EDITORIAL: Contemporary board governance at the intersection of behaviour, diversity, and accountability

Dear readers!

The contributions gathered in this issue reflect the continuing evolution of corporate governance as both a research field and a practical system of organizational oversight. Rather than focusing solely on traditional mechanisms such as compliance and control, the articles published here explore how behavioural factors, cultural environments, political backgrounds, sustainability imperatives, and professional roles jointly shape governance effectiveness. Viewed together, these analyses illuminate a governance landscape in which boards must navigate increasingly complex expectations from investors, regulators, employees, and broader society.

A key stream of research in this issue addresses the shifting architecture of governance roles. The article *"Beyond administration: Unveiling the strategic role of company secretaries in corporate governance — A systematic literature review"* by *Mohd Azuwan Khalidi, Nur Ashikin Mohd Saat, Yeng Wai Lau,* and *Fatima Abdul Hamid* demonstrates that company secretaries increasingly serve as strategic advisors rather than merely administrative coordinators. Their systematic literature review highlights how the company secretary enhances information integrity, supports regulatory compliance, and facilitates effective board operations. This reframing of a traditional governance role complements several other contributions in this issue that emphasize the behavioural and relational dimensions of board effectiveness.

Behavioural governance emerges prominently in two studies. *Juliana Osmani* and *Sanie Doda* investigate whether overconfidence among top managers varies by age, ultimately finding that overconfidence appears across age groups, implying that boards must look beyond demographic markers when designing oversight and evaluating leadership judgement. Their work aligns with "*Leadership styles and their impact on workplace engagement: Insights from emerging enterprises*" by *Kenneth L. Armas, Christina Y. Pacubas, Norberto M. Secretaria*, and *Leoncio T. Lucero Jr.,* who show that transformational leadership fosters organizational citizenship behaviour, while laissez-faire leadership undermines cohesion and engagement in emerging enterprises. Together, these studies reinforce the importance of behavioural insight when assessing executive performance and board-management dynamics.

Board composition, a persistent core theme in governance research, receives rich attention in this issue. *Hicham Sbai, Hicham Meghouar*, and *Oumaima Benaguid,* in their paper "*Gender diversity and bank performance in developing countries:*

The moderating effect of culture", demonstrate that gender diversity can improve bank performance in developing economies, but only when aligned with supportive cultural norms. The research "*Examining the impact of board composition on environmental, social, and governance disclosure*" by *Maria Assunta Baldini, Graziella Sicoli, Maurizio Rija*, and *Giovanni Bronzetti* adds to this conversation by showing that gender-diverse boards produce more comprehensive environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosures among Italian firms, reinforcing the link between board composition, transparency, and stakeholder accountability. The work "*The role of board size, environmental indicators, and corporate reputation on environmental, social, and governance performance*" by *Bunga Maxel Iliany* and *Linda Kusumaning Wedari* expands this argument by showing that board size influences ESG performance, while environmental indicators can shape disclosure behaviours in complex ways.

This thematic cluster is substantially deepened by the contribution "*Political ties of female directors and ESG: The mediating role of environmental attention*" of *Linxuan Wang, Shamsul Nahar Abdullah, Jason See Toh, Mengjie Sun, Zhiqiang Yang*, and *Ke Li*, who examine the influence of female directors' political backgrounds (FDPB) on ESG performance in the Chinese A-Share market. Using more than 21,000 firm-year observations and conducting textual analysis of environmental disclosures, they find that FDPB enhances ESG performance through increased "environmental attention", even though the direct relationship weakens under fixed-effects estimation. Their findings enrich the broader narrative on gender diversity by demonstrating that the impact of women directors on ESG outcomes depends not only on their presence on the board but also on their political and experiential backgrounds.

The importance of effective oversight mechanisms is reinforced by *Nicholas D. Belesis, Christos G. Kampouris, Andreas E. Fousteris*, and *Dimitrios Varouxis*, who show that strong internal control systems bolster audit quality, operational efficiency, and financial reporting integrity in their study "*Evaluating the effectiveness of internal control systems: Evidence from financial and audit performance data*". These results demonstrate that internal controls strengthen organizational credibility, connecting directly with the sustainability, transparency, and behavioural insights highlighted throughout this issue.

Taken together, the research published here illustrates a multidimensional governance paradigm; one that integrates structural design, behavioural insight, political context, cultural influences, and sustainability considerations. Boards today operate at the confluence of these forces and must ensure that governance practices support both organizational performance and societal legitimacy.

The contributions in this issue align closely with the mission of *Corporate Board: Role, Duties and Composition*, which is devoted to addressing the central governance challenges arising from the separation of ownership and control, director accountability, board effectiveness, and responsible conduct. The articles offer evidence and reflection on several of the journal's core themes: board size and composition; committee and director roles; behavioural dynamics; political influences on governance; director independence; compensation-related behaviour; and the broader social responsibilities of boards in modern organizations.

Patrice Gélinas, Prof.,
York University, Canada,
Editorial Board member, Corporate Board: Role, Duties and Composition