ethical values disclosures", "Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance MCCG", "ethics reporting", and "ethical commitment". The advanced search brought forth a total of 188 results.

Table 1: Keywords, Synonyms, and Search Strings

Database	Keywords Used
Web of Science	TS = (("ethical practice disclosure*" OR "ethical conduct and commitment" OR "ethical value* report*" OR "corporate ethical standard" OR "corporate ethics" OR "business ethics and values disclosure" OR "moral value*" OR "ethical management reflection" OR "ethical behav*" OR "ethical values" OR "ethics assessment commitment" OR "voluntary* disclos*" OR "factors influencing*" OR "factors determining*" OR "ethical commitment disclos*" OR "MCCG* Malaysia" OR "Malaysian Code of corporate governance") AND ("annual report*" AND "Malaysia"))
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((*"ethical practice disclosure*"* OR *"ethical conduct and commitment"* OR *"ethical* AND *value** AND *report*"* OR *"corporate ethical standard"* OR *"corporate ethics"* OR *"business ethics and values disclosure"* OR *"moral* AND *value*"* OR *"ethical management reflection"* OR *"ethical behav*"* OR *"ethical values"* OR *"ethics assessment commitment"* OR *"voluntary** AND *disclos*"* OR *"factors influencing*"* OR *"factors determining*"* OR *"ethical commitment disclos*"* OR *"MCCG** AND *Malaysia"* OR *"Malaysian* AND *code* AND *of* AND *c orporate* AND *governance"* AND *"annual report*"* AND *"Malaysia"*

Table 2: Record Counts by WoS Database Categories

Research Areas	No of record Count	%
Business Economics	34	80.95
Social Issues	5	11.90
Computer Science	4	9.52
Engineering	4	9.52
Science Technology Other Topics	4	9.52
Environmental Sciences Ecology	3	7.14
Government Law	3	7.14
Mathematics	3	7.14
Construction Building Technology	2	4.76
Energy Fuels	2	4.76
Social Sciences Other Topics	2	4.76
Geography	1	2.38
Geology	1	2.38
Meteorology Atmospheric Sciences	1	2.38
Philosophy	1	2.38
Religion	1	2.38
	42	100.00%

***Source*:** Web of Science (WoS) database.

Table 3: Record Counts by Scopus Subject Area

Subject Area	No of Documents
Business, Management and Accounting	61
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	31
Social Sciences	19
Engineering	8
Environmental Science	6
Computer Science	4
Energy	4
Arts and Humanities	3
Earth and Planetary Sciences	2
Mathematics	2

***Source*:** Scopus database.

3.3.2 Screening Stage

During the screening process, we first identified duplicate articles found in both databases above, as well as in Google Scholar. A total of 23 were removed, leaving the remaining 281 articles. We then proceeded to screening the articles to be included in our review. The inclusion took into account the article type, where only research-based articles published in journals were included (see Table 4). We excluded documents in the form of conference proceedings, article reviews, or book chapters since they are not considered primary sources for referencing purposes (Samsuddin et al., 2020). Our search covered a publication timeline from 2001 onwards since 2001 marks the year when listed companies implemented the recommended Malaysian Code of Corporate Government (MCCG) guidelines. All included articles are in English to avoid confusion and misleading information. This is also to overcome difficulties in translation which is time-consuming and requires extra effort (Ah Choi & Joseph, 2020).

Table 4: Criteria for the Screening Process

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of Literature	Research journal articles	Books, books chapters, conference proceedings
Time span (publication years)	Between 2001 and 2021	Before 2001
Country	Malaysia	Countries beside Malaysia
Language	English	Non-English

3.3.3 Eligibility Stage

The eligibility stage requires more tedious work of examining thoroughly the articles to ensure that they have fulfilled the inclusion criteria and are fit to be employed according to the objectives of the study (Shaffril et al., 2019). This includes examining manually the titles, abstracts, and main contents of the articles. A total of 251 were excluded because they did not focus directly on ethical values reporting or disclosure in Malaysia. We found that many articles focus on voluntary disclosures among Malaysian public listed companies but were more towards corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, environmental, social, and governance (ESG), Shariah disclosure, or corporate governance (CG) disclosures that fulfil the recommended prescriptions of the MCCG.

A total of 10 remaining articles were eligible and ready to be included and analysed (see Figure 1). These articles suit our study's objectives, which attempt to identify the factors that influence disclosures of ethical values and practices among Malaysian public listed companies (PLCs). These deliverables are very much enshrined in the revised MCCG 2012, which requires integrity in corporate reporting and meaningful communication with the stakeholders**.** As very limited articles were included, we also included the CIMA guidelines (Chartered Institute of Chartered Accountant [CIMA], 2014), and the revised MCCG 2012 and 2017, since we believe the review of these relevant reports can provide more insights on the regulatory aspects that may influence the voluntary disclosures on ethical values and practices among Malaysian PLCs.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of our systematic review managed to draw two conclusions on the factors that influence the extent of corporate ethical values disclosures and reporting in the context of Malaysian public listed companies. The factors can be identified as internal influence and external influences (see Table 5). We categorise the internal influence into three main factors, namely, i) Ethical Commitment (six sub-categories), ii) Board characteristics (six sub-categories), and ii) Firm characteristics (five sub-categories).

Under ethical commitment, past studies have identified six sub-categories: corporate ethical values, action to promote ethics, whistleblowing policy, code of ethics disclosure, corporate commitment towards sustainability, and the availability of the Ethics Committee (Rahman et al., 2016; Abidin et al., 2017, 2020; Abidin et al., 2019; Salin et al., 2019; Hashim et al., 2020).

In identifying determinants of ethical identity disclosure (EID) in Islamic banks, Rahman et al. (2016) argued that inadequate disclosure of EID could severely impact the image of Islamic banks as ethical Islamic financial institutions. Their study identified nine EID Dimensions, namely the company's vision and mission, board size and independence, product, zakat, charity and benevolent loan, employees, debtors, community, and environment, and Shari'ah Supervisory Board. Using the ethical identity index and multiple regression analysis on Islamic banks in Bahrain and Malaysia, the study supported the institutional theory where board size, Shari'ah Supervisory Board and investment account holders can significantly influence the disclosure levels in Islamic banks.

In connecting ethical commitments and financial performance, Abidin et al. (2017) explored the significant role of business ethics in wealth and sustainable performance. Their study on 243 Malaysian PLCs revealed a positive association between firms' commitment towards ethics and financial performance as measured by return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE). The study developed the Ethics Commitment Assessment Index (ECAI), comprising 14 items to measure score commitment towards ethics. These items include all aspects of Board Ethical Commitment as listed in Table 5.

Abidin et al. (2019) use the Ethical Commitment Index (ECI) developed by Choi and Jung (2008) to measure companies' ethical commitment and modify it to incorporate the Malaysian corporate environment. The ECI also follows the MCCG 2012 recommendations. The ECI comprises six themes; corporate ethical values, action to promote ethics, whistle-blowing policy, code of ethics, sustainability practices, and ethics committee. The results of the content analysis on 1,115 companies' annual reports and five-year observations (2012-2016), found that the level of ethical practice disclosure among Malaysian PLCs remained low. The dataset is relevant, as it is an indicator of corporate ethical commitment and reflects the ethical climate among Malaysian PLCs (Hashim et al., 2020).

We observed past literature attempts to examine companies that were driven by the compliance recommended in the revised MCCG 2012. Among others, MCCG 2012 recommended companies have a whistle-blowing policy and formulate a code of ethics. Despite the MCCG 2012 prescription of upholding high standards of ethical business practices, firms' level of ethical commitment disclosures in Malaysia remains low. Abidin et al. (2020) examined these disclosures on 250 Malaysian non-financial companies and found that companies tend to commit the most towards sustainability practices but the least towards actions to promote ethics and prevent unethical practices. The study used ECI consisting of 17 disclosure items from five dimensions, namely: i) corporate ethical values, ii) actions to promote ethics and prevent unethical behaviour, iii) Code of Ethics, iv) Whistle-blowing philosophy, and v) Sustainability Practices. Through regulatory framework and willpower, disclosures on corporate ethical conduct are crucial as commitment towards ethical conduct is an important aspect of ensuring corporate sustainability (Abididn et al., 2020).

When the board embeds ethics in discharging their duties, this could discourage fraud and other unethical actions and decisions (Salin et al. 2019). Thus, board commitment to ethics and ethical practices plays a pertinent role in influencing corporate values and performance. Salin et al. (2019) specified board responsibility to formalise ethical standards as per Recommendation 1.3 of the MCCG 2012 as well as guidelines proposed by various international organisations from developed countries such as Australia, Canada, Norway, South Korea, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, UK, and the USA. Sixty-four items were developed and used to measure corporate board ethical commitment practices, which also include "Board responsible to monitor code/ethics compliance."

Past studies also examined board characteristics as relevant factors that can influence voluntary disclosures related to ethical values and commitment. The six sub-categories are board independence, the board size, education and talent, experience, number of board meetings, and audit committee (Othman et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2016; Chong, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2020). These aspects are also laid out as compliance recommended in the MCCG 2012. The Board audit committee is considered a sub-category under board characteristics and relevant independent bodies that can influence board ethical commitment. Although MCCG 2017 advocates for more board diversity as another prescription for more board commitment and accountability, no past studies have related that to ethical values disclosures.

Five sub-categories under company characteristics were also identified by past studies in relation to ethical values disclosures. They are ownership types, firm size, age, financial leverage, and as Shari'ah compliance firm (Dah, Zainon, Zakaria, & Omar, 2016; Rahman et al., 2016; Salin et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2020). The availability of Integrated Corporate Reporting, which is in line with the International Standard of Governance, and the prescription recommended in the revised

MCCG 2017 was mentioned by Chong (2018). This new deliverable motivates the direction of how ethical values can be integrated with other corporate governance reporting.

An external factor-like regulatory framework is also identified to drive a company's commitment to disclose ethical values. The external influence, on the other hand, consists of the regulatory framework, namely, the MCCG. For instance, the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance (MCCG) 2012 directly emphasises the role of the board and management in promoting ethical corporate conduct (Abidin et al., 2017). Universal guidelines, such as the Chartered Institute of Management Accounting, CIMA's guidelines on embedding ethical values, also serve as reference deliverables to drive the commitment to have a code of ethics in influencing ethical behaviour and decision-making (CIMA, 2014). From the SLR, past studies also found that Malaysian companies still lack actions towards ethical practices with regard to disciplinary action and employee appraisal (Abidin et al., 2019). Through the SLR, we found two main underlying theories mentioned by past studies that argue the need for ethical values and practices. They are the Stakeholder theory (Othman et al., 2012; Rahman et al., 2016; Abidin et al., 2017; Salin et al., 2019) and the Agency theory (Rahman et al., 2016; Abidin et al., 2017). This indicates that future studies may explore other theories, for example, resource-based theory and institutional theory, to explain the ethical values disclosures by companies.

5. CONCLUSION

Drawing from the results of the SLR, there still exists minimal literature focusing on factors that influence ethical values and information disclosures among Malaysian companies. Only ten empirical articles were found to examine ethical values disclosures from the perspective of Malaysian companies. The small number could probably be due to the fact that ethical values are intertwined with corporate governance reporting, where ethics-related concepts such as corporate integrity, anti-corruption, compliance, and transparency have regularly been emphasized in the codes of corporate governance (Abidin et al., 2019).

Based on the 10 articles analysed, it can be concluded that factors influencing ethical values and practices disclosure among public listed companies in Malaysia have been successfully identified. Analyses of articles screened using PRISMA revealed that those factors can be broadly categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors identified include ethical commitment, board characteristics, and company characteristics whilst external factors comprise the regulatory framework and MCCG.

The above observation implies that it is not an overstatement to deduce that our current study will enrich the existing pool of literature on corporate governance and ethics-related issues. It is also implied that future research should therefore be focused more on ethical values and practices integrating globally recognised framework as promoted by MCCG 2017, and perhaps also incorporating the latest updates of MCCG, MCCG 2021. Future studies are advised to employ resource-based theory and institutional theory to expand and explain the extent of the significance of ethical values to corporate citizens for sustainable performance.

Past literature pointed out that some companies failed to practice and adopt corporate ethical values because of the less effective communication channel being used. It is insufficient just to have a

Code of ethics, organize seminars, and train employees to disseminate ethical values among employees. The company should use a more effective method to instil ethical values among employees. This can be done by using an informal channel like incorporating corporate culture, practicing appropriate leadership, and exhibiting commendable management behaviour. Corporate culture is created when ethical values are practiced and toned by the top management. Based on the published studies discussed previously, disclosing information about ethics can help create value for companies. Hence, it should be supported by the management as it reflects their commitment and behaviour towards accountable corporate citizens.

Regarding the role of board diversity, since this item is not identified by past studies, it would be interesting to explore this issue as it is being advocated by MCCG 2017 under board commitment and accountability. Will board diversity, especially women's participation, and greater women's composition as board members influence corporate ethical performance? Their influence on the overall company's performance would be interesting to highlight.

In Malaysia, even though significant initiatives to strengthen corporate governance have been put in place, unethical practices among political leaders and business executives remain unsolved. This challenge should not deter authorities from continuously addressing ethical problems aggressively. Everyone should strive to rigorously communicate deterrent measures to mitigate misconduct and ethics-related risks. It is hoped that the deterrent element of ethical values can help the firm to achieve its stated objectives and minimise corporate scandals.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Table 5: Table of Findings

Authors	Study Design	Sample	Unit of Analysis	Internal Factors						Theory	
				Board Ethical Commitment							
				CEV	**ACT**	**WBP**	**CODE**	**SUS**	**ETH**	**ST**	**AT**
Rahman et al. (2016)	QN	21 banks	2007 - 2011	√						√	√
Abidin et al. (2017)	QN	243 PLCs	2014	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Abidin et al. (2019)	QN	223 non-financial companies	2012 - 2016	√	√	√	√	√	√		
Salin et al. (2019)	QN	500 top PLCs	2013 - 2014	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Abidin et al. (2020)	QN	250 non-financial companies	2016	√	√	√	√	√	√		
Hashim et al. (2020)	QN	1115 PLCs	2012-2016	√	√	√	√	√	√		
				Board Characteristics							
				BI	**BS**	**BE**	**BEX**	**BM**	**IA**		
Othman et al. (2014)	QN	100 top companies	2011						√	√	
Rahman et al. (2016)	QN	21 banks	2007 - 2011	√	√					√	√
Chong (2018)	QN	250 respondents	-	√	√	√	√	√	√		
Ibrahim et al. (2020)	QN	50 banks	2010 - 2014	√							
				Firm Characteristics							
				OWN		**SIZE**	**AGE**	**LEV**	**SSB**		
Dah et al. (2016)	QN	100 PLCs	2010 - 2014	√		√					
Rahman et al. (2016)	QN	21 banks	2007 - 2011						√	√	√
Salin et al. (2019)	QN	500 top PLCs	2013 - 2014				√	√		√	
Ibrahim et al. (2020)	QN	50 banks	2010 - 2014				√	√			

Note: QN: Quantitative analysis, CEV: Corporate ethical values, ACT: Action to promote ethics, WBP: Whistleblowing policy, CODE: Code of ethics disclosure, SUS: Corporate commitment toward sustainability, ETH: Ethics Committee, BI: Board independence, BS: Board size, BE: Board education and talent, BEX: Board experience, BM: Board meetings, IA: Audit committee, OWN: Firm ownership types, SIZE: Firm size, AGE: Firm age, LEV: Financial leverage, SSB: Shari'ah compliance firm, ST: Stakeholder theory, AT: Agency theory.

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