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**Role of Ethical Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Citizenship
Behavior: Evidence from the Japan**

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Abstract

Purpose: To aim of the study was to analyze the role of ethical leadership in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior: evidence from the Japan.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study found that ethical leadership positively impacts organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in Japan. Leaders who demonstrate integrity and fairness foster trust, encouraging employees to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization. Ethical leadership strengthens organizational culture and motivates employees to exceed job expectations, enhancing overall performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social exchange Theory (SET), transformational leadership theory & ethical leadership theory may be used to anchor future studies on the role of ethical leadership in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior: evidence from the Japan. In practice, the study highlights the importance of integrating ethical leadership into organizational cultures to enhance OCB. Japanese companies should prioritize ethical leadership development programs aimed at fostering leadership behaviors such as honesty, transparency, and accountability. From a policy perspective, the study provides insights for policymakers in Japan to implement organizational and corporate governance policies that emphasize ethical leadership as a key driver of positive employee behavior. Policymakers should encourage regulations that incentivize ethical practices within corporate settings, thereby promoting a culture of responsibility and integrity.

Keywords: *Ethical Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior*

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INTRODUCTION

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary, extra-role behaviors exhibited by employees that contribute to the overall effectiveness of an organization, beyond their formal job requirements. These behaviors include acts like helping colleagues, showing initiative, and promoting a positive work environment. OCB is often linked to higher job satisfaction, enhanced organizational performance, and improved team dynamics. Research indicates that OCB is particularly beneficial in environments that require collaboration and adaptability, such as in multinational companies or fast-paced industries. According to a study by Podsakoff (2019), OCB is a significant predictor of both individual and organizational success, as employees who engage in OCB tend to promote a culture of cooperation and shared responsibility.

In Canada, OCB is increasingly linked to enhanced organizational performance in sectors such as healthcare and technology. A 2021 study by Scott and Lemoine (2021) found that 78% of employees in Canadian healthcare institutions engage in OCB, with acts such as volunteering for extra shifts or helping coworkers often cited as factors that contribute to high patient satisfaction and operational efficiency. This behavior is seen as crucial in maintaining smooth operations in high-pressure environments like hospitals, where collaboration and mutual support are essential. In Sweden, research indicates that OCB is particularly prevalent in the technology sector, with a 2020 study reporting that 83% of employees engage in helping others with tasks outside their job description (Andersson & Eriksson, 2020). This behavior fosters innovation and knowledge sharing, critical for Sweden's leadership in technological advancements. Employees who engage in OCB in Sweden report higher job satisfaction, and companies that encourage OCB experience a 12% improvement in performance metrics like project completion rates and employee retention.

In developed economies like the USA and Japan, OCB is frequently observed in the corporate sector. For instance, in the USA, a study found that approximately 85% of employees engage in some form of OCB, contributing to improved team collaboration and organizational performance (Lee, 2020). In Japan, OCB is deeply embedded in the work culture, with behaviors like helping others and going beyond the call of duty often seen as essential to career progression. According to a survey by the Japan Management Association (2021), 79% of workers reported engaging in OCB, which is linked to high organizational commitment and job satisfaction. These behaviors are most prominent in industries like technology and manufacturing, where teamwork and innovation are critical to business success. As a result, organizations in these countries benefit from higher employee engagement and productivity, with some companies reporting a 10-15% increase in overall performance linked to OCB (O'Reilly, 2019).

In developing economies like India and Brazil, OCB also plays a crucial role in organizational success, although the extent of its prevalence varies due to differing cultural and economic contexts. In India, a 2018 study found that 68% of employees exhibited OCB, with behaviors such as helping colleagues and suggesting improvements being particularly common in the IT and manufacturing sectors (Sharma & Agarwal, 2018). In Brazil, OCB is encouraged through informal networks and personal relationships at work, with 72% of employees in the services industry reporting positive engagement with OCB (Silva, 2017). However, challenges such as job insecurity and income disparity may limit OCB in some sectors. Despite these barriers, organizations that actively promote OCB often see improved teamwork and customer satisfaction, as demonstrated by a 12% rise in customer retention rates in Brazilian retail chains (Barros, 2019).

In China, OCB is influenced by cultural norms that emphasize collectivism and teamwork. A study by Zhang (2018) found that over 80% of employees in Chinese manufacturing firms exhibited OCB, particularly behaviors that align with organizational goals such as offering help to colleagues and actively contributing to team efforts. The study highlighted that OCB in China is directly linked to improved performance in manufacturing, contributing to a 15% rise in production output. Similarly, in Mexico, OCB plays a significant role in both private and public sectors. A 2019 survey by Herrera and Martinez (2019) revealed that 74% of employees engage in OCB, particularly in terms of helping coworkers and voluntarily taking on extra responsibilities. These actions are attributed to the collective culture and strong relationships within Mexican workplaces. Research shows that organizations in Mexico that foster OCB see a 10% increase in customer satisfaction and a 6% decrease in turnover rates in industries such as retail and tourism.

In Sub-Saharan economies, such as Kenya and Nigeria, OCB is still developing as a concept, but its presence is increasingly felt in more progressive industries. In Kenya, a 2020 survey found that 60% of employees in the banking sector exhibited behaviors like helping colleagues and volunteering for extra work (Ngugi & Kiiru, 2020). Similarly, in Nigeria, a study by Okafor et al. (2018) showed that OCB is vital in the oil and gas sector, with 65% of employees reporting positive engagement in extra-role activities. These behaviors have been linked to organizational growth, particularly in sectors where collaboration and trust are necessary for operations in the face of external challenges. Despite economic instability, OCB has helped organizations in Sub-Saharan economies maintain resilience, with companies reporting a 14% increase in operational efficiency attributed to employees' extra-role efforts (Olawale, 2019).

In South Africa, OCB is becoming more common in the corporate sector as companies adopt international best practices. A 2020 study by Mokoena (2020) found that 69% of employees in South African banks exhibit OCB, with behaviors such as assisting colleagues with difficult tasks and suggesting improvements for workplace processes. These behaviors are associated with higher levels of organizational trust and employee morale, which, in turn, contribute to a 9% increase in customer retention. In Ghana, OCB is particularly noticeable in NGOs and social enterprises, where employees often go beyond their job roles to meet organizational goals. A 2021 survey by Osei and Amankwah (2021) showed that 71% of employees in Ghana's social sector engage in OCB, including offering assistance to community projects and staying late to ensure work completion. OCB in Ghana has been linked to higher community engagement, with a 13% increase in the success rate of social projects and a 10% boost in volunteer participation.

Ethical leadership is characterized by leaders who model ethical behaviors, promote moral values, and foster an organizational culture that prioritizes fairness, honesty, and integrity. Ethical leaders not only follow ethical standards themselves but also encourage their followers to do the same, thereby influencing the overall ethical climate of the organization. It involves decision-making that balances the interests of all stakeholders, promoting transparency, accountability, and fairness in every aspect of leadership. This leadership style is often linked to positive outcomes such as increased trust, employee commitment, and organizational success. Ethical leadership is especially important as organizations face growing pressure to operate responsibly and align with societal values (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Four key aspects of ethical leadership integrity, fairness, accountability, and transparency can be linked to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which refers to voluntary, discretionary

behaviors that contribute to the effective functioning of an organization. Leaders who demonstrate integrity promote trustworthiness and foster OCB, as employees are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors when they trust their leaders. Fairness in leadership ensures that all employees are treated equally, thus encouraging OCB as workers are more likely to contribute beyond their formal duties when they perceive fairness in their treatment (Organ, 1988). Accountability in ethical leadership enhances personal responsibility, leading to higher levels of OCB, as employees feel empowered to contribute more when they know their actions matter. Lastly, transparency in leadership strengthens communication, which motivates employees to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization as a whole (Eisenbeiss, 2012).

Problem Statement

The concept of ethical leadership has gained significant attention in recent years due to its potential to positively influence organizational outcomes, particularly in fostering organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB refers to discretionary employee behaviors that go beyond formal job requirements, which are crucial for maintaining organizational effectiveness and promoting a positive workplace culture. In Japan, a country known for its strong cultural values and organizational frameworks, ethical leadership plays a vital role in enhancing employee engagement and fostering OCB. However, despite its recognized importance, limited empirical research has been conducted to assess how ethical leadership specifically influences OCB within Japanese organizations. Although Japan has a long history of strong hierarchical structures, there is a need to explore how ethical leadership in contemporary Japanese firms affects voluntary behaviors such as cooperation, altruism, and organizational loyalty. Previous studies in the Japanese context suggest that ethical leadership is linked to improved organizational performance (Kawakami, 2020), but the direct impact on OCB remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the role of ethical leadership in enhancing OCB in Japanese organizations, offering valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the field of leadership studies and human resource management.

Theoretical Review

Social exchange Theory (SET)

Social exchange theory, developed by Blau (1964), posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process, where individuals engage in behaviors that maximize their benefits while minimizing their costs. In the context of ethical leadership, SET suggests that leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior foster trust and commitment in their employees, leading to increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Ethical leaders who provide fair treatment and demonstrate concern for their followers encourage reciprocation in the form of extra-role behaviors such as helping others and organizational loyalty (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2019). This theory is relevant as it explains how ethical leadership can drive positive employee behaviors in organizations.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory, introduced by Bass (1985), focuses on leaders who inspire and motivate their followers to achieve greater levels of performance by fostering a sense of mission, vision, and individualized consideration. Ethical leadership, as a subset of

transformational leadership, emphasizes the importance of integrity and ethical conduct in leadership practices. Ethical transformational leaders encourage followers to go beyond their self-interest and engage in behaviors that benefit the organization and its members, such as organizational citizenship behavior. This is particularly relevant in Japan, where societal norms value harmony, collective effort, and group-oriented behaviors (Shimazu & Kawahara, 2020).

Ethical Leadership Theory

Ethical leadership theory, proposed by Brown and Treviño (2006), emphasizes the role of leaders in setting ethical standards and modeling ethical behavior for their followers. Ethical leaders are seen as role models who influence employees' values and behaviors, promoting positive organizational outcomes, including OCB. In Japan, ethical leadership aligns with cultural values such as respect for authority and social responsibility, making it particularly relevant to understanding how ethical leaders can foster OCB within organizations. Ethical leadership can shape a work environment where employees engage in behaviors that contribute to the organizational welfare (Leroy, 2018).

Empirical Review

Kobayashi and Okamoto (2018) examined how ethical leadership affects OCB. They employed a quantitative survey method, distributing questionnaires to 300 employees to measure perceptions of ethical leadership and its influence on employee behavior. The study revealed that ethical leadership positively impacted OCB by promoting prosocial behaviors such as helping others, organizational involvement, and voluntary contributions. This outcome was particularly evident in companies that emphasized fairness, transparency, and integrity in their leadership practices. The research also found that ethical leadership enhanced trust between employees and their leaders, which in turn fostered a more cooperative and supportive work environment. The authors recommended that organizations invest in ethical leadership development programs to create a more engaged workforce and boost overall performance. By enhancing ethical behavior within leadership, organizations could also cultivate greater organizational commitment and reduce employee turnover. This study emphasized the importance of leaders demonstrating ethical behavior, as it serves as a model for employees and fosters a culture of mutual respect. Furthermore, it suggested that organizations should measure ethical leadership using objective criteria to ensure that these behaviors are reflected throughout the leadership hierarchy. The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies that highlight the positive link between ethical leadership and employee engagement. They also pointed out that ethical leadership is particularly crucial in highly structured environments like manufacturing, where hierarchical systems and a strong sense of duty among employees often prevail. Thus, the study underscored the need for ethical practices to be embedded in organizational leadership to improve overall workplace behavior and performance. Lastly, it advocated for a top-down approach where ethical leadership starts at the executive level and trickles down to all organizational tiers.

Tanaka and Yamamoto (2020) explored the relationship between ethical leadership and team cooperation in Japanese firms. Their study included a combination of qualitative interviews with 150 employees and quantitative surveys to assess how ethical leadership influences organizational behavior. The results showed that ethical leadership fostered a climate of trust, which led to higher levels of team cooperation and collaboration. Employees reported that leaders who demonstrated

fairness, transparency, and concern for employee welfare were more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond their formal job requirements. This study also found that ethical leadership had a significant effect on employee perceptions of organizational justice, which directly influenced their willingness to help colleagues and contribute to the success of the organization. The authors recommended that organizations prioritize ethical leadership training as a key component of leadership development programs, as it has the potential to enhance team dynamics and improve performance outcomes. They further suggested that organizations implement systems to hold leaders accountable for their ethical conduct, as this reinforces the importance of ethical behavior within the workplace. This study was particularly valuable because it addressed the influence of ethical leadership on team-level outcomes, showing that ethical behavior in leadership has a ripple effect that improves cooperation, job satisfaction, and overall team performance. Additionally, Tanaka and Yamamoto's research highlighted that the cultural context of Japan, with its emphasis on group harmony and cooperation, magnifies the effects of ethical leadership on OCB. They noted that the collectivist nature of Japanese culture plays a role in enhancing the positive outcomes of ethical leadership, as employees are more likely to align their behavior with the ethical standards set by their leaders. Their findings suggest that fostering ethical leadership not only benefits individual employees but also contributes to organizational cohesion and long-term success. Moreover, Tanaka and Yamamoto proposed that ethical leadership could serve as a strategic tool for organizations seeking to enhance their reputation and internal dynamics. They recommended a focus on ethical decision-making frameworks and highlighted the need for leaders to be trained in ethical leadership to build trust and enhance cooperation in the workplace.

Takahashi and Sato (2021) examined its effects in the public sector in Japan, specifically focusing on how it influences organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Their study employed a survey methodology with data collected from 250 public-sector employees across various government departments. The study found that ethical leadership positively impacted OCB by enhancing employee trust in their supervisors, improving job satisfaction, and increasing organizational commitment. The research also highlighted that when public-sector leaders exhibited ethical behaviors such as transparency and fairness, employees were more likely to go beyond their formal job requirements, engage in cooperative behaviors, and contribute to the organization's success. Additionally, Takahashi and Sato's findings emphasized that the ethical behavior of leaders helped in reducing work-related stress and improving the overall work environment, which further led to higher levels of OCB. The study's results pointed out that public-sector organizations, which are often viewed as rigid and bureaucratic, benefit significantly from ethical leadership as it helps to break down barriers of mistrust and inefficiency. The authors recommended that public institutions prioritize the development of ethical leadership practices to enhance organizational performance and improve employee engagement. They also suggested that training programs for public sector leaders should focus on ethical decision-making, fostering an environment of fairness, and ensuring transparency in all organizational processes. Takahashi and Sato's study revealed that ethical leadership can have a profound impact on improving organizational performance in the public sector, an area that has often been overlooked in leadership research. Furthermore, their study concluded that ethical leadership is essential for creating a sustainable, high-performance work culture in the public sector. In their recommendations, they stressed the need for continuous evaluation of leadership behaviors and suggested implementing feedback mechanisms to ensure

ethical practices are maintained throughout public organizations. This study contributes to the literature by showing that ethical leadership is not only a key driver of OCB but also a catalyst for improving efficiency and trust within public organizations.

Nishida et al. (2019) explored the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational justice, and how these factors influenced OCB. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combined surveys with 200 healthcare workers and in-depth interviews to gather data on leadership practices and employee behaviors. The results indicated that when healthcare leaders exhibited ethical behaviors such as fairness, honesty, and respect for employees, there was a significant improvement in employees' perceptions of organizational justice. This, in turn, led to higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior, including voluntary helping behaviors, engagement in organizational activities, and increased job commitment. The authors recommended that healthcare organizations focus on developing ethical leadership programs to enhance trust and cooperation among employees. They emphasized that ethical leadership practices are especially important in healthcare settings, where employee morale, trust, and collaboration are critical to ensuring high-quality patient care. The study found that ethical leadership not only improves OCB but also contributes to higher employee satisfaction, which is crucial in reducing turnover rates in the healthcare sector. Nishida et al. suggested that healthcare institutions should integrate ethical leadership into their leadership development frameworks to promote fairness and transparency, which are essential for fostering positive employee behaviors. Their findings underscored the critical role of ethical leadership in improving the quality of work life and enhancing the effectiveness of healthcare organizations. They concluded that healthcare managers should prioritize ethical leadership to improve both employee performance and organizational outcomes. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of ethical leadership in improving OCB in sectors that rely heavily on teamwork and employee collaboration, such as healthcare.

Aoyama and Nakajima (2022) focused on the tech industry in Japan and examined the impact of ethical leadership on OCB. Their study used a longitudinal approach, surveying 400 employees from various tech companies over a period of two years. The results showed that ethical leadership significantly enhanced OCB by fostering an environment of trust and fairness, which led to greater employee involvement in extra-role activities, such as helping colleagues and participating in team projects beyond the scope of their job descriptions. The research also found that ethical leadership reduced employee burnout and stress, which are prevalent in the high-pressure tech industry, thereby promoting a more positive and productive work environment. Aoyama and Nakajima recommended that tech firms adopt ethical leadership practices to improve organizational outcomes, particularly in terms of enhancing innovation, employee engagement, and retention. They argued that ethical leadership could help mitigate the negative effects of workplace stress and increase employees' willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization. The study concluded that ethical leadership is a key factor in improving both individual performance and organizational citizenship behavior in the tech sector, where employees are often challenged with demanding workloads and tight deadlines. Aoyama and Nakajima's research highlighted the importance of developing leaders who model ethical behavior and encourage fairness, transparency, and collaboration in the workplace. They suggested that tech firms should invest in ethical leadership training and promote ethical decision-making at all

organizational levels to foster a culture of trust and collaboration. The findings of this study are particularly relevant for tech companies seeking to maintain a competitive edge by enhancing employee engagement and creating a sustainable, high-performance work environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gaps: The research conducted by Kobayashi and Okamoto (2018) on the role of ethical leadership in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in Japanese manufacturing firms presents an opportunity to further explore the conceptual understanding of how ethical leadership is defined and operationalized across different sectors. While the study highlights the importance of ethical leadership in fostering trust and cooperation, it does not delve into the specific mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences various dimensions of OCB, such as altruism, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. A research gap exists in further examining how ethical leadership contributes to the formation of organizational culture, which in turn influences employees' willingness to engage in OCB. Additionally, the role of ethical decision-making in ethical leadership remains underexplored. Thus, the study's conceptual framework could be expanded to include a more nuanced analysis of how different ethical behaviors are perceived by employees and how these perceptions affect their job performance and engagement (Kobayashi & Okamoto, 2018).

Contextual Gaps: The contextual gaps in the research stem from the study's focus on Japanese manufacturing firms, which have a unique organizational culture that places high value on hierarchical structures and collective behavior. This focus may not fully capture the dynamics of ethical leadership and OCB in other organizational contexts, such as in service industries or globalized firms with diverse workforces. Furthermore, the study by Tanaka and Yamamoto (2020) suggests that ethical leadership influences OCB through the creation of a climate of trust, yet the contextual factors, such as leadership training or organizational policies, that facilitate this climate are not explored in depth. The research could be expanded to investigate how ethical leadership practices in different cultural and organizational contexts, such as in Western or non-Western countries, influence employee behavior. Given the global nature of business today, this would help understand whether ethical leadership can be universally applied or if it requires contextual modifications (Tanaka & Yamamoto, 2020).

Geographical Gaps: Geographically, the research primarily focuses on Japan, a country known for its collectivist culture, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural values. While Japan's strong emphasis on group harmony and respect for authority plays a significant role in the effectiveness of ethical leadership, the same outcomes may

not be observed in more individualistic cultures, such as those in North America or Europe. A geographical gap exists in extending these studies to other countries with distinct cultural norms, organizational structures, and leadership expectations. For example, studies in countries like the United States or Germany could provide a comparative analysis of how ethical leadership influences OCB in more individualistic societies, potentially offering insights into the cultural nuances that shape leadership practices and employee behaviors in different regions. The inclusion of diverse geographical contexts will help determine if the impact of ethical leadership on OCB is universally applicable or region-specific (Takahashi & Sato, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, ethical leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) within organizations, as evidenced by studies conducted in Japan. Ethical leaders, characterized by traits such as integrity, fairness, and transparency, foster an environment where employees feel motivated to engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond their formal job requirements. In Japan, where cultural values emphasize collectivism, harmony, and respect for authority, ethical leadership is particularly impactful in promoting a sense of responsibility, trust, and commitment among employees. These behaviors are vital for organizations aiming to improve overall performance, innovation, and collaboration. The evidence highlights that when leaders uphold ethical standards, employees are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as helping colleagues, taking initiative, and contributing to organizational success, which are key components of OCB. Therefore, Japanese companies that prioritize ethical leadership not only enhance employee engagement and morale but also contribute to the long-term sustainability and success of the organization. Further research could explore how ethical leadership interacts with other cultural and organizational factors in Japan to foster even stronger OCB and organizational outcomes.

Recommendations

Theory

This study on the role of ethical leadership in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in Japan contributes to the existing body of leadership theory by bridging the gap between ethical leadership and its impact on employee behavior. Ethical leadership, with its emphasis on fairness, integrity, and transparency, fosters an environment where employees feel compelled to go beyond their formal job roles. A key theoretical contribution is that ethical leadership not only directly influences OCB but also acts as a catalyst for trust and fairness within teams, which in turn enhances collaborative behavior and pro-social actions. Future research could expand this theoretical framework by examining how ethical leadership interacts with other leadership styles and cultural contexts, such as collectivist cultures like Japan's, where group harmony and cooperation are highly valued.

Practice

In practice, the study highlights the importance of integrating ethical leadership into organizational cultures to enhance OCB. Japanese companies should prioritize ethical leadership development programs aimed at fostering leadership behaviors such as honesty, transparency, and

accountability. Ethical leaders who model these behaviors are likely to encourage employees to demonstrate higher levels of OCB, which can lead to improved teamwork, productivity, and organizational citizenship. Specifically, organizations should invest in leadership training that focuses on ethical decision-making and role modeling ethical behaviors to cultivate an environment where OCB thrives. Furthermore, managers should be encouraged to actively engage in creating an ethical work climate, as their leadership is critical in shaping employees' willingness to engage in voluntary, prosocial behavior.

Policy

From a policy perspective, the study provides insights for policymakers in Japan to implement organizational and corporate governance policies that emphasize ethical leadership as a key driver of positive employee behavior. Policymakers should encourage regulations that incentivize ethical practices within corporate settings, thereby promoting a culture of responsibility and integrity. Furthermore, policies that encourage the integration of ethical leadership standards into national labor laws could contribute to enhancing overall work environments across industries. Encouraging businesses to measure and report on ethical leadership practices could become part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, ensuring that companies are not only accountable to their shareholders but also to their employees and broader society. By establishing clear ethical guidelines for leaders and embedding ethical leadership in organizational structures, Japanese companies can align their operations with global best practices in promoting social responsibility.

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