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**Challenges and Recommendations for Career Management and Global  
Leadership among Managers in a Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-  
Commerce Enterprise**

A Thesis

By

YuXiao

Submitted to Durham University Business School For the degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

July, 2024

## **Abstract**

The thesis studies career management and global leadership among managers in a Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprise using a qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews to collect data of 30 junior and 20 senior managers from Company X.

The findings firstly show that both middle and senior managers value organisational and individual career development plans, adapt to dynamic situations, and consider cross-cultural issues. However, they have differences: 1) the junior managers address individual career development and operational focus, requiring professional adaptations to cross-cultural situations as the most important factor; 2) the senior managers emphasise organisational career development, maintain a strategic focus, and regard leadership as the most important factor. Additionally, both senior and junior managers address global leadership to respond to cross-cultural issues and develop their transiting from traditional to new work styles. However, they have differences: 1) the junior managers are operational and short-term focused; 2) the senior managers are strategic and long-term focused.

The findings imply general recommendations for managers in different positions, emphasising the importance of supporting cross-cultural communication, change management, goal setting and career development planning. There are also specific recommendations for managers in their different stages of career development. For junior managers, recommendations include focusing on operational procedures to develop cross-cultural training, designing supportive and flexible work arrangements, and introducing technological support using business information systems and social media platforms. For senior managers, recommendations include maintaining a strategic focus, adapting to changing situations, offering diversified management, combining short-term and long-run goals, and making special efforts to improve cross-cultural effectiveness in the global context.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### ***1.1 Background***

Globalisation and the development of social media platforms indicate opportunities, such as cross-border e-commerce businesses, to participate in the global supply chain, to source raw materials and products in the international market, and to introduce foreign products to their domestic market. For example, Yiran (2023) suggested that China's ODI surged 9.2 per cent year-on-year to \$145.2 billion in 2021, marking a significant increase from the \$136.9 billion recorded in 2019 according to data from the National Development and Reform Commission, indicating growing numbers of Chinese E-commerce enterprises sourcing materials and products in the foreign market and exporting items to the Chinese market. Social media platforms are useful tools the Chinese E-commerce enterprises to showcase and sell foreign products to domestic audiences, particularly beneficial for Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises looking to break into international markets without the overhead costs associated with traditional export methods (Flow, 2024). Scholars agree that the internationalisation of Chinese enterprises has been accelerating, which has created a pressing need for robust global leadership and effective career management practices for employees to ensure competitiveness and sustainability (Alon et al., 2018; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Alon et al. (2018) conducted a review of the internationalisation of Chinese enterprises, exploring 206 academic articles published between 2003 and 2016 to suggest the importance of global leadership and career management for the continuous growth of transnational corporations. Global leadership guides the collective efforts of employees and managers in transnational corporations toward their collective goals. Career management suggests interventions of transnational corporations improve the capabilities of the employees and managers conducting their operations in the global context. Findings by Tarique and Schuler (2010) confirmed the importance of global talent management through a literature review and one integrative framework, addressing available strategies and tactics that Chinese transnational corporations can follow to achieve their global presence in globalisation.

However, corporations face challenges to achieve their organisational effectiveness,

such as the capabilities dealing with cross-cultural issues, achieving engaged and motivated employees, and collective efforts of the employees can meet organisational goals and objectives in the operations. Human resource management practices in corporations addressing career management and motivating employees are important for corporations to achieve their organisational effectiveness. For example, properly designed and implemented human resource management practices addressing the employees' key concerns can result in the employees' improved performance and the organisations' increased productivity (Gashi et al., 2022). The employees' continuous engagement and motivation in the workplace can also result in a strong workplace culture, attracting and retaining talents and achieving tasks within the organisation (Verma & Sharma, 2019). However, corporations face challenges in identifying and responding to the individual employees' career development requirements to achieve motivated employees toward enhanced individual performance and organisational productivity in the human resource management practices because of the diversified features of the employees in the workplace.

Global leadership is crucial for Chinese enterprises operating internationally, as leaders must navigate complex and diverse cultural landscapes, manage cross-border teams, and implement global strategies effectively. Global leadership is required, especially for senior managers, to respond to the cross-cultural situations they face in globalisation, aiming at achieving improved organisational effectiveness. For example, Liu et al. (2020) audited the leadership of the Global university president using the quantitative research strategy to suggest the importance of performing global leadership for corporations achieving continuous improvements in organisational effectiveness, such as the capabilities of managing changes and achieving improvements in financial performance. Tretter and Jacobs (2020) agreed with the arguments of Liu et al. (2020) on the roles of leaders in supporting the employees' diversified requirements in career development by conducting quantitative analysis on the leaders' behaviours and suggesting that leaders could use data to improve outcomes of the employees' career development based on interviewing one leader in Paediatric and Congenital Cardiac Care.

When corporations operate in a global context, they need to train and develop the leaders' skills and capabilities in responding to changing situations before they can support the employees' career development (Woodhouse & Pedder, 2017). For example, the quantitative study by Cogan and MacDonald (2021) explored situations facing leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic to confirm the significance of encouraging employee engagement for the leaders to well understand and follow the followers' newest requirements before proposing counterpart leadership interventions in supporting the employees' career development. However, the adaptivity of managers in different positions is different because of their different importance for the organisation auditing dynamic situations and conducting efforts satisfying the organisational goals and objectives.

Effective career management is also vital for retaining and developing talent within Chinese enterprises. Career development programs that align with global standards can help employees build the skills and competencies necessary for international assignments and leadership roles. Moreover, the dynamic nature of global markets requires Chinese enterprises to adopt flexible and innovative career management practices. As pointed out by Tarique and Schuler (2010), the ability to adapt career management strategies to changing global trends and business needs is a key factor in maintaining a competitive edge. This includes offering cross-cultural training, mentorship programs, and opportunities for international assignments to develop a globally competent workforce.

Employees show diversified requirements to be motivated toward improved performance and productivity for their organisations because of the different career stages they conduct daily operations. For example, staff of corporations are classified into senior and junior managers, referring to the position they undertake, to indicate different tasks and required skills they should have in the workplace (Vilela & Casado, 2021). Senior managers are seasoned professionals who have earned their leadership through years of dedication and performance, while junior managers are those who are just beginning their journey in leadership, relying on their potential and the support of their more experienced colleagues. Individuals in different stages of their career

development are to achieve different tasks and train their skills and capabilities differently, undertaking the responsibilities. Senior managers are more likely to be strategically focused, analysing overall situations facing their corporations to propose measures to respond to the challenges. For example, CEOs of corporations need to consider advances in technologies to predict trends their corporations face in the future (Longenecker & Wittmer, 2022). In contrast, managers in junior positions are focused on developing their skills and capabilities by undertaking specific tasks in the workplace, aiming at improving operational efficiency, such as reducing time and cost in achieving tasks allocated to them (Atienzo et al., 2020). The different positions and the counterpart focus of the junior and senior managers suggested different individual level and organisational supports to improve their skills and capabilities in undertaking responsibilities and promoting their career development.

Besides the different career development stages facing individual employees, more factors result in their diversity and influence their career development and the organisational effectiveness of the organisations they work. Some employees show diversified preferences and requirements in the workplace to be motivated because of their diversified cultural backgrounds and values in conducting operations, along with their different skills and capabilities to undertake their positions, requiring cross-cultural considerations, adaptivity, and global leadership performed by leaders in corporations when interacting with the employees. First, the culturally diversified features of the employees suggested that the leaders in corporations need to consider and effectively respond to the cultural features of the employees, aiming at motivating the employees toward their promotions in career development and increasing productivity and organisational effectiveness of their organisations. According to (Kristjansdottir, Gulaugsson, et al., 2017), individuals from different countries and cultural backgrounds have different cultural preferences under the influences of the diversified national culture, which Hofstede's cultural dimensions can measure.

## ***1.2 Research gaps***

However, previous studies have not thoroughly explored career management and global leadership development among managers in Medium-sized Cross-Border E-

Commerce enterprises in China. First, previous studies failed to achieve an integrated approach, which combines career development, global leadership and cross-border e-commerce situations when studying situations facing Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in supporting the employees' career development. Second, previous studies also had not classified career management into two levels, the organisational level career management and the individual level career management, to study how leaders could contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the wellbeing of the employees. The researcher is motivated by the two identified gaps in previous studies to explore career management measures contributions to organisational effectiveness mediated by global leadership. The research is also motivated to consider career stages by dividing managers into two groups, senior managers and junior managers, aiming at comparing the different organisational career management initiatives from the individual and organisational levels toward improved organisational effectiveness.

The thesis focuses on China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises to scope down the businesses in exploration and to conduct research in-depth. China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises are chosen as the target for this research because of the global context facing the businesses and challenges of the Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises in developing and implementing detailed career management initiatives supporting improved performance of individual employees and the whole organisations. The global context means occasions of cross-cultural conflicts that the corporations should address to design and implement the various career management measures supporting the employees' career development (Hruby et al., 2022). This research uses the qualitative strategy and case study method, referring to one company (Company X) as the case to conduct an in-depth analysis. Company X was established in 2010, as one corporation to have e-commerce operation experience in international mid-to-high-end beauty cosmetics and health products. The corporation currently has 500+ employees, and it plans to cultivate or recruit 2 to 3 managers for managing the buyer teams with 15 to 20 buyers in the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Switzerland, Germany, etc. The

successful operations of the corporation in the previous years and its requirements to achieve expansion in the global market are resulting in the company's requirements to hire more talent and training skills and capabilities of the managers to support the expansions.

### ***1.3 Research aims and questions***

For this study, the research question is how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation. The research question in exploration addresses key issues of corporations managing employees, focusing on supporting the career development of the employees at the organisational level. Individual employees also make efforts to promote their career development at the individual level. However, managers and employees, considering the different career development stages and key tasks they need to undertake in the workplace, have different skills required and concerns to achieve career development. The thesis scope of the research subject is Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in China to facilitate data collection and critical discussions on the research question. There are research aims and objectives suggested to break down the main research question into different parts and answer the main research question from different perspectives.

**Research objectives.** First, is to compare the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers. Second, the thesis is to compare the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers. Third, it is to propose recommendations updating the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership.

### ***1.4 Research method used***

Concerning research methods adopted by this thesis, it chooses the interpretivism philosophy for studying career management and global leadership in the cross-cultural business environment. Under the interpretivism philosophy, the thesis uses the inductive approach and the qualitative strategy. The research is based on the



interpretation of managers and leaders of Company X and the researcher on the research scope of career management and global leadership in a cross-cultural business environment. Company X is a medium-sized cross-border E-Commerce enterprise with 500 employees, offering international mid-to-high-end beauty cosmetics and health products to the target customers. Cross-border e-commerce introduces foreign products into its homeland (China) and serves domestic customers.

There are three models in which Company X conducts its operations: the general trade model, the bonded model, and the direct mail model. First, Company X uses the general trade model to purchase goods from abroad through the general trade import model, clearing customs, and then selling them to domestic consumers. The advantages of this model are good consumer experience, fast logistics speed, and low purchase unit price. The disadvantages are high purchase amount and large capital usage. Second, the bonded model applied by Company X means that the company stores imported goods in cross-border e-commerce bonded warehouses until the goods are sold and then clear customs. This model does not require paying taxes first, so the capital occupation is lower than that of the general trade model, and the logistics speed is higher than that of the general trade model. General trade mode is slightly slower. Third, the direct mail model applied by Company X refers to its direct sale and delivery of items from abroad to domestic consumers through mail to complete sales. The advantages of this model are fast capital turnover and low occupancy rate. The disadvantages are long logistics time and procurement cost advantages. not obvious.

Internationalisation is the growth strategy of Company X because Company X source products from the global market to sell items in its motherland (China). The Internationalisation strategy directs its business model based on one matrix organisational structure, which combines the functional departments and business units directly selling products and services to consumers in different countries. The functional departments of Company X include customer service, human resource management, finance and accounting, research and development, strategy and brand, global supply chain management and other departments, and are led by the board of directors. The company has four independently operated business divisions, supported

by a professional organisational structure, and sells products and services to the Chinese domestic market.

Semi-structured interviews are used for data collection by including 30 middle-level managers and 20 high-level managers and leaders as the samples. The type of data in the collection is primary data and qualitative data when referring to the sources and the format of the data in the collection. The sampling strategy of this research is convenient sampling. The interview process includes two parts. The first part is the online face to face interview with the managers that are working in the overseas markets. The second part is the offline face-to-face interview with the managers who are working in Company X, and the whole interview process will be recorded through WeChat. There are three steps for the interview data organising: collecting the interview transcript, translating the transcript into English, and analysing the transcript using content analysis. Ethical considerations related to the collection and analysis of primary data are included.

### ***1.5 Preview of findings***

The thesis studies career management and global leadership among managers in a Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprise. The current states of career management among junior and senior managers share some similarities: they both value organisational and individual career development plans, require resources and change their plans in dynamic situations, and consider cross-cultural issues in implementing the career development plans. However, there are also some differences concerning the current state of career management among junior and senior managers, addressing their focus, the kinds of support required, and factors related to their career development. Middle managers address individual career development and support from organisations, while senior managers pay more attention to addressing organisational career development to realise the benefits of equity options. The kinds of organisational support required by middle and senior managers are different because the middle managers are the operational focus while the senior managers are the strategic focus. The most important factors for middle managers are the professional skills and capabilities to respond to dynamic and cross-cultural situations. For senior

managers, however, leadership is the most important factor.

There are similarities in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers: they both regard global leadership as important, they both make efforts to address cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, and they both face challenges to performing effective global leadership. Differences in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers include different focuses of middle managers and senior managers in identifying the importance of global leadership, different efforts performing global leadership by middle managers and senior managers in the workplace toward their career goals, and different challenges in performing global leadership reported by middle managers and senior managers.

Comparisons suggest some general recommendations to direct global leadership practices of middle and senior managers toward their career development. The general recommendations include cross-cultural communication training that considers outsourcing and remuneration, support for change management, and techniques to support goal setting and career development planning. There are also specific recommendations for managers in their different stages of career development. For junior managers, recommendations include focusing on operational procedures to develop cross-cultural training, designing supportive and flexible work arrangements, and introducing technological support using business information systems and social media platforms. For senior managers, recommendations include maintaining a strategic focus, adapting to changing situations, offering diversified management, combining short-term and long-run goals, and making special efforts to improve cross-cultural effectiveness in the global context.

### ***1.6 Theoretical and practical implications***

The thesis studying Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises based on the case of one company implies contributions to academic studies and managerial practices of businesses. The research built based on the gap in previous studies constructs an integrated approach, which combines career development, global leadership and cross-

border e-commerce situations when studying situations facing Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in supporting the employees' career development. This integrated approach is useful in directing empirical studies of this thesis and can also indicate valuable recommendations directing future studies exploring the interactive relationships of career development, global leadership, and organisational effectiveness of businesses in the cross-border e-commerce industry. Career development nowadays is conducted in a special context, such as the cross-cultural context facing China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, indicating the importance of incorporating global leadership in the model to study the contributions of career development to the organisational effectiveness of corporations (Monkhouse et al., 2018).

The thesis has special academic contributions by considering studying how leaders can contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the wellbeing of the employees in the cross-border ecommerce enterprises. Findings from the research can generate recommendations better focusing on the specific group of managers to direct initiatives supporting their career development and improving organisational effectiveness from different perspectives (Vilela & Casado, 2023). For example, junior managers in the workplace always undertake daily operational activities, and they focus on details instead of strategies (Gray et al., 2019). In contrast, senior managers to achieve career development requires the supports of global leadership, to audit and respond to the cross-cultural situations facing the managers and their organisations (Gray et al., 2019). Therefore, the conceptual framework by classifying managers into senior and middle managers, had addressed the importance of career development strategy to result in proper recommendations for the specific groups of managers concerning their career development.

Future studies, therefore, can refer to the conceptual framework constructed by this thesis to conduct a detailed analysis of Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. For example, future studies can collect quantitative data and extend findings from this thesis with the quantitative data collected to explore the contributions of specific career

management initiatives on the organisational effectiveness of corporations. They can consider global leadership to develop the quantitative modelling addressing relationships between career management initiatives and organisational effectiveness, such as financial performance that organisations achieve in the operations. Future studies can also refer to the classifying of management positions or managers in their different stages of career development to explore the impacts of career management on the organisational effectiveness of corporations mediated by global leadership.

Besides the academic contributions, the research exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises referring to Company X as the case can cast light on the managerial practices of Company X and other Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises. First, findings from the thesis compare the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers concerning individual and organisational level of career development to identify factors related to their career development (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019). The comparison includes similarities and differences to imply specific recommendations that corporations, such as Company X, should address to support the career development of middle and senior managers. On the one hand, the similarities in the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers concerning factors related to their career development mean general recommendations that Company X can follow to develop and implement the human resource management practices supporting the employees' career development. On the other hand, there are differences in the current state of career management among middle managers and senior managers concerning factors related to their career development. The differences imply diversified measures that Company X should develop and adopt, responding to the employees' career development. Findings from the thesis imply the importance of career development stages that corporations should address when developing and implementing career development initiatives supporting the employees' satisfaction, motivation, and engagement in the operations toward their organisational effectiveness (Delle & Searle, 2022). Other corporations belonging to China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-

Commerce enterprises can also learn lessons from the findings of this thesis to update their career management practices and motivate their employees.

Second, findings from the thesis compare the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers also to suggest both similarities and differences between middle managers and senior managers performing global leadership. Referring to similarities of the managers, they both regard global leadership as important, they both make efforts to address cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, and they both face challenges to performing effective global leadership. The findings imply recommendations that Company X can exert to motivate both the middle and senior managers in supporting their global leadership in cross-cultural situations (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). Referring to differences between the managers, the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers include different focuses of middle managers and senior managers in identifying the importance of global leadership, different efforts performing global leadership by middle managers and senior managers in the workplace toward their career goals, and different challenges in performing global leadership reported by middle managers and senior managers. The differences imply different supportive measures for Company X, aiming at supporting the global leadership effectiveness of the managers in different positions. Other corporations can also learn lessons from Company X to analyse their cross-border and cross-cultural situations and to develop and implement initiatives supporting the global leadership of the employees.

### ***1.7 Thesis Outline***

The thesis includes five chapters studying Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises based on the case of one company. The first chapter is an introduction to review the background, identify and rationale research questions, summarise the gap between previous studies, review the research methods, previous of findings, and summarise the outline of the thesis. Chapter two is a literature review to review previous studies on organisational effectiveness, global leadership, and career management. The research gap is identified by reviewing previous studies to construct

a conceptual framework for direct empirical study in this thesis. Chapter three is the research methodology section follows the research union as the framework to include levels as the element of the research methodology: research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research methods and design, time horizons, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. Chapter four is the findings and discussion section include three sub-sections: reviewing the current state of career management among middle managers and senior managers, the current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers, and recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership. Chapter five is the conclusion section, to summarises findings from the thesis, answers the research questions, proposes recommendations for management concerning career development, and proposes recommendations directing future studies based on the identified limitations of this thesis.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

The section uses Development Needs Analysis (DNA) to review and discuss previous articles to propose detailed discussions on the themes and concepts of the research question: how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in company X and the other Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation. The DNA is one framework identifying contents of the literature review section, to prepare for a literature review including key terms and relationships among the key terms to construct the conceptual framework or identify the research gaps. The purpose of the literature review is to identify and review previous studies related to the topic of this themes to fulfill its research aim, which is to achieve career development addresses organisational effectiveness via the collective efforts of managers in companies, from the organisational and individual level career development plans. The literature review section includes five sub sections: Organisational effectiveness in internationalisation, global leadership, career management, research gap, and the conceptual framework.

Organisational effectiveness is the goal of career management, mediated by global leadership. This thesis defines organisational effectiveness from a holistic approach, addressing leadership effectiveness, personal growth, flexibility in dealing with cross-cultural issues, collaborative environment within the organisation supporting the career development of individuals (Manoharan & Singal, 2019). It is to measure organisational effectiveness and critically discuss the significance of organisational effectiveness to illustrate the definition of organisational effectiveness in-depth. In this thesis, organisational effectiveness is measured by asking the managers' evaluations on their productivity, how they could achieve their career development goals (such as good relationships with the other team members, satisfaction in the workplace, desired promotional opportunities, required monetary rewards, and work-life balance) while enabling the organisation achieves financial goals and customer satisfaction.

Global leadership facing leaders in their operations suggest the requirements that



the leaders value situations and develop their leadership practices based on the dynamic situations they face when interacting with their followers (Athanasopoulou et al., 2018; Delle & Searle, 2022; Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022). Global leadership theories encompass a variety of perspectives on the nature and practice of leadership in a global context. These theories often emphasise the importance of understanding cultural differences and the psychological, physiological, geographical, geopolitical, anthropological, and sociological effects of globalisation. The representative schools of thought studying global leadership include behavioural theories, inclusive leadership, cultural dimensions theory, and leadership styles. Global leadership effectiveness is explored, referring to adaptation in leadership and the cross-cultural situations in which leaders conduct their leadership in the global context. Adaptive leadership is defined as one leadership style during which the leaders can change their leadership styles and interventions in interacting with the followers when they perceive the dynamic situations they face in the workplace (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). Cross-cultural management is the capability that leaders should have to support their employees' career development. The leaders could refer to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as the framework to understand national culture while managing cross-border enterprises and supporting employees' development in cross-cultural situations. Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational goals.

Employees in the workplace pursue career development opportunities when they find positions and undertake responsibilities in the workplace to achieve the assigned tasks and reach their organisational goals. There are two types of career development by defining career development from different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. Career development from the organisational level is defined as efforts that managers in corporations develop and implement to support the overall improvements of the employees' professional status while achieving the tasks and responsibilities for their organisations (Motley & McMullin, 2020). Career development from the individual level is defined as the

improvements in professional skills and capabilities of individual employees based on their special requirements and preferences (Motley & McMullin, 2020).

The role of the career stage in career management is crucial as it provides a structured approach to understanding and planning professional growth (Vilela & Casado, 2021). One method to classify the career stage of the employees is to classify them into senior and junior managers, referring to the different positions they take in their organisation. This thesis aims to study the career development differences between senior and junior managers following the proposal of Vilela and Casado (2021), comparing their years of experience, the depth of their skill sets, understanding of organisational processes, cultural integration, and the level of independence and accountability they carry.

The interactions of the concepts in identification are that organisational effectiveness in a global context is the goal that organisations intend to achieve with the various measures supporting the career development of the junior and senior managers in the operations. Global leadership in corporations help achieve improved organisational effectiveness, while organisational and individual career management for employees in their different career stages can influence global leadership performed by the managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises.

## ***2.2 Organisational effectiveness in internationalisation***

*1. Internationalisation of Chinese corporations.* Globalisation means opportunities for corporations to achieve their presence in the global market, participating in the global supply chain to source raw materials and use resources in more efficient and cost-effective ways to realise their sales and improve profits when selling items in domestic markets. Internationalisation of Chinese corporations (ICE) are addressed in the context of globalisation because Chinese corporations face various occasions designing and conducting the operations in internal contexts. According to the qualitative study of Liu and Tian (2008), ICE refers to the process where Chinese businesses expand their operations beyond China's borders. This phenomenon can be observed across various sectors, including manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and finance. The drive for internationalisation is often motivated by factors such as market seeking, resource

acquisition, and strategic diversification (Liu & Tian, 2008). The internationalisation of Chinese enterprises (ICE) includes various forms, such as expanding operations to sell items in foreign markets or sourcing valuable items from international markets to improve sales and profits in the domestic market (Alon et al., 2018). In this thesis, the internationalisation of companies is defined as its finding suppliers and foreign products from foreign markets via participating in international operations to support its improved sales and profits in the motherland (China).

Scholars have raised empirical evidence to indicate the acceleration of ICE, addressing key concerns that Chinese enterprises should address in ICE and the goals they intend to achieve in ICE. The internationalisation of Chinese enterprises has been accelerating, which has created a pressing need for robust global leadership and effective career management practices for employees to ensure competitiveness and sustainability to develop interactions with businesses in the global supply chain (Alon et al., 2018; Tarique & Schuler, 2010).

First, the conceptual paper by Alon et al. (2018) suggested that global leadership and career management are important in supporting Chinese corporations' global presence by reviewing and critiquing 206 academic articles published between 2003 and 2016. The qualitative research strategy in application allows in-depth analyses to explore the relationships between global leadership and career management for corporations. Global leadership guides the collective efforts of employees and managers in transnational corporations toward their collective goals. Career management suggests interventions of transnational corporations improve the capabilities of the employees and managers conducting their operations in the global context. The quantitative exploration of Adedigba et al. (2020) confirmed the arguments of Alon et al. (2018) by indicating the importance of globalisation and career management for corporations that participated in China's BRI (the Belt and Road Initiatives). The findings of Adedigba et al. (2020) suggested the importance for Chinese corporations to train the cross-cultural capabilities of the employees and guide the continuous efforts of the employees in cross-cultural situations with global leadership. However, it is a challenge for corporations in the cross-cultural context to

properly audit and respond to cross-cultural issues before achieving their global presence.

Additionally, the findings of Tarique and Schuler (2010) proposed one integrative framework to address available strategies and tactics that Chinese transnational corporations can follow to achieve their global presence in globalisation after confirming the importance of global talent management through a literature review. The integrative framework is one useful tool that corporations in the global market can follow to develop and maintain interactive relationships with various stakeholders, such as policymakers, suppliers, and consumers in different countries, to plan and use their limited resources in internationalisation properly. However, the integrative framework in implementation should consider various challenges because of the different situations facing Chinese corporations expanding their operations in different markets. Being market-focused and pursuing sustainability are feasible strategies that Chinese enterprises can follow to achieve their international presence in complex and dynamic situations (Liao & Yang, 2023). One goal achieved in the internationalisation of Chinese enterprises is achieving organisational effectiveness, auditing and responding to opportunities and challenges in the global market when sourcing products or developing cooperation with businesses in the global supply chain.

2. *The concept of organisational effectiveness.* Organisational effectiveness refers to the degree to which an organisation accomplishes its goals and objectives efficiently and effectively (Oyewo et al., 2022). It encompasses various aspects of an organisation's operations and structure, including its strategy, leadership, communication, and culture, which in combination shape the daily operations of corporations to pursue their goals in the marketplace. For example, corporate strategy directs behaviours of leaders communicating with the employees in a certain organisational culture to achieve their desired tasks, contributing to sales and profits of the corporation. The various aspects determining the performance of corporations indicate that it is to define organisational effectiveness from the various aspects. Scholars have identified key components of organisational effectiveness, such as goal setting, strategic alignment, leadership, communication, flexibility, innovation,

collaborative environment, personal growth, continuous improvement, and the holistic approach.

First, scholars suggested that goal-setting is the foundation to measure organisational effectiveness because organisations are regarded as effective when the operations can meet the goals with various supportive measures. Manoharan and Singal (2019) suggested that goal setting is the foundation for organisations to develop management practices toward their organisational effectiveness, addressing clear and measurable goals to align activities they adopted with their values and missions. The research defines organisational effectiveness for the hospitality industry by investigating goal goal-setting practices of hospitality operators to support their achieving operational effectiveness. The quantitative research strategy is applied by defining organisational effectiveness as four categories of goals: financial outcomes, guest outcomes, employee outcomes and societal outcomes (Manoharan & Singal, 2019). The quantitative research by Rashad et al. (2022) confirmed the importance of goal setting in supporting corporations to achieve organisational effectiveness by focusing on the importance of strategic alignment between goals and daily management practices facing corporations.

Second, organisational effectiveness means effectiveness in leadership to support communications and enable flexibility, innovation, and a collaborative environment for the individual employees' personal growth. For example, Douglas et al. (2022) define organisational effectiveness from the perspective of systemic leadership development, indicating that leadership effectiveness is one important aspect of organisational effectiveness by reviewing previous studies and conducting one conceptual paper on defining organisational effectiveness from the perspective of leadership. Effectiveness in leadership is defined as the capabilities of the leaders enabling flexibility and interactive communications between leaders and followers, which can support innovation and result in a collaborative environment for the individual employees' personal growth (Bendickson et al., 2023). However, there are individual differences in the leadership practices concerning features of the leaders and the followers, indicating challenges to achieving leadership effectiveness for corporations, based on the

qualitative review of Flinchbaugh et al. (2020). For example, transformational leaders address changing views and motivate employees as indicators defining organisational effectiveness. In contrast, transactional leaders are more likely to focus on financial returns and the employees' responsiveness to their orders as their organisational effectiveness measuring indicators.

Third, more scholars have referred to a comprehensive perspective by combining different perspectives in defining organisational effectiveness. For example, Gashi et al. (2022) suggested that organisational effectiveness can be defined from the organisational level addressing a holistic approach supporting continuous growth of the organisations. The research uses the quantitative research approach to explore how corporations can be outcome-focused, addressing the various factors in data-driven decision-making toward their continuous improvements (Gashi et al., 2022). The findings by Gashi et al. (2022) are supported by the empirical evidence of Naveed et al. (2022), which investigates organisations across cultures and conducts quantitative research design modelling and analysis of the differences. Overall, organisational effectiveness is a multifaceted concept that requires attention to strategic alignment, leadership, communication, flexibility, innovation, collaboration, personal growth, reward mechanisms, and continuous improvement. By focusing on these areas, organisations can enhance their overall productivity and sustainability.

This thesis defines organisational effectiveness from a holistic approach, addressing leadership effectiveness, personal growth, flexibility in dealing with cross-cultural issues, collaborative environment within the organisation supporting the career development of individuals (Manoharan & Singal, 2019). It is to measure organisational effectiveness and critically discuss the significance of organisational effectiveness to illustrate the definition of organisational effectiveness in-depth. Organisational effectiveness is a goal that corporations intend to achieve, implying the goal of this thesis exploring how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers.

3. *Measurements of organisational effectiveness.* Companies, to measure their organisational effectiveness, always design key performance indicators (KPIs)

according to their strategic goals and objectives. Scholars explored the concept of organisational effectiveness to suggest that measurements of Organisational effectiveness include employee productivity, financial metrics, customer satisfaction, attrition rates, management, workforce performance and productivity, accountability, the employee experience, organisational financial performance, and the organisation's capabilities to achieve its goals (Bendickson et al., 2023; Douglas et al., 2022; Sharma & Singh, 2021; Sumathi & K, 2022). Table 2.1 summarises measures of organisational effectiveness, including definitions of the measures, to allow a comparison among the various identified measures before determining measures applied in this thesis to measure organisational effectiveness.

Table 2.1 measures of organisational effectiveness

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Define and exploration</b>
<b>Employee Productivity</b>	This KPI assesses the efficiency and output of employees during their working hours. It is crucial to determine whether labour costs are aligned with the value generated by employees.
<b>Financial Metrics</b>	Financial data such as revenue growth, cash flow, and return on investment (ROI) are commonly used to evaluate organisational effectiveness. These metrics help in understanding the financial health of the company and its ability to sustain operations and growth.
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	Customer feedback through surveys and ratings is another method to gauge the effectiveness of an organisation. High customer satisfaction scores indicate that the company is meeting or exceeding customer expectations, which is beneficial for retention and acquisition.
<b>Attrition Rates</b>	The rate at which employees leave an organisation can be indicative of morale and acceptance of changes within the company. Lower attrition rates suggest that employees are satisfied with their roles and the company's direction.

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<b>Management</b>	The effectiveness of management is evaluated by looking at their motivational skills, decision-making processes, and leadership styles. Management practices that foster open communication and trust can lead to higher levels of employee performance and satisfaction.
<b>Workforce Performance and Productivity</b>	This includes measuring individual and collective employee performance, such as output per hour worked, quality of work-life balance, and safety records. Productivity gains can be attributed to various factors, including process improvements, technology enhancements, and workforce training.
<b>Accountability</b>	Accountability systems ensure that tasks are assigned, delegated, and tracked effectively. This helps in maintaining synchronisation and productivity within the organisation.
<b>The Employee Experience</b>	This encompasses all aspects of a worker's interaction with a company, from pre-hire communications to post-exit surveys. Positive employee experiences can lead to increased loyalty, lower turnover rates, and improved customer service.
<b>Organisational Performance</b>	This is measured by comparing actual achievements against set goals, such as profit and innovation, and by examining the efficiency of business functions and processes. Cost-efficiency and speed in achieving business aims are also considered.
<b>Organisational Strategy</b>	The effectiveness of an organisation's strategy is assessed by its competitiveness and ability to meet customer demands. Strategies that maintain market share and customer base during economic downturns are typically seen as effective.

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In summary, measuring organisational effectiveness involves a multifaceted approach that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each method provides valuable insights into the performance and efficiency of the organisation, helping to identify areas for improvement and sustain long-term success.



In this thesis, organisational effectiveness is measured by asking the managers' evaluations on their productivity, how they could achieve their career development goals (such as good relationships with the other team members, satisfaction in the workplace, desired promotional opportunities, required monetary rewards, and work-life balance) while enabling the organisation achieves financial goals and customer satisfaction.

*4. Significance: Organisational effectiveness is the goal of career management for corporations.* It is important to measure organisational effectiveness because Organisational effectiveness is the goal of career management for corporations. For instance, the conceptual paper of Bagdadli and Gianecchini (2019) conducted a systematic review and framework using the qualitative strategy is to suggest the importance of organisational career management practices for objective career success. The conceptual paper findings suggested that career management practices in organisations contribute to both the career success of individuals and organisations when the career management practices, such as training and development of employees, help improve the skills and capabilities of the employees, better undertaking their positions in the workplace and contributing to organisational performance. The qualitative research strategy in application allows in-depth analyses on the importance of organisational career management on career success of employees. However, this research strategy failed to identify accurate contributions of organisational career management on employees' career success, illustrated by numeric scales. Manoharan and Singal (2019) agreed that organisational effectiveness directs career management in corporations by suggesting the directions optimising the organisations' structure, culture, and processes to achieve their goals and objectives in managing talents in relation to their corporate strategies. The research refers to quantitative data in the hospitality industry to define organisational effectiveness and to model the interactions between organisational effectiveness and the various management in corporations: managing talents, setting goals, and allocating resources to achieve their corporate strategies (Manoharan & Singal, 2019).

Scholars agree on the important effects of career management on organisational

effectiveness and also have an in-depth analysis of how career management practices contribute to improved organisational effectiveness for corporations. Rashad et al. (2022) agreed with the importance of organisational effectiveness by summarising several mechanisms that organisational effectiveness is related to excellent career management and continuous improvements of employees within corporations. The quantitative investigation by Rashad et al. (2022) on leaders and employees in corporations suggests that organisational effectiveness and career management are related via strategic alignment, metric setting, executive sponsorship, behavioural changes, and continuous evaluations. First, Organisational effectiveness starts with a clear strategy that includes efficiency and effectiveness as core values. This strategy is then cascaded throughout the organisation, guiding career management practices. Second, Effective organisations use metrics to hold themselves accountable for achieving their goals. These metrics are essential for career management to understand progress and identify areas for improvement. Third, Leadership commitment is critical for organisational effectiveness. Senior leaders who visibly commit to effective policies can influence the behaviour and performance of the entire organisation. Fourth, Recurring behaviour is where efforts to achieve organisational effectiveness are most likely to break down. Career management interventions can address these moment-by-moment decisions that contribute to the organisation's effectiveness. Fifth, Organisational effectiveness is not a one-time achievement but a continuous process that requires ongoing evaluation and adjustment. Career management practices, including training and educational opportunities, performance assessments, and career development programs, are integral to this ongoing evaluation.

However, there are criticisms of the supportive status of career management practices on improved organisational effectiveness. The quantitative research by Gjana (2020) suggested that cultural differences among countries can result in different organisational effectiveness of corporations using the same career management practices. There are also changes in cultural values for nations and corporations, indicating that career management practices being helped for organisational effectiveness can shift to ineffective practices when situations facing corporations

change. For example, the increasing gig economy and online jobs require corporations to train flexible work capabilities employees to align with the changed situations (Kristjansdottir, Guolaugsson et al., 2017). Regardless of criticisms, more scholars agree on career management practices supporting improved organisational effectiveness of corporations. Overall, organisational effectiveness is the ultimate goal of career management for corporations because it ensures that the organisation is running smoothly, utilising its resources optimally, and achieving its desired outcomes (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019). Career management practices support this goal by fostering the development of employees and maintaining alignment with the organisation's evolving strategy and operations. In this research, the research questions are developed referring to achieving organisational effectiveness as one important goal, to explore factors and how they are related to organisational effectiveness of China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, focusing on career development and global leadership.

### ***2.3 Global leadership***

When referring to global leadership required to support employees' career development, it is to define leadership, review and discuss leadership styles, and audit the roles of situations to summarise requirements on leadership abilities, and methods and approaches to develop leadership. Global leadership is also related to the research questions because global leadership in corporations help achieve improved organisational effectiveness, in the cross-cultural context for China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, which have operations in different countries and include employees from the cross-cultural context.

*1. The leadership concept.* Leadership is one important function in corporations' operations to pursue improved values and competitive advantages in their operations because leaders undertake important positions to organise and allocate resources in corporations while motivating the employees' efforts to achieve the organisational goals and objectives. The conceptual paper of Delle and Searle (2022) suggested that leadership is defined as the process during which the leaders influence the followers (always employees in corporations) to have continuous efforts toward their

organisational goals and objectives, as one conceptual framework raising the definition of leadership based on various previous studies. Similarly, Athanasopoulou et al. (2018) investigated female CEO roles and their interactions with the followers using a qualitative research, to suggest that it is the responsibility of the leaders to motivate the employees as followers with the aim to achieve the organisational goals and objectives. Effective leaders should be able to incorporate the employees' interests and organisational performance to achieve operational effectiveness. Motivating the followers, including the various efforts to motivate the employees by fitting with the employee's career development goals, is one important way that the leaders could result in the followers' satisfaction and continuous efforts to achieve the organisational goals (Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022). Using quantitative modelling and regression analysis, Lopez Hernandez et al. (2022) suggested that developing and maintaining good relationships with people is the strategy that leaders could follow to motivate their followers and to achieve their organisational goals and objectives under the collective efforts of the various followers. However, the preferences and requirements of the individual followers, who are employees in corporations, are complex, leading to difficulties for leaders to have proper interactions with the followers before achieving motivated employees in the workplace (Nguyen & Rowe, 2021). When corporations operate in the global context and face dynamic situations in the global market, it is more difficult for the leaders to perceive and follow the customers' requirements.

*2. Review and discuss leadership styles.* Scholars classify leaders into different styles by referring to different dimensions. For example, leaders are defined as having different styles according to the managerial grid theory, which identifies five styles of leaders based on two dimensions: focusing on tasks and focusing on people by the leaders (Lagunes Cordoba et al., 2022). The qualitative study classified leaders based on their features after collecting data from interviewing leaders and using the thematic coding method in a qualitative research framework. The five leadership styles in identification are country club style, team style, impoverished style, perish style, and stand-in-the-middle style (Lagunes Cordoba et al., 2022). Leaders need to have the ability to audit the followers' requirements and preferences to determine certain

leadership styles. For example, leaders should audit the level of willingness and capabilities of the followers to determine the career development support they offer to the followers. For example, leaders should perform team style in interacting with their followers, who show low willingness and low capabilities to achieve tasks in the workplace.

Besides the leadership styles defined by the managerial grid theory, scholars also define transformational, transactional, contingency, and adaptive leadership based on the global context and dynamic situations facing leaders in operations. Zhang et al. (2021) suggested that leaders are classified by referring to their preferred ways to motivate followers, using the quantitative research strategy and comparing means as the research methods. Transformational leaders negotiate with their followers to form collective objectives with the followers and to motivate them, followers, with the identified shared vision and values. Transactional leaders exchange followers' efforts with various forms of rewards, such as monetary and non-monetary rewards (Hruby et al., 2022). The different styles of leaders address different interventions to motivate the followers toward their organisational goals by supporting the employees' career development. For example, transformational leaders address the employees' intrinsic requirements to motivate them and support them in their most desired positions based on their intrinsic requirements (Kotama et al., 2020). However, transactional leaders address the rewards to exchange the employees' efforts in their careers rather than focusing on the employees' intrinsic demands and most desired positions based on their intrinsic requirements. For example, transactional leaders believe they can find the most talented employees to achieve their development when they have provided enough monetary rewards and non-monetary rewards to attract the employees, according the quantitative studies (Hruby et al., 2022).

3. *Global leadership* facing leaders in their operations suggests the requirements that the leaders value situations and develop their leadership practices based on the dynamic situations they face when interacting with their followers. The significant global context facing leaders suggests the challenges to achieving effective leadership in dynamic situations and the counterpart ways that the leaders could follow to address

the dynamic situations before achieving effective leadership when interacting with the followers. Liu et al. (2020) audited the leadership of the Global university president using a quantitative research strategy to summarise their leadership characteristics and dynamics using a quantitative research strategy. Findings suggested that leaders in dynamic situations can change their leadership styles and practices based on specific situations. Findings cast light on the roles of leaders in supporting employees' career development in corporations because the leaders are proven to have the capabilities to adapt the leadership styles and practices to support the different employees' career development requirements. Tretter and Jacobs (2020) agreed with the arguments of Liu et al. (2020) on the roles of leaders in supporting the employees' diversified requirements in career development by conducting quantitative analysis on the leaders' behaviours and suggesting that leaders could use data to improve outcomes of the employees' career development based on interviewing one leader in Paediatric and Congenital Cardiac Care. Monkhouse et al. (2018) also conducted a qualitative analysis to identify the roles of innovative leaders' significant roles in supporting the employees' career development. Requirements leadership style in the global context is adaptive leadership, which is a leadership style requiring the leaders to perceive and follow the followers' requirements, such as their career development, in the global context.

Global leadership theories encompass a variety of perspectives on the nature and practice of leadership in a global context. These theories often emphasise the importance of understanding cultural differences and the psychological, physiological, geographical, geopolitical, anthropological, and sociological effects of globalisation. The representative schools of thought studying global leadership include behavioural theories, inclusive leadership, cultural dimensions theory, and leadership styles.

First, behavioural theories in global leadership refer to approaches that suggest the effectiveness of a leader is determined by their behaviour rather than innate traits. These theories argue that leadership is a learned behaviour that can be observed and evaluated in specific situations (Bajis et al., 2023). Kemp and Zhao (2016) agreed that Behavioral leadership theory posits that leadership is not an innate ability but a behaviour that can be learned and adopted. In leadership practices, Leadership behaviours are assessed

through observations and ratings, such as the Leader Behavior Descriptions Questionnaire, which asks team members to evaluate their leader's behaviour. Behavioural leadership theory identifies two primary behavioural dimensions: task-oriented behaviours, which focus on achieving tasks, and people-oriented behaviours, which foster interactions and satisfaction (Khoreva & Vaiman, 2015). The theory emphasises the importance of adapting leadership behaviours to fit varying contexts, such as the difference between leading a small business and a large international organisation. It suggests that anyone can potentially become an effective leader if they are trained and develop the appropriate behaviours. The theory has several strengths, including its flexibility and the possibility of widespread applicability, as it does not require specific innate qualities (Bajis et al., 2023). However, it also presents challenges, such as the complexity of determining the most effective behaviours in any given situation (Knibbs et al., 2017). In summary, behavioural theories in global leadership offer a framework for understanding and enhancing leadership effectiveness through the study and application of observable and measurable behaviours.

Second, global leaders are required to show their inclusive leadership, addressing the role of inclusivity in global leadership and highlighting the importance of valuing diversity and fostering collaboration across cultures. According to Jackson et al. (2022), inclusive leadership is a style of leadership that actively seeks to include and value diverse perspectives and backgrounds. It emphasises the importance of embracing differences and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and supported. The key components of inclusive leadership include self-awareness, empathy, psychological safety, collaboration, and diverse perspectives (Forde & Torrance, 2017). Global leadership showing their inclusivity to recognise their biases, strengths, and weaknesses is crucial for inclusive leadership. They also need to show empathy via understanding and connecting emotionally with others to take meaningful action to improve their circumstances. Global leadership requires the leaders to pursue psychological safety by prioritising authenticity to create a safe space for the followers to express ideas and feelings, aiming at achieving the employees' engagement and motivation in the workplace. The collaboration between the leaders and followers is

also important for global leaders to show their inclusiveness by auditing and responding to the diversified preferences of the employees. Diversity management is recommended for inclusive leaders to respond to the diversified workplace as one effective global leader. Overall, practices of inclusive leadership can lead to significant improvements in team performance, decision-making quality, and collaboration, as well as reducing employee turnover and enhancing innovation and profitability. However, there are challenges for leaders in the global context to perform inclusive leadership because of their limited skills and capabilities supporting their performing inclusive leadership. For example, the quantitative studies of (Lagunes Cordoba et al., 2022) suggested that it is a challenge for leaders to learn and follow the diversified features and preferences of the employees to be inclusive leaders. Considering the advances of globalisation and the increasing number of expatriate employees, it has been more difficult for the leaders in global operations to perform inclusive leadership (Westfahl & Wilkins, 2017).

Third, cultural dimensions theory suggests the key concerns that that the global leadership should address to audit and respond to the cross-cultural situations when interacting with the followers from different countries and cultural contexts. Proposed by Geert Hofstede, the Cultural Dimensions Theory theory posits that culture influences behavior and that there are specific cultural dimensions that can affect leadership practices (Story, 2011). It includes the Power Distance Index, Individualism, Masculinity vs Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation vs Short Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence vs Restraint (Story, 2011). These dimensions are not only correlated with behaviour but also with psychological outcomes and organisational practices (Cogan & MacDonald, 2021). They continue to be a significant resource in various fields, including cross-cultural psychology, international management, and communication (Cogan & MacDonald, 2021).

Fourth, global leadership includes several leadership styles, defined by Hersey and Blanchard: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating, which may vary depending on the situation or stage of development (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). Directing leadership in a global context suggests that the leaders focus on tasks, instead of relationships, to identify instructions directing efforts of the followers clearly. This



leadership style suits for followers featured as low competence and high commitment. The coaching leadership is featured as focusing on the relationship and trust that begins to develop. This leadership is suitable for followers with moderate competence and improving commitment. Supporting leadership is one leadership style that provides guidance and checking in on performance without detailed instructions. Supportive leaders are suited for followers who are competent but need more full commitment and consistency. Delegating leadership entails entrusting tasks to the follower with minimal intervention, fostering empowerment and self-direction. This leadership is suitable for followers who are highly competent and motivated, requiring minimal supervision. These styles are part of the broader context of practical leadership development, emphasising the importance of understanding and adapting to the differences among individuals in organisational settings (Tretter & Jacobs, 2020). Global leadership effectiveness is explored, referring to adaptation in leadership and the cross-cultural situations in which leaders conduct their leadership in the global context.

4. *Adaptive leadership* is defined as one leadership style during which the leaders can change their leadership styles and interventions in interacting with the followers when they perceive the dynamic situations they face in the workplace (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). Methods and approaches to develop adaptive leadership include encouraging employees' engagement, using delegation, training and development of the leaders to follow better the employees' career development requirements in the global context. First, employee engagement is important to support the leaders in choosing certain leadership styles and conducting interventions with the employees to support the employees' career development. Cogan and MacDonald (2021), with a quantitative research approach, suggested that employees who achieve their career development always require various supports, especially delicately support from their peers and their leaders, requiring their engagement with the leaders to communicate with the leaders and to ask for support from the leaders. By encouraging the employees' engagement, leaders could get information about the efforts they need to address before achieving the employees' satisfaction and required efforts in the employees' career development. Understanding the employees, such as by encouraging employees' engagement and

providing background information that the leaders could follow to develop their adaptive leadership (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). In contrast, the quantitative study by Cogan and MacDonald (2021) explored situations facing leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic to confirm the significance of encouraging employee engagement for the leaders to well understand and follow the followers' newest requirements before proposing counterpart leadership interventions in supporting the employees' career development.

Second, adaptive leadership could be developed by using delegation, which addresses the empowerment practices of the employees to encourage the employees to set their own goals and objectives to direct their career development. Using delegation is one important tactic that leaders could use to motivate the employees' engagement in the workplace, such as in setting goals, allocating resources, and achieving the employees' continuous motivations toward the organisational goals while the individual employees could choose their desired tasks and responsibilities in the workplace delegation. Huntsman et al. (2021) conducted quantitative empirical studies to audit the performance of employees in emergency response to suggest that delegation helps leaders adapt to the required support by the employees and results the win-win situations for the individual employees and the organisations from the overall.

Third, Adaptive leadership could be achieved effectively by training and developing the leaders, who are important stakeholders, to perform their adaptive leadership when interacting with the employees in the workplace. Imtiaz et al. (2021) identified the significance of adaptive leadership for corporations to audit and respond to rapidly developing technologies, which requires continuous training and development for the employees and leaders dealing with the technologies under a quantitative modelling approach. In contrast, the quantitative study of Van Hala et al. (2018) suggested that corporations achieve effective leadership by supporting the career development of employees also need to address the leaders' career development, such as by providing various forms of training and development to help the leaders catch up with the newest technologies, the employees' requirements, and change management requirements for their corporations. When corporations operate in the

global context, they need to train and develop the leaders' skills and capabilities in responding to changing situations before they can support the employees' career development (Woodhouse & Pedder, 2017). One important aspect of training the leaders and developing their adaptive leadership is to train the cross-cultural effectiveness of the leaders, who need to design and conduct leadership practices in the cross-cultural context when they work in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises.

5. *Cross-cultural management* is the capability that leaders should have to support their employees' career development. The leaders could refer to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as the framework to understand national culture while managing cross-border enterprises and supporting employees' development in cross-cultural situations. Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational goals.

6. *The concept of culture*. Scholars have debates on defining culture and its role in organisations' management. Verma and Sharma (2019) suggested that culture is the shared values and beliefs in organisations or groups to shape the behaviours of the members. The research identified both observed and not observed parts of the culture in organisations or groups. Noormahomed et al. (2019) further defined strong and weak cultures based on how culture impacts individuals' behaviours in organisations or groups. Culture could be defined from the national culture level, organisational culture level, and culture as one system under certain cultural models, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Verma & Sharma, 2019).

First, national culture provides the foundation to define organisational culture and culture as one system to shape the values and preferences of individual employees (Gjana, 2020). Leaders supporting employees' career development in the global context need to address the significant roles of national culture, such as by referring to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which defines five dimensions to measure national culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Kristjansdottir, Gulaugsson, et al., 2017). Power distance as one

dimension to measure culture means to what extent the individuals in the culture would accept inequality distribution of power among all members in the society. Individualism measures how individuals address their interests in contrast with the interests of their groups. Masculinity measures the level of competition (or cooperation) preferred by the nation as a dimension of the national culture. Uncertainty avoidance measures how people in a culture are likely to avoid or accept uncertainties. Long-term orientation measures how people in a culture are likely to be long-term focused.

Second, individuals form organisations with culture as the reason to link the different team members in the organisations to have their collective efforts toward the goals and objectives of their organisations. An-Chi and Kao (2022) suggested that groups develop into organisations when team members are motivated to have collective goals and combine efforts toward the collective goals. Therefore, organisations held values, beliefs, and practices as features of the organisations and as reasons to differentiate the organisations from the other organisations in the marketplace under the quantitative analysis and modelling using the regression model by Noormahomed et al. (2019).

Third, culture works as a system by referring to national culture or organisational culture, during which there are various stakeholders and their interactions to shape the behaviours of the team members and their efforts toward the organisational goals and objectives. For example, culture in corporations is one system to address the career planning system of corporations toward their operational effectiveness, as suggested by the conceptual paper of Kuntz and Livingston (2020). The behaviours of the leaders and the followers are influenced by the organisational culture as to result of their dynamics and interactions toward the employees' career planning and their efforts toward their career goals and objectives.

*7. Culture and HRM.* Culture is related to human resource management because of the role of culture in influencing the leaders' and the followers' behaviours. Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational

goals (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). Using quantitative explorations, Mate et al. (2019b) suggested that culture includes values, beliefs, and preferred styles that the leaders and the employees follow in the human resource management process, including auditing the environment, recruitment and selection, training and development, rewarding and performance management. For example, a strong culture is defined as the strong values and beliefs to direct the behaviours of the team members in the culture, leading to the various interventions that the leaders perform to interact with the followers and to promote the followers' efforts toward the organisational goals while realising the individual employees' career development goals (Mate et al., 2019b). However, cultural diversity among managers, employees, and clients results in challenges for leaders to interact with their followers effectively and to result in proper career development interventions in the workplace, as suggested by the quantitative study of Pajic et al. (2018). The leaders noticing the complex and dynamic cultural situations in the workplace are suggested to perform an adaptive leadership style, which contributes to the leaders' catching up with the dynamic situations and the employees' requirements before proposing the proper interventions to help the employees achieve their career development.

Culture and career development. Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions. First, leaders who support the employees' career development must develop talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations (Bickel, 2022). Talent management is essential for corporations to result in high-performing employees while achieving their career development because employees are the most important internal customers that corporations should value to support their competitive advantages. Leaders achieving effective talent management are suggested to audit the employees' previous and current experience to help them reflect on their previous career development and propose their future career development (Bickel, 2022).

Second, leaders support the employees' career development are to motivating

employees, such as by providing various monetary and non-monetary rewards based on the perceived requirements of the employees (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019). Managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises are to consider the diversified cultural requirements of the employees while perceiving their requirements before proposing counterpart leadership styles and rewards to motivate the employees (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019).

Third, leaders who support the employees' career development focus on growth rather than promotions. Zhang et al. (2021) suggested that employees' career development is long-term focused on supporting the employees' growth rather than only helping the employees gain monetary rewards or promotions, which are the primary requirements that employees need in the workplace. Employees in their career development define growth from more aspects, such as their improved professional status in knowledge and skills, their capabilities to achieve work-life balance, and their possibilities of finding other job opportunities in the industry, besides the monetary rewards they gain and the promotions they achieve (Zhang et al., 2021).

In this thesis, leadership is defined as the process during which the leaders influence the followers (always employees in corporations) to have continuous efforts toward their organisational goals and objectives, as one conceptual framework raising the definition of leadership based on various previous studies (Delle and Searle, 2022). Global leadership facing leaders in their operations suggests the requirements that the leaders value situations and develop their leadership practices based on the dynamic situations they face when interacting with their followers. The significant global context facing leaders suggests the challenges to achieving effective leadership in dynamic situations indicates the importance of global leadership, which includes various styles of leadership, and achieved in the cross-cultural situations. Global leadership effectiveness is explored, referring to adaptation in leadership and the cross-cultural situations in which leaders conduct their leadership in the global context. Adaptive leadership is defined as one leadership style during which the leaders can change their leadership styles and interventions in interacting with the followers when they perceive the dynamic situations they face in the workplace (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). Cross-

cultural management is the capability that leaders should have to support their employees' career development. The leaders could refer to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as the framework to understand national culture while managing cross-border enterprises and supporting employees' development in cross-cultural situations (Kristjansdottir, Gulaugsson, et al., 2017). Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational goals (Verma & Sharma, 2019).

Global leadership is related to the research questions and the research gap, also relating to career management and organisational effectiveness, which are other themes of the research. As one illustration, global leadership is related to the research question, which aims to study the supportive status of global leadership on career development of employees in China's Medium-sized Chinese Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises toward organisational effectiveness. The research gaps are also identified referred to the specific perspectives that global leadership is related to career development of the employees.

## ***2.4 Career management***

*1. The concept of career development and career development plans.* Career development is one important theme explored by this thesis to study its links to organisational effectiveness via the various complex mechanisms, such as under influences of leadership in enterprises. Employees in the workplace pursue career development opportunities when they find positions and undertake responsibilities in the workplace to achieve the assigned tasks and reach their organisational goals. For an illustration, the qualitative study of Xiao et al. (2019) defined career development as the process of exploration, self-knowledge and decision-making to shape workplace careers. Individual employees should undertake the most responsibilities in choosing their career positions and develop their professional skills and capabilities in the workplace by aligning with their skills, interests and personality (Xiao et al., 2019). This study includes rich data and in-depth explorations to define career development addressing the procedures of employees' career development process and features of

each procedures in the career development process. However, there are also studies that address the roles of managers in supporting individuals' career development because individuals work in organisations and require support from managers and other employees to achieve their daily tasks and their improved professional status in the workplace (Atienzo et al., 2020). Homsey (2021) suggested that career development is the support organisations provide to help employees achieve their professional growth, especially by supporting their learning skills and capabilities to move to new positions or achieve new projects within their organisations. Corporations provide various forms of career development support to help the employees' professional development, such as by referring to mentoring, coaching, networking, and career pathing to promote employees' career development (Okolie et al., 2020).

Career development plans (CDPs) are addressed by corporations to promote the human resource management practices directing the planning of corporations and the employees, addressing the organisational effectiveness and sustainability of corporations. According to Homsey (2021), a career development plan is a professional development plan, which is an organised document that outlines an individual's career goals and the strategies they intend to follow to achieve these objectives. This plan serves as a roadmap for employees to navigate their professional journey, providing clarity on where they wish to go and the actions they need to take to get there. The CDP is a dynamic tool that should be reviewed and adjusted regularly to reflect changes in the individual's career progress and aspirations (Dizaho et al., 2017). It is also crucial to note that while a CDP is a personalised document, it should be aligned with the individual's employer's goals and capabilities. This structured approach to career navigation not only benefits the individual by providing a sense of purpose and direction but also adds value to the employer by fostering employee engagement and retention (Dizaho et al., 2017). For example, Vanderford et al. (2018a) suggested that employees intend to achieve their desired career development by designing and implementing certain career development plans, with a quantitative strategy based on investigating employees and their efforts in designing and implementing career development plans to promote their career development. Okolie et al. (2020) used the



quantitative research strategy investigating employees' requirements to suggest the key concerns of creating and using one CDP to support operational effectiveness. The key steps in designing one CDP include assessing the current situation, defining career goals, skills analysis, resource identification, action plan formulation, implementation, tracking process, and reviewing and revising. The career development plans delicately developed for an individual employee are achieved under the collective efforts of the managers and employees, addressing the concerns of both the individual employees and the organisation.

There are two types of career development by defining career development from different levels: organisational career development and individual career development.

2. *Organisational career management.* Career development from the organisational level is defined as efforts that managers in corporations develop and implement to support the overall improvements of the employees' professional status while achieving the tasks and responsibilities for their organisations (Motley & McMullin, 2020). According to Delle and Searle (2022), Career development from the organisational level involves implementing strategies and initiatives that aim to enhance the skills, knowledge, and experiences of employees to achieve their career goals within the company. The research breaks into ways that organisations can approach the career development of their employees from the organisational level, addressing employee goals, personalised development plans, and measures managing the career advancement processes. First, identifying employee goals sets the background information indicating measures about performance evaluations, skills assessments and discussions on the employees' skills and capabilities to support the organisational goals in the operations (Dragoni et al., 2014).

Second, personalised growth plans of the employees are developed, to align the individual and organisations toward improved career development from the organisational level. Şimşek et al. (2022) suggested that career development from the organisational level should include training programs and job rotations addressing individual requirements of the employees in the personalised development plans to support collaboration of all the individual employees toward the organisational goals

using digital media platforms. For example, corporations can have training programs online, in the format of on-the-job training, to improve the skills and capabilities of the employees in achieving the organisational goals and objectives. Corporations are also recommended to implement job rotation programs that allow employees to gain experience in different areas of the company.

Third, career development from the organisational level suggests the organisational level efforts designed and conducted by the managers to facilitate skills improvements and knowledge acquiring of the employees as the career advancement process, trying to achieve the organisational goals about improved operational efficiency and performance. For example, managers can offer mentoring opportunities and cross-cultural projects to improve the skills and capabilities of the employees (Li et al., 2022). The mentoring projects can address cross-functional procedures within operations of corporations including internal promotions and career planning sessions. Internal promotions mean efforts to establish clear pathways for internal promotions, ensuring that employees understand the criteria and expectations for advancement (Woodhouse & Pedder, 2017). Career planning sessions can be developed to set short-term and long-term career goals, and identify development opportunities, aiming at directing career development of individuals at the organisational level. Table 2.2 summarises examples of career development initiatives to suggest how career development from the organisational level allows corporations to achieve improved organisational performance by supporting the performance of the employees.

Table 2.2: Examples of Organisational Level Career Development Initiatives

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Job Rotation</b>	Allows employees to try out different roles within the company for skill enhancement.
<b>Career Planning Sessions</b>	Helps employees set and work towards career goals through discussions with management.
<b>Internal Promotions</b>	Creates opportunities for employees to advance within the company based on merit and potential.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Cross-Functional Projects</b>	Encourages collaboration and skill development through joint projects across departments.

In conclusion, career development is a critical component of human resource management that benefits both employees and employers. Besides career development from the organisational level, individuals' efforts to address their career goals indicate the significance of individual career management in supporting individuals' improved performance and the improved organisational effectiveness of their corporations.

3. *Individual career management.* Career development from the individual level is defined as the improvements in professional skills and capabilities of individual employees based on their special requirements and preferences (Motley & McMullin, 2020). Atienzo et al. (2020) suggested that Career development from the individual level encompasses a series of activities and processes that an individual undertakes to understand themselves better, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and make informed decisions about their career paths. Gee et al. (2019) agreed that career development from the individual level is a dynamic and iterative process that equips individuals with the tools they need to navigate their career journey effectively. It encourages continuous reflection, adaptability, and proactive strategies for achieving one's full potential in the workplace and beyond. Table 2.3 summarises Career development from the individual level, addressing the initiatives in detail.

Table 2.3: Examples of individual-level Career Development Initiatives

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Self-Assessment</b>	Individuals gather relevant information about themselves, including talents, interests, values, and lifestyle preferences (Pajic et al., 2018). Self-assessment helps one understand one's abilities, behaviours, and motivations, which is crucial for aligning career choices with personal attributes (Athanasopoulou et al., 2018).
<b>Development of</b>	Based on self-assessment results, individuals develop realistic

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<b>Career Goals</b>	<p>career goals (Cheah et al., 2021).</p> <p>Career goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to ensure clarity and focus (Cheah et al., 2021).</p>
<b>Skill Acquisition and Enhancement</b>	<p>Through training and education, individuals acquire and enhance the necessary skills for their chosen career path (Vanderford et al., 2018a).</p> <p>Skill development can occur formally through degrees or certificates or informally through online courses or workshops (Vanderford et al., 2018a).</p>
<b>Experience and Application:</b>	<p>Practical experience, such as internships, volunteer work, or part-time jobs, allows individuals to apply their skills and gain real-world exposure (Chang et al., 2021).</p> <p>Experience is essential for developing competence and confidence in one's abilities.</p>
<b>Networking and Relationship Building:</b>	<p>Developing professional relationships can lead to opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and networking.</p> <p>Networking can be facilitated through attending industry events, participating in professional associations, and connecting on social media platforms.</p>
<b>Continuous Learning and Adaptation:</b>	<p>Career development is an ongoing process that continues throughout an individual's working life.</p> <p>It involves adapting to changes in the labour market, technology, and personal circumstances.</p>
<b>Professional Development Plan:</b>	<p>An individual development plan (IDP) is a tool that assists employees in achieving their personal and professional development goals (Vanderford et al., 2018b).</p> <p>IDPs often include training, qualifications, and credentials required for professional advancement and achievement.</p>

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<b>Career Advancement Framework:</b>	Some organisations provide a career advancement framework that outlines paths for professional advancement from entry-level positions to higher roles.
	This framework can guide individuals in planning their career progression and setting short-term and long-term objectives.

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Those initiatives supporting the career development of employees from the individual levels are also supported by organisations to promote the career development of the employees and to realise improved operational efficiency for the organisations. Corporations support the organisational level of career development by addressing the general tasks and requirements of all the employees, while corporations support the individual level of career development by addressing the employees' customised requirements to achieve improved professional status in the workplace. Jones-Morales & Konrad (2018) suggested that it is important for corporations to audit factors related to career development from either the organisational level or individual level of career management by exploring the supportive roles of elite leaders in corporations using a quantitative research approach. For example, social media and the related changes brought about to the marketplace are the important factors that corporations should consider to achieve effective operations by supporting the career development of the employees (Jones-Morales & Konrad, 2018). Additional analysis is required to address how the identified factors are important reasons that contribute to career development at the individual and organisational levels to support the goals of individuals and corporations in the workplace.

*4. Factors related to the career development* of employees in the workplace include the person's characteristics, financial resources, financial obligations, Physical, Mental, and Emotional Impairments, age, and family obligations. First, the employee's characteristics, such as interests, personality type, aptitudes, and work-related values, determine their ways of thinking and making decisions in the workplace (Dietrich & Lazarides, 2019). Employees also refer to their characteristics as one important factor in determining their positions and supporting their career development. For example,

introverted individuals are not likely to undertake the position of a salesman because of the challenges for the introvert to interact with others to sell goods (Hunt et al., 2017).

Second, employees must consider financial resources and obligations while pursuing their career options and career development. Gee et al. (2019) suggest that individuals pursuing their career options can be costly because they need to pay for training and development to gain skills for certain positions, and employees always require time to prepare for career development. Chang et al. (2021) suggested that financial limitations might also hinder the job-hunting of employees. For example, limited financial resources might result in limited funds for the employees to buy interview clothes. Besides the financial resources available to hunt jobs and to prepare skills and capabilities for certain positions, employees also need to consider their financial obligations when choosing their careers. For example, some employees need to undertake positions with high levels of rewards to support their families instead of choosing the most desired positions (Vanderford et al., 2018b).

Third, employees' career development is significantly impacted by physical, mental, and emotional factors and the age of the employees. For example, employees need to have the physical capabilities to undertake some tasks, such as working in the construction industry (Cheah et al., 2021). Age is also one important factor to influence the career development of employees because younger employees always spend more time and effort to support their career development while the elders are facing more serious challenges to balance their work and life, and they are likely to have more time with their families (Cheah et al., 2021). Especially when employees consider changing their careers, age is one important factor they consider before making decisions. However, Homsey (2021) suggested that the perceived age of the employees, rather than the actual age, influences their career development decisions.

Fourth, employees must undertake family obligations while choosing a career and achieve their career development. For example, achieving work-life balance is one important goal that many employees need to consider, especially female employees, resulting in their efforts to combine work and life while choosing a career and proposing efforts to achieve their career development (Okolie et al., 2020). However,

technological advances, such as the development of the Internet and online workspace, help reduce barriers that the employees need to consider balancing work and life because the employees can have remote work or work from home instead of going to their physical offices (Wu & Kao, 2022).

Managers in corporations should undertake important responsibilities to support the individual employees' career development, especially at the organisational level of career development by supporting resources for the employees' developing their skills and promoting their career development (Abkhezr et al., 2018; Miller & u.a, 2018). Abkhezr et al. (2018) suggested that managers should undertake responsibilities to support individual employees' career development by motivating them toward the long-term goals for their organisations and themselves in career development. Miller and u.a (2018) examined the cross-cultural situations facing managers in supporting the employees' career development to suggest that managers should understand and respond to cross-cultural situations while interacting with the employees in supporting their career development. There are advantages in technologies, such as artificial intelligence, supporting career development plans development and implement of corporations. For example, Zhang and Jin (2023) explored the supportive functions of smart technology, artificial intelligence, automation, robotics, and algorithms (STAARA) awareness of the employees' perceptions in the hotel industry. A disruptive innovation theory perspective is applied to conduct the data analysis addressing situations facing employees in the hotel industry in a quantitative research design. Findings suggested that the advanced technologies can support the employees' gaining career perceptions. The collective efforts of the managers and the individual employees could finally improve the employees' career development of all the employees of the organisation from the overall and the customised career development of the individual employees.

5. *The role of the career stage in career management* is crucial as it provides a structured approach to understanding and planning professional growth (Vilela & Casado, 2021). Career stages are essentially milestones or phases that an individual passes through during their professional journey, each presenting its own set of

responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities for growth (Vilela & Casado, 2021). Scholars notice the importance of defining career stages to design and propose counterpart career management plans and interventions to define the career stages of the employees before determining the career management measures. Table 2.4 illustrates a general approach identifying four stages of career development for employees in the workplace (Noormahomed et al., 2019).

Table 2.4: Stages of career development

Career Stage	Description
<b>Establishment</b>	Beginning one's career and establishing professional identity.
<b>Advancement</b>	Pursuing promotion and leadership opportunities.
<b>Maintenance</b>	Managing ongoing responsibilities and facing professional challenges.
<b>Withdrawal</b>	Leaving one's career due to various reasons marks the end of a professional journey.

In Table 2.4 illustration, the four stages of career development for an individual in the workplace are establishment, advancement, maintenance, and withdrawal (Noormahomed et al., 2019). In the establishment stage, the employees enter the workplace to begin their careers and establish their professional identity. In the advancement stage, the employees pursue promotion and leadership opportunities to realise their goals, such as monetary rewards and a feeling of achievement in the workplace (Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022). Employees in senior and junior management positions, such as those working as customer services professionals undertaking the housekeeping tasks or directing the housekeeping departments, both value promotions and growth opportunities, indicating their position as in the advancement stage of the career development hotel career. The maintenance stage is featured as managing ongoing responsibilities and professional challenges by detecting and dealing with the various issues they face in the workplace. In the withdrawal stage of career development, the employees leave their careers because of various reasons, such as retirement. However, the career development stages of employees are more complex in the advancement and maintenance stages, when the employees enter one corporation to



achieve their daily work and promotions before withdrawal (Gray et al., 2019).

One method to classify the career stage of the employees is to classify them into senior and junior managers, referring to the different positions they take in their organisation. According to Vilela and Casado (2021), senior and junior managers show significant differences concerning their career development due to the varying levels of expertise, responsibilities, and tenure within the organisations they serve. The qualitative research of Vilela and Casado (2021), by reviewing studies on the career development of senior and junior managers from 2011 to 2020, summarised key aspects to compare the career development of the senior and middle managers, addressing year of experience, skill set, process understanding, organisational culture, independence and accountability, mentorship. Table 2.5 summarises the career development differences of senior and junior managers following the proposal of Vilela and Casado (2021).

Table 2.5 The career development differences between senior and junior managers

<b>Career development stages</b>	<b>Senior managers</b>	<b>Junior managers</b>
<b>Years of Experience</b>	Senior managers usually have several years of experience in their field, ranging from 5+ years to potentially decades	Junior managers are in the early stages of their careers, typically with less than 3 years of experience in their field
<b>Skill Set</b>	They possess advanced knowledge and high skill in the work they are required to do at their position	While they may be highly skilled in their technical area, they are less experienced in managing others and may be learning on the job
<b>Process Understanding</b>	Senior managers are deeply familiar with the	Junior managers may be less aware of or less

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	relevant processes of the organisation and may have contributed to shaping these processes	involved in the broader organisational processes
<b>Organisational Culture</b>	They have integrated into the culture of the organisation and understand its values	They may be newer to the company's culture and values and could be in a phase where they are adapting to fit into the organisation's norms
<b>Independence and Accountability</b>	Senior managers are capable of acting independently and taking responsibility for their actions, often leading to decision-making authority	Junior managers often rely on senior managers for guidance and support, especially when making decisions that impact the entire team or project
<b>Mentorship</b>	As they have gained experience, senior managers may take on mentoring roles, guiding and teaching younger staff members	Organisations may offer orientation, boot camps, and on-the-job training to help junior managers acclimate to their new roles

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To summarise, the primary differences between senior and junior managers lie in their years of experience, the depth of their skill sets, understanding of organisational processes, cultural integration, and the level of independence and accountability they carry. Senior managers are seasoned professionals who have earned their leadership through years of dedication and performance, while junior managers are those who are just beginning their journey in leadership, relying on their potential and the support of their more experienced colleagues.

However, individual managers and employees show significant differences in achieving their career development, regardless of the positions they undertake, indicating the importance that managers have the skills to support the career development of the employees based on the special features and preferences of employees (Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022). The research conducted a social network analysis based on mass data collected from women leaders in global health to suggest the importance of Connectedness. Internal support, such as support on developing the skills and capabilities of the employees, is extremely important for managers and staff in junior positions. Those in senior positions, however, need to be strategically focused in their daily lives, and they pay more attention, requiring empowerment from top managers. Huntsman et al. (2021) confirmed the arguments of Lopez Hernandez et al. (2022) by exploring the key tasks of senior managers in the workplace to argue the importance of participating in decision-making is important for senior managers to plan their career development toward the growth of the businesses properly.

6. *Managers' skills related to career development* include their leadership skills in interacting with the employees as followers and the cross-cultural management skills and capabilities when they face cross-cultural situations in interacting with employees in cross-border organisations. The summary of Pajic et al. (2018), based on quantitative modelling, suggested that corporations operating in the global market must address the individual employees' diversified requirements, indicating the challenges for the leaders in corporations to perform their adaptability when interacting with employees and supporting the employees' career development. Jones-Morales and Konrad (2018) agreed with the managers' skills in responding to the diversified demands and preferences of the employees by referring to the dynamic situations that corporations need to address in their operations, with investigations on managers and applying the quantitative strategy. Additionally, Mate et al. (2019a) studied the roles of leaders, employees' career development, and the cross-cultural situations facing corporations to construct a quantitative model analysing factors related to the career development of managers and strategies to address the importance of managers' skills in managing cross-cultural situations. The leadership should know to understand the cultural

dimensions of nations and employees' cultural preferences and design the counterpart HRM interventions to motivate the employees effectively.

In this research, career development is the exploration, self-knowledge and decision-making to shape workplace careers by the employees (Xiao et al., 2019). There are two types of career development by defining career development from different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. The career development of managers in their different positions, such as the senior and junior managers, are also differently, because of the different positions they need to undertake, indicating the research questions and linking to the research gaps of the study. For example, career development for senior and junior managers can be explored to study: what are the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers in supporting the organisation's effectiveness? The distinction between organisational and individual career management is useful. The study is related to one research gap that previous studies have not classified career management into organisational and individual levels, and studied how leaders could contribute to career management at both levels to achieve organisational goals and employee wellbeing.

### ***2.5 The research gap***

The thesis includes two research gaps. To identify the first research gap is to review previous studies related to the keywords of this study to address limitations of previous studies studying relations of the key terms, such as career management, cross-border e-commerce, global leadership, and cross-cultural situations. Although there are studies exploring career management effects, impacts of cross-cultural situations, and the importance of global leadership on organisational effectiveness, previous studies have not thoroughly explored career management and global leadership development among managers in Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in China, within one integrated model. First, there are studies focusing on career management effects to explore how career management has significant impacts on the operations and organisational effectiveness of corporations from different perspectives. Xiao et al. (2019) defined career development as the process of exploration, self-knowledge and decision-making to shape workplace careers. Individual employees should undertake

the most responsibilities in choosing their career positions and develop their professional skills and capabilities in the workplace by aligning with their skills, interests and personality (Xiao et al., 2019). Homsey (2021) suggested that career development is the support organisations provide to help employees achieve their professional growth, especially by supporting their learning skills and capabilities to move to new positions or achieve new projects within their organisations. However, there are mechanisms that career management means significant impacts on organisational effectiveness, requiring additional studies.

Second, scholars have noticed the cross-cultural situations when studying organisational effectiveness and human resource management practices to achieve effective human resource management practices supporting their organisational goals and objectives. Verma and Sharma (2019) suggested that culture is the shared values and beliefs in organisations or groups to shape the behaviours of the members. Noormahomed et al. (2019) further defined strong and weak cultures based on how culture impacts individuals' behaviours in organisations or groups. Gjana (2020) suggested national culture provides the foundation to define organisational culture and culture as one system to shape the values and preferences of individual employees. Previous studies have also defined national culture following Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explore differences in national culture and the significant impacts of cultural differences on career management and the operational effectiveness of corporations. Hofstede's cultural dimensions define five dimensions to measure national culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Kristjansdottir, Gulaugsson, et al., 2017). Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions. However, studies also need to address how to incorporate cross-cultural situations into consideration to design and implement certain operational procedures and measures in managing the career development of employees toward the desired organisational goals.

Third, scholars have studied the situations to have global leadership and the features of global leadership in supporting corporations' gaining organisational effectiveness by managing staff in cross-border situations. The significant global context facing leaders suggests the challenges to achieving effective leadership in dynamic situations and the counterpart ways that the leaders could follow to address the dynamic situations before achieving effective leadership when interacting with the followers. Liu et al. (2020) audited the leadership of the Global university president using a quantitative research strategy to summarise their leadership characteristics and dynamics using a quantitative research strategy. Findings suggested that leaders in dynamic situations have the capability to change their leadership styles and practices based on specific situations. Global leaders, to support organisational effectiveness, can address key concerns of the employees, supporting the career development of the employees from different perspectives. For example, Cogan and MacDonald (2021), with a quantitative research approach, suggested that employees who achieve their career development always require various supports, especially delicately support from their peers and their leaders, requiring their engagement with the leaders to communicate with the leaders and to ask for support from the leaders. Global leadership includes several leadership styles, defined by Hersey and Blanchard: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating, which may vary depending on the situation or stage of development (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). However, additional analysis addressing the combination of global leadership in cross-cultural situations, career management, cross-border e-commerce enterprises, and organisational effectiveness is required to scope down a feasible research topic.

Therefore, the first research gap is: previous studies failed to achieve an integrated approach, which combines career development, global leadership and cross-border e-commerce situations when studying situations facing Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in supporting the employees' career development.

The research gap in identification is important to direct empirical studies of this thesis, future academic studies exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, and

valuable career management interventions that corporations can adopt to support the career development of their employees. First, the identified research suggests that there are opportunities to construct a conceptual framework based on findings from the literature review section to address interactive relationships among career management, global leadership, and organisational effectiveness as the foundation to conduct empirical analysis on the research topic studying Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises (Carr et al., 2019). This thesis refers to the conceptual framework proposed from the literature review section to conduct a case study on company X, which is a medium-sized cross-border E-Commerce enterprise with 500 employees offering international mid-to-high-end beauty cosmetics and health products to the target customers. The case study is one type of qualitative research strategy that has an in-depth analysis of the relationships between career development and organisational effectiveness, mediated by global leadership (Gioia, 2021). Besides the qualitative research strategy suggested and conducted by this thesis, there is also potential quantitative research strategies applied in future studies to explore Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. For example, future studies can define and measure career management with numeric data to conduct regression analysis on how career management is related to organisational financial performance, mediated by the global leadership styles performed by the leaders in the operations.

Second, findings from this thesis exploring the interactive relationships of career development, global leadership, and organisational effectiveness can result in valuable career management interventions that corporations can adopt to support the career development of their employees. Company X studied by this thesis can refer to findings from the thesis to design and update their career management strategies, motivating efforts of the employees toward their operational effectiveness in addressing the cross-border and cross-cultural situations. Other businesses can also learn lessons and recommendations for Company X to update their operations in managing the career development of the employees. The recommendations are especially useful for

corporations operating in the cross-border e-commerce industry, which face similar situations to Company X.

To identify the second research gap, it is to focus on the "career management" concept to have an in-depth analysis. Previous studies have defined career management and classified career management into different categories following the grouping variables, such as individual-organisational career management and career management in different career stages but no studies had applied different levels of career management in studying the role of leadership in the cross-cultural context to achieve organisational effectiveness. First, scholars have defined career development from different perspectives to lay a foundation for classifying career management and studying relationships between career development and organisational effectiveness. Xiao et al. (2019) defined career development as the process of exploration, self-knowledge and decision-making to shape workplace careers. Employees in the workplace pursue career development opportunities when they find positions and undertake responsibilities in the workplace to achieve the assigned tasks and reach their organisational goals. In contrast, there are also studies that address the roles of managers in supporting individuals' career development because individuals work in organisations and require support from managers and other employees to achieve their daily tasks and their improved professional status in the workplace (Atienzo et al., 2020). Homsey (2021) suggested that career development is the support organisations provide to help employees achieve their professional growth, especially by supporting their learning skills and capabilities to move to new positions or achieve new projects within their organisations. The definition of career management implies types of interventions that influence the career development of individuals and suggests methods of classifying career development into groups by individual and organisational interventions supporting career development.

Second, scholars have defined career management by identifying two types of career development according to career development from different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. Career development from the organisational level is defined as efforts that managers in



corporations develop and implement to support the overall improvements of the employees' professional status while achieving the tasks and responsibilities for their organisations (Motley & McMullin, 2020). According to Delle and Searle (2022), there are ways that organisations can approach the career development of their employees from the organisational level, addressing employee goals, personalised development plans, and measures managing the career advancement processes. Besides career development from the organisational level, there are efforts of the individuals to address their career goals, indicating the significance of individual career management supporting individuals' gaining improved performance and supporting improved organisational effectiveness of their corporations. Career development from the individual level is defined as the improvements in professional skills and capabilities of individual employees based on their special requirements and preferences (Motley & McMullin, 2020). However, the effects of the same career management interventions designed and implemented for one corporation can be different because of the special positions and personal preferences of the employees in the workplace. Therefore, additional analyses are required to address how the identified factors are important reasons that contribute to career development at the individual and organisational levels to support the goals of individuals and corporations in the workplace.

Third, previous studies have identified the importance of the career stage in career management. One method to classify the career stage of the employees is to classify them into senior and junior managers, referring to the different positions they take in their organisation. According to Vilela and Casado (2021), senior and junior managers show significant differences concerning their career development due to the varying levels of expertise, responsibilities, and tenure within the organisations they serve. The qualitative research of Vilela and Casado (2021), by reviewing studies on the career development of senior and junior managers from 2011 to 2020, summarised key aspects to compare the career development of the senior and middle managers, addressing year of experience, skill set, process understanding, organisational culture, independence and accountability, mentorship. However, previous studies have not combined individual-organisational level career management interventions and also career stages

into consideration to define career management with an approach addressing the two dimensions.

Therefore, the second research gap is: previous studies also had not classified career management into two levels, the organisational level career management and the individual level career management, to study how leaders could contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the wellbeing of the employees. The situations facing managers in their different positions, such as the senior managers and junior managers, are quite differently, indicating different interventions in leadership and cross-cultural management practices are required to address their career development while supporting their organisations' effectiveness (Delle & Searle, 2022).

To close the second research gap of previous studies, the thesis tries to define and study four career management situations in organisations, referring to two dimensions: the individual vs organisational level of career management and the career management for the junior vs senior managers. On the one hand, career development is defined from two different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. The various career management interventions designed and conducted from the levels of organisational career development and individual career development are summarised and critically discussed, to explore the relationships between career management and organisational effectiveness from different perspectives. On the other hand, there are career management efforts delicately developed for junior and senior managers because of their different challenges and goals in career development determined by the stage of their career. This thesis classifies samples into two groups: 30 middle-level managers and 20 high-level managers and leaders as the samples. The two groups of samples are selected and explored to study career management effects on organisational effectiveness in the context of cross-cultural situations and global leadership, allowing comparisons of findings from the two groups of samples. Therefore, findings from this thesis suggest different recommendations addressing career management interventions for the senior and junior managers of Company X, aiming at improving its organisational effectiveness, such as reduced costs, improved

financial performance, and improved employee satisfaction and commitment in the workplace.

The four identified types of career management situations mean a special contribution to this thesis with the creative approach to defining and modelling complex career management situations. First, the four identified types of career management situations implied by the conceptual framework of this thesis suggest a useful conceptual framework directing future studies exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. Future studies can refer to the career management classification methods to construct the quantitative research strategy studying how diversified career management situations are related to global leadership and organisational effectiveness (Moon et al., 2019). Second, the four identified types of career management situations suggest valuable recommendations that managers of both Company X and other corporations facing career management situations to achieve improved organisational effectiveness. Corporations can classify the staff into different groups according to their positions and preferred working styles to design and promote both organisational and individual-level career management interventions, aiming at supporting the individual employees' work efficiency and improving the organisational efficiency of their organisations. Considering the world is in a cross-cultural situation, especially for cross-border e-commerce, the diversified considerations in designing and implementing career management measures for different employees in the workplace are important in supporting their diversified career development goals (Mate et al., 2019b).

The thesis aims to address the two identified research gaps by focusing on the following questions:

**First, what are the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers in supporting the organisation's effectiveness?**

**Second, to what extent the global leadership development practices among these two groups can direct the career development toward the organisational effectiveness?**

**Third, how can the current career management practices and leadership be updated to fulfil the junior and senior managers' career development needs and the organisational effectiveness ?**

The thesis is developed based on the identified research gap to suggest the special contributions of this thesis.

### ***2.6 The conceptual framework***

There are contributions of the study referring to the proposed conceptual framework and the related empirical analyses developed based on the identified research gap. Contribution of this thesis: propose a conceptual framework to identify cross-cultural factors that HRM practices should consider developing global leadership toward successful career management for Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. The theoretical framework of this thesis suggests that career management and global leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises can result in improved organisational effectiveness for their organisations. However, it had not determined constructions of the themes in identification, to allow open-ended questions for the qualitative investigation, which answers the research questions from different perspectives addressing "how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation?". Details of the conceptual framework are summarised in Figure 2.1.

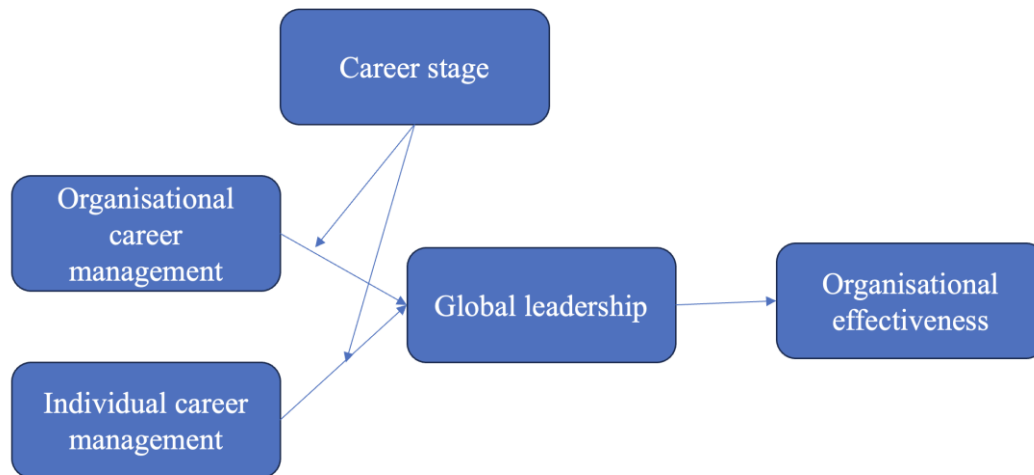


Figure 2.1 The conceptual framework

As illustrated by Figure 2.1, organisational effectiveness in a global context is the goal that organisations intend to achieve with the various measures supporting the career development of the junior and senior managers in the operations. Global leadership in corporations help achieve improved organisational effectiveness, while organisational and individual career management for employees in their different career stages can influence global leadership performed by the managers in China’s Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises.

Career management exerts impacts on the global leadership of the managers mediated by the career stages of the managers. There are four career management situations in organisations defined by this thesis, referring to two dimensions: the individual vs organisational level of career management and the career management for the junior vs senior managers. On the one hand, career development is defined from two different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. On the other hand, there are career management efforts delicately developed for junior and senior managers because of their different challenges and goals in career development determined by the stage of their career. The four identified types of career management situations mean a special contribution to this thesis with the creative approach to defining and modelling complex career management situations. Factors related to the career development of employees in the workplace include the person's personal characteristics, financial resources, financial obligations, Physical,

Mental, and Emotional Impairments, age, and family obligations. Managers in corporations should undertake important responsibilities to support the individual employees' career development, especially at the organisational level of career development, by providing resources to support the employees' developing their skills and promoting their career development. Managers' skills related to career development include their leadership skills in interacting with the employees as followers and the cross-cultural management skills and capabilities when they face cross-cultural situations in interacting with employees in cross-border organisations.

When referring to global leadership required to support employees' career development, it is to define leadership, review and discuss leadership styles, and audit the roles of situations to summarise requirements on leadership abilities and methods and approaches to develop leadership. Requirements leadership style in the global context is adaptive leadership, which is a leadership style requiring the leaders to perceive and follow the followers' requirements, such as their career development, in the global context. Methods and approaches to develop adaptive leadership include encouraging employees' engagement, using delegation, training and development of the leaders to follow better the employees' career development requirements in the global context. Cross-cultural management is the capability the leaders should have to support the employees' career development. The leaders could refer to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as the framework to understand national culture while managing cross-border enterprises and supporting employees' development in cross-cultural situations. Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational goals. Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions.

However, there are potential evolving of the framework referring to specific situations facing Company X this research plans to explore to answer the research

questions. For example, there are potential new recommendations that the managers can follow to update the current career management practices and leadership practices toward their career development needs and the organisational effectiveness besides the recommendations suggested by the literature review section. The conceptual framework proposed based on previous studies can be revised and expanded based on qualitative findings after interviewing the managers from Company X, which is one representative organisation among China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises.

Developed on the findings from the literature review section, the empirical research section focuses on Company X's situation to address the specific Career management and global Leadership among managers. So, special contributions from the empirical research section focus on a certain business to address the real condition facing the business. The empirical research section, with the framework identified to analyse findings from data in the collection, follows the framework suggested by the literature review section, which indicated three theories: career management, global leadership, and cross-cultural HRM, to conduct the research question. Three expected answers from the empirical research section relate to career management, global leadership, and cross-cultural HRM. Findings are supported by recommendations from some previous studies, while there are also different opinions concerning the findings.

### Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The research methodology section follows the research onion as the framework to include levels as the element of the research methodology section (Saunders et al., 2015). The model was first presented by Saunders et al. (2015) in the book titled *Research Methods for Business Students* to summarise the stages of writing a business thesis and to help the researchers create a well-organised methodology. Figure 3.1 symbolically shows the Research Onion to illustrate the many parts within the model. This thesis follows the framework proposed by Saunders et al. (2015) to reach the final research design after reviewing, making decisions and justifications on the other levels of the research onion.

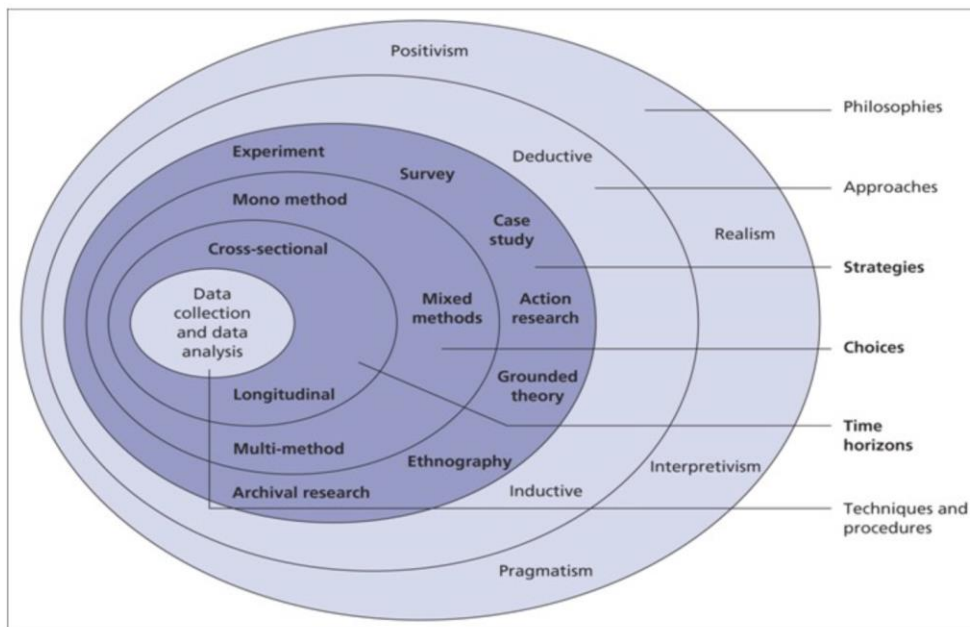


Figure 3.1: The Research Onion

Retrieved from: Saunders et al. (2015)

As illustrated by Figure 3.1, the research methodology section includes six sub-sections, which are the research philosophies, the research approaches, the strategies to design and conduct the research, the choices of the research method and the research design, the time horizons of the research design and empirical research, and the data collection and data analyses as techniques and procedures of the research (Kalpokas & Radivojevic, 2021). It also includes limitations and ethical concerns.

The research Philosophy adopted is the interpretivism philosophy. The research



approach in use is the inductive research approach. The qualitative research strategy is used. Research methods and design are discussed by reviewing the data collection tool (semi-structured interview), type of data, sampling and data collection and analysis methods. The qualitative research strategy, the semi-structured interview, and the convenience sampling suggest limitations of the methodology section. Ethical considerations to achieve the study include the potential cultural conflicts of the researcher and the participants, and the private information protection of the participants.

**3.1 Research philosophy.** Based on the research onion, the research philosophy is the first layer that determines the research design. Philosophy is a concept that decides how people view the world (Othman et al., 2020). Different philosophical approaches in the research onion could be selected for different types of academic research. This research chooses interpretivism because the research topic is in the field of studying human behaviours, which is a sociological research that aims to interpret human psychology and behaviours (Keedle et al., 2018). The whole research scope is constructed based on the view of subjective opinions on the world. The key concept of interpretivism philosophy is that the human concept and perception is the foundation for constructing the world (Moon et al., 2019). The world is open to the interpretation and definition of human beings. The laws, rules, and causal relationships and connections among the things and development in the world require the interpretation and explanation of human beings. Without human interpretation, it is impossible to have a functional understanding of the world (Kallio et al., 2016).

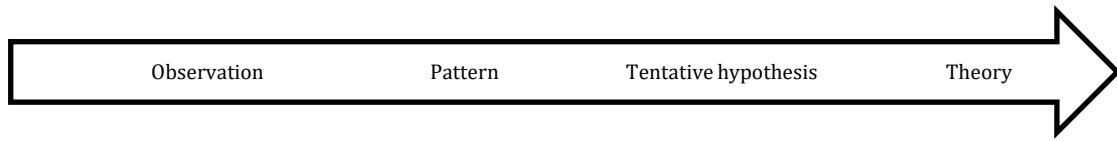
There are strengths and weaknesses of interpretivism philosophy in academic research. Interpretivism is a philosophical approach that chooses to understand how and why things happen and operate. In interpretivism philosophy-guided research, the involvement of researchers and human participation is necessary because the thinking mode is to analyse the changes occurring or existing in the research scope based on human interpretation (Michalovich, 2021). The interpretivism logic process provides clear guidance to analyse human psychology and behaviours, which often means the investigation of complex and contextual social factors and phenomena in a dynamic

research background (Brown, 2019). Due to the involvement of researcher and human participation, the data collection process in interpretivism research is more likely to consume more time and resources. Due to the dynamic research background and the complex and contextual factors in interpretivism research, the data analysis of interpretivism research is challenging for open interpretation. The complicated and dynamic research backgrounds might lead to uncertainties in data collection and valuable research results, so it is difficult to generalise the research results (Ryan, 2018). The dependence on the interpretation of the researchers and the human participants means that the research results might be perceived as less credible than the objective (Corry et al., 2019).

This research chooses the interpretivism philosophy for studying career management and global leadership in the cross-cultural business environment because it is a study of human psychology and human behaviours in an organisational environment. As a study in the sociological field, the research scope depends on the interpretation of the research respondents and the researcher (Davids & Waghid, 2021). First of all, the existing theories on career management and global leadership in cross-cultural business environments are still under development (Balsvik, 2017). As the business environment in a cross-cultural background is changing, the new development in the field of cross-border e-commerce is open for interpretation (Chandra & Shang, 2019). Secondly, the awareness and perception of career management and global leadership differentiate from person to person, so to realise valid analysis to meet the research objectives, the proper interpretation of the researcher is required (Matta, 2015). Based on the requirements from the perspectives of the research respondents and the researcher, this research chooses interpretivism.

**3.2 Research approach.** After the interpretivism philosophy, the research decides the logical process of the data collection and analysis. In the research onion, there are two logic processes for research design: inductive and deductive. These two logic processes are opposite thinking processes for information analysis (Rapley, 2018). From the two figures below, it is clear that the starting points of the inductive and deductive logic processes are very different (Frericks, 2021). Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3

identify the processing steps of the inductive approach and deductive approach.



Source: (Frericks, 2021)

Figure 3.3 Processing steps of the deductive approach

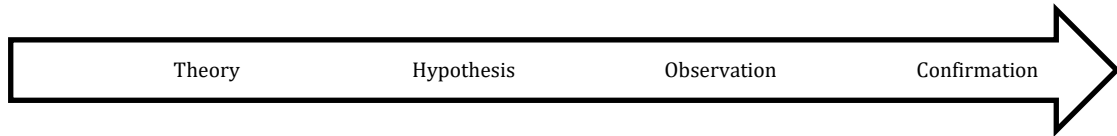


Figure 1.2 Processing steps of inductive approach

Source: (Frericks, 2021)

The starting point of the information analysis in inductive logic is the observation of the data in the research scope, and the starting point of the information analysis in deductive logic is the selected theories in the research scope (Bourque & Bourdon, 2017). Thus, the different starting points indicate that the end of the logic chain in inductive reasoning is to conclude theories, and the end of the logic chain in deductive reasoning is to confirm and verify the selected theory in the research scope (Dodgson, 2017). This research chooses inductive reasoning because the objectives of the research are to conclude the influential factors and effective strategies in career management and global leadership in the cross-cultural business environment (Gear et al., 2018). Thus, the information analysing process is to collect first-hand information from the managers and leaders of Company X as the starting point and then conclude common patterns and factors from Company X as valid references for other cross-border e-commerce companies in China.

**3.3 Research strategy.** The research strategy in the research onion includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed qualitative and quantitative choices. The definition to classify qualitative and quantitative research is the nature of the collected data. Whether the collected data is subjective or objective data decides the qualitative and quantitative nature of the research (Johnson et al., 2020). Qualitative research refers to the research process that collects data from human participation in the dynamic research

context. The data collection methods of qualitative research include interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, field observations, etc., which require contact with the researcher and the research respondents (Jennings et al., 2018). Quantitative research refers to the research process that collects objective and measurable data. The data collection methods of quantitative research include laboratory design, questionnaires, surveys, and other methods that involve measurable means, which creates distance between the researcher and the research respondents. There are strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research (Kelly, 2017). Qualitative research design focuses on in-depth analysis ranks and counts by the collection of attitudes, feelings, and behaviours. It creates openness via the encouragement of people to expand their responses on new fields out of planning and expectation. It simulates people's personal experiences to understand the cause of people's behaviours and feelings with detailed descriptions. Qualitative research does not engage large samples because it is time-consuming and a big budget. It is not as easy as quantitative to generalise because of the small sample (Sutherland, 2020). It is difficult to make a systematic comparison because the responses from participants are highly subjective (Yuqi, 2020). It highly relies on the skills, abilities, and professional backgrounds of the researcher.

As an interpretivism research, this research is based on the interpretation of managers and leaders of Company X and the researcher on the research scope of career management and global leadership in a cross-cultural business environment. The interpretation means the collection of subjective opinions from human beings, so the nature of the subjective opinions determines the qualitative research (Chhabra, 2021). Thus, this research is qualitative research to collect subjective opinions for analysing subjective data based on a sociological research topic.

**3.4 Research methods and design.** The qualitative method is used, with referring to the interview as the way of the data collection method. Interview is one widely used method for collecting qualitative data because the researchers could act as the interviewer to conduct interviews with the samples to collect rich data (Whitley & Massey, 2018). Data in the collection by interview is also the primary data.

**3.5 Time horizons.** The time horizons of the thesis include the longitudinal and the

cross-sectional study. This thesis includes both the longitudinal time horizon and the cross-sectional dimension. First, it addresses the longitudinal time horizon by comparing the career development of the managers before they enter the company and after they enter the company. The historical perspective is to result of findings related to the company's contributions to the employees' performing career development (Beifus et al., 2017). First, it addresses the cross-sectional time horizon by comparing the career development of middle-level managers and high-level managers and leaders. The cross-sectional perspective is to result of findings related to the company's contributions to the employees' performing career development of the middle-level managers and the high-level managers and leaders (Rasid et al., 2017).

**3.6 Data collection and analyses** include several sections referring to the data collection tool, the interview questions design, the types of data, the sampling, the data collection process and the proposed data analysis techniques and expected results. The semi-structured interview is used as the data collection tool, with the interview questions designed for middle-level managers and high-level managers and leaders, respectively, with rationale. The type of data in the collection is the primary data and the qualitative data, under the convenience sampling technique to include 30 middle-level managers and 20 high-level managers and leaders as the samples. The data collection uses offline and online interactions, while the data analyses adopt the content analysis method.

*1. Data collection tool - semi-structured interview.* The data collection tool in use is the semi-structured interview to align with the research strategy, research approach, the research philosophy. Knibbs et al. (2017) suggested that the semi-structured interview is the type of interview during which a few predetermined questions ask the interviews, with the participants being allowed to raise and answer additional questions. It tried to combine the unstructured interview styles and the structured interview types to apply the advantages of both. For conducting the qualitative research strategy, semi semi-structured interview is one important form to conduct qualitative data and to support the in-depth analyses of the research questions and the data collected (Bleiker et al., 2019).

There are advantages of semi-structured interview as the research method for data collection and for supporting the additional empirical research about the research title: "Career management and Global Leadership among Managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises". The advantages include the combination of the unstructured and the structured interview questions (Ademolu, 2021). First, the researchers use the structured interview questions could direct the answers of the participants in the interview process, to require their answers to some key questions and to conduct data analyses based on the answers to the many key questions (Haste et al., 2020). Second, the researchers, by using the unstructured questions, are encouraging open questions and open answers from the participants as the ways of perceiving information relevant to the research topic from many perspectives (McIlvennan et al., 2019). The designing and conducting of the unstructured questions in the semi-structured interview are based on the basic assumption that the many participants as the interviewees could provide answers to the relevant questions of the topic "Career management and Global Leadership among managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises" from the more perspectives beyond the perspectives identified and mentioned by the interviewers.

However, there are also disadvantages of the semi-structured interview as the form of the qualitative research method to suggest potential improvements in future studies about the research topic. First, the interviewers need to prepare and conduct research before actually conducting the interview (Bedregal et al., 2017). Interviewers need to meet with certain people to conduct the interview, leading to time and money consumption when they are to reduce potential biases in the data collection process by using the semi-structured interview (Fonville et al., 2017). Moreover, there are challenges that the interviewers face to have effective interactions with the interviewees before collecting valuable qualitative data to support the analyses (Li et al., 2019). The researcher, acting as the interviewer, needs to have advanced interactive communication capabilities and the skills to conduct semi-structured interviews when interacting with the interviewees to collect data and conduct additional analyses.

Thirty interview questions are designed based on the literature review to support the interview and the data collection with the semi-structured interview. Of the 30

questions, 15 are designed to interview middle-level managers, while 15 are designed to interview high-level managers and leaders. The process of designing the semi-structured interview is to design the interview questions based on the literature review on career management theories, global leadership theories, and cross-cultural HRM, which are relevant to the research topic, as the way of collecting valid data for the study (Zakaria et al., 2021). The interview questions are designed with a total of 30 questions.

In order to make sure that the questions are valid, the study conducted a pilot interview to understand whether the questions would be sensitive and whether they could deliver valid research results (Heisler et al., 2021). After the pilot interview, the researcher revised the interview questions and determined the interview process with an estimation of the total duration. When conducting the pilot test, the researcher interacts with ten middle-level managers and ten high-level managers and leaders to have free communications and discussions with them about the research topic "Career management and Global Leadership among managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises". The structured questions are formed after the pilot tests while also referring to the literature review section findings (Mohajan, 2018). Among the 20 samples to connect, three middle-level managers and two high-level managers responded and were included in the test with rich data. Five versions of the interview questions are conducted before making the final decision about the structured questions in the interview. The researcher then connected with another 50 samples (30 middle-level managers and 20 high-level managers and leaders) to collect rich data about their answers to the structured questions while allowing their open questions and answers. The open questions and the flexibility allowed in the interview are to collect rich data from the many participants, who are raising diversified perspectives in answering the interview questions and in raising relevant questions to the research topic (McGregor-Hepburn & James, 2021)

The interviews for the middle-level managers and the high-level managers and leaders are summarised in Table 3.1 in relation to the conceptual framework of the study developed based on the literature review findings. The research question is, "what is the effective career management strategy under the global leadership in cross-border e-

commerce enterprises in China?” The semi-structured interview questions answer the research question from various perspectives and are delicately designed for middle-level managers, high-level managers, and leaders, respectively.

Table 3.1 semi-structured interview questions

<b>Relevance to the conceptual framework</b>	<b>1. Organisational career development</b>
<b>The semi-structured interview questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Before you come to this company, do you have any career development plans?</li> <li>● Whether and how you have changed your career development plans after you work for Company X?</li> <li>● What kind of organisational support do you think you need from the company to realise your career development?</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale</b>	The questions address relationships of career development of the individual and the organisation from the perspective of the middle-level managers
<b>Relevance to the conceptual framework</b>	<b>2. Individual career development</b>
<b>The semi-structured interview questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How individual efforts and organisational support are related to career management?</li> <li>● What kind of role do you think the company should play in career management?</li> <li>● What are the abilities you need to advance your career development?</li> <li>● Why or why not do you have changed your career development plans?</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale</b>	The question identifies the career potentials of the middle-level



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manager to study career development supports.

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**Relevance to the conceptual framework**

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**The semi-structured interview questions**

**3. Requirements for leadership ability**

- What do you think a leader could do for individual career management?
- In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the opportunities for career development in your mind?
- If there are open positions as the leader of a cross-cultural team, do you want to apply? Why?
- What abilities and personalities do you think you need as the leader of a cross-cultural team?
- What do you think about the current leadership from the perspective of career management in a cross-cultural working environment?
- Are there rooms for improvements in career management to meet the development needs of the company?
- In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the opportunities for career development in your mind?
- In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the challenges for leadership in your mind?
- What are the career management plans of the company for the middle-level managers for taking the leading positions in the cross-cultural teams?
- What kind of abilities and personalities do you think the middle-level managers need as the leader of a cross-cultural team?

**Rationale**

The middle-level managers are to identify the required support

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from the leaders concerning their career development.

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**Relevance to the conceptual framework**     **4. Methods and approaches to develop leadership**

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**The structured interview questions**     **semi-** ● What kind of organisational support do you think you need from the company to be the leader of a cross-cultural team?  
● What kind of organisational support do you think the company or the leaders need to offer to the middle-level managers to apply for the leader position of a cross-cultural team?

**Rationale**     The middle-level managers perceive the management approach by the leaders about career development.

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**Relevance to the conceptual framework**     **5. Dimensions of cultural differences influencing leadership**

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**The structured interview questions**     **semi-** ● What is the cultural diversity that you have experienced in the workplace to influence your career development?  
● How have your managers properly audited and responded to the various cultural diversity in the management to facilitate your career development?

**Rationale**     The middle-level managers perception of cultural diversity, as the background information in career development

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**Relevance to the conceptual framework**     **6. Cross-cultural human resource management models influencing leadership**

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<b>The semi-structured interview questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do you think about the current leadership from the perspective of career management in a cross-cultural working environment?</li> <li>● What approach does your organisation adopt to audit and respond to cross-cultural situations, with a focus on supportive career development for employees?</li> <li>● Do you perform diversity management and the relevant approach to support the career development of the employees?</li> <li>● Whether your company requires improvement in career management to support the organisational effectiveness?</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale</b>	The middle-level managers' evaluations of the cross-cultural leadership practices and their proposed recommendations on improving the leadership practices to support their career development

Table 3.1 shows the potential semi-structured interview questions identified from the perspectives of the middle-level managers and the high-level managers and leaders concerning the research question "what is the effective career management strategy under the global leadership in cross-border e-commerce enterprises in China?". The interview is conducting is to choose from the potential questions to ask the middle-level managers and the high-level managers and leaders, respectively, with rationale. The two categories of samples, with their answers from different perspectives, enable comparisons before drawing valid conclusions (Janis et al., 2020).

2. *Interview question design (for middle-level managers).* Table 3.2 summarises the semi-structured interview questions for middle-level managers. 15 questions are identified from the perspective of the middle-level managers to address their required or expected career management strategy under the global leadership in cross-border e-commerce enterprises in China.

Table 3.2 semi-structured interview questions for the middle-level managers

<b>Relevance to the conceptual framework</b>	<b>The semi-structured interview questions</b>
<b>Organisational career development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (1-1) Before you come to this company, do you have any career development plans? (1-2) After you work in this company, do you change your career development plans? (1-3) Why or why not do you have changed your career development plans?</li> <li>2. What kind of organisational support do you need from the company to realise your career development working in the cross-border e-commerce sector?</li> </ol>
<b>Individual career development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What abilities do you need to develop so as to climb the latter of your career in the cross-border e-commerce sector?</li> </ol>
<b>Requirements for leadership ability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. What do you think a leader could do for individual career management for you in the cross-border e-commerce sector?</li> <li>5. (5-1) If there are open positions as the leader of a cross-cultural team, do you want to apply? (5-2) Why?</li> <li>6. What abilities and personalities do you think you need as the leader of a cross-border e-commerce enterprise?</li> <li>7. What do you think about the current leadership from the perspective of career management in a cross-border e-commerce?</li> <li>8. What would you do differently if you were in this position working for the cross-border e-commerce sector?</li> <li>9. In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the opportunities for career development in your mind?</li> <li>10. In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the challenges for leadership in your mind?</li> </ol>

<b>Methods and approaches to develop leadership</b>	11. What kind of organisational supports do you think you need from the company for being the leader of a cross-border e-commerce?
<b>Dimensions of cultural differences</b>	12. (12-1) What is the cultural diversity that you have experienced in the workplace to influence your career development in the cross-border e-commerce sector? (12-2) How have your managers properly audited and responded to the various cultural diversity in the management to facilitate your career development in the cross-border e-commerce sector?
<b>Career management improvements and open ideas</b>	13. What is the approach your organisation adopts to audit and respond to cross-cultural situations, with a focus on supportive career development for employees in the cross-border e-commerce sector? 14. Whether your company requires improvement in career management to achieve improved organisational effectiveness in the cross-border e-commerce sector? 15. Do you have any recommendations on this interview?

3. *Interview question design (for high-level managers and leaders)*. Table 3.3 summarises the semi-structured interview questions for the high-level managers and leaders. Fifteen questions are identified from the perspective of high-level managers and leaders to summarise the current career management strategy under the global leadership in cross-border e-commerce enterprises in China and the potential for improvements that the high-level managers and leaders intend to perform in the future. The rationale is to suggest the high-level managers' and leaders' perspectives concerning the various semi-structured interview questions, in contrast to the perspective of the middle-level managers.

Table 3.3 Semi-structured interview questions for the high-level managers and leaders

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**Relevance to The semi-structured interview questions**

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**the conceptual  
framework**

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- Organisational career development**
1. What kind of role do you think the company should play in career management to support cross-border ecommerce?
  2. What kind of organisational support do you think you have provided to the employees in supporting their career development in the cross-border e-commerce sector?
  3. What do you think about the connection between individual efforts and organisational support to career management in the cross-border e-commerce sector?
- Requirements for leadership ability**
4. What do you think a leader could do for individual career management in the cross-border e-commerce sector?
  5. What would you do differently if you were in this position for the cross-border e-commerce?
  6. In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the opportunities for career development in your mind?
  7. In the field of cross-border e-commerce, what are the challenges for leadership in your mind?
  8. What are the career management plans of the company for the middle-level managers for taking the leading positions in the cross-border e-commerce?
  9. What kind of abilities and personalities do you think middle-level managers need as the leader of a cross-border e-commerce?
- Methods and approaches to develop leadership**
10. What kind of organisational support do you think the company or the leaders need to offer to the middle-level managers to apply for the leader position of a cross-border e-commerce?
- Dimensions of cultural**
11. What is the cultural diversity that you have experienced in the workplace to influence your career development in the cross-border
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<b>differences</b>	e-commerce sector?
	12. (12-1) How have you properly audited and responded to the various cultural diversity in the management to facility your career development in the cross-border e-commerce sector? (12-2) What approach does your organisation adopt to audit and respond to cross-cultural situations, with a focus on supportive career development for employees in the cross-border e-commerce sector?
<b>Career management improvements and open ideas</b>	13. Do you perform diversity management and the relevant approach to support the career development of the employees?
	14. Whether your company requires improvement in career management to achieve improved organisational effectiveness?
	15. Do you have any recommendations for this interview?

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4. *The type of data* in the collection is primary data and qualitative data when referring to the sources and the format of the data in the collection. The primary data in the collection has the advantage of perceiving the real conditions and the immediate data about the managers' conditions and attitudes toward Career management and Global Leadership among managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises (Glaw et al., 2017). The qualitative data in the collection are rich data to support the in-depth analyses relevant to Career management and Global Leadership among managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, such as by addressing the mechanisms of how the many factors and the various aspects of career development are leading to effective career management and the performing of global leadership of the managers (Kirwan & O'Driscoll, 2020). However, the qualitative data in identification failed to have a numeric format and to support the accurate relationships of the factors related to global leadership and career development of the managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises (Kalpokas & Radivojevic, 2021).

5. *Sampling.* The sampling strategy of this research is convenient sampling, aiming at achieving the sampling quickly and within the budget, accessing required data. The

research objectives are to collect first-hand data from the managers and leaders of a cross-border e-commerce company with the need to build multiple cross-cultural teams and team leaders working in a cross-cultural business environment. This research chooses convenient sampling for 30 middle-level managers and 20 high-level managers and leaders of Company X. The number of samples are determined for the purpose collecting enough data by interviewing the junior and senior managers, following the needs of data saturation, which is an important concept in qualitative research to determine if the sample size is sufficient (Emerson, 2021). The number of samples are determined by also considering the number of managers in Company X, which has about 500 managers with the ratio between junior and senior managers about three vs two. The criteria to select the research respondents are the managers and leaders that have at least three years of working experience and the intention to work, manage and lead the cross-cultural teams for the business expansion in the global market. Only the managers and leaders with sufficient working experience in Company X and the awareness and intention for career management in a cross-cultural working environment could provide in-depth data for qualitative analysis. The convenience sampling method suggests potential limitations, such as sampling biases, as the nonprobability sampling technique, while it is still the best choice for the research with referring to the time and budget limitations (Emerson, 2021).

*6. Data collection process.* The interview process includes two parts. The first part is the online face to face interview with the managers that are working in the overseas markets. The online interview process is through WeChat for audio recording. This data collection process is convenient and at low costs, leading to the preference of the researcher to use online ways as the primary way of conducting the interview (Bryant et al., 2017). However, some interviewees need to get used to the online interview, and they prefer face-to-face communication (Stratton, 2021). The second part is the offline face-to-face interview with the managers who are working in Company X, and the whole interview process will be recorded through WeChat.

Data collection has been conducted to recruit the 50 samples for the semi-interview. However, the interview has not been conducted, and it will take about one month from



11 November 2021 to collect data for it.

7. *Data analyses.* The thesis uses NVivo to conduct a qualitative content analysis and it had followed three steps to organise the interview data before conducting the content analysis. The first is dictating the interview transcripts. The second is translating the Chinese transcripts into English transcripts. The last step is using Excel to organize the English transcripts so as to code them for data analysis. After all data input in NVivo for content analysis, this thesis codes the rich data in collection organised by the three research questions. Each sentence of the interview transcript is coded manually by the researcher to ensure credibility of the coding process for qualitative data analysis (Hu & Qin, 2018).

In detail, the interview results are summarised and reported based on the 30 interview questions designed. They are based on the three main theoretical themes of global leadership practices, career management practices, and cross-cultural human resource management. The interview results are classified into these three themes with direct quotes from the interview transcripts (Chandra & Shang, 2017).

The information on the samples and the research questions for the middle-level managers and the high-level managers and leaders could be summarised in the following table (table 3.4) with the framework of directing the empirical research section.

Table 3.4 The Data Analyses Framework

Section 1	
Population: the middle level managers	
Number of Samples: 30	
Data analysis framework:	
Sections	Answers to the interview questions
Career development	1-3
Global leadership	4-11
Cross-cultural management	12-15
Section 2	

Population: the high-level managers and leaders		
Number of Samples: 20		
Data analysis framework:		
Sections	Answers to the interview questions	
Career development	1-3	
Global leadership	4-10	
Cross-cultural management	11-15	
Section 3: Comparison		
Sections	Answers from the middle-level managers	Answers from the high-level managers and leaders
Career development		
Global leadership		
Cross-cultural management		

The theories relevant to the research include career management, global leadership, and cross-cultural HRM. Career development theories are relevant to organisational career development and individual career development. Global leadership abilities refer to the approaches to improve the global leadership ability of managers and employees to promote their operational effectiveness in the global market. Cross-cultural HRM reviews the dimensions of cultural differences, and career management and leadership in cross-cultural context. Details of the three categories of theories and the relevant studies are reviewed and critiqued in the literature review section.

There is an innovation in the research by referring to the 30 semi-interview questions developed based on the identified theoretical framework with the purpose of addressing career management and Global Leadership among managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. The special perspective to examine the theories is the contribution of the study, which examines the roles of global leadership in supporting career development in the special context of Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises.

**3.7 Limitations.** A reflection on the research design helps acknowledge and mitigate potential researcher bias of this thesis, auditing the qualitative research strategy, the semi structured interview, and the convenience sampling. First, the interviewers need to prepare and conduct research before actually conducting the interview (Scholtz, 2021). Interviewers need to meet with certain people to conduct the interview, leading to time and money consumption when they are to reduce potential biases in the data collection process by using the semi-structured interview (Gioia, 2021). Moreover, there are challenges that the interviewers face to have effective interactions with the interviewees before collecting valuable qualitative data to support the analyses (Garnier, 2020). The researcher, acting as the interviewer, needs to have advanced interactive communication capabilities and the skills to conduct semi-structured interviews when interacting with the interviewees to collect data and conduct additional analyses (Funk et al., 2021). Third, the qualitative data in identification failed to have a numeric format and to support the accurate relationships of the factors related to global leadership and career development of the managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises (Gagnon et al., 2020). Fourth, convenience sampling suggests potential sampling biases when the sampling technique is one form of non-portability sampling and fails to ensure an equal selection of individuals in the population to result in unbiased data collection (Chhabra, 2021).

Regardless of the potential biases of the research, the research design shows trustworthiness and credibility following the data saturation principle in collecting data and using NVivo to professionally conduct the content analysis. First, the data saturation principle ensures all data collected provide enough information to have in-depth analysis and answer the research questions from different perspectives, exploring how career management, global leadership, and organisational effectiveness of Company X are related. Second, the study had used NVivo, which is one professional qualitative data analysis software, to ensure credibility of coding and qualitative analysis (Hu & Qin, 2018).

**3.8 Ethical considerations.** The research design process strictly follows the ethical requirements of an academic thesis. First of all, the research would select the qualified

research respondents in the research scope of analysing career management and global leadership in the cross-cultural business environment through brief interviews with the managers and leaders to understand their qualifications (Hu & Qin, 2018). After the screening of proper candidates, the researcher explains the research topic, the research objectives, and the questions that will be asked. If they are interested, the researcher would further explain the ethical considerations applied in the interview process, including their rights to refuse to answer the questions, their anonymity in the research, and how their private information would be protected. At the same time, the researcher would obtain consent from Company X for the interview of their staff, and the measures would be taken to protect their commercial interests (Lines et al., 2021). With the consent forms from the company as well as the interview respondents, the data collection process could be initiated (Sharma et al., 2021).

The interview would be recorded in audio for data analysis purposes, but all the recordings would be marked with numbers instead of the names of the respondents. No one expects the researcher would have access to the audio recording, and after the research is completed, the audio recording will be deleted (Jeong et al., 2019).

## **Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions**

Participants' responses were organised around the key questions. Common responses were presented first, followed by distinctions between the two groups of managers. The research uses manual coding supported by NVivo to conduct the empirical study. The manual coding intends three steps: coding each sentence of the interview transcript collected, exploring codes using Hierarchy Chart of NVivo, and analysing the codes to answer the research questions. There are also discussions on findings from the empirical study, in contrast to proposals summarised by the literature review section, especially the conceptual framework, before drawing conclusions.

The Findings and discussion section includes three sub-sections: reviewing the current state of career management among middle managers and senior managers, the current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers, and recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership. For each of the three sub-sections, the presentation summarises findings and makes comparisons to identify similarities and differences among middle managers and senior managers in company X. A comparison analysis is conducted to summarise and compare answers from 30 middle-level managers (junior managers, respondent 1-30) and 20 high-level managers and leaders (senior managers, respondent 31-50) from Company X, which is one Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprise with 500 employees.

### ***4.1 The current state of career management among middle managers and senior managers***

*1. Findings* related to the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers are summarised to enable comparisons, because the differences in career management expectations of junior and senior managers in cross-border ecommerce enterprises to achieve their organisational effectiveness. Career development from the organisational level is defined as efforts that managers in corporations develop and implement to support the overall improvements of the employees' professional status while achieving the tasks and responsibilities for their

organisations (Motley & McMullin, 2020). Career development from the individual level is defined as the improvements in professional skills and capabilities of individual employees based on their special requirements and preferences (Motley & McMullin, 2020). For this research exploring the situations of Company X, the findings are in Table 4.1 concerning their organisational career development, individual career development, and factors related to their career development, respectively.

Table 4.1 The current state of career management among middle managers and senior managers

Interview Questions	Answers from middle managers	Answers from senior managers
<b>Organisational career development</b>	<p>18 of 30 suggest they have career development plans</p> <p>12 out of 30 suggest they have changed their career development since they worked for the current company</p> <p>Kinds of organisational support required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platforms allowing the reporting and feedback among the staff</li> <li>• Information systems to support daily operations and interact with the target customers</li> <li>• Enough monetary rewards</li> <li>• Supports for work-life balance</li> <li>• Interesting work design and clear promotional paths</li> <li>• Equality among promotions</li> </ul>	<p>18 of 20 suggest they have career development plans</p> <p>Companies should be changed their career development platforms</p> <p>Companies should offer supportive resources</p> <p>Kinds of organisational support required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources for strategic decision-making, such as consultant services available from the internal staff or the external consultants</li> <li>• Interactive communications with the employees and customers</li> </ul>

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	and rewards for career development	
<b>Individual career development</b>	Some skills are important: interactive communication skills, cross-cultural effectiveness, conflict identification and solving, time management, Leadership is important. It is important to have capabilities that use technologies, such as social media platforms in communications and business information systems in the workplace	Organisational supports are the foundations. Individual efforts are important to realise the maximum benefits of organisational support on individuals' career development. Inter-personal communications among managers help improve career development.
<b>Factors related to their career development</b>	The most important is the professional skills and capabilities to respond to dynamic and cross-cultural situations. Specific conflicts interacting with the other employees and the target customers. Being operations and managerial-focused. Addressing daily operations	Leadership is the most important factor. Cross-cultural context is the most important context that managers should consider in developing and implementing their leadership. Being strategy focused. Addressing online supports

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2. *Comparison – similarities.* The comparison suggests some similarities between the middle and senior managers in Company X regarding their current state of career management. First, both middle and senior managers value organisational and individual career development plans. For example, 18 of 30 middle managers suggest they have career development plans. Respondent 19 (a junior manager) said: “CDPs

provide a structured approach to career advancement, guiding employees on how to achieve their career goals. Therefore, I have career development plans for me and also the employees in my department, aiming at determining the proper direction of our efforts". Respondent 22 (a junior manager) agreed that "we have a team career development plan, regarding our work as a career to exploit opportunities for growth". 12 out of 30 middle managers suggest they have changed the career development since they worked for the current company. Respondent 7 said: "I develop career development plans every year because they are useful directing my assign limited time to the many tasks, aiming at achieving my career development goals". In contrast, 18 of 20 senior managers suggest they have career development plans. Respondent 41 said: "I have career development plans. I believe that Through CDPs, individuals can identify any skill gaps they have and take proactive steps to address these deficiencies. Therefore, I also encourage my followers to have their career development plans. In fact, I regularly check the career development plans of employees in my department to raise ideas improving their career development". Answers from the managers in the interview suggested that both the senior and middle managers value career development plans.

The findings are supported by arguments from the literature review section, addressing the supportive roles of career development plans on the performance of employees and organisational effectiveness in the marketplace. Scholars agree that career development plans direct career management of the employees and improved organisational effectiveness in daily operations when employees guided by career development plans achieve continuous efforts in the workplace to achieve their career development and to support sustainability of their corporations. Corporations provide various forms of career development support to help the employees' professional development, such as by referring to mentoring, coaching, networking, and career pathing to promote employees' career development (Okolie et al., 2020). Vanderford et al. (2018) suggested that employees intend to achieve their desired career development by designing and implementing certain career development plans, with a quantitative strategy based on investigating employees and their efforts in designing and



implementing career development plans to promote their career development.

The findings suggested that it is important for Company X to encourage career development plans in managing the employees from both the organisational and individual levels of career management. For example, delicacy efforts in Company X are required to develop career development plans for its employees. The efforts to develop the career development plans can follow the proposed approach by previous studies, addressing key issues in the career development planning process. As identified in the literature review section, (Okolie et al., 2020) used the quantitative research strategy investigating employees' requirements to suggest the key concerns of creating and using one CDP to support operational effectiveness. The key steps in designing one CDP include assessing the current situation, defining career goals, skills analysis, resource identification, action plan formulation, implementation, tracking process, and reviewing and revising. The career development plans delicately developed for an individual employee are achieved under the collective efforts of the managers and employees, addressing the concerns of both the individual employees and the organisation. Therefore, there are two types of career development by defining career development from different levels: organisational career development and individual career development when designing the career development plan and implementing various supportive measures addressing career development in Company X toward its improved organisational performance. From the organisational level of career management planning, it is recommended Company X leaders make efforts to develop and implement measures to support the overall improvements of the employees' professional status while achieving the tasks and responsibilities for their organisations (Motley & McMullin, 2020). From the individual level of career management planning, it is recommended that Company X encourages each individual manager to promote the improvements in professional skills and capabilities of individual employees based on their special requirements and preferences (Motley & McMullin, 2020). However, it is a challenge to effectively develop and implement career development plans for Company X managers, requiring resources supporting the development and implementation of the career development plans based on the the conditions of

Company X and the needs of the managers.

Second, there are shared supports that the middle and senior managers require: Setting career development plans under the direction of the organisation, updating career development plans when situations change, resources to implement career development plans, and platforms to implement career development plans. Setting career development plans under the direction of the organisation helps the managers, including the middle and senior managers, to find paths toward their final career development goals, based on the matrix organisational structure of Company X, when exporting foreign products to the Chinese market as one cross-border e-commerce brand. For example, respondent 11 said: "I follow directions of the organisational goals and objectives to set my career development plans. I believe that proper career development plans for individuals should well combine my interests and the interests of our company". Respondent 44 agreed that "we have career development plan development projects addressing the combining the individual and organisational goals in our career development. I believe vision of the company is one important goal in my career development because I can earn from both salaries and bonus based on performance of the overall organisation". Findings from the literature review section confirmed the importance of organisational goals in directing the career development of individuals from both the individual and organisational levels of career development. For example, (Delle & Searle, 2022) (2022) suggested breakdowns of ways that organisations can approach the career development of their employees from the organisational level, addressing employee goals, personalised development plans, and measures managing the career advancement processes, following their organisational goals. Gee et al. (2019) agreed that career development from the individual level is a dynamic and iterative process that equips individuals with the tools they need to navigate their career journey effectively toward the organisational goals of their companies.

Updating career development plans when situations change is required because senior and middle managers always face dynamic situations to respond to the changing demands of the customers and changing trade barriers in the global market. For example,

the career development plans of managers should be updated because of the updating of business information systems in Company X using AI (respondents 22, 31, 39). Findings from the literature review section supported this argument and suggested that there are advantages in technologies, such as artificial intelligence, supporting career development plans development and implementation of corporations (Zhang & Jin, 2023). Besides technological advances, dynamics facing individuals updating their career development plans include cross-cultural dynamics and changes in the consumers' requirements. Managers in corporations should undertake important responsibilities to support the individual employees' career development, especially at the organisational level of career development by supporting resources for the employees' developing their skills and promoting their career development (Abkhezzr et al., 2018; Miller & u.a, 2018). Abkhezzr et al. (2018) suggested that managers should undertake responsibilities to support individual employees' career development by motivating them toward the long-term goals for their organisations and themselves in career development. Miller and u.a (2018) examined the cross-cultural situations facing managers in supporting the employees' career development to suggest that managers should understand and respond to cross-cultural situations while interacting with the employees in supporting their career development.

Resources and platforms to implement career development plans are required by middle and senior managers because they work in groups to achieve organisational goals by interacting with colleagues supported by the platforms and resources. "Resources and platforms are important to implement my career development plans because I need to perform on-the-job learning to achieve continuous improvements. For example, I need to learn the national culture of the UK when I work as one expatriate worker in the UK," Respondent 9, who is one middle manager of Company X, argued. A senior manager, respondent 33, confirmed the argument, indicating that "I need supports from others to determine my career goal, aligned with the organisational objectives we aim to achieve in the operations. I always have annually plan to direct my career development and I perform interactive communications with my colleagues to determine whether the goals I set are proper". The answers of respondent 33 as one

senior manager align with the recommendations from the literature review section, which suggested that employees must consider financial resources and obligations while pursuing their career options and career development. Gee et al. (2019) suggest that individuals pursuing their career options can be costly because they need to pay for training and development to gain skills for certain positions, and employees always require time to prepare for career development. Chang et al. (2021) suggested that financial limitations might also hinder the job-hunting of employees. Besides the resources and platforms offered by the organisation, managers need to consider their career development plans and also need to evaluate the responsibilities or obligations they need to undertake for their families. For example, respondent 17 said: "I always take the ideas of my wife into consideration to determine the location of my work and I have to give up some promotional opportunities because I need to stay at home and take care of children". The answers aligned with findings from the literature review section, which suggested that employees must undertake family obligations while choosing a career and achieving their career development. For example, achieving work-life balance is one important goal that many employees need to consider, especially female employees, resulting in their efforts to combine work and life while choosing a career and proposing efforts to achieve their career development (Okolie et al., 2020). However, technological advances, such as the development of the Internet and online workspace, help reduce barriers that the employees need to consider balancing work and life because the employees can have remote work or work from home instead of going to their physical offices (Wu & Kao, 2022). Findings from the research suggested that it is important for Company X to support the employees' career development with resources and platforms, such as the online workspace allowing them to work from home.

Third, Cross-cultural issues are important for their successfully implement career development plans. As one cross-border e-commerce corporation, company X faces various cross-cultural situations, requiring the middle and senior managers to audit and respond to the cross-cultural situations under the support of the organisation (respondents 15, 19, 23, 35, and 44). Respondent 15 said: "I have met with various

cross-cultural issues to work in the UK when I take responsibilities of marketing the newest products to the UK market in 2022. For example, language and understanding of laws one primary challenges". Respondent 35 confirmed the argument by Respondent 15 by raising one example of her experience failed to cope with various tasks in time. "Punctuality and time management remain a complex issue in the UK due to the intersection of cultural norms, workplace practices, and legal frameworks. The challenge lies in creating an environment that respects and accommodates the diverse ways in which time is perceived and managed across the country," Respondent 35 summarised and reflected on her experience in the UK. Top managers in Company X had noticed the language and other cross-cultural issues facing employees in the global workplace and they have designed delicately efforts addressing the employees' key concerns. For example, Company X offers translation support and adaption programmes to help its employees work aboard, aiming at reducing their barriers to adapting to foreign countries (Respondent 17). The recommendations will be effective in supporting Company X's career management of the employees from the organisational level, referring to previous studies' findings and recommendations. Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions. For example, leaders who support employees' career development must develop talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations (Bickel, 2022). Talent management is essential for corporations to result in high-performing employees while achieving their career development because employees are the most important internal customers that corporations should value to support their competitive advantages. Leaders achieving effective talent management are suggested to audit the employees' previous and current experience to help them reflect on their previous career development and propose their future career development (Bickel, 2022). Offering supportive policies means useful recommendations supporting career management in Company X to support the employees' designing and implementing their career development plans toward organisational effectiveness. However, there are differences

in the career management focus and the required resources supporting their career development.

3. *Comparison – differences.* The comparison suggests some differences between the middle and senior managers in Company X regarding their current states of career management. First, middle managers focus on individual career development, while senior managers pay more attention to addressing organisational career development. As identified in the interview, middle managers are more likely to refer to the career development paths and resources offered by Company X to achieve their individual career development before contributing to the development of the organisation. For example, respondent 16 said: “I frequently refer to the recommended career development paths by the company to determine the potential promotional paths I can seek”. Respondent 23 agreed that: “Guiding resources in the corporation are important directing my continuous efforts achieving my career development. For example, I refer to the personality test tools and career planning tools offered by the company to design my career development plan, to evaluate implement of my career development plans, and to find potential improvements”.

In contrast, situations facing senior managers are more complex, requiring more about their self-directing career development instead of support from organisations. Senior managers also pay more attention to organisational career development for Company X because Company X offers equity options for senior managers. For example, respondent 38 said: “I frequently communicate with external consultants to find useful recommendations on managing our people, including designing and implementing career development plans and practices for myself”. Respondent 44 said: "promoting growth of Company X is the most important goal for me to achieve the career development because Company X is my career. I gain more than 80% monetary rewards from bonus related to its growth. Moreover, I feel excited when I can grow the business". To achieve organisational growth for Company X, respondent 45 suggested that the most important task he undertakes every day is "supporting others". Therefore, the answers from the senior managers' responses suggest that they are leading positions in Company X, caring about organisational growth and the career development of

others as an important parts of their career management.

The career development concerns of the senior and middle managers in Company X, in comparison, suggest that the middle managers are tactic-focused on addressing individual development and support from organisations, but the senior managers are strategically focused on addressing organisational career development to realise benefits and equity options. One reason for the different focus of the senior and middle managers of Company X concerning their career development considerations is the different stages of their career development. Career stages are essentially milestones or phases that an individual passes through during their professional journey, each presenting its own set of responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities for growth (Vilela & Casado, 2021). Scholars notice the importance of defining career stages to design and propose the counterpart career management plans and interventions to define the career stages of the employees before determining the career management measures. One method to classify the career stage of the employees is to classify them into senior and junior managers, referring to the different positions they take in their organisation. According to (Vilela & Casado, 2021), senior and junior managers show significant differences concerning their career development due to the varying levels of expertise, responsibilities, and tenure within the organisations they serve, indicating that the junior managers are operationally focused while the senior managers are strategically focused.

Second, the organisational supports required by middle and senior managers are different. Middle managers are operational focus, requiring organisational supports like platforms allowing the reporting and feedback among the staff, information systems to support daily operations and interact with the target customers, enough monetary rewards, support for work-life balance, interesting work design and clear promotional paths, and Equality among promotions and rewards for career development. For example, respondent 17 said: "gaining continuous improvements in monetary rewards is the primary goal in my career development after I have determined the position as one sales representative of Company X." The respondent explained the importance of monetary rewards for him: "I have to support my family, two daughters, my wife, and

my parents”. In contrast, the kinds of organisational support required by senior managers are strategically focused, including resources for strategic decision-making, such as consultant services available from the internal staff or the external consultants and interactive communications with the employees and customers. For example, respondent 36 said: “I need empowerment of the board of directors to determine continuous efforts I can develop, aiming at supporting my individual goal in career development and the goals of Company X about improved sales and reduced costs, working as one director of procurement and supply chain management”.

The findings aligned with the findings and recommendations in the literature review section. (Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022) suggested that individual managers and employees show significant differences in achieving their career development, regardless of the positions they undertake, indicating the importance that managers have the skills to support the career development of the employees based on the special features and preferences of the employees. Huntsman et al. (2021) confirmed the arguments of Lopez Hernandez et al. (2022) by exploring the key tasks of senior managers in the workplace to argue the importance of participating in decision-making is important for senior managers to properly plan their career development toward the growth of the businesses. Findings from the comparison suggested that Company X, to support the career development of the managers in different positions and to achieve its organisational effectiveness, should develop and offer diversified support for the senior and middle managers, addressing their mostly preferred resources. For example, there should be a higher ratio of monetary rewards offered to middle managers to allow their gaining stable income to support their families. In contrast, the rewards for the senior managers should be featured as a higher ratio of bonus, determined by the achievements of their work team and the overall performance of Company X. The reward system designed for senior managers is featured as lower certainty compared to the rewards to middle managers but enabling higher rewards if the senior managers contribute to gains of the company (Wu & Kao, 2022). Company X to reward the senior managers is also recommended to improve the senior managers and allow their flexibility in determining the work arrangements based on their career goals (Ademolu, 2022).



Third, factors related to their career development for middle and senior managers are different. For middle managers, the most important is the professional skills and capabilities to respond to dynamic and cross-cultural situations. Important skills supporting their individual career development include interactive communication skills, cross-cultural effectiveness, conflict identification and solving, and time management. The capabilities of using technologies, such as social media platforms, in communications and business information systems in the workplace are also important, from an operational perspective. Respondent 12 said: “I need to undertake various daily operations selling items to the customers and I need to manage a team of sales representative. Therefore, I need some fundamental skills and capabilities supporting the interactive communications and planning efforts interacting with the colleagues and customers”. The skills and capabilities required by the middle managers are operational focused and related to their career development (Rashad et al., 2022).

In contrast, however, Leadership is the most important factor supporting their career development for senior managers. Cross-cultural context is the most important context that managers should consider in developing and implementing their leadership. For example, respondent 37 said: “I need to travel to more than ten countries every year, requiring I understand the cross-cultural situations. I also need to show transformational leadership to interact with the employees in different countries, to motivate their continuous efforts in the workplace". The situations facing respondent 37, one senior manager of Company X, suggested the importance of leadership and cross-cultural management to support the operational effectiveness of the cross-border e-commerce in the global market. The findings are supported by arguments of previous academic studies, which argued that senior managers’ skills related to career development include their leadership skills in interacting with the employees as followers and the cross-cultural management skills and capabilities when they face cross-cultural situations in interacting with employees in cross-border organisations. For example, the summary of Pajic et al. (2018) based on quantitative modelling suggested that corporations operating in the global market must address the individual employees' diversified requirements, indicating the challenges for the leaders in corporations to perform their

adaptability when interacting with employees and supporting the employees' career development. Jones-Morales and Konrad (2018) agreed with the managers' skills in responding to the diversified demands and preferences of the employees by referring to the dynamic situations that corporations need to address in their operations, with investigations on managers and applying the quantitative strategy. Additionally, Mate et al. (2019a) studied the roles of leaders, employees' career development, and the cross-cultural situations facing corporations to construct a quantitative model analysing factors related to the career development of managers and strategies to address the importance of managers' skills in managing cross-cultural situations.

However, it is a challenge for Company X to offer resources supporting its middle and senior managers in responding to the dynamic situations in the global market, focusing on the career development of the managers because of the diversified conditions of the managers, regardless of the positions they undertake. For example, two senior managers in the same position working as the sales manager in the Company might have significant differences in their physical, mental, and emotional factors. For example, employees need to have the physical capabilities to undertake some tasks, such as working in the construction industry (Cheah et al., 2021). Age is also one important factor to influence the career development of employees because younger employees always spend more time and effort to support their career development while the elders are facing more serious challenges to balance their work and life, and they are likely to have more time with their families (Cheah et al., 2021). Especially when employees consider changing their careers, age is one important factor they consider before making decisions. However, Homsey (2021) suggested that the perceived age of the employees, rather than the actual age, influences their career development decisions. Therefore, Company X, to audit and respond to the employees' requirements about career development, is recommended to perform diversity management, aiming at offering as much support as possible for the individual employees based on their special requirements.

*4. Summary.* Figure 4.1 summarises findings from the interviews about “the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers” to prepare

for additional empirical discussions, when also referring to findings and recommendations proposed by the literature review section.

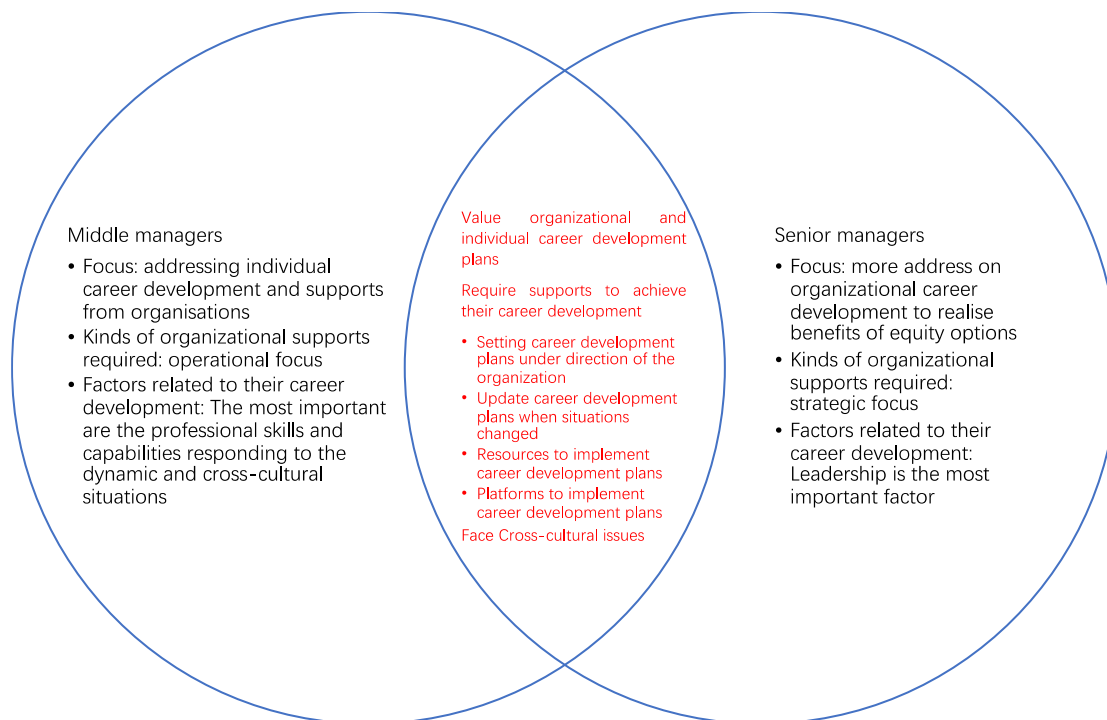


Figure 4.1 Compare the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers

Figure 4.1 findings suggest that both middle and senior managers value organisational and individual career development plans. They require support to achieve their career development. There are shared supports that the middle and senior managers require: setting career development plans under the direction of the organisation, updating career development plans when situations change, resources to implement career development plans, and platforms to implement career development plans. Those shared supports that the middle and senior managers require in supporting their career development enriched the conceptual framework identified in the literature review section, addressing factors related to organisational and individual level career development.

However, there are also some differences concerning the current state of career management among junior and senior managers in the cross-border ecommerce, addressing their focus, the kinds of support required, and factors related to their career development. In-depth discussions and reasoning referring to previous studies and a

case study on Company X analyse the reasons behind the differences. First, they have different focuses. Middle managers address individual career development and support from organisations, while senior managers pay more attention to addressing organisational career development to realise the benefits of equity options. Second, the kinds of organisational support required by middle and senior managers are different because the middle managers are the operational focus while the senior managers are the strategic focus. The different focus of the senior and junior managers on their career development are the special contributions of the empirical study by analysing the interview transcripts, compared to findings from the literature review section. Third, factors related to their career development for middle and senior managers are different. The most important factors for middle managers are the professional skills and capabilities to respond to dynamic and cross-cultural situations. For senior managers, however, leadership is the most important factor.

***4.2 The current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers***

1. *Findings* related to the current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers are summarised in Table 4.2 concerning the importance of global leadership, ways the managers perform global leadership in the workplace, and the challenges that the managers face be effective global leaders supporting the career development while Company X’s organisational effectiveness.

Table 4.2 The current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers

<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Answers from middle managers</b>	<b>Answers from senior managers</b>
<b>The importance of global leadership</b>	A leader could help the individual audit the workplace and offer supportive status for the individuals to realise their	Global leadership is important because global leadership can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer resources</li> <li>• Motivate employees</li> </ul>

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	career goals	• Reward employees
	Managers apply for open positions as the leader of a cross-cultural team because they have noticed the importance of such a position and their career goals align with such a position	
<b>How the managers perform leadership in the workplace</b>	Cross-cultural communications are regarded as the most important Recommendations proposed include more monetary rewards, facilities and policies to support work-life balance, setting career development in the global context as a part of the strategic human resource management	Adaptive leadership are regarded as the most important Support available for individuals from cross-cultural colleagues
<b>What are the challenges that managers face to be effective global leaders?</b>	Individuals are curious about new technologies improving work efficiency The individuals' incline to the traditional work style and the adaptive requirements	Adapting to the changing situations Considering the diversified requirements of individuals in the workplace Different national culture

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Barriers from languages  
Even cultural differences  
among individuals when  
they are from the same  
nation  
Cultural diversity because  
of age, religion, etc.

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2. *Comparison – similarities.* Findings illustrated in Table 4.2 suggest that there are similarities of the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers: they both regard global leadership important, they both take efforts addressing the cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, and they both face challenges to perform effective global leadership.

First, middle managers and senior managers of company X confirmed the importance of global leadership. The middle managers suggest that a leader could help the individual audit the workplace and offer supportive status for the individuals to realise their career goals. For example, middle managers as leaders could offer support to promote cross-cultural communications (Respondent 2). Leaders could suggest training and development goals directing individuals. 26 of 30 middle managers report they will apply global leadership to respond to the situations in which they interact with customers and colleagues from different countries and cultural backgrounds. Middle managers are to apply for open positions as the leader of a cross-cultural team because they have noticed the importance of such a position and their career goals align with such a position. For example, respondent 14 said: "Global leadership encompasses various aspects, including inspiring and equipping leaders for transformation, advanced leadership training, managing systemic risk, and navigating elections and their implications, to help me motivate employees buying items globally". The cross-border e-commerce business feature of Company X is one important reason leading to the fact that the managers should perform global leadership to audit and respond to the operational activities across countries (Saleh et al., 2022). When considering operations

in different countries, middle managers are to focus on cross-cultural differences because customers and colleagues from different countries and cultural backgrounds show significant differences and potential conflicts that middle managers should address before they can achieve effective interactions with the customers and colleagues (Mate et al., 2019b).

Similarly, senior managers suggested that global leadership is important for company X because global leadership can offer resources, motivate employees, and reward employees. First, respondent 41 suggested that global leadership is important for resource acquisition to support strategy planning and implementation for company X. "In a globalised world, Company X can access a larger talent pool, which can lead to a more diverse and innovative workforce. This can help the company in acquiring the resources it needs for growth and innovation" respondent 41. Respondent 44 agreed that "Global leadership also promotes the development of a culturally competent workforce. This is crucial for ensuring effective communication and collaboration across border". "Global leadership encourages the inculcation of shared values among employees, which can foster a sense of unity and purpose, essential for effective teamwork across borders", said respondent 48. Second, respondents 42, 43 and 47 had identified the motivational impact of global leadership for company X toward its sustainability. Respondent 42 said: "Global leadership can create a more inclusive and motivating work environment. Leaders who understand and respect different cultural and geographical perspectives can better motivate their employees, leading to increased productivity and satisfaction at work". Respondent 43 confirmed, "Global leadership encourages strategic thinking that is future-oriented. Leaders who understand and can navigate global dynamics are better equipped to develop strategies that will position the company for success in the years to come". Respondent 47 said: "Global leadership necessitates effective cross-cultural and cross-geographic communication skills. This is particularly important for a company like Company X that operates in a diverse global environment". Third, respondent 49 suggested that a global leadership approach can also create a more equitable and fair reward system. "By valuing diversity in thought and experience, global leaders can ensure that employees are rewarded based

on their contributions, rather than just their time spent in the company” respondent 49.

Findings from the literature review section also confirmed the importance of global leadership for cross-border e-commerce to achieve operational effectiveness. Noticing the importance of global leadership, various efforts are recommended to direct the performance of global leadership in the career development of both middle and senior managers. To implement these benefits, Company X should focus on developing a robust global leadership development program. This program should aim at creating a global mindset among leaders, encouraging cultural competence, and fostering effective communication and collaboration. Additionally, investing in training and development initiatives can help employees gain the necessary skills to succeed in a global leadership role. By taking these steps, Company X can leverage global leadership opportunities and create a more competitive, dynamic, and successful organisation.

Second, middle managers and senior managers of company X have both made efforts to address cultural issues and adaptation in leadership. Answers from the middle managers suggest that the middle managers regard cross-cultural communications as the most important activity addressing cross-cultural issues in the global context when designing and conducting cross-border e-commerce for their organisation and aiming at achieving their individual career development. Middle managers had identified serious impacts of cross-cultural communications to indicate their requirements addressing the cross-cultural situations while requiring support from their colleagues and their company before they could achieve excellent cross-cultural communications and global leadership effectiveness. Required supports that the middle managers desire and the related efforts they intend to perform toward improved global leadership include more monetary rewards, facilities and policies to support work-life balance, setting career development in the global context as a part of the strategic human resource management. For example, respondent 4 said: "I face various challenges adapting to German when I were assigned to work in the country and buy items for my corporation. However, I have noticed the importance to perform global leadership and I have taken efforts to prepare for my oversea work". Respondent 5 adds more details



about how he made efforts to address cultural issues and adaptation in leadership with delicate efforts supporting work-life balance when working overseas. Before going to the foreign country, respondent 5 planned adaptations and how to get help with his computer. In contrast, respondent 11 said: "To become a successful global leader, one must continuously work on developing these key behaviors and attributes. By doing so, they can better manage a global workforce, navigate cultural complexities, and optimise global operations".

Similar to the multiple ways that middle managers perform global leadership in the workplace, senior managers in Company X also address adaptive leadership to require support from cross-cultural colleagues, the organisation, and external consultants. Respondent 42 said, "Adaptive leadership is the most important for me to effectively perform global leadership in the workplace because I face various challenges due to diversified situations, I face working in different countries". Şimşek et al. (2022) suggested that Adaptive leadership is a practical approach to solving business issues, guiding leaders in identifying and focusing on the important aspects of a business operation and discarding what it can do without. It was developed by Harvard professors Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky and is defined as the act of mobilising a group of individuals to handle tough challenges and emerge triumphant in the end (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). The framework of adaptive leadership was designed to help organisations and individuals adapt and thrive in challenging environments. Cogan and MacDonald (2021) agreed that adaptive leadership in the workplace is a practical approach to solving business issues, guided by five principles: Anticipate Future Needs, Articulate Collective Support, Respond to Change, Facilitate Collective Growth, and Promote Transparency. When achieving the adaptative leadership practices, respondent 44 said she regularly "seek Supports available for individuals from the cross-cultural colleagues". Respondent 46 guided her efforts following the principles of adaptive leaders to make all her decisions transparent and clearly stated because "Adaptive leaders communicate clearly, promoting transparency within the organisation. They encourage the inclusion of all employees in the decision-making process, making everyone feel valued".

The similar arguments of the senior and middle managers of Company X suggest the importance of addressing cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership. Cross-cultural management is the capability that leaders should have to support their employees' career development. Leaders supporting employees' career development in the global context need to address the significant roles of national culture, such as by referring to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which defines five dimensions to measure national culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Kristjansdottir, Gulaugsson, et al., 2017). In the career of managers, culture in corporations is one system to address the career planning system of corporations toward their operational effectiveness, as suggested by the conceptual paper of (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). The behaviours of the leaders and the followers are influenced by the organisational culture as to result of their dynamics and interactions toward the employees' career planning and their efforts toward their career goals and objectives. Therefore, Company X is to promote a system encouraging continuous efforts of the managers responding to cross-cultural situations, such as by developing their adaptive leadership, which is defined as one leadership style during which the leaders could change their leadership styles and interventions in interacting with the followers when they perceive the dynamic situations they face in the workplace (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). Methods and approaches to develop adaptive leadership include encouraging employees' engagement, using delegation, training and development of the leaders to follow better the employees' career development requirements in the global context.

Third, middle managers and senior managers of company X agree that they face challenges in developing their global leadership toward their career goals based on their current career development plans and resources available. Managers, to effectively perform global leadership, need to close the gap between their traditional leadership and the newly required leadership practices responding to the global context. Respondent 29 said: "The individuals' incline to the traditional work style and the adaptive requirements". He identified the situations in which some managers needed to respond to the newest technologies and situations facing the operations of Company X

because the managers insisted on their previous ways of working. Respondent 28 agreed with the arguments raised by Respondent 29, indicating that the limited capabilities and awareness of changes might result in the managers' slower responses to any changes in the global market. The various cross-cultural situations and the increasing number of customised items required by the customers also lead to challenges for managers to be excellent global leaders. Respondent 43 had identified the fact facing senior managers because he needs to "adapt to the changing situations and consider diversified requirements of individuals in the workplace". Similarly, respondent 48 identified cross-cultural issues because of differences in national culture, barriers in languages, and even cultural differences among individuals when they are from the same nation. Respondent 49 suggested, "there is Cultural diversity because of age, religions, etc., leading to challenges for managers to be excellent global leaders and adapting to the customised and dynamic needs of the followers". To address the cross-cultural issues facing the senior and middle managers in Company X, it is recommended the corporation have cross-cultural training addressing the cross-cultural context they face. Cross-cultural human resource management models, such as culture in the career planning system, are suggested to direct the global leaders' efforts to adapt to cross-cultural situations and to motivate employees' continuous efforts toward the organisational goals (Kuntz & Livingston, 2020). When designing and implementing cross-cultural training and development, Company X is recommended to use professional consultants who are familiar with various countries' cultures to direct the managers' quick learning and adapting to the cross-cultural situations in their work.

3. *Comparison – differences.* Differences in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers include different focuses of middle managers and senior managers in identifying the importance of global leadership, different efforts performing global leadership by middle managers and senior managers in the workplace toward their career goals, and different challenges in performing global leadership reported by middle managers and senior managers.

First, middle managers and senior managers in company X have a different focus on identifying the importance of global leadership in directing their activities toward

their organisational and individual career development. Middle managers are operational focus to suggest that global leadership is important for operational procedures of company X. As a result, middle managers, to undertake their positions and achieve their career development properly, are to perform global leadership. Respondent 16 said: "performing global leadership includes enhancing my data analysis skills, understanding the organisation's strategy, and improving people leadership skills. I can also consider developing my communication skills to better connect with different teams and individuals across the globe". Respondent 21 said: "Middle managers play a vital role in shaping the organisation's culture by influencing daily operations because middle managers connect staff and senior managers in company X to conduct the daily operations". "For example, when the corporation has marketing strategies and campaigns aiming at promoting a new cosmetic from the UK market to the Chinese market, the middle managers should cooperate with each other to communicate with the suppliers in the UK, the distribution channels in the global supply chain, and the senior manager allocating resources to this marketing campaign, aiming at properly designing and implementing the marketing campaign" (respondent 21). Findings from the literature review section have identified various skills and capabilities that the middle managers of Company X can follow to improve their global leadership effectiveness. For example, middle managers should show adaptive leadership features supporting their learning and learning of the staff toward the organisational goals and objectives. Adaptive leadership is defined as one leadership style during which the leaders can change their leadership styles and interventions in interacting with the followers when they perceive the dynamic situations they face in the workplace (Jaunarajs & McGarry, 2018). Methods and approaches to develop adaptive leadership include encouraging employees' engagement, using delegation, training and development of the leaders to better follow the employees' career development requirements in the global context.

In contrast, senior managers are strategic focus, indicating that Senior managers' strategic focus on global leadership involves a multi-faceted approach that combines an understanding of leadership competencies, strategic problem-solving, and the ability

to influence others. For example, respondent 45 said: "I have noticed that that leadership is not just about managing, but also involves inspiring, influencing, and empowering others". Respondent 47 holds similar opinions, indicating that "as the Senior Strategy Manager, I define a clear strategic vision for the business. This involves creating focused tactical and strategic agendas that enhance the business". "Being strategic focus is important for me to properly allocate limited resources in company X to the most important tasks we should achieve because we have so many tasks to consider in the operations", respondent 49 said. However, the strategic focuses of different senior managers are different, resulting in potential conflicts among the senior managers to design and implement the corporate strategies for Company X, indicating the importance that the senior managers should have interactive communications and cooperation to determine the corporate strategies within the limited budget (Bhatti & Ahsan, 2016). There are lessons learned from the literature review section directing leadership practices of senior managers of Company X. For example, Delle and Searle (2022) suggested that leadership is defined as the process during which the leaders influence the followers (always employees in corporations) to have continuous efforts toward their organisational goals and objectives, as one conceptual framework raising the definition of leadership based on various previous studies. Similarly, Athanasopoulou et al. (2018) investigated female CEO roles and their interactions with the followers, to suggest that it is the responsibility of the leaders to motivate the employees as followers with the aim to achieve the organisational goals and objectives. Effective leaders should be able to incorporate the employees' individual interests and organisational performance to achieve operational effectiveness. Motivating the followers, including the various efforts to motivate the employees by fitting with the employee's career development goals, is one important way that the leaders could result in the followers' satisfaction and continuous efforts to achieve the organisational goals (Lopez Hernandez et al., 2022). Middle managers of Company X to interactive and motivate the employees are to gain interactive communication capabilities. They can also develop their capabilities using social media platforms to support their performing global leadership interacting with others.

Second, efforts taken by middle and senior managers in Company X to perform global leadership and support their career development are different, besides the strategic and operational focus. For the middle managers, efforts in operational procedures and interacting with others are more likely to be short-term focused, aiming at solving specific issues in the short run facing Company X. For example, respondent 31 had identified the various issues in the global supply chain, indicating that Company X middle managers should have additional efforts addressing the global supply chain integration and cost management, especially in the short run, to solve immediate problems about offering enough products from overseas markets to the Chinese customers. In contrast, senior managers are long run focused. For example, respondent 44 said: "senior managers should be long run focus to support organisational development and their individual rewards from company X because the corporation uses equity option as the method to motivate and reward the senior managers". Under the remuneration design for the senior managers, they could share returns from the development of the corporation in the long run as the shareholders of the company (Kemp & Zhao, 2016). However, the middle managers do not have equity in the company and do not share profits from the Company's profits.

Findings from the literature review section, addressing the different key concerns of the individual managers in corporations, suggest the different remuneration packages for middle and senior managers of Company X are required because of the different positions they undertake and the most important valued rewards by them are different. Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions. For example, leaders who support employees' career development must develop talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations (Bickel, 2022). Leaders support the employees' career development are to motivating employees, such as by providing various monetary and non-monetary rewards based on the perceived requirements of the employees (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019). Managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises are to consider the diversified cultural

requirements of the employees while perceiving their requirements before proposing counterpart leadership styles and rewards to motivate the employees (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019).

Third, there are different challenges middle and senior managers in Company X face when performing global leadership to achieve operational effectiveness and to realise their career development plans. The most serious challenges facing middle managers are the transforming from the traditional to the new leadership styles and practices. Respondent 19 said: "Middle managers often struggle to adapt to new leadership styles and practices. This is due in part to the traditional, command-and-control approach still prevalent in many organisations. Middle managers need to learn to lead by example, empowering their teams and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation". Respondents 23, 29 and 35 identified pressure for results, limited time and challenges to achieve excellent conflict management. "Middle managers have faced increased pressure for tangible results. This pressure can lead to the neglect of other essential managerial responsibilities, such as talent development and team engagement" (Respondent 23). "Middle managers often find themselves in conflict resolution scenarios. This could involve managing disagreements between two team members or handling disputes between different departments. Effective conflict management skills are crucial for middle managers' success" (Respondent 29). "Given their broad responsibilities, middle managers often struggle with effective time management. This can lead to missed deadlines and poor-quality work. Middle managers often feel that their role is undervalued and underappreciated. This can lead to dissatisfaction and low morale, which can negatively impact team performance" (Respondent 35).

In contrast, the most serious challenge facing senior managers is the dilemma between limited resources and customised services because senior managers always undertake positions to allocate limited resources to the corporate strategies and projects, directing efforts of the middle managers. Respondent 42 said: "I frequently face confusions to achieve work-life balance because I have limited time while I want to achieve as better performance for the corporation as possible". Respondent 50 confirmed that "I feel difficult to support requirements of all the followers because they

have various ideas and conduct various operational activities while I have limited resources to support their daily operations. When I failed to satisfy the followers, I frequently feel anxiety”. Considering problems facing the managers in Company X, recommendations are required to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership but address the different most serious challenges with the specific human resource management interventions. For middle managers, training programs, such as the on-the-job training taken online and under the support of professional consultants, are required to address the requirements of improving cross-cultural effectiveness and global leadership effectiveness (Whitley & Massey, 2018). For the senior managers, however, it is more difficult to design and conduct certain training and development, indicating that Company X should allow the senior managers to design their supportive projects by accessing resources (Huntsman et al., 2021). The board of directors should use empowerment to allow the senior managers to access resources and cater customised services supporting both staff and customers in the marketplace.

4. *Summary.* Figure 4.2 summarises findings from the interviews about “the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers” to prepare for additional empirical discussions, when also referring to findings and recommendations proposed by the literature review section.



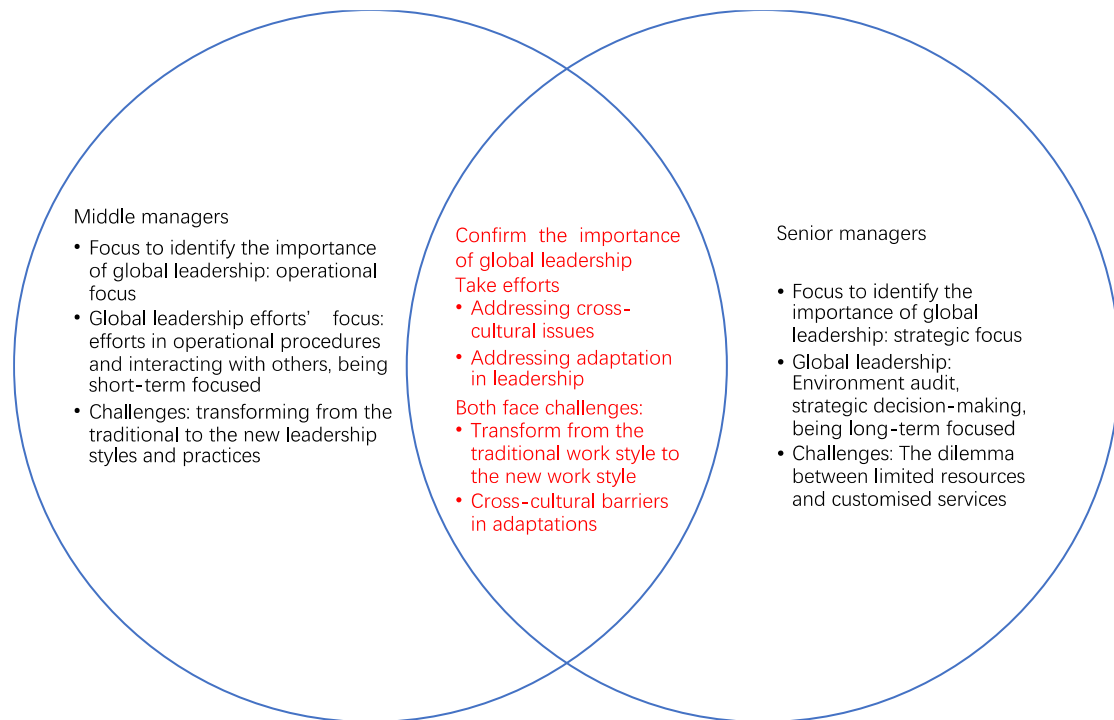


Figure 4.2 Compare the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers

Figure 4.2 summarises the current state of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers in comparison. There are similarities in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers: they both regard global leadership as important, they both make efforts to address cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, and they both face challenges to performing effective global leadership. Global leadership identified by the empirical study is one theme plotted in the conceptual framework in the literature review section. However, the other themes, such as cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, are not plotted in the conceptual framework, indicating that future improvements of the conceptual framework can also incorporate cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership as two constructs.

Differences in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers include different focuses of middle managers and senior managers in identifying the importance of global leadership, different efforts performing global leadership by middle managers and senior managers in the workplace toward their career goals, and different challenges in performing global

leadership reported by middle managers and senior managers. Those differences in identification are perspectives to enrich the conceptual framework identified in the literature review section.

**4.3 Recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership**

1. *Findings.* Table 4.3 summarises findings related to recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and to support Company X’s organisational effectiveness.

Table 4.3 Recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership

<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Answers from middle managers</b>	<b>Answers from senior managers</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	Professional consultants’ cultural communication training; from managers; work and management framework	Adapting to the changing situations Considering the diversified requirements of individuals in the workplace Setting both short and long-run goals; Being goal-focused with baby steps; Monthly adjustment of the goals Being supportive Cross-cultural awareness Interactive communications Training and development about the cross-cultural situations and challenges in the global context

2. *Comparison – similarities.* Comparisons suggest that there are some general

recommendations to direct global leadership practices of both middle and senior managers toward their career development. The general recommendations include cross-cultural communication training, support for change management, and techniques to support goal setting and career development planning. First, cross-cultural trainings help the managers (including the middle and senior managers) gain better cross-cultural awareness and capabilities to respond to the various cross-cultural situations they face in the operations. Respondent 21 said: "I need cross-cultural training to support my settle in foreign countries because I need to frequently visit and stay at foreign countries to find suppliers from the foreign countries". Respondent 46 agreed that: "I need a professional consultant help me quickly learn the cultural context in the global market because I have to serve clients from diversified markets". "We also recruit employees from different countries, requiring my capabilities managing the cultural diversified employees to reduce conflicts and maintain sales and profits of the company", Respondent 32 said. Considering features of company X as one cross-border e-commerce buy items overseas to serve the domestic customers in China, there are various cross-cultural occasions that the middle and senior managers should address to achieve operational effectiveness in serving the customers and to realise their career goals (Dragoni et al., 2014). For example, managers of Company X sourcing materials from foreign markets and interacting with employees from the international markets should well understand the foreign laws and cultural preferences of the overseas employees and business partners, aiming at developing and maintaining their smooth cooperation in the long run. Therefore, cross-cultural training and related support are required.

Previous studies have focused on rewarding employees in cross-cultural situations to address tactics that managers can follow when interacting with the employees to result in motivated employees. Scholars agree that Talent management is essential for corporations to result in high-performing employees while achieving their career development because employees are the most important internal customers that corporations should value to support their competitive advantages. Leaders achieving effective talent management are suggested to audit the employees' previous and current

experience to help them reflect on their previous career development and propose their future career development (Bickel, 2022). Managers in Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises are to consider the diversified cultural requirements of the employees while perceiving their requirements before proposing counterpart leadership styles and rewards to motivate the employees (Kirchner & Akdere, 2019). In rewarding employees, leaders who support the employees' career development focus on growth rather than promotions. Zhang et al. (2021) suggested that employees' career development is long-term focused on supporting the employees' growth rather than only helping the employees gain monetary rewards or promotions, which are the primary requirements that employees need in the workplace. Employees in their career development define growth from more aspects, such as their improved professional status in knowledge and skills, their capabilities to achieve work-life balance, and their possibilities of finding other job opportunities in the industry, besides the monetary rewards they gain and the promotions they achieve (Zhang et al., 2021). The cross-cultural training in development and implementation should consider the support of technologies and the changing situations facing Company X.

Second, support for change management is required to promote continuous efforts of middle and senior managers in Company X to respond to the changing situations in the operations. For example, there should be regular updates of the career development goals and plans for the managers to match their career development plan with the requirements of the marketplace and Company X. Respondent 24 said: "I keep learning via on-the-job training because I feel the changing situations in the workplace, requiring me to update the skills and capabilities supporting the changing situations". Respondent 38 agreed with the arguments of Respondent 24, indicating the significant impacts of AI and related technologies on the workplace, saying: "AI is changing the landscape of designing advertisement for our company, requiring us updating the previous partnership with the advertising consultants in developing advertisements". Therefore, change programs are required to update the current operations of the Company following the changed situations in the operations. To implement effective change programmes directing career development and global leadership of middle and senior

managers, Li et al. (2022) suggested that the key to successful change management lies in the active involvement and commitment of all levels of management, including middle managers. Scholars agree on the important effects of career management on organisational effectiveness and also have an in-depth analysis of how career management practices contribute to improved organisational effectiveness for corporations. Rashad et al. (2022) agreed with the importance of organisational effectiveness by summarising several mechanisms that organisational effectiveness is related to excellent career management and continuous improvements of employees within corporations. The quantitative investigation by Rashad et al. (2022) on leaders and employees in corporations suggests that organisational effectiveness and career management are related via strategic alignment, metric setting, executive sponsorship, behavioural changes, and continuous evaluations. There are also changes in cultural values for nations and corporations, indicating that career management practices being helped for organisational effectiveness can shift to be ineffective practices when situations facing corporations change. For example, the increasing gig economy and online jobs require corporations to train flexible work capabilities employees to align with the changed situations (Kristjansdottir, Guolaugsson et al., 2017). By providing the necessary support and actively involving them in the change process, company X can ensure a smoother transition and greater acceptance of the changes within the organisation.

Managers of Company X reflecting changes in the external environment and requirements of the managers can develop a change project addressing the needs of the managers in their career development to achieve organisational effectiveness from a holistic approach, addressing leadership effectiveness, personal growth, flexibility in dealing with cross-cultural issues, collaborative environment within the organisation supporting the career development of individuals. For example, Kotter's eight steps of change management are the framework that change management practices of Company X can address, directed by the board of directors, to support the senior and middle managers' updating the leadership styles, cross-cultural management capabilities, and career management plans toward improved organisational effectiveness of the

corporation (Miles et al., 2023). Such a change management project includes eight steps: creating a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision, communicating the vision, empowering action, planning for and creating short-term wins, consolidating improvements for improvements, and achieving institutional changes. These steps collectively address the psychological and structural aspects of change management, ensuring that the change process is not only initiated but also sustained over time.

Third, there are required techniques to support goal setting and career development planning of middle and senior managers in Company X concerning key tasks the managers need to undertake in the dynamic workplace. Respondent 12 said: "I frequently refer to social media and collect mass data to understand the consumers' requirements". Respondent 33 also identified the importance of technological advances, indicating that "the development of the Internet and the raising gig economy suggests new ways that our employees work. They prefer work from home and I have to discuss with other managers to update the work arrangements to fulfill the employees". To deal with the identified challenges, updates in technologies and management practices of Company X are required. For example, training on using business information systems and advanced AI and big data analysis methods are required to improve the capabilities of the managers using those technologies participating in the global supply chain and exploiting maximum profits for Company X.

3. *Comparison – differences.* There are different recommendations proposed for middle and senior managers based on their answers in the interview to direct their performing global leadership toward career development. Recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership should be operationally focused. For example, recommendations for middle managers raised from the interviews include professional consultants' cross-cultural communication training, support from senior managers, flexible work arrangements and performance management framework responding to changing situations, and supporting the adoption of new technologies, such as business information systems and social media

platforms. Those recommendations are supported by arguments from the literature review section. First, professional consultants' cross-cultural communication training contributes to continuous improvements in the employees developing their skills and capabilities in responding to the cross-cultural situations facing Company X (Gjana, 2020). Second, support from senior managers helps allocate resources for cross-cultural training for the middle managers (Noormahomed et al., 2019). Third, flexible work arrangements and performance management frameworks responding to changing situations are required because of the changing situations facing middle managers of Company X. Scholars have studied the situations of global leadership and the features of global leadership in supporting corporations' gaining organisational effectiveness by managing staff in the cross-border situations. The significant global context facing leaders suggests the challenges to achieving effective leadership in dynamic situations and the counterpart ways that the leaders could follow to address the dynamic situations before achieving effective leadership when interacting with the followers. Liu et al. (2020) audited the leadership of the Global university president using a quantitative research strategy to summarise their leadership characteristics and dynamics using a quantitative research strategy. Findings suggested that leaders in dynamic situations can change their leadership styles and practices based on specific situations. Global leaders, to support organisational effectiveness, can address key concerns of the employees, supporting the career development of the employees from different perspectives. Fourth, middle managers are supported by supporting the adoption of new technologies, such as business information systems and social media platforms. The research (Jones-Morales & Konrad, 2018) suggested that social media and the related changes brought about in the marketplace are important factors that corporations should consider to achieve effective operations by supporting the career development of employees.

In contrast, recommendations to update the current career management practices of senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership should be strategically focused. Recommendations for senior managers raised from the interviews include Adapting to changing situations,

considering diversified requirements of individuals in the workplace, setting both short and long-run goals enabling monthly adjustments, Interactive communications, efforts to improve Cross-cultural awareness, and training about cross-cultural situations and challenges in the global context. Arguments from the literature review section support those recommendations. For example, (Jones-Morales & Konrad, 2018) addressed the changing situations along with social media platforms in management practices of corporations interacting with individuals about their career development. However, implementation of the recommendations needs to address limited resources within Company X and the diversified requirements of the employees based on their age, personality, mental health, individual preferences, etc. For example, the employee's characteristics, such as interests, personality type, aptitudes, and work-related values, determine their ways of thinking and making decisions in the workplace (Dietrich & Lazarides, 2019). Employees also refer to their characteristics as one important factor in determining their positions and supporting their career development. For example, introverted individuals are not likely to undertake the position of a salesman because of the challenges for the introvert to interact with others to sell goods (Hunt et al., 2017). Company X is recommended to audit both the internal resources and requirements of the senior managers to set short and long-run goals, enabling monthly adjustments. Interactive communications, efforts to improve Cross-cultural awareness, and training about cross-cultural situations and challenges in the global context are important concerns when addressing the managers' diversified requirements within the internal capabilities of Company X.

4. *Summary.* Figure 4.3 summarises the interviews' findings about "the recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership" to prepare for additional empirical discussions, also referring to the findings and recommendations proposed by the literature review section.



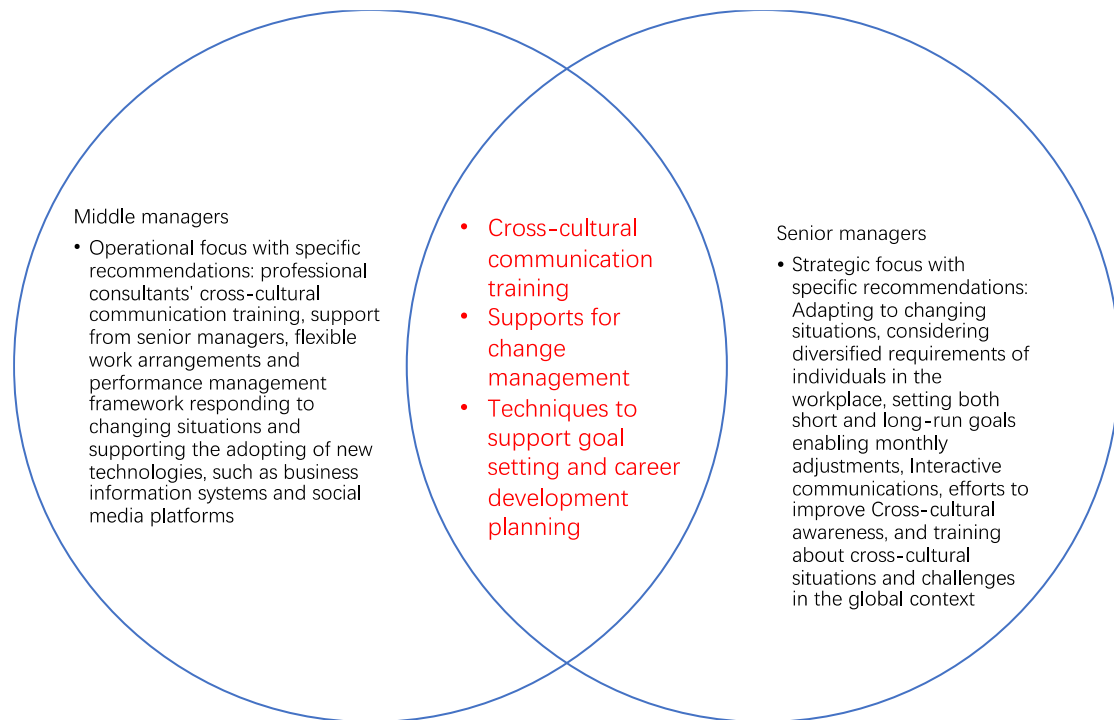


Figure 4.3 Compare the recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership

In summary, figure 4.3 compares the recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership. The comparisons suggest that there are some general recommendations to direct global leadership practices of both middle and senior managers toward their career development. The general recommendations include cross-cultural communication training considering outsourcing and remuneration, support for change management, and techniques to support goal setting and career development planning. Those recommendations are potentials to enrich the conceptual framework identified in the literature review section, such as by identifying more constructions for the themes illustrated by the conceptual framework.

There are different recommendations proposed for middle and senior managers based on their answers in the interview to direct their performing global leadership toward career development. Recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers to fulfil their career development needs and

the organisational need for global leadership should be operationally focused. In contrast, recommendations to update the current career management practices of senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership should be strategically focused. The different focuses of junior and senior managers to update the current career management practices of managers in different stages of their career development are special contributions of the empirical study compared to the conceptual framework identified in the literature review section because previous studies had not discussed the operational vs strategic focus of managers in updating the career management practices and global leadership toward organisational effectiveness of cross-border ecommerce.

**4.4 Diversified conditions of the managers and impacts on career development**

There are also diversified conditions of the managers and impacts on their career development concerning their different positions, ages, and nationalities, suggesting customised recommendations that Company X could adopt to support global leadership and career development of the middle and senior managers. Table 4.4 summarises findings considering diversified conditions of the managers and impacts on career development, to address context facing Company X supporting managers in different career stages to pursue its organisational effectiveness.

Table 4.4 Diversified conditions of the managers and impacts on career development

<b>Diversified conditions of the managers</b>	<b>Findings from the diversified groups of managers</b>	<b>Findings from the literature section</b>	<b>Findings from the review</b>
<b>Position</b>	30 junior managers	Senior managers are strategically focused, while junior managers	Confirmed findings from the empirical studies
	20 senior managers	are likely to focus on their daily operations.	The nature of tasks conducted by senior and junior managers results in their different focus

on career development.

<b>Age</b>	Below 28 years old: 6+4=10 28-35 years old: 15+4=19 Older than 35 years old: 9+12=21	Elders focus more on leadership, while the youngsters are more sensitive to cross-cultural diversity.	Confirmed findings from the empirical studies
<b>Nationality</b>	For junior managers: China: 19 HK: 3 Japan: 2 TaiWan(china): 2 The US: 1 The UK: 1 South Korea: 1 The Swiss: 1 For senior managers: China: 15 HK: 2 Japan: 2 TaiWan(China): 1	Not yet summarised	Confirmed findings from the empirical studies

**4.5 Summary of the chapter.** A summary of the findings and discussions section suggested that the managers have identified the values of global leadership for both the middle and senior managers. Therefore, global leadership is important for managers responding to challenges in the global market, auditing and responding to the cross-cultural situations toward their organisational effectiveness. Compared to middle

managers, cross-cultural contexts and global leadership are more important for senior managers of Company X in planning their career development toward the organisational effectiveness of the company.

There are models to address international HR practices in cross-border situations: goal setting, reinforcement theory in motivating employees, using professional consultants, and on-the-job training. Those models are implemented to support the career development of middle and senior managers of Company X but with different allocations of resources to address key concerns of the managers in their different career development stages. Interventions supporting the middle managers are operationally focused, but interventions supporting the senior managers are more strategically focused, responding to key challenges they face in the operations to gain career development and supporting organisational effectiveness.

There are approaches identified beyond the literature review section findings supporting the career development of the senior and middle managers of Company X toward its organisational effectiveness in sourcing products from the global market to sell products to the Chinese consumers: remuneration and outsourcing of training. The general recommendations include cross-cultural communication training considering outsourcing and remuneration, support for change management, and techniques to support goal setting and career development planning. Under the remuneration design for the senior managers, they could share the return from the development of the corporation in the long run as the shareholders of the company. Outsourcing of training is important to gain support from external professionals to design and conduct on-the-job training for Company X, especially when Company X operates in foreign markets but is not familiar with the laws and workplaces of the foreign countries.

The process conducting the empirical studies is conducted to expand the initial conceptual framework by including more themes and more constructions of themes included in the model. For example, themes, such as cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership can also be incorporated in the future conceptual framework studying how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-

Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation. A future conceptual framework also can include more constructions addressing the differences of junior and senior managers by examining to what extent they are operational (or strategical) focused in achieving career development and requiring global leadership supports. Overall, findings from the empirical studies help expand the initial conceptual framework to direct future empirical studies, especially the future quantitative studies.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary of findings

The thesis studies Career Management and Global Leadership among Managers in Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises by Comparing Junior and Senior Managers of Company X. The main research question is how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation.

**Aim: to explore the extent to which having global leadership among the managers and employees supports the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation.**

Objectives:

- **To compare the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers**
- **To compare the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers**
- **To propose recommendations updating the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership**

Previous studies have not thoroughly explored career management and global leadership development among managers in Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in China. First, previous studies failed to achieve an integrated approach, which combines career development, global leadership and cross-border e-commerce situations when studying situations facing Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in supporting the employees' career development. Second, previous studies also had not classified career management into two levels, the organisational level career management and the individual level career management, to study how leaders could contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the wellbeing of the employees.

The current research aims to address this important gap by focusing on the following questions:

**First, what are the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers?**

**Second, what are the current states of global leadership development among these two groups?**

**Third, how can the current career management practices be updated to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership?**

There are contributions of the study referring to the proposed conceptual framework and the related empirical analyses developed based on the identified research gap. Contribution of this thesis: propose a conceptual framework to identify cross-cultural factors that HRM practices should consider to develop global leadership toward successful career management for Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. The theoretical framework of this thesis suggests that career management and global leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises can result in improved organisational effectiveness for their organisations.

The thesis uses the qualitative research strategy to collect primary data from semi-structured interviews. Comparison analysis is conducted to summarise and compare answers from 30 middle-level managers (junior managers) and 20 high-level managers and leaders (senior managers) from Company X, which is one Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprise with 500 employees. Expected findings are the identified career development goals (individual and organisational), factors related to their career development, the roles of global leadership and cross-cultural situations facing junior and senior managers in Company X. There are also recommendations drawn from the thesis to suggest different intervention measures that Company X could follow to support career management for the junior and senior managers toward their operational effectiveness while achieving satisfaction and engagement of the employees.

*1. The current state of career management among junior and senior managers. The current states of career management among junior and senior managers share some*

similarities: they both value organisational and individual career development plans, require resources and change their plans in dynamic situations, and consider cross-cultural issues in implementing the career development plans. First, both middle and senior managers value organisational and individual career development plans. For example, 18 of 30 middle managers suggest they have career development plans. 12 out of 30 middle managers suggest they have changed their career development since they worked for the current company. 18 of 20 senior managers suggest they have career development plans. The findings are supported by arguments from the literature review section, addressing the supportive roles of career development plans on the performance of employees and organisational effectiveness in the marketplace. Scholars agree that career development plans direct career management of the employees and improved organisational effectiveness in daily operations when employees guided by career development plans achieve continuous efforts in the workplace to achieve their career development and to support sustainability of their corporations.

Second, there are shared supports that the middle and senior managers require: Setting career development plans under the direction of the organisation, updating career development plans when situations change, Resources to implement career development plans, and platforms to implement career development plans. Setting career development plans under the direction of the organisation helps the managers, including the middle and senior managers, to find paths toward their final career development goals, based on the matrix organisational structure of Company X, when sourcing products from the global market and selling products to the Chinese customers as one cross-border e-commerce brand. Findings from the literature review section confirmed the importance of organisational goals in directing the career development of individuals from both the individual and organisational levels of career development. Updating career development plans when situations change is required because senior and middle managers always face dynamic situations to respond to the changing demands of the customers and changing trade barriers in the global market. For example, the career development plans of managers should be updated because of the updating



of business information systems in Company X using AI. Findings from the literature review section supported this argument and suggested that there are advantages in technologies, such as artificial intelligence, supporting career development plans development and implementation of corporations. Besides technological advances, dynamics facing individuals updating their career development plans include cross-cultural dynamics and changes in the consumers' requirements. Resources and platforms to implement career development plans are required by middle and senior managers because they work in groups to achieve organisational goals by interacting with colleagues supported by the platforms and resources. Findings from the research suggested that it is important for Company X to support the employees' career development with resources and platforms, such as the online workspace, allowing them to work from home.

Third, Cross-cultural issues are important for their successfully implement career development plans. As one cross-border e-commerce corporation, company X faces various cross-cultural situations, requiring the middle and senior managers to audit and respond to cross-cultural situations under the support of the organisation. For example, company X offers translation support and adaption programmes to help its employees work abroad, aiming at reducing their barriers to adapting to the foreign countries' supply chain. The recommendations will be effective in supporting Company X's career management of the employees from the organisational level, referring to previous studies' findings and recommendations. Scholars have summarised and critiqued the proposed culture in corporations to support the employees' career development: developing talents by auditing experiences and proposing future expectations, motivating employees, and focusing on growth rather than promotions.

However, there are also some differences concerning the current state of career management among junior and senior managers, addressing their focus, the kinds of support required, and factors related to their career development. In-depth discussions and reasoning referring to previous studies and a case study on Company X analyse the reasons behind the differences. First, they have different focuses. Middle managers address individual career development and support from organisations, while senior

managers pay more attention to addressing organisational career development to realise the benefits of equity options. One reason for the different focus of the senior and middle managers of Company X concerning their career development considerations is the different stages of their career development. Scholars notice the importance of defining career stages to design and propose counterpart career management plans and interventions to define the career stages of the employees before determining the career management measures.

Second, the kinds of organisational support required by middle and senior managers are different because the middle managers are the operational focus while the senior managers are the strategic focus. The findings aligned with findings and recommendations in the literature review section, suggesting that individual managers and employees show significant differences in achieving their career development, regardless of the positions they undertake, indicating the importance that managers have the skills to support the career development of the employees based on the special features and preferences of the employees. Findings from the comparison suggested that Company X, to support the career development of the managers in different positions and to achieve its organisational effectiveness, should develop and offer diversified support for the senior and middle managers, addressing their mostly preferred resources. For example, there should be more emphasis on monetary rewards for motivating middle managers over senior managers. In contrast, Company X should use more empowerment to motivate senior managers compared to the remunerations motivating the middle managers.

Third, factors related to their career development for middle and senior managers are different. The most important factors for middle managers are the professional skills and capabilities to respond to dynamic and cross-cultural situations. For senior managers, however, leadership is the most important factor. Cross-cultural context is the most important context that managers should consider in developing and implementing their leadership. The findings are supported by arguments of previous academic studies, which argued that senior managers' skills related to career development include their leadership skills in interacting with the employees as

followers and the cross-cultural management skills and capabilities when they face cross-cultural situations in interacting with employees in cross-border organisations. However, it is a challenge for Company X to offer resources supporting its middle and senior managers in responding to the dynamic situations in the global market, focusing on the career development of the managers because of the diversified conditions of the managers, regardless of the positions they undertake. Company X, to audit and respond to the employees' requirements about career development, is recommended to perform diversity management, aiming at offering as much support as possible for the individual employees based on their special requirements.

2. *Global leadership and career management.* There are similarities in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers: they both regard global leadership as important, they both make efforts to address cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, and they both face challenges to performing effective global leadership. First, middle managers and senior managers of company X confirmed the importance of global leadership. The middle managers suggest that a leader could help the individual audit the workplace and offer supportive status for the individuals to realise their career goals. Similarly, senior managers suggested that global leadership is important for company X because global leadership can offer resources, motivate employees, and reward employees. Findings from the literature review section also confirmed the importance of global leadership for cross-border e-commerce to achieve operational effectiveness. Noticing the importance of global leadership, various efforts are recommended to direct the performance of global leadership in the career development of both middle and senior managers.

Second, middle managers and senior managers of company X have both made efforts to address cultural issues and adaptation in leadership. Answers from the middle managers suggest that the middle managers regard cross-cultural communications as the most important activity addressing cross-cultural issues in the global context when designing and conducting cross-border e-commerce for their organisation and aiming at achieving their individual career development. Similar to the multiple ways that middle managers perform global leadership in the workplace, senior managers in

Company X also address adaptive leadership to require support from cross-cultural colleagues, the organisation, and external consultants, addressing the cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership.

Third, middle managers and senior managers of company X agree that they face challenges in developing their global leadership toward their career goals based on their current career development plans and resources available. Managers, to effectively perform global leadership, need to close the gap between their traditional leadership and the newly required leadership practices responding to the global context. To address the cross-cultural issues facing the senior and middle managers in Company X, it is recommended the corporation have cross-cultural training addressing the cross-cultural context they face. When designing and implementing cross-cultural training and development, Company X is recommended to use professional consultants who are familiar with various countries' cultures to direct the managers' quick learning and adapting to the cross-cultural situations in their work.

Differences in the current states of global leadership development among middle managers and senior managers include different focuses of middle managers and senior managers in identifying the importance of global leadership, different efforts performing global leadership by middle managers and senior managers in the workplace toward their career goals, and different challenges in performing global leadership reported by middle managers and senior managers. First, middle managers and senior managers in company X have a different focus on identifying the importance of global leadership in directing their activities toward their organisational and individual career development. Middle managers are operational-focused to suggest that global leadership is important for the operational procedures of company X. In contrast, Senior managers are strategic focus, indicating that Senior managers' strategic focus on global leadership involves a multi-faceted approach that combines an understanding of leadership competencies, strategic problem-solving, and the ability to influence others.

Second, efforts taken by middle and senior managers in Company X to perform global leadership and support their career development are different besides the

strategic and operational focus. For the middle managers, efforts in operational procedures and interacting with others are more likely to be short-term focused, aiming at solving specific issues in the short run facing Company X. In contrast, senior managers are long run focused. Therefore, under the remuneration design for the senior managers, they could share the return from the development of the corporation in the long run as the shareholders of the company.

Third, there are different challenges middle and senior managers in Company X face when performing global leadership to achieve operational effectiveness and to realise their career development plans. The most serious challenges facing middle managers are the transforming from the traditional to the new leadership styles and practices. In contrast, the most serious challenge facing senior managers is the dilemma between limited resources and customised services because senior managers always undertake positions to allocate limited resources to the corporate strategies and projects, directing efforts of the middle managers. Considering problems facing the managers in Company X, recommendations are required to update the current career management practices of middle managers and senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership but address the different most serious challenges with the specific human resource management interventions. For middle managers, training programs, such as the on-the-job training taken online and under the support of professional consultants, are required to address the requirements of improving cross-cultural effectiveness and global leadership effectiveness. For the senior managers, the board of directors should use empowerment to allow the senior managers to access resources and cater customised services supporting both staff and customers in the marketplace.

*3. Recommendations from this thesis.* Comparisons suggest some general recommendations to direct global leadership practices of middle and senior managers toward their career development. The general recommendations include cross-cultural communication training that considers outsourcing and remuneration, support for change management, and techniques to support goal setting and career development planning. A combination of one or more recommendations can be applied to other cross-

border e-commerce beyond Company X to improve their presence in the global markets.

First, cross-cultural trainings help the managers (including the middle and senior managers) gain better cross-cultural awareness and capabilities to respond to the various cross-cultural situations they face in the operations. Therefore, cross-cultural training and related support are required. The cross-cultural training in development and implementation should consider the support of technologies and the changing situations facing Company X.

Second, support for change management is required to promote continuous efforts of middle and senior managers in Company X to respond to the changing situations in the operations. For example, there should be regular updates on the career development goals and plans for the managers to match their career development plan with the requirements of the marketplace and Company X. By providing the necessary support and actively involving them in the change process, company X can ensure a smoother transition and greater acceptance of the changes within the organisation.

Third, techniques are required to support the goal setting and career development planning of middle and senior managers in Company X concerning key tasks the managers need to undertake in the workplace. For example, training on using business information systems and advanced AI and big data analysis methods is required to improve the capabilities of the managers using those technologies participating in the global supply chain and exploiting maximum profits for Company X.

Based on their answers in the interview, different recommendations are proposed for middle and senior managers to direct their global leadership performance toward career development.

Recommendations to update the current career management practices of middle managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership should be operationally focused. For example, recommendations for middle managers raised from the interviews include professional consultants' cross-cultural communication training, support from senior managers, flexible work arrangements and performance management framework responding to changing situations and supporting the adoption of new technologies, such as business information systems and

social media platforms.

In contrast, recommendations to update the current career management practices of senior managers to fulfil their career development needs and the organisational need for global leadership should be strategically focused. Recommendations for senior managers raised from the interviews include Adapting to changing situations, considering diversified requirements of individuals in the workplace, setting both short and long-run goals enabling monthly adjustments, Interactive communications, efforts to improve Cross-cultural awareness, and training about cross-cultural situations and challenges in the global context.

## ***5.2 Theoretical contributions***

Academically, the thesis develops a conceptual framework studying how leaders can contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the well-being of the employees in cross-border e-commerce enterprises to close the two identified gaps of previous studies. A primarily conceptual framework is developed in the literature review section based on previous studies to indicate that organisational effectiveness in a global context is the goal that organisations intend to achieve with the various measures supporting the career development of the junior and senior managers in the operations. Global leadership in corporations help achieve improved organisational effectiveness, while organisational and individual career management for employees in their different career stages can influence global leadership performed by the managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. The empirical research section expanded the initial conceptual framework by including more themes and more constructions of themes included in the model.

For example, themes such as cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership can also be incorporated into the future conceptual framework studying how to have global leadership among the managers and employees to support the career management of managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises toward the collective goals of the managers and the corporation. As referring to the literature review section, global leadership is related to career development and organisational

effectiveness, respectively. As one illustration, Homsey (2021) suggested that career development is the support organisations provide to help employees achieve their professional growth, especially by supporting their learning skills and capabilities to move to new positions or achieve new projects within their organisations. Liu et al. (2020) suggested that global leaders can support organisational effectiveness by addressing key concerns of the employees from different perspectives. However, previous studies failed to achieve an integrated approach, which combines career development, global leadership and cross-border e-commerce situations when studying situations facing Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises in supporting the employees' career development. Findings from this thesis explored cross-cultural situations and adaptive leadership, which are themes related to global leadership, to suggest the ways that global leadership bridges the career development of managers and organisational effectiveness.

There are also unexpected findings from the thesis, addressing the operational vs strategic focus of the managers. As referring to the findings summarised in Chapter 5.1, the junior managers are operational and short-term focused, but the senior managers are strategic and long-term focused. Therefore, a future conceptual framework can also include more constructions addressing the differences between junior and senior managers by examining to what extent they are operationally (or strategically) focused on achieving career development and requiring global leadership support. Previous studies have classified employees' career development into groups, referring to the different stand of points (individual or organisational), career stages, or positions they take in their organisation. According to Vilela and Casado (2021), senior and junior managers show significant differences concerning their career development due to the varying levels of expertise, responsibilities, and tenure within the organisations they serve. However, previous studies had not classified career management into levels to study how leaders could contribute to career management in their organisations toward the organisational goals and the wellbeing of the employees. The thesis closed the gap in previous studies by defining and studying four career management situations in organisations, referring to two dimensions: the individual vs organisational level of



career management and the career management for junior vs senior managers. On the one hand, career development is defined from two different levels: organisational career development and individual career development. On the other hand, there are career management efforts delicately developed for junior and senior managers. The conceptual framework this thesis developed and expanded, therefore, is one useful framework to direct academic studies in the future, implying its academic contributions.

### ***5.3 Practical implications***

Findings from the thesis also mean specific and actionable recommendations for Company X and other similar companies in China's cross-border e-commerce sector to pursue their organisational effectiveness. For example, findings from the thesis compare the current states of career management among middle managers and senior managers concerning individual and organisational levels of career development to identify factors related to their career development. Therefore, Company X can follow the recommendation to develop measures supporting the career development of managers in different career stages toward organisational effectiveness. Additionally, there are also discussions on the roles of global leadership to indicate the impacts of global leadership on the managers' career development toward organisational effectiveness. Company X can also follow recommendations directing global leadership practices to pursue its improved organisational effectiveness when supporting the senior and junior managers' career development. Other corporations belonging to China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises can also learn lessons from the findings of this thesis to update their career management practices and motivate their employees.

Taking Company X as one example, the practical implications start by classifying the managers into two groups: senior and junior managers. The second step is proposing specific recommendations for managers in their different stages of career development, considering the context of global leadership and organisational and individual career development goals.

For junior managers, recommendations include focusing on operational procedures to develop cross-cultural training, designing supportive and flexible work arrangements,

and introducing technological support using business information systems and social media platforms. Firstly, it is to audit and respond to cross-cultural situations, such as offering cultural training programs based on the managers' requirements. The audit is recommended to be operationally focused, aiming at solving problems facing the junior managers in the operations, such as the language barriers they face in interacting with customers using different languages. Secondly, Company X is recommended to design and implement supportive and flexible work arrangements. Thirdly, it is to introduce technological support using business information systems and social media platforms. For example, Lark is one powerful tool to support remote work, incorporating the needs of the business and the employees under technological support.

For senior managers, recommendations include maintaining a strategic focus, adapting to changing situations, offering diversified management, combining short-term and long-run goals, and making special efforts to improve cross-cultural effectiveness in the global context. Firstly, it is to be strategic focus when auditing the changing situations and offering diversified management. For example, Company X is recommended to offer tools, such as information systems and consultancy services, from external professionals so that the senior managers can seek help to understand the global context and develop their global leadership. Secondly, efforts are required to combine short-term and long-run goals. Company X is recommended to suggest a SMART framework directing its goal setting under the collective efforts of the managers and the external professionals to have specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bounded goals (Oyewo et al., 2022). Thirdly, it is to make special efforts to improve cross-cultural effectiveness in the global context. Continuous efforts in Company X are required to deploy such an organisational culture supporting diversity management, to support the senior managers' career development as global leaders.

#### ***5.4 Limitations and recommendations for future studies***

Limitations lie in the qualitative research strategy and the limited dimensions used to compare senior and junior managers' career development. Future studies could use the quantitative strategy to have a more accurate analysis.

First, there are limitations of the case study method in this thesis exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, indicating potential improvements using the quantitative research strategy and some quantitative data analysis methods, such as regression analysis. The case study is one type of qualitative research strategy that has an in-depth analysis of the relationships between career development and organisational effectiveness, mediated by global leadership. This research strategy has limitations because it failed to figure out accurate relationships among variables, such as career development, global leadership, and organisational effectiveness, with numeric data, requiring additional research methods to address the research questions better. Besides the qualitative research strategy suggested and conducted by this thesis, there is also potential quantitative research strategies applied in future studies to explore Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. For example, future studies can define and measure career management with numeric data to conduct regression analysis on how career management is related to organisational financial performance, mediated by the global leadership styles performed by the leaders in the operations. In identifying and defining variables constructing future studies, the four identified types of career management situations implied by the conceptual framework of this thesis suggest a useful conceptual framework directing future studies exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises. Future studies can refer to the career management classification methods to construct the quantitative research strategy studying how diversified career management situations are related to global leadership and organisational effectiveness.

Second, the case study method used in this thesis exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises has limitations because it only considers one case, Company X, for data collection and data analysis. Company X is a medium-sized cross-border E-Commerce enterprise with 500 employees, offering international mid-to-high-end beauty cosmetics and health products to the target customers. The case study is one type

of qualitative research strategy that has an in-depth analysis of the relationships between career development and organisational effectiveness, mediated by global leadership. Findings from the case study focusing on Company X can result in valuable recommendations directing management practices of Company X concerning the career management of the senior and junior managers in the cross-border context to achieve improved organisational effectiveness from a holistic approach, addressing leadership effectiveness personal growth, flexibility in dealing with cross-cultural issues, collaborative environment within the organisation supporting career development of individuals. However, findings from this thesis include biases when generated by more companies operating in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce industry or other industries. To improve the generalisation of findings from the research exploring Career management and Global Leadership among managers in China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, it is recommended that future studies include more cases beyond Company X. For example, future studies can apply the case study method by including another two companies of China's Medium-sized Cross-Border E-Commerce enterprises, to study career management and organisational effectiveness of the companies. The more cases considered by future studies also suggest opportunities that future studies can use a comparative approach by comparing situations, career management practices, and organisational effectiveness of the cases from different perspectives to conclude fairer findings.

Third, the thesis has limitations in defining variables, such as only considering career stages facing employees in the workplace as senior and junior managers, indicating opportunities that future studies can improve the effectiveness of defining career stages before exploring the impacts of career development on organisational effectiveness for employees in different career stages. As identified in the literature review section, career stages are a fundamental aspect of career management that guides individuals through their professional journey. They ensure that career development is not only systematic but also adaptable to changing circumstances and personal needs. As such, they play a crucial role in shaping an individual's career trajectory and professional identity. Therefore, future studies can define the career

stages of the staff differently from this thesis, addressing the years that employees enter the workplace. For example, future studies can address the four stages of career development for an individual in the workplace: establishment, advancement, maintenance, and withdrawal. However, the career development stages of employees are more complex when the employees enter one corporation to achieve their daily work and promotions before withdrawal. Future studies can address a special stage of career development, such as the establishment stage, to study career management interventions required by organisations and individual employees to support their successful introduction to the workplace.

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