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Contents

Session ID: 1.1 Competitive Session

[AJBS-006] A bibliographic and co-citation analyses of IHRM research: Insights for Japanese business studies

Tamiko Kasahara (Bentley University, United States of America)

[AJBS-007] Local managers' language proficiency and their contribution to foreign subsidiaries

Naoki Ando (Hosei University, Japan)

Manami Suzuki (Hosei University, Japan)

Hidehiko Nishikawa (Hosei University, Japan)

[AJBS-1015] The role of institutional environment on international joint venture control: Management, location, and size of Japanese subsidiaries

Viviane Eiko Ito Yamasaki (ESPM, Brazil)

Mario Henrique Ogasavara (ESPM, Brazil)

Fernando Jorge Moreira da Silva (ESPM, Brazil)

Session ID: 1.2 Interactive Session

[AJBS-012] National and organizational cultures' moderating effects on high commitment work practices: implications for the cultural fit theory

Takashi Sakikawa (Chuo University, Japan)

[AJBS-1026] Undergraduate "Zemi" seminars in the Japanese post-secondary education system: Observations and reflections from my experience as a visiting scholar

Derek Lehmborg (North Dakota State University, United States of America)

Session ID: 2.1 Competitive Session

[AJBS-009] Japanese parent firm ownership levels in green power generating foreign subsidiaries

K. Skylar Powell (Western Washington University, United States of America)

Max Zimmerman (Western Washington University, United States of America)

[AJBS-1027] Absorptive Capacity, Business Model, and Competitive Advantage: Evidence from Japanese Firms

Naohiro Sawada (Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan)

[AJBS-1028] Possibility of success for startup company Rapidus from the perspective of dynamic capabilities theory

Takabumi Hayashi (Rikkyo University, Japan)

Session ID: 2.2 Interactive Session

[AJBS-1016] Adaptation Process of Indian IT Engineers in the Japanese Workplace

Hiroaki Kumamoto (Tsukuba University, Japan)

[AJBS-1031] Determinants of Location Choice of Japanese FDI in Brazil's Global Cities: National, Subnational, and Industry Factors

Fabio Hiroshi Tomoyose (ESPM, Brazil)

Mario Henrique Ogasavara (ESPM, Brazil)

Chie Iguchi (Keio University, Japan)

[AJBS-1034] Corporate Fraud in the Three Largest Economies: A Review and Survey

Syed Tariq Anwar (West Texas A&M University, United States of America)

Session ID: 3 Competitive Session

[AJBS-1012] Not Only for the Money: Combining Financial and Social Incentives to Motivate Employees

Yue Zhong (Waseda University, Japan)

Yuichiro Tomitsuka (Waseda University, Japan)

Hitoshi Mitsuhashi (Waseda University, Japan)

[AJBS-1014] Japanese Career Women: Emotional Implications of Identity Dilemmas

Markus Pudenko (University of Tübingen, Germany)

Helene Tenzer (Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Germany)

[AJBS-1029] The Self-reinforcing Dynamics of Traumatic Shock in History: The Effect of Samurai Schools on Regional Entrepreneurship in Japan

Akitsu Oe (Tokyo University of Science, Japan)

A bibliographic and co-citation analyses of IHRM research: Insights for Japanese business studies

ABSTRACT

This study reviews the intellectual development of international human resource management (IHRM) research from 2000 to 2024, employing bibliometric and co-citation analyses of 234 articles. Additionally, it highlights how Japan and its companies have been perceived and addressed in IHRM research. The analyses identify thematic shifts across three periods—2000–2009, 2010–2019, and 2020–2024—focusing on institutional influences, strategic alignment, and cross-national HRM practices. Co-citation analysis underscores the dominance of institutional theory, with studies on Japan and Japanese companies reflecting similar trends.

The findings reveal key themes, including subsidiary HR activities, global integration/local responsiveness, hybridization, and the impact of institutional factors on HRM in multinational corporations (MNCs), emphasizing institutional theory. Early research focused on institutional impacts, while later studies explored alignment with parent firms or adaptation to local contexts, particularly in emerging economies. This study offers implications for Japanese business studies and emerging themes like digital transformation, remote work, and AI's impact on employee management, suggesting areas for future IHRM research. It also proposes future directions in diversity management and IHRM, advancing understanding of these evolving topics.

Keywords: IHRM research, bibliographic coupling analysis, Co-citation analysis, research trends, systematic review, network analysis

Local managers' language proficiency and their contribution to foreign subsidiaries

Abstract

This study investigates language barriers that occur inside foreign subsidiaries of multinational enterprises. It explores whether local managers with high levels of English proficiency can enhance the performance of the department where they work because a relationship between foreign language proficiency and organization-level performance has not been studied. English proficiency, communicative competence, identification with nonlocals, and managerial skills are proposed as factors that affect local managers' contribution to the department's performance. fsQCA is conducted by using data collected from foreign subsidiaries operating in Japan. The results of fsQCA suggest that the managerial skills of local managers can be better utilized when combined with communication-enhancing skills. They indicate that English proficiency and communicative competence are essential communication-enhancing skills to exercise managerial skills. In addition, this study demonstrates that local managers who feel attached to expatriate managers contribute to the department's performance by using their English proficiency and managerial skills.

Keywords: Communicative competence; English proficiency; Japan; Language barrier; Organizational performance; Social identity theory; Willingness to communicate.

The role of institutional environment on international joint venture control: Management, location, and size of Japanese subsidiaries

ABSTRACT

Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) often utilize International Joint Ventures (IJVs) as a primary method for internationalization. Establishing an IJV requires MNEs to determine the location, management, and level of control over the venture. This study, grounded in institutional theory, examines the direct influence of institutional environments and management on IJV control and the moderating effects of location, management, and subsidiary size. We test the hypotheses using panel regression and marginal effects analysis on a sample of 4,827 IJVs of Japanese subsidiaries operating in Latin America and Europe. The findings indicate that institutional environments do not directly relate to IJV control but moderate normative and regulatory environments. IJVs managed by expatriates in high normative environments exhibit greater control. Additionally, higher regulatory environment indicators correlate with increased control in expatriate-managed IJVs. This study advances the understanding of institutions' moderating role in the relationship between management, location, and size in IJV control modes. Employing marginal effects analyses elucidates how moderating effects can attenuate or amplify the influence of institutional environments on subsidiary management and location, impacting the level of IJV control.

Keywords: International Joint Ventures; Institutional environment; Japanese Subsidiaries; JV Control; Management; Location.

National and organizational cultures' moderating effects on high commitment work practices: implications for the cultural fit theory

Abstract

Organizations are bound by national culture and differences in national culture explain differences in human resource management practices among nations. By drawing on the cultural fit theory, researchers have argued that the effect of high commitment work practices on individual and organizational outcomes will be amplified or suppressed, depending on a fit or misfit between these practices and nations' cultural values. Since not only national culture but also organizational culture will provide organizations with a context, I have theorized about and tested the separate and simultaneous moderating effects of national and organizational culture on the relation between high commitment work practices and work engagement, based on evidence from six nations located in different cultural clusters. My statistical results provide an implication: A certain, not large, amount of tension between high commitment work practices and national and organizational culture may be needed to facilitate the effect of high commitment work practices.

Keywords National culture · organizational culture · high-commitment work practices · cultural fit theory · work engagement

**Undergraduate “Zemi” seminars in the Japanese post-secondary education system:
Observations and reflections from my experience as a visiting scholar**

ABSTRACT

Seminars, called "*zemi*" in Japanese, are an important and unique feature of undergraduate education in Japanese universities. *Zemis* provide opportunities for student academic achievement, personal growth, and socialization through long-term, close interaction with other students and the faculty member leading the *zemi*. In this paper, I describe Japanese *zemis* based upon my personal experience and discussions with *zemi* instructors in Japan. The *zemi* system is adapted to work effectively in the Japanese context. While directly copying the *zemi* approach is probably not feasible for U.S. based instructors and institutions, an appreciation of how it works may spark development of new and innovative practices.

Keywords: business education, comparative education, mentoring

Japanese parent firm ownership levels in green power generating foreign subsidiaries

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between foreign subsidiaries' status as green energy generating facilities and their Japanese parent utility firms' levels of equity ownership, relative to foreign subsidiaries engaged in traditional power generation or other productive activities. Using transaction cost and internalization, organizational learning, and neo-institutional theories, we hypothesize that green energy subsidiaries are associated with lower levels of equity ownership by Japanese parent firms due to the heightened complexities, risks, and uncertainties of green energy production investments. We further posit that this relationship is negatively moderated by host-country levels of economic development, cultural distance from Japan, and regulatory transparency. To test these hypotheses, we analyze a unique unbalanced panel dataset comprising 1,394 foreign subsidiary-year observations, from 235 different foreign subsidiaries, across 20 countries from 2013 to 2023. Our findings support all four hypotheses, indicating that Japanese parent utility firms tend to own lower levels of equity in green energy producing subsidiaries, particularly in host countries that are less economically developed, culturally distant, or have less transparent regulatory environments.

Absorptive Capacity, Business Model, and Competitive Advantage: Evidence from Japanese Firms

Abstract

Research on business models has significantly increased, especially after the dot-com bubble. However, most studies primarily focus on the performance of business models, neglecting their underlying premises or other factors. This study investigates the impact of additional factors on business models, focusing on absorptive capacity. We analyze four fundamental business model types—efficiency, novelty, complementarity, and lock-in—and test our hypotheses using publicly available archival data and survey responses from Japanese firms. The results indicate that the effects of absorptive capacity differ across various business model types. This study contributes to existing business model research by offering new insights into these dynamics.

Keywords

Business model, absorptive capacity, competitive advantage, Japanese firms

Possibility of success for startup company Rapidus from the perspective of dynamic capabilities theory

Abstract

The start-up rate in Japan is only about 4.4% (2021), which is close to the lowest level among OECD countries. The paper examines the success potential of the startup company Rapidus, a company founded in 2022, in the semiconductor foundry business, which requires huge investment and extremely high technological standards.

The company aims to manufacture and receive orders for 2nm chips in fiscal 2027, but as of this writing (end of 2024) it is unclear whether this will be successful or not. So, based on the above situation, the paper examines the company's chances of success from a “Dynamic Capability” (DC) perspective.

Through the process of analysis, the DC theory framework is then utilised, while at the same time examining the effectiveness of DCs and future challenges. The effectiveness and future challenges of the DC theory, which have been identified through the analysis of the potential success of the SU company Rapidus in this paper are summarized in the last section.

Adaptation Process of Indian IT Engineers in the Japanese Workplace

Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the adaptation process of Indian IT engineers in the Japanese working environment and identify areas for improvement. The research involved interviews with Indian IT engineers working in Japan, analyzed using the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA). This analysis enabled the extraction and modeling of concepts related to the adaptation process. The findings reveal that Indian IT engineers experience four adaptation stages—honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adaptation—across work, lifestyle, human relationships, and language. The process is influenced by key factors such as connections with the Indian community, support from Japanese mentors, and personal background. The study highlights the need for Japanese companies to foster an environment that supports smooth adaptation, facilitating a transition from initial expectations to long-term employment stability. This research contributes to cross-cultural adaptation literature by modeling Indian IT engineers' integration into Japan's workforce and offering practical recommendations for companies aiming to improve foreign talent retention and success.

Keywords: qualitative research, modified grounded theory approach (M-GTA), highly skilled foreign workers, employment process

Determinants of Location Choice of Japanese FDI in Brazil's Global Cities: National, Subnational, and Industry Factors

ABSTRACT

This ongoing study investigates the determinants of Japanese multinational enterprises (MNEs) establishing foreign subsidiaries in Brazil's global cities (GCs). Based on institutional theory and the new economic geography literature, this research uses an integrated conceptual framework to assess the impacts of the national- (host-country), subnational- (city or region), and industry-level factors on the location choice of GCs. Our sample comprises 432 Japanese subsidiaries established in 15 states in Brazil. From this ongoing study, we apply cluster analysis and find four clusters that will test our proposed hypotheses later. In addition, we aim to provide relevant insights and contributions to the IB literature by including the subnational-level factors in the location of foreign subsidiaries in GCs in the Latin American context.

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Corporate Fraud in the Three Largest Economies: A Review and Survey

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and discuss corporate fraud in the three largest economies of the world that include the U.S., China and Japan. We selected the three countries because of their economic size, financial prowess, and corporate involvement in global business. By using a review- and survey-based approach and case-specific research, the paper systematically discusses corporate fraud in the three countries as well as administrative and enforcement actions. Corporate fraud and corruption cases remain to be a big menace in the business world that transcend across national borders. The paper provides a brief discussion and review of the literature that at present is important in the international business (IB) literature, foreign direct investment (FDI), and multinational corporations' (MNCs) operations. The paper also provides academic and managerial implications that continue to unfold in the three economies as well as world business.

Keywords: Corporate fraud; three largest economies; review; survey.

Not Only for the Money:

Combining Financial and Social Incentives to Motivate Employees

ABSTRACT

Previous research disagrees on whether financial incentives increase or decrease employees' overall motivation. On the one hand, financial incentives enhance employees' extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, they suppress employees' intrinsic motivation. Applying self-determination and autonomous motivation theory, we argue that the presence of a mentor mitigates the negative effect of financial incentives on employees' intrinsic motivation and fosters behaviors encouraged by the financial incentives. Using data from a Japanese staff-leasing firm in civil engineering and construction, which redesigned its incentive systems in June 2023 to encourage employees' certification attainment, we found that employees assigned an official mentor are more likely to obtain a certificate following the incentive redesign. Furthermore, mentors who are more socially knowledgeable—those supervising a relatively balanced proportion of certificate holders and non-holders, and whose mentees experience larger salary gaps—exert even stronger positive effects on their mentees' certification attainment. Our theory links the roles of financial incentives and mentorship in motivating employees and offers theoretical and practical insights into how organizations can integrate human resource policies to promote desired employee behaviors.

Keywords: Financial Incentives, Mentors, Intrinsic Motivation, Self-Determination Theory, Peers

Japanese Career Women: Emotional Implications of Identity Dilemmas

ABSTRACT

Identity research predominantly suggests that individuals can successfully apply identity work strategies to resolve identity conflicts. However, such studies rarely consider the impact of external constraints on identity work and its outcomes in the longer run. This qualitative study explores how individuals engage in identity work under severe societal constraints and how they feel about their chosen identity work strategies in the longer term. Drawing on 125 in-depth interviews with Japanese career women facing incompatible expectations for their roles in their professional and private lives, we show how this dilemma leads to emotionally draining identity conflicts, prompting women to adopt one of two identity work strategies: withdrawal or balancing. While these strategies partly resolve incompatible external role expectations, they fail to diminish internalized dilemmas in the longer run, resulting in persisting negative emotions such as regret, guilt and frustration. Our study contributes to research on identity work by demonstrating that in the longer run identity work is not necessarily successful, particularly when societal constraints render individual identity work futile. We suggest that in such situations, transformative changes in cultural and institutional settings are required to allow individuals to reconcile their conflicting identities.

The Self-reinforcing Dynamics of Traumatic Shock in History: The Effect of Samurai Schools on Regional Entrepreneurship in Japan

This study examines the self-reinforcing dynamics of path dependency by analyzing how Samurai Schools from the Edo period (1603–1868) shaped regional entrepreneurship despite multiple traumatic shocks. We collected historical data from 266 feudal domains and applied structural equation modeling and necessary condition analysis to assess entrepreneurship across the Meiji Restoration, WWII, and the modern era. Our findings reveal that Samurai Schools were not only a consistent driver of start-ups in each period but also a necessary condition for their emergence. Furthermore, we confirm a self-reinforcing mechanism, where Samurai Schools facilitated knowledge spillover and entrepreneurial persistence, unaffected by historical disruptions. While traumatic shocks are widely acknowledged as disruptive forces, their long-term effects on regional entrepreneurship remain unclear. This study shows how historical institutions shape entrepreneurship despite institutional discontinuities. By demonstrating the role of defunct academic institutions in sustaining knowledge spillover, it advances path dependency theory and the knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, by incorporating historical disruptions into regional entrepreneurship analysis, it strengthens the history-in-theory approach. These findings enhance our understanding of how historical institutions drive long-term economic development and provide a foundation for future research on history, entrepreneurship, and regional resilience.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, human resource management, management, regional variation, traumatic shocks