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Ethical Leadership and Its Cultural and Institutional Context: An Empirical Study in Japan

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Abstract In recent times, international comparative studies on managers' beliefs regarding ethical/unethical leadership have increased in number. These studies focus on both Eastern and Western countries. However, although these previous studies focused on the effects of national culture, they did not pay sufficient attention to the effects of institutions. Moreover, these studies covered only a few countries. Despite Japan's strong influence on the world economy, it has not been included in previous studies on ethical leadership. Thus, to reveal unexplored factors—particularly cultural and institutional factors—and to determine the generalizability of previous findings, this study used a qualitative research method to examine Japanese business managers' beliefs about ethical/unethical leadership. The data revealed the convergence and divergence in beliefs regarding ethical/unethical leadership between managers in Japan and in other countries. The analysis identified mostly the same themes of ethical/unethical leadership as found in other countries albeit with different distributions. In addition, We identified new themes that may be specific to Japan or that were neglected in previous studies. Moreover, this study suggests the necessity of considering each society's history of business ethics and current ethics-related institutional contexts in ethical/unethical leadership studies.

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Introduction

The growing complexity of businesses, escalating amount and speed of information flows, and stronger pressure for high performance have raised the probability of leaders making ethical slip-ups (Toor and Ofori 2009) and led to a series of recent corporate scandals. Thus, in the last decade, researchers have paid significant attention to business ethics and ethical leadership (Brown et al. 2005; Dinh et al. 2014; Rutherford et al. 2012).

The definition of ethical leadership that is most cited is that of Brown et al. (2000, p. 120), who regarded it as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making." Empirical studies based on this definition have found positive effects of ethical leadership on employees' work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction (Neubert et al. 2009; Palanski et al. 2014; Sharif and Scandura 2014), work engagement (Chughtai et al. 2014; Den Hartog and Belschak 2012), and organizational citizenship behavior (Mayer et al. 2009; Newman et al. 2014; Resick et al. 2013; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara and Suárez-Acosta 2014). Moreover, Steinbauer et al. (2014) found a positive impact of ethical leadership on followers' moral judgment suggesting its contribution to organizational ethicality.

While leadership scholars have long argued that culture affects followers' perceptions of leadership (Gerstner and Day 1994; Javidan et al. 2006; Muenjohn and Armstrong 2007), research on ethical leadership only recently began to

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address cultural differences (Eisenbeiss 2012; Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014; Resick et al. 2006, 2011). These studies primarily relied on general and traditional arguments of cultural differences and showed convergence of the construct of ethical leadership across societies.

In general, changing trends in leadership studies suggested the institutional nature of leadership (Gardner et al. 2010; Yukl 1989). However, international comparative studies on ethical leadership paid little attention to such institutional aspects (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Specifically, differences exist between countries in the degree to which the construct of business ethics permeates business society (Scholtens and Dam 2007). In some countries, this construct is still unfamiliar or is diffused and advanced through institutional pressure. In such countries, people's perspectives toward ethical leadership largely depend on the aspects of business ethics that feature in their institutionally driven diffusion process.

Through an exploratory study of a Japanese sample, this study can contribute to the ethical leadership literature in several ways. First, in Japan, the construct of business ethics has recently been diffused in an institution-related manner. For the past several decades, Japan has introduced Western values of business ethics in response to globalization. Thus, the potential influence of the institutional context legitimizes our focus on Japan as a research field.

Second, as previous studies indicated, Japanese business society has a notably unique culture that differs from not only Western culture but also from the cultures of other Eastern societies (Hofstede 1980; Javidan et al. 2006; Oetzel et al. 2001). The cultural uniqueness of Japan may explain why research in Japan serves as an examination of the cultural convergence of ethical leadership shown in previous studies. Third, Japan is a G8 member nation and has the third largest GDP (IMF 2015) and fourth largest global export and import values in the world (UNCTAD 2013), thus significantly influencing the world economy. Therefore, in today's globalized business society, research on leadership in Japan has numerous implications for other countries as well.

This study aims to reveal the meaning that Japanese workers attach to the constructs of ethical/unethical leadership. We can examine the generalizability of previous studies' findings by conducting research in Japan, which has a distinctive culture, and where the business ethics construct has been only relatively recently introduced as a result of institutional pressure. If we find Japanese-specific properties, such findings suggest the effect of culture or institutional pressure on business ethics constructs.

We begin the remainder of this study by briefly reviewing previous cross-cultural studies on ethical leadership. We then discuss the traditional view of Japanese ethics, recent trends in Japanese business ethics, and Japanese cultural characteristics. The next section explains

the research methods, including the data collection strategy and analysis method. We then present the results of the analysis and a discussion of the findings. Finally, this study concludes by offering contributions and limitations of the study and suggesting several avenues for future research.

Cultural Differences in Ethical Leadership

Leadership is one of the central themes of cross-cultural organizational behavior studies (Gelfand et al. 2007). However, empirical research has recently addressed the cultural differences in ethical leadership (Resick et al. 2006, 2011). Using qualitative research methods, Resick et al. (2011) investigated divergences and convergences in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership across six societies [People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States, Ireland, and Germany]. Their study identified six ethical leadership themes (accountability, consideration and respect for others, fairness and non-discriminatory treatment, character, collective orientation, and openness and flexibility) and six unethical leadership themes (acting in self-interest and misusing power; deception and dishonesty; lack of accountability, compliance, or transparency; lack of personal values or moral code; incivility; and narrow or short-term focus). To varying degrees, these themes were found in all six societies, suggesting a certain level of convergence in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership across these societies.

Their results also showed divergence across societies. For example, regarding ethical leadership, "character" was mentioned by many respondents in the United States (90.0 %), Ireland (79.3 %), and Taiwan (69.6 %). However, only approximately half the respondents in Germany (50.0 %), PRC (52.5 %), and Hong Kong (54.8 %) mentioned "character." In contrast, more than 70 % of the respondents in Germany and PRC mentioned "consideration and respect for others." Regarding unethical leadership, "deception and dishonesty" dominated in the United States and Ireland, "incivility" dominated in Germany, PRC, and Hong Kong, and "acting in self-interest and misusing power" dominated in Taiwan.

Another contribution of Resick et al. (2011) is their indication of the multidimensional nature of ethical leadership. Several other studies also suggested the multidimensionality of ethical leadership (De Hoogh and Den Hartog 2008; Eisenbeiss 2012; Kalshoven et al. 2011), and the dimensions identified in these studies differed from those found in Resick et al. (2011). However, the dimensions identified by Resick et al. (2011) included almost all the dimensions suggested in other studies. Thus, we state that Resick et al. (2011) viewed ethical leadership more broadly than previous research (Brown et al. 2005; Treviño and Brown 2004).

Following the results of Resick et al. (2011), which showed convergence across societies, we speculate that the ethical/unethical leadership themes identified in that study also exist in Japan. However, a reflection on Japanese workers' business ethics values indicates that the distribution of each theme may differ, at least partly, from that of other societies. Moreover, Japanese-specific themes of ethical/unethical leadership may exist, including themes not appearing in the six dimensions of Resick et al. (2011) but appearing in other studies [i.e., role clarification, power sharing, moderation orientation (De Hoogh and Den Hartog 2008; Kalshoven et al. 2011)].

The study by Eisenbeiss (2012), a more recent cross-cultural study, identified four universal orientations of ethical leadership: (1) humanity (2) justice, (3) responsibility and sustainability, and (4) moderation orientation. According to Eisenbeiss, the moderation orientation includes leaders' self-control and ability to restrain emotions and is more important in Eastern societies. The aspect of emotional restraint did not emerge in Resick et al. (2011), but it is possible for us to identify it as an ethical leadership theme in Japan, reflecting the fact that, traditionally, keeping a level head is highly valued in Japan (Nishigori et al. 2014; Nitobe 1904).

Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck (2014) identified the charismatic/visionary aspect of ethical leadership, which was not found in Resick et al. (2011). An empirical study using data from Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) showed the universality of the value of charismatic or transformational leadership (Den Hartog et al. 1999). Another empirical study suggested that the positive effects of transformational leadership are larger in collectivistic and high-power distance societies (Jung and Avolio 1999; Kirkman et al. 2009; Pillai et al. 1999). Moreover, some scholars have maintained that transformational leadership is highly valued in Japan, and Japanese leaders frequently display it (Jung et al. 1995 for a review). Thus, it is possible that managers in Japan—a more collectivistic and higher power distance society—highly value charismatic and visionary styles as aspects of ethical leadership. In the next section, We outline the Japanese cultural and institutional context of business ethics, which may be the cause of Japanese specificity in ethical/unethical leadership components.

Business Ethics in Japan

Cultural Perspectives

Although Japan does not fundamentally or primarily have a Confucian culture like China or a Buddhist culture like Thailand (Wargo 1990), traditional arguments on Japanese ethics paid significant attention to the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto—an indigenous religion of Japan (Coates 1987; Dollinger 1988; Ornatowski 1996; Taka 1994). Academics often regard thinkers' arguments showing strong influence from Confucianism and Buddhism as the origin of Japanese business ethics. We can trace the history of business ethics in Japan back to the Edo Period (1603–1868 CE). At the beginning of this period, the Zen priest Shosan Suzuki argued ethics in his book "Banmin-Tokuyou," which is regarded as the origin of Japanese work ethics (Hajime and Johnston 1967). The author's views are based on Buddhism and they suggest that all work forms a part of Buddhist asceticism.

In the middle of the Edo period, Baigan Ishida relied on Neo-Confucianism to emphasize frugality and the importance of social contribution through business activities in his book "Tohi-mondo" (Ishida 1988). In the subsequent Meiji period (1868–1912 CE), Eiichi Shibusawa used his book "Rongo-To-Soroban" to argue for the importance of achieving both profits and ethics and the necessity of making social contributions through profit generation (Shibusawa 2010). His concept is based on Confucianism.

As previously noted, thinkers' and academics' arguments on traditional Japanese ethical values emphasized the influences of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism on Japanese business ethics. However, these traditional views are based on normative views rather than empirical evidence. Therefore, although these arguments and standards may reflect and influence some aspects of Japanese considerations of business ethics and ethical leadership, we suspect that they may not necessarily represent, at least in part, modern Japanese business practitioners' views of ethical leadership.

The GLOBE study, which conducted seminal research on cultural differences in effective leadership, identified nine cultural dimensions: performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Using GLOBE's nine dimensions as a theoretical basis, Resick et al. (2011) showed the cultural convergence of ethical/unethical leadership. However, compared with the six countries included in Resick et al. (2011), Japanese culture has distinctive features in some dimensions. Thus, there is room to investigate the properties inherent in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership in Japan. More specifically, compared with six other countries (i.e., the United States, Ireland, Germany, PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), Japan ranks the highest in future orientation and institutional collectivism and the lowest in performance orientation, assertiveness, and uncertainty avoidance (Javidan et al. 2006).

Considering these characteristics, some cultural distinctiveness may exist in the meaning of ethical/unethical

leadership in Japan. First, because of the country's high future orientation and institutional collectivism, Japanese workers may emphasize the aspect of "collective orientation" (i.e., putting the interests of the organization ahead of personal interests; considering sustainability and longer-term impacts; protecting the interests of the organization and society; and promoting teamwork and cooperation) (Resick et al. 2011, p. 442) in the meaning of ethical leadership. In contrast, low assertiveness may lead these workers to emphasize the aspects of "acting in self-interest and misusing power" (i.e., pushing blame onto others; greed and self-indulgence; personal face saving; want for power; egotistical; acting in self-interest and exploiting power; politicking; setting a bad example) (Resick et al. 2011, p. 442) in the meaning of unethical leadership. Moreover, because of low performance orientation, Japanese workers may be less likely to prioritize short-term financial performance and thus may emphasize "narrow or short-term focus" (i.e., exclusive focus on profits or short-term interests) (Resick et al. 2011, p. 442) in the meaning of unethical leadership. Japan is lower in assertiveness and performance orientation than other Eastern countries; thus, these characteristics may be more salient in Japan than in other Eastern countries.

Power sharing and role clarification (De Hoogh and De Hartog 2008; Kalshoven et al. 2011)—ethical leadership dimensions not included in Resick et al. (2011)—may not be emphasized in Japan because Japan is at the middle level of power distance and because vague job boundaries have long been accepted in Japanese organizations (Van Maanen 2006). Moreover, the argument we deployed in the previous section suggests that Japanese managers could

attach much value to a charismatic/visionary style and emotion restraint (Eisenbeiss 2012; Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014) as aspects of ethical leadership.

Institutional Perspectives

Given the trends in business ethics in Japan, we need to consider the country's institutional contexts to investigate specific meanings of ethical/unethical leadership. Regardless of the existence of classical ethical thought mentioned in the previous section, business society and practitioners in Japan have only recently paid significant attention to the concept of business ethics. Figure 1 indicates the number of articles in Nihon-Keizai-Shimbun—a popular newspaper in Japan that primarily focuses on economy- and business-related news—that include the phrase "business ethics" (kigyo-rinri in Japanese) in the title and/or text for each year during 1950–2014. For data collection, we used an online article database called Nikkei Telecom, which is provided by Nihon-Keizai-Shimbun, Inc. Figure 1 indicates that while articles including the word "business ethics" were rarely found during the period 1950–1988, such articles increased suddenly in 1989. This change reflects an increased interest in business ethics during this period.

The catalyst for such increased attention was the Recruit scandal in 1988, which was viewed as an unprecedented corporate scandal in Japan. During the scandal, unlisted shares in Recruit Cosmos—an unlisted real estate firm and subsidiary of Recruit, a classified advertisement, publication, and human resources company in Japan—were transferred as bribes. These transfers led to the arrest of

Fig. 1 Number of business ethics-related articles published by Nihon-Keizai-Shimbun between 1965 and 2014
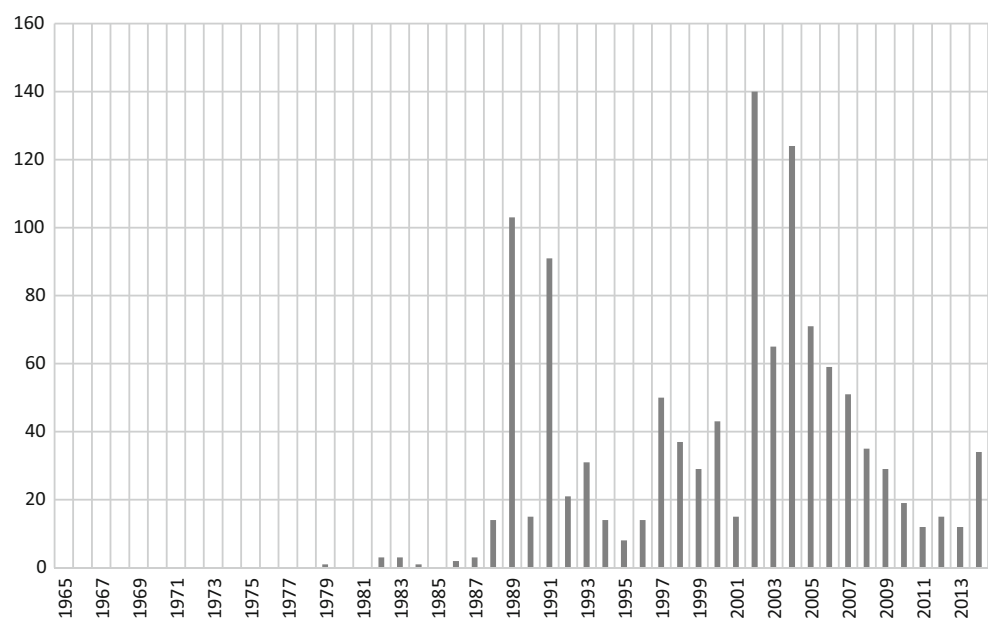
some of Recruit's employees (bribers) and some prominent politicians (recipients of the bribes). This scandal demonstrated the cozy relationships between politics and business in Japan. In response to this scandal, Keidanren, a comprehensive economic organization with a membership comprising representative companies in Japan, set up a committee called the Study Group of Business Ethics, who encouraged companies to make an effort to develop a code of ethics that stipulates (1) compliance with laws and ordinances; (2) fair and rational business activities; (3) appropriate disclosure of corporate information; (4) compliance in stock trading, insider trading, and stock offerings; and (5) prohibition of excessive exchanges of gifts (Keidanren 1991).

An increased number of articles in 1991 may have been the result of the publication of the Charter of Corporate Code (Kigyo Koudou Kensho), a code of business ethics for member companies developed by Keidanren (Fig. 1). The Charter of Corporate Code sought to transform the Japanese market into a free, transparent, and fair market to internationalize Japanese firms' business activities in response to foreign countries' criticism that Japanese business practices were closed and opaque. The Charter of Corporate Code was revised in 1996 (Keidanren 1996). However, in response to the subsequent rash of corporate scandals at large reputational firms (e.g., Yukijirushi, Tokyo Electric Power, Nippon Meat Packers), it was revised again to stipulate management's responsibilities more clearly. Furthermore, in 2004, the code was revised yet again to more strongly emphasize corporate social responsibility (CSR) in response to the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) development of CSR and business ethics standards (Keidanren 2004). Thus, the code's policy newly emphasized environmental protection and decent labor conditions in developing countries. Subsequently, following the final approval of ISO 26000, the Charter of Corporate Code was revised in 2010 to reflect this standard (Keidanren 2010).

As previously noted, in Japan, business practitioners have only relatively recently begun to pay significant attention to business ethics. Some parts of the business ethics policy as proposed by Keidanren reflect traditional Japanese ethical values suggested by Eiichi Shibusawa, such as broad social contributions through business activities. However, most of the policy is a response to repeated corporate scandals and the need to internationalize Japanese firms' business activities. Following Keidanren's effort, Japanese firms started to introduce codes of conduct. Thus, in 2008, 97.8 % of Keidanren member companies had codes of conduct (compared with 79.1 % in 2003) (Nikkeiren 2008).

Keidanren recently proposed a standard of business ethics (i.e., the Charter of Corporate Code) centered on (primarily Western-style) compliance and CSR. Thus, if Keidanren's efforts strongly affect the meaning of ethical leadership, Japanese workers may emphasize aspects of "accountability" and "collective orientation" (Resick et al. 2011) because "accountability" includes compliance, and "collective orientation" includes CSR.

However, Keidanren's policy may not have much influence on practitioners' views of ethical leadership because Keidanren's power base—primarily manufacturers—declined as a result of the rise of the service economy. The number of bankruptcies caused by firms' illegal acts (e.g., window-dressed accounts) has been increasing in Japan (Teikoku Databank 2015), suggesting that Keidanren's policy has yet to become ingrained among Japanese firms. Moreover, during the past several years, corporate scandals have successively occurred at representative Japanese firms (e.g., Toshiba, Asahikaseikenzai). It is possible that some Japanese firms established an ethical code merely to create the appearance of complying with Keidanren's policy. Thus, Keidanren's policy may have little influence on Japanese workers' ethical values.

Considering this context, the meaning of ethical leadership in Japan may or may not be convergent/divergent with respect to the meaning of ethical leadership in other societies. Accordingly, this study investigates the meaning of ethical leadership in Japan using an explorative approach.

Method

Sample and Procedure

This study follows the approach used by Resick et al. (2011). We asked Japanese business managers to describe their concept of ethical/unethical leadership traits and behaviors. These data allow us to identify both Japan-specific as well as common features. While recent cross-cultural work by Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck (2014) on ethical/unethical leadership used samples of business executives, this study uses a broader sample of senior, middle, and entry-level managers, as used by Resick et al. (2011). The participants targeted in this study were Japanese managers (i.e., senior managers, middle managers, and entry-level managers) working in firms in Japan. The term "entry-level managers" here means first-line managers such as site supervisors or team leaders.

We contacted 76 prospective participants; 30 of them were graduate students or graduates of a Master of Business Administration course at a university in Japan. This course is a part-time MBA course targeted at incumbent businesspersons, and thus all graduate students and graduates contacted in this study are incumbent managers of

Table 1 Sample characteristics

	Japan	The United States	Ireland	Germany	The PRC	Hong Kong	Taiwan
n	58	40	29	22	40	31	23
Male (%)	71	63	81	65	63	55	29
Mean age	45	49	43	44	26	34	38
Level							
Senior (%)	17	58	77	43	9	11	24
Middle (%)	61	26	15	26	27	78	41
Entry (%)	22	16	8	26	64	11	35
No response (%)	0	0		5	0	0	0

business firms; 34 were students of an organizational management seminar administered by Japanese private business education institutions, and 12 were sampled using the snowball method through graduate student participants. To exclude the possibility of responses being contaminated by bias and prejudice, we excluded individuals who attended lecture courses on ethical leadership. Following Resick et al. (2011), we designed a four-item, open-response questionnaire. The use of the Google Spreadsheet website allowed the questionnaire to be completed online.

We explained the purpose of this study and provided prospective participants with the URL of the questionnaire either face-to-face or through email. We clearly indicated to them that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Because most participants were acquaintances of the authors, to secure anonymity, we limited the demographic questions to gender, age, and management level.

This study adopted the research method of Resick et al. (2011). Thus, as in Resick et al. (2011), we classified management into three levels: senior, middle, and entry. However, most participants came from different firms, and not all of these firms had a three-stratum structure. In addition, the criteria for the operational definition of top-, middle-, and entry-level management vary considerably across organizational settings (Floyd and Lane 2000). The most rigorous correct definition of management level uses others' (supervisors, peers, subordinates) perceptions of the hierarchical level of a manager through 360-degree ratings. However, because of restrictions in adopting this method, we relied on managers' opinions as the next best way (Edwards and Gill 2012). To facilitate self-evaluation of hierarchical level, we provided examples of titles that typically represent each level in Japanese firms (e.g., *Shikko-Yakuin* and *Honbu-cho* for senior manager; *Bucho, Kacho, Guruupu-cho,* and Manager for middle manager; *Kakari-cho, Shunin, Fukushunin,* and *Chiimu-cho* for entry-level manager).

We received 58 responses from 76 prospective participants (76.3 % response rate). The average total length (i.e., the total of four questions) of responses is 208 words in

English after translation—originally, 529 characters in Japanese.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the sample characteristics with those of Resick et al. (2011). Our sample consists of 10 senior managers (17.2 %), 35 middle managers (60.3 %), and 13 entry-level managers (22.4 %). Compared with the sample in Resick et al. (2011), our sample has a higher ratio of middle managers. In the sample, 41 are male (70.7 %) and 17 are female (29.3 %). Thus, the gender ratio is almost the same as that of the sample in Resick et al. (2011). The average age was 45.2 years, and 27.6 % were in their 30s, 39.7 % were in their 40s, 29.3 % were in their 50s, and 3.4 % were in their 60s. We did not directly collect data on the length of working experience, but all the respondents started their work career at the age of 20–24 and had worked continuously since then. The average ages of senior managers, middle managers, and entry-level managers were 56.1, 46.1, and 38.2 years, respectively.

To reveal the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership in Japan, we compared the results of this study with those of Resick et al. (2011). Because they examined ethical/unethical leadership in various societies and identified broad aspects, we regarded their study as appropriate for comparison.

To achieve comparability, we designed the qualitative research method to be as similar as possible to that of Resick et al. (2011). Thus, using four questions from Resick et al. (2011) with some modifications, we asked participants to use their own words and language to describe actions, attributes, and tendencies that they associate with ethical/unethical leadership (cf. Resick et al. 2011).

The survey questions are as follows:

Q1: Which behaviors and personal characteristics do you associate most closely with ethical leadership in business settings?
Q2: Think about a specific situation where you consider an organizational leader to have demonstrated ethical leadership. Describe this situation and explain why you consider it as ethical leadership.

Q3: Which behaviors and personal characteristics do you associate most closely with unethical leadership in business settings?

Q4: Think about a situation where you consider an organizational leader to have demonstrated unethical leadership. Describe this situation and explain why you consider it as unethical leadership.

We developed these questions in the following way. We made a provisional questionnaire in Japanese using the back-translation method (Brislin 1980). Then, we asked three Japanese practitioners to answer the questions and give some advice to help improve the clarity and readability of the questions. Finally, based on their advice, we made some modifications to render the questions more appropriate for Japanese respondents. Specifically, for Q1 and Q3, we changed the word of "organization" to "business settings" to make the sentences more understandable for Japanese speakers. As for Q2 and Q4, we used "a specific situation" instead of "a situation" to obtain as detailed information as possible. Furthermore, in the latter part of Q2 and Q4, we changed the phrase "why you consider the person to have behaved ethically" into "why you consider it as ethical/unethical leadership" to make the phrase more understandable for Japanese speakers.

Analysis

The data were analyzed by three researchers using the following procedures. First, as the first-order analysis, two researchers read all the responses and then independently grouped similar responses for both ethical and unethical leadership. Then, the two researchers showed the results of the groupings to each other and reviewed and discussed the categories until they reached a final agreement. To maintain the explorative nature of this study, in the first analysis, the two researchers coded the data without referring to the codes in Resick et al. (2011).

Next, regarding the second-order analysis, the two researchers collated the codes that emerged from the first-order analysis using the themes and their definitions from Resick et al. (2011). Then if appropriate, the two researchers integrated many of the initial codes into the themes of Resick et al. (2011). Like the first-order analysis, this integration was also based on discussions and agreements between the two researchers.

Finally, the third researcher read all the responses and definitions of ethical/unethical leadership themes from Resick et al. (2011). Next, he reviewed the results of the second-order analysis, evaluated their validity, and modified them if necessary. Then, the three researchers discussed the results of the third researcher's review and decided on the final codes, with agreements reached on each coding. During this process, the three researchers identified some additional themes that were not found in Resick et al. (2011). In the next section, we explain our results in detail.
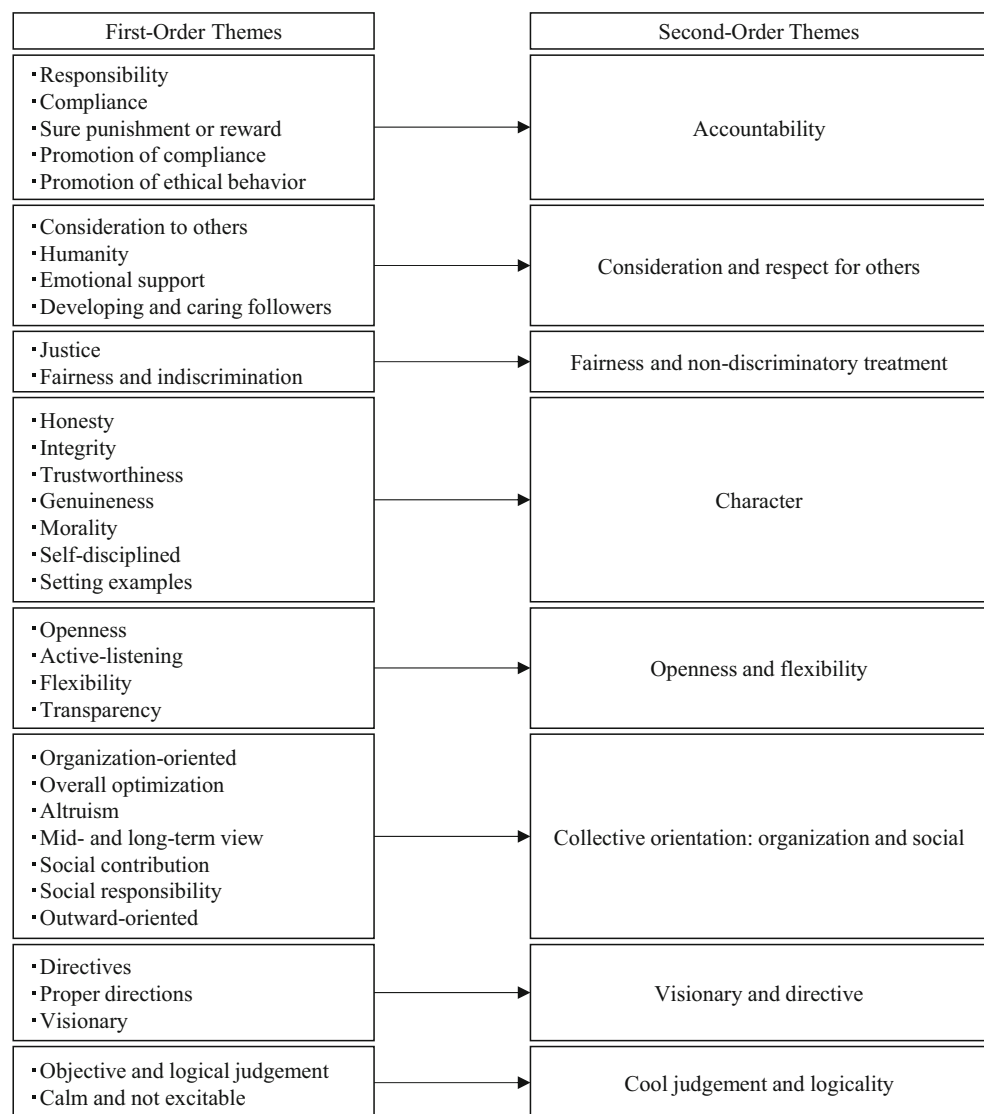
Results

Themes of Ethical Leadership

In the first-order analysis of ethical leadership, we identified 47 codes. In the second- and third- order analyses, we found that 29 of the codes could be integrated into any of the six themes identified in Resick et al. (2011). That is, all six ethical leadership themes identified in Resick et al. (2011) also emerged in this study. In addition, we integrated six of the remaining codes into two additional themes: "Cool judgment and logicality" and "Visionary and directive." Figure 2 shows these eight themes and the corresponding codes identified in the series of analyses. In the following analysis, we did not include codes that could not be integrated into these eight themes. Because fewer than three respondents mentioned all these codes, we regarded this exclusion as reasonable.

Table 2 provides the number and examples of responses for each theme. The most frequently mentioned theme is "Accountability" ($N = 36$, 62.1 %), followed by "Character" ($N = 30$, 51.7 %), "Collective orientation" ($N = 26$, 44.8 %), "Consideration and respect for others" ($N = 18$, 31.0 %), "Openness and flexibility" ($N = 13$, 22.4 %), and "Fairness and non-discriminatory treatment" ($N = 13$, 22.4 %). Two themes not identified in the study of Resick et al. (2011)—Cool judgement and logicality and Visionary and directive—were mentioned less frequently ($N = 12$, 20.7 %).

"Cool judgment and logicality" indicates making decisions calmly, based on logic, and without getting excited, even in the face of an unexpected situation. The following responses reflect this theme.

- "I think we cannot make decisions calmly without sufficient experience and knowledge. In my view, an ethical leader is a manager who can get things done giving followers proper instructions in daily operations."
- "When he/she (an ethical leader) finds followers doing their tasks in ways that can be ethically problematic, he/she deals with the situation without getting emotional. If he/she becomes emotional, the situation will go from bad to worse."
- "[Ethical leaders] are emotional to minor issues and are rational to major ones. Usually, they are in a light-

Fig. 2 Data structure of ethical leadership

First-Order Themes	Second-Order Themes
·Responsibility ·Compliance ·Sure punishment or reward ·Promotion of compliance ·Promotion of ethical behavior	Accountability
·Consideration to others ·Humanity ·Emotional support ·Developing and caring followers	Consideration and respect for others
·Justice ·Fairness and indiscrimination	Fairness and non-discriminatory treatment
·Honesty ·Integrity ·Trustworthiness ·Genuineness ·Morality ·Self-disciplined ·Setting examples	Character
·Openness ·Active-listening ·Flexibility ·Transparency	Openness and flexibility
·Organization-oriented ·Overall optimization ·Altruism ·Mid- and long-term view ·Social contribution ·Social responsibility ·Outward-oriented	Collective orientation: organization and social
·Directives ·Proper directions ·Visionary	Visionary and directive
·Objective and logical judgement ·Calm and not excitable	Cool judgement and logicality

hearted manner but deal with issues logically when the rubber hits the road."

"Visionary and directive" indicates showing a clear medium- and long-term vision and directions to followers through objective judgment and evidence. The following responses reflect this theme.

- "[An ethical leader] gives us directions with objective consideration of various information, such as our company's policy, customers' situation, salespersons' opinion, and what they think and feel."
- "[An ethical leader] can show us directions at the critical moment, and instruct followers on how to act to achieve the objective."
- "[An ethical leader] clearly tells the policy (goals and objectives) to all members to make them face the same direction. He/she speaks in words of his/her own."

These responses imply that ethical leaders should articulate their vision and directions for improving organizational performance.

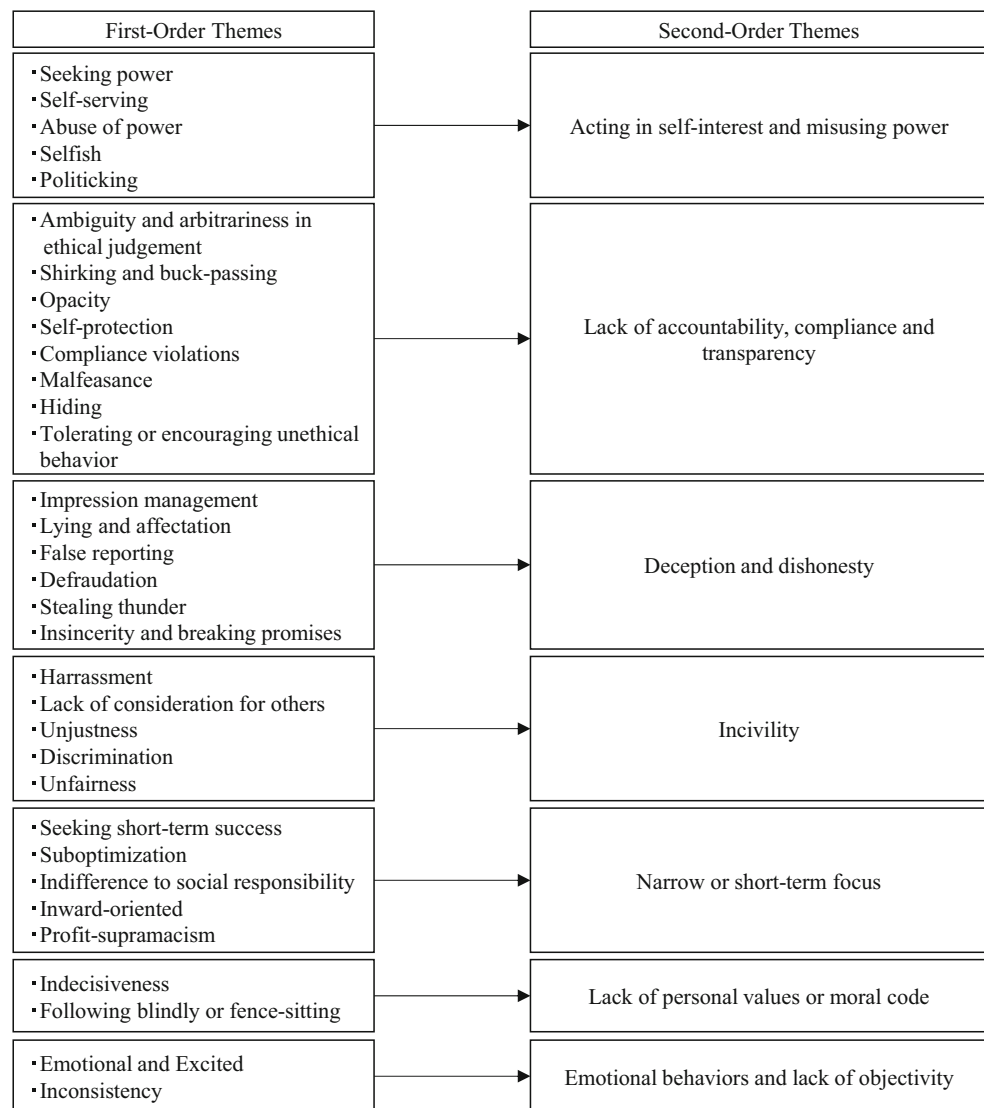### Themes of Unethical Leadership

In the first-order analysis of unethical leadership, we identified 42 codes. In the second- and third- order analyses, we found that 31 codes could be integrated into any of the six themes from Resick et al. (2011). That is, all six themes of unethical leadership identified in Resick et al. (2011) also emerged in our study. Although we identified an additional theme—Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity—few respondents mentioned this theme. We also found some codes that could not be integrated into the seven themes previously mentioned, but we did not include them in the subsequent analysis because only a few

Table 2 Dominant themes of ethical leadership and examples

Theme	Total	%	Examples
Accountability	36	62.1	• Amends the organization's and/or the team's policies and behaviors and leads them in the right directions when he/she finds that policies and actual behaviors are not "right" regarding social standpoints or compliance
			• Understands the meaning of corporate compliance and takes a lead in behaving along with it. Furthermore, establishes the code of conducts and makes employees behave along with it
			• Always works with a sense of responsibility for the firm and the society
Character	30	51.7	• Makes me feel that I won't go in the wrong directions if I follow him/her. Gives me a sense of security
			• Not being lazy or inertia. Behaving with consideration of what is sincere to the organization
			• Address matters that we can judge as "against reason," even if they are not articulated in rules and regulations. Not leaves them prioritizing his/her own convenience
Collective orientation: organization and social	26	44.8	• Considers the whole organization's interest. Not makes judgements for his/her own self-interest
			• On the basis of ethical standard, actively address business that can make significant contributions to people and society. Even if it may not be so profitable
			• Gives priority to what the firm should be or what a person should be rather than how much profit it makes
Consideration and respect for others	18	31.0	• One who never forgets consideration for others
			• Can be thoughtful of others' feeling and situations
			• Confronts severe troubles and complaints in the team. Not escapes. Addresses them with a sense of responsibility by thinking and behaving with followers, supporting followers, trying to resolve using his/her own network. And as a result, contributes to developing followers
Openness and flexibility	13	22.4	• Has individual meetings with rank-and-filers as well as managers to take their opinions into consideration in the case of significant decision makings. Listens to broader people rather than only to few people with loud voices
			• Proactively communicate with followers. Sets up a channel for drawing up employees' opinions, reflects them on actual practices for improvement
			• In the case of a non-routine decision, he/she has open discussions and makes decisions creating shared recognition of associated risks. He/she puts the issue on the table t o enable others to understand the basis for judgment. Not decides at his/her own discretion or "with closed doors"
Fairness and non-discriminatory treatment	13	22.4	• Consistent in evaluating other's decision as right or not
			• Makes fair judgements and interacts with others without discriminations and prejudices
			• Has same (consistent) axes for decision making, and makes fair judgements on members' claims
Cool judgement and logicality	12	20.7	• I think we cannot make decision calmly without sufficient experience and knowledge. In my view, an ethical leader is a manager who can get things done giving followers proper instructions in daily operations
			• When he/she (an ethical leader) finds followers doing their tasks in ways that can be ethically problematic, he/she deals with the situation without getting emotional. If he/she becomes emotional, the situation will go from bad t o worse
			• Are emotional to minor issues, and are rational to major ones. Usually, they are in a light-hearted manner but deal with issues logically when the rubber hit s the road
Visionary and directive	12	20.7	• Gives us directions with objective consideration of various information such as our company's policy, customers' situation, salespersons' opinion, and what they thinks and feels
			• Can show us directions at the critical moment, and instruct followers on how to act to achieve the objective
			• Clearly tells the policy (goals and objectives) to all members so as to make them face the same direction. He/she speaks in words of his/her own

respondents (i.e., fewer than three) referred to them. Figure 3 displays these seven themes and the corresponding codes identified in the series of analyses.

Table 3 presents the number and examples of responses for each theme. The most frequently mentioned theme is "Lack of accountability, compliance, and transparency"

Fig. 3 Data structure of unethical leadership

First-Order Themes	Second-Order Themes
· Seeking power · Self-serving · Abuse of power · Selfish · Politicking	Acting in self-interest and misusing power
· Ambiguity and arbitrariness in ethical judgement · Shirking and buck-passing · Opacity · Self-protection · Compliance violations · Malfeasance · Hiding · Tolerating or encouraging unethical behavior	Lack of accountability, compliance and transparency
· Impression management · Lying and affectation · False reporting · Defraudation · Stealing thunder · Insincerity and breaking promises	Deception and dishonesty
· Harrassment · Lack of consideration for others · Unjustness · Discrimination · Unfairness	Incivility
· Seeking short-term success · Suboptimization · Indifference to social responsibility · Inward-oriented · Profit-supramacism	Narrow or short-term focus
· Indecisiveness · Following blindly or fence-sitting	Lack of personal values or moral code
· Emotional and Excited · Inconsistency	Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity

($N = 30$, 51.7 %), followed by "Acting in self-interest and misusing power" ($N = 28$, 48.3 %), "Narrow or short-term focus" ($N = 18$, 31.0 %), "Incivility" ($N = 17$, 29.3 %), and "Deception and dishonesty" ($N = 13$, 22.4 %). We found only five answers that could be categorized into the theme of "Lack of personal values or moral code." "Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity," the newly identified theme, was less frequently mentioned ($N = 7$, 12.1 %). "Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity" is the opposite pole of "Cool judgement and logicality," with the former indicating making decisions based upon transient emotions or self-interest, without logical or objective thinking. The following responses reflect this theme.

- "[An unethical leader] judges right and wrong emotionally or off the cuff. His/her directions depend on

their transient emotions or passing whim. He/she lacks in consistency."

- "Their decision criteria vary with their transient emotion and personal likes and dislikes. From an objective viewpoint, they lack in rationality and consistency. They don't have actual transparency."

- "Easily getting emotional, which finally leads to getting involved in violation of laws such as window-dressing of accounts. If they think calmly, they can easily know that such violation is not cost effective."

Comparison with Other Countries

Table 4 presents a comparison of the results from Japan and the other six countries (i.e., the results of Resick et al. 2011). Regarding ethical leadership, the Japanese sample

Table 3 Dominant themes of unethical leadership and examples

Theme	Total	%	Examples
Lack of accountability, compliance, and transparency	30	51.7	• Always shirking from difficult tasks, claims, and troubles. Even if being consulted by followers, before everything, he/she tries to shirk responsibility. Sometimes delays resolution, or blames subordinates for his/her own failure
			• Obviously violates laws such as The Antitrust Laws or The Act on Fair Trade
			• Turns a blind eye to unethical behaviors inside or outside of the firm
Acting in self-interest and misusing power	28	48.3	• Willing to violate rules if it leads his/her own interest
			• Plotting to take all the outcomes generated by members for himself/herself
			• Thinks and acts prioritizing their own interest
Narrow or short-term focus	18	31.0	• Puts the firm's or team's goal achievement first while behaves anyhow and everyhow, and urges followers
			• Gives priority to the firm's profit-making light of consumer's safety and neglecting social responsibility
			• Tell followers to do everything to achieve sales goal achievement
Incivility	17	29.3	• Does undesirable things that are not obviously illegal, such as minor harassments
			• Yells for failure in work with no mercy. Not considering the others
			• Favors those who comply with what he/she does and says
Deception and dishonesty	13	22.4	• Distorts the results and facts to show them even better to clients and followers
			• Does not keep promises
			• Tells followers to manipulate the data which shows harmful effects on public health and safety. He/she hides data of soil pollution
Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity	7	12.1	• Judges right and wrong emotionally or off the cuff. His/her directions depend on his/her transient emotions or passing whim. He/she lacks consistency
			• Their decision criteria vary with their transient emotion and personal likes and dislikes. From an objective viewpoint, they lack in rationality and coherence. They don't have actual transparency
			• Easily getting emotional, and which finally leads to getting involved in a violation of Laws such as window-dressing of accounts. If they think calmly, they can easily know that such a violation is not cost effective
Lack of personal values or moral code	5	8.6	• Being dependent. They are indecisive and likely to side with the majority
			• Leaders who tend to be influenced by their boss or surrounding work environment. They do not have their own policy and echoes their boss's idea. They change their opinion according to the person whom they are speaking
			• Does not have stable axes for decision making. He/she does not kick against the pricks, rather follows the powerful others around like a shadow

shows the highest percentage for "Accountability" out of the seven countries (62.1 %). In contrast, Japan ranked the lowest in "Consideration and respect for others" (31.0 %) and the second lowest in "Character" (51.7 %). Other themes are at approximately intermediate levels. Regarding unethical leadership, the Japanese sample indicates the highest percentage out of the seven countries in "Lack of accountability, compliance, and transparency" (51.7 %). In contrast, the Japanese sample shows the lowest percentage in "Deception and dishonesty" (22.4 %) and "Lack of personal values or moral code" (8.6 %). "Incivility" is also the lowest (29.3 %), but its percentage does not greatly differ from that of the second lowest country (i.e., the United States, 35.9 %). Other themes are at approximately intermediate levels.

In summary, the results of our ethical leadership survey and comparison with the results of Resick et al. (2011) indicate both uniqueness and commonality between Japan and the other six countries. That is, although Japan and the other six countries share the six main themes identified by Resick et al. (2011), the Japanese sample indicated a higher frequency for "Accountability" and a lower frequency for "Consideration and respect for others." we also identified two themes of "Cool judgement and logicality" and "Visionary and directive" that were not identified in the study of Resick et al. (2011). Regarding unethical leadership, we found a certain level of convergence in that most of the main themes also dominate in Japan. The Japanese sample indicated a higher frequency of "Lack of accountability, compliance, and transparency" and a lower frequency of

Table 4 Themes across Societies

	The United States		Ireland		Germany		PRC		Hong Kong		Taiwan		Japan	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Ethical leadership														
Accountability	17	42.5	15	51.7	7	31.8	16	40.0	8	25.8	13	56.5	36	62.1
Consideration and respect for others	16	40.0	10	34.5	16	72.7	29	72.5	16	51.6	10	43.5	18	31.0
Fairness and non-discriminatory	10	25.0	8	27.6	10	45.5	20	50.0	5	16.1	6	26.1	13	22.4
Character	36	90.0	23	79.3	11	50.0	21	52.5	17	54.8	16	69.6	30	51.7
Collective orientation—organizational and social	14	35.0	11	37.9	14	63.6	16	40.0	16	51.6	5	21.7	26	44.8
Openness and flexibility	12	30.0	11	37.9	4	18.2	8	20.0	4	12.9	2	8.7	13	22.4
N	40		29		22		40		31		23		58	
Unethical leadership														
Acting in self-interest and misusing power	22	56.4	12	46.2	16	76.2	24	63.2	12	41.4	11	68.8	28	48.3
Deception and dishonesty	30	76.9	16	61.5	9	42.9	12	31.6	14	48.3	7	43.8	13	22.4
Lack of accountability, compliance, or transparency	15	38.5	8	30.8	7	33.3	10	26.3	11	37.9	5	31.3	30	51.7
Lack of personal values or moral code	10	25.6	11	42.3	4	19.0	13	34.2	5	17.2	7	43.8	5	8.6
Incivility	14	35.9	12	46.2	18	85.7	30	78.9	17	58.6	6	37.5	17	29.3
Narrow or short-term focus	36	92.3	8	30.8	3	14.3	11	28.9	11	37.9	3	18.8	18	31.0
N	39		26		21		38		29		16		58	

Comparison with the data of Resick et al. (2011)

The data for the US, Ireland, Germany, PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are from Resick et al. (2011)

"Deception and dishonesty" and "Lack of personal values or moral code." We identified a theme of "Emotional behaviors and lack of objectivity" that were not identified in the study of Resick et al. (2011); however, the number of respondents who mentioned this theme was relatively low. Our results showed that compared with other countries, Japanese responses were relatively concentrated in accountability-related aspects of ethical/unethical leadership.

Discussion

Following the approach by Resick et al. (2011), this study explored ways in which Japanese business managers view ethical/unethical leadership. The results showed both commonalities and differences between Japan and other countries (i.e., the United States, Ireland, Germany, PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan).

According to the GLOBE data, Japanese culture is characterized by high levels of future orientation and institutional collectivism and low levels of performance orientation, assertiveness, and uncertainty avoidance. Thus, as previously noted, we surmised that Japanese managers emphasize "collective orientation" in the meaning of

ethical leadership and that they emphasize "acting in self-interest and misusing power" and "narrow or short-term focus" in the meaning of unethical leadership. However, our data did not support these assumptions. The percentages of "collective orientation" and "narrow or short-term focus" in Japan were not much higher than those in other Eastern and Western countries. Further, compared with other countries, the percentage of "acting in self-interest and misusing power" in Japan was relatively low. These results suggest that the uniqueness of Japan in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership is not reflected in GLOBE's dimensions of societal culture. Rather, an analysis through the lens of the GLOBE dimensions suggests convergence across societies. This finding is largely consistent with that of Resick et al. (2011).

Japan's most notable feature is that Japanese managers mentioned accountability-related themes (i.e., "Accountability" in ethical and "Lack of accountability, compliance, and transparency" in unethical leadership) more frequently than managers in other countries. This tendency may reflect the development process of the concept of business ethics in modern Japan. As previously noted, business ethics in modern Japan have been promoted as a response to successive corporate scandals and means to catch up with global compliance standards. For this reason,

Japanese managers might emphasize leaders' adherence to compliance as an element of ethical leadership.

Another feature of Japanese conceptions of ethical leadership is that Japanese managers mentioned "Consideration and respect for others" less frequently than did managers from other countries. However, this result does not enable us to conclude that consideration and respect for others are not important in Japan. It is possible that this result is an indication of the fact that Japanese managers take for granted that leaders will act with "consideration and respect for others" rather than seeing these traits as a discrete element of ethical leadership. This is supported by previous studies that have regarded treating others with compassion (Kitayama et al. 1997), caring for other's face (Lin and Yamaguchi 2011), and valuing harmonious relationships (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Rao et al. 1997) as characteristics of Japanese culture. Therefore, we cannot conclude that Japanese managers are indifferent to leaders' "consideration and respect for others."

Moreover, we identified two ethical leadership themes that were not identified in Resick et al. (2011): "Cool judgment and logicality" and "Visionary and directive." The theme "Cool judgment and logicality" may reflect the tendency of people in Japanese business society to see an explicit expression of anger as undesirable (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Such a tendency might be attributed to the Japanese-specific view of "self." In Japanese society, "self" does not exist within oneself but in interdependence between actors to be maintained; thus, people tend to see self-restraint as an appropriate behavior of socially mature adults (Hamaguchi 1985). This evidence is consistent with Japanese traditional image of desirable leaders (Nishigori et al. 2014; Nitobe 1904).

"Cool judgment and logicality" and "moderation orientation" identified by Eisenbeiss (2012) overlap in that both of them include self-restraint but are not equivalent. While "moderation orientation" represents temperance and humility as critical virtues, "cool judgement and logicality" includes not only calmness but also decisiveness (with logicality) in unexpected situations. This aspect is consistent with an earlier finding that due to high uncertainty avoidance, employees in Japan prefer decisive leaders in crisis situations (Haruta and Hallahan 2003). Moreover, a recent upsurge in popular disapproval of political leaders who lack composure and engage in self-serving manipulation (Mulgan 2000; Nakamura and Kikuchi 2011) may have created high expectations among individuals for calm and decisive leaders. Although we cannot determine whether it is derived from a cultural or trend factor, this ethical leadership theme may be Japan-specific or more salient in Japan than in other Eastern as well as Western countries.

"Visionary and directive" is similar to "charismatic inspiration," identified as a dimension of ethical leadership in the study by Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck (2014). Both include visionary leadership as a characteristic of transformational leadership (Avolio et al. 1999). However, while the core of "charismatic inspiration" is leaders' charisma (Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014), none of the respondents who referred to the "visionary and directive" aspect used the words "charisma" or "charismatic." Rather, they emphasized that ethical leaders should articulate their vision and direction based on "objective judgement" and "evidence."

The emphasis on this theme in Japan is consistent with arguments that the Japanese attach much value to transformational leadership (Jung et al. 1995). It is also in line with recent evidence that visionary leaders enhance followers' job satisfaction in Japanese firms (Kimura 2012). Although empirical studies showed that transformational leadership is especially effective in societies with high collectivism and high power distance [e.g., Japan and China (Jung and Avolio 1999; Kirkman et al. 2009; Pillai et al. 1999)], this aspect did not emerge in the Chinese sample of Resick et al. (2011). This theme may be salient in Japan, where people value lifelong, continuous learning and intellectual stimulation (Yokochi 1989 cited in Jung et al. 1995) because providing medium- to long-term vision and direction with intellectual insight is consistent with such values. Moreover, the emergence of this theme in this study may reflect a sense of deficiency in such leaders in Japanese society.

However, it should be noted that the theme may not be unique to the Japanese context but may reflect general aspects of ethical leadership that have not received much attention in the literature. The empirical findings of Kalshoven et al. (2011) indicated a high positive correlation between ethical leadership and transformational leadership. Moreover, as previously noted, the empirical finding of Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck (2014) indicated that in various cultural contexts, visionary leaders are sometimes viewed as ethical leaders. Although being visionary and directive may appear unrelated to ethical leadership, such features may be viewed as the antithesis of leaders who seek short-term profits and self-interest without articulating a vision and direction to followers (i.e., a type of unethical leader). Further, although "being ethical" does not necessarily indicate "being transformational," leaders may need to be ethical to be considered truly transformational (Bass and Steidlmeier 1999). Therefore, regardless of their conceptual distinctiveness, some practitioners may view "being transformational and visionary" and "being ethical" as leadership traits falling under the same umbrella of "ethical leadership."

Regarding unethical leadership, Japanese managers' responses were relatively concentrated on the theme of "Lack of accountability, compliance, or transparency."

However, in contrast, two of the six main themes (i.e., "Deception and dishonesty" and "Lack of personal values or moral code") were less frequently noted by Japanese managers. As previously mentioned, this result may be partly attributable to the recent historical background of business ethics in Japan. Another interpretation is that the Japanese may tend to view unethical leadership behavior from a relatively narrower perspective, which may reflect the fact that the concept of business ethics was introduced relatively late in Japan compared with other developed countries.

Theoretical Implications

This study suggests both convergence and divergence in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership between Japan and other countries. This study replicated the findings of Resick et al. (2011) in the Japanese context, suggesting convergence in the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership. Specifically, the results showed that the fundamental elements of ethical/unethical leadership found in Western and other Eastern societies are also found in Japan. Thus, our findings endorse the concept that the current conceptualization and theorization of ethical leadership is worth an extension to a wider range of societies. While previous studies acknowledged that national cultures could affect perceptions of business ethics (Sim and Gegez 2004; Stajkovic and Luthans 1997), this study further confirms that the statement "What is ethical/unethical leadership" is, at least in part, different across countries. This endorsement is consistent with the finding by Lee and Yoshikawa (1997) regarding the convergence of general beliefs and divergence of minor business ethics problems.

Regarding divergence, our results primarily indicate a distinctiveness that may be explained through institutional perspectives. Specifically, the finding that Japanese managers mentioned accountability-related themes more frequently than did managers in other countries may reflect the influence of Keidanren's institutional efforts, which aimed to instill a compliance practice in Japanese business society. In contrast, the results did not reflect our assumption regarding the cultural contingency of ethical/unethical leadership based on GLOBE's dimensions.

Our findings suggest that when conducting international comparative studies on ethical leadership, researchers must consider the concepts of institutional pressure (DiMaggio and Powel 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977) and diffusion of practice (Ansari et al. 2010). Many international comparative studies on leadership analyzed the influence of culture based on the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1980), such as individualism–collectivism and power distance (Li et al. 2013; Gelfand et al. 2007 for review). In contrast, academic arguments on Japanese business ethics

were primarily based on traditional Japanese religious outlooks. However, the respondents in this study did not use symbolic words drawn from the traditional Japanese view of ethics, such as "on," "giri," and "ninjo" (Wargo 1990), to describe ethical/unethical leadership. Rather, the data showed the influence of ethical standards articulated by Keidanren on Japanese practitioners' view of ethical/unethical leadership.

As previously noted, in Japan, growth in the awareness of business ethics was ignited by the publication of the Charter of Corporate Code in 1991. After the 1990s, many large Japanese public firms introduced codes of ethics and ethics committees. We could regard this movement as a change caused by institutional pressure. However, we suspect that in some firms, these practices may remain superficial efforts that only emulate other firms' practices and have no substantive effect because corporate scandals continue to occur in large firms. Alternatively, for firms that followed Keidanren's policy, the introduction of ethics-related practices was a kind of emulative management innovation (Birkinshaw et al. 2008) or adoptive management innovation (Lin and Su 2014; Vaccaro et al. 2012). Moreover, recent topical corporate scandals (e.g., scandals at Novartis Pharma K.K., Olympus, and Tokyo Electric Power Company) may strengthen the attention to compliance as an aspect of ethical leadership. We emphasize that regardless of whether they represent superficial fashions or true innovation, management trends may influence the interpretation of traits signifying ethical/unethical leadership. Thus, some elements of the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership may change over time even in the same society.

This study further identified some themes of ethical/unethical leadership that did not emerge in Resick et al. (2011). They are not included in the Chinese-specific measure of moral leadership developed by Chen et al. (2014). Therefore, the new themes may reflect Japanese-specific aspects of ethical leadership that differ not only from those of Western societies but also from those found in other Eastern countries. However, as noted above, the two ethical leadership themes that were not identified in the study of Resick et al. (2011) (i.e., "cool judgement and logicality" and "visionary and directive") have overlaps as well as differences with the dimension of ethical leadership identified in previous studies (Eisenbeiss 2002; Eisenbeiβ and Brodbeck 2014). Therefore, while these themes may be reflections of Japanese culture, we cannot eliminate the possibility that they are general elements of ethical and unethical leadership.

Moreover, our results suggest that followers' perceptions of ethical leadership are not limited to ethic-related elements. The identification of "cool judgment and logicality" and its flip side, "emotional behaviors and lack of

objectivity," indicates that leaders' mental stability affects followers' perception of ethical leadership—possibly in particular situations such as an economic crisis or moral dilemma. Regarding a leader being "visionary and directive," it can be argued that because an ethical leader also tends to be a transformational leader (Kalshoven et al. 2011), both leadership behaviors may be perceived as aspects of a larger construct (i.e., excellent leadership). Being "visionary" or "transformational" does not mean being ethical, but some Japanese practitioners regard these traits as indicators of ethical leadership. Thus, we state that some elements that are not directly related to ethics can affect followers' perceptions of ethical leadership. This argument is worthy of further exploration and extension in future research.

Practical Implications

The convergence and divergence of the meaning of ethical leadership found between Japanese and other societies in this study suggest that firms operating in various societies need to understand each society's context of ethical leadership. For example, our findings on unethical leadership suggest that relative to leaders working in other countries, those working in Japan face a more significant risk of being viewed as unethical when they are perceived as lacking accountability, compliance, or transparency. Thus, leaders working in Japan need to pay significant attention to their behavior in terms of these traits. Moreover, because of the importance of followers' attribution (Kelly and Michela 1980), leaders working in Japan should clearly present themselves to audiences as being accountable to be perceived as ethical.

Furthermore, our findings suggest the influence of modern management trends on individual-level conceptions of ethical leaders. Our analysis of the Japanese sample revealed the same main themes as found in other countries, indicating that stable, general elements may exist in ethical leadership. However, as previously noted, current management trends can affect what people consider ethically important. Our results may reflect the management trend of firms introducing compliance-centered ethics-related practices shaped by Keidanren's policy. In addition, new ethics-related trends may affect individuals' interpretation of what constitutes ethical/unethical leadership.

Our findings on Japanese features of ethical leadership have practical implications not only for Japanese workers but also for non-Japanese workers in Japanese firms as well. In recent times, due to global business development and a talent shortage, Japanese firms have actively recruited foreign students—especially from Asian emerging countries (DISCO 2015). Thus, Japan will increase its importance as a place where young workers from emerging countries develop their careers. To successfully develop a managerial career, it is important for such immigrants to understand Japanese perceptions regarding ethical leadership. In addition, firms that run subsidiaries in Japan and manage Japanese employees need to recognize the Japanese features of ethical/unethical leadership revealed in this study. Moreover, to successfully develop joint ventures with Japanese firms, one needs to have knowledge about ethical leadership in the Japanese context.

Limitations and Future Research

Our research has some limitations. The first limitation is its sample size, which is relatively small for generalizing the empirical findings, even though it is larger than that of each society in Resick et al. (2011). In addition, similar to Resick et al. (2011), the sample is selective and qualitative data are not as rich as those used by Treviño et al. (2003). Due to data limitations, we could not determine if the themes that emerged in this study but which were not identified in the study by Resick et al. (2011) can be considered Japanese-specific or general elements also found in recent studies (Eisenbeiss 2012; Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014). Future research can benefit from a larger sample and in-depth qualitative studies.

However, adoption of this method enabled us to compare our results with those of Resick et al. (2011). Moreover, the use of written accounts offers an advantage in that it is less subject to the researcher's interpersonal influences (Koerner 2014). Because of the nature of the topic (i.e., ethical/unethical leadership), participants may have been reluctant to candidly tell their stories in face-to-face interviews for fear of a leak of official secrets and reputational risk. This problem was serious because some respondents (or their superiors) are prominent business leaders in Japan. Therefore, we believe that the use of written accounts allowed us to obtain candid responses from the participants.

Moreover, the majority of our respondents are middle managers, which may create bias in our results. The fact that a compliance-oriented view rather than a value-oriented view (Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014) of ethical leadership occupied a large part of the results may reflect the characteristics of our sample (i.e., primarily middle managers and a few senior managers). While a compliance-oriented view represents leaders' adherence to laws, rules, and regulations, a value-oriented view assumes a higher stage of moral development (Kohlberg and Hersh 1977) and, thus, leaders' reliance on their own principles to allow them to transcend the respective law, rules, and regulations for the greater good (Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck 2014). From the viewpoint of leadership skill development, expert leaders are differentiated from intermediate-level leaders in that the former

tend to find deeper, more principled definitions of problems, which may involve a greater understanding of the factors defining the situational contingencies (Lord and Hall 2005). Thus, compared with intermediate-level leaders, expert leaders may be more likely to rely on their own principles in the face of ethical dilemmas. In general, senior managers are in a higher stage of leadership skill and moral development than middle managers. Therefore, senior managers may be more likely to have a value-oriented view than middle managers. However, given the small sample size, we cannot statistically compare response tendencies across management levels.

Furthermore, the language primarily used in each country may affect the cultural specificity of ethical/unethical leadership. In the context of this study, we may need to consider the relationship between "ethical" and "rinriteki," a Japanese word typically used as a translation of "ethical." Because the translation cannot frequently fully replicate the meaning of the original word, "rinriteki" may have certain nuances that differ from those conveyed by the use of the word "ethical." Thus, different meanings or nuances may be attributed to the concept of an ethical/unethical leadership in other non-English-speaking societies. Researchers need to consider this effect when conducting research in non-English-speaking societies.

Because this study revealed commonalities in managers' views on ethical leadership between Japan and other Eastern and Western countries, future studies may conduct quantitative research on ethical leadership in Japan through ethical leadership measures used and validated in other countries. Although this study shows the possibility of institutional and cultural effects on the meaning of ethical/unethical leadership, it does not allow their relative effects to be determined. Future international comparative studies using quantitative methods can help reveal the degree of cultural effects on the meaning, antecedents, and outcomes of ethical leadership across societies.

We relied on the research method of Resick et al. (2011) to reveal Japanese managers' views on ethical/unethical leadership and found commonalities with other societies as well as Japanese-specific elements. This finding endorses the usefulness of Resick et al.'s (2011) methodology in revealing the country-specific nature of ethical/unethical leadership. Therefore, future research can apply this approach to investigate ethical/unethical leadership in other countries and other cultural clusters.

Conclusion

This study revealed Japanese managers' views on ethical/unethical leadership. In addition, we compared our results with those of other countries from previous studies. Then,

we found both commonalities and differences in managers' views on ethical/unethical leadership between Japan and other countries.

The main themes identified in Western and other Eastern countries were also found in Japan. Our results may suggest that research approaches and methods used to examine ethical/unethical leadership used in other countries can be applied in the Japanese context although the existence of the context-specific nature of ethical/unethical leadership should be acknowledged.

Moreover, our results suggested that an ongoing and, thus, volatile social context and a relatively stable cultural context can affect individuals' views of ethical/unethical leadership. Therefore, to be perceived as an ethical leader, one needs to consider not only general and stable ethical principles but also ongoing ethics-related social contexts.

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