Doctoral Thesis

Cultural-crossvergence, Embeddedness and Sustainable IHRM: A Chinese Central State-owned Enterprise and its Overseas Branches in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abbreviations

AC	Affirmative Commitment
BCQ	Behavioral Cultural Quotient
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CC	Continuance Commitment
CCM	Cross-cultural Management
CCSOE	Chinese Central State-owned Enterprise
CE	Corporate Environment
CQ	Cultural Quotient/ Intelligence
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EM	Emerging Markets
EMMNE	Emerging Markets Multinational Enterprise
EQ	Emotional Quotient/ Intelligence
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HCA	Human Capital Advantage
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resource
HRA	Human Resource Advantage
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
IB	International Business
IHRM	International Human Resource Management
LE	Living Environment
LPS	Lean Production System
ME	Market Environment
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
NC	Normative Commitment
OB	Organizational Behavior
OFDI	Outward Foreign Direct Investment
OPA	Organizational Process Advantage
POE	Private-owned Enterprise
PR	Public Relations
PRC	People's Republic of China

RBV	Resource Based View
SIHRM	Strategic International Human Resource Management
SME	Socialist Market Economy
SOE	State-owned Enterprise
SR-HRM	Socially Responsible Human Resource Management
TNGA	Toyota New Global Architecture
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development

1.1 South-South cooperation dynamics, Chinese engagement in sub-Saharan Africa, and Sino-Africa nexus

In the 21st century, our world is undergoing profound and complex changes. Though the underlying apprehensions of the Global Financial Crisis continue to loom, the world economy is convalescing slowly and unevenly, meanwhile the complicated international and regional situations present emerging and developing countries with bigger challenges than before. Over the last two decades, China's presence and engagement in African countries, which is driven by Chinese multinational enterprises' (MNEs) globalization strategies and supported by the Chinese State with mental encouragement and financial aids, has increased tremendously (Grimm, 2014). China has become the largest trade partner of African states, and Africa is one of the largest outward foreign investments (OFDI) destinations of Chinese MNEs. Grimm (2014) opined that this kind of relationship between emerging and developing countries, which is termed South-South Cooperation, is mere rhetoric and political sloganeering. He also tried to explain the reason for Chinese MNEs' OFDI movements as 'a market and resource-seeking behavior'. In his opinion, despite the enormous quantitative growth of South-South cooperation, the quality aspect of the cooperation seems in need of improvement, which in turn addresses the significance of conducting empirical studies upon relevant themes at the micro-organizational level. Consequently, topics from the fields of international human resource management (IHRM), cross-cultural management (CCM), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) of Chinese MNEs have become hotspots of scholarly research within the International Business (IB) discipline. Meanwhile, the impact of Chinese engagement in sub-Saharan Africa has long been a contentious topic in media articles and academic studies (see Hanauer and Morris, 2014). [1]

> "*Chinese engagement in Africa has had some positive effects: job creation, the development of critically needed infrastructure, and an increase in economic growth, particularly in sectors or geographic areas in which international financial institutions and Western governments and companies have been unwilling to engage. Chinese engagement has also had deleterious effects: It has helped nondemocratic regimes cling to power; reinforced many African countries' dependence on raw materials and unskilled labor; contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs in certain industries, such as textiles; and contributed to high levels of debt, economically unviable decisions, and official corruption.*"

Anecdotal media articles upon Sino-African relations and the contents of those reports

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[1] Hanauer, L. and Morris, L.J. (2014). Chinese engagement in Africa: drivers, reactions, and implications for U.S. policy. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014. Available from URL: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR521.html. (Accessed on November 12, 2020.)

convey the impression that China is a "Rogue Donor", and "China Money" brings about massive influences on the Africa continent (Brautigam, 2009). Brautigam (2009) further points out that anecdotal information that is predominant and pejorative is reported because of a Western suspicion of China's motives in Africa. In 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was newly proposed by the Chinese government as a grand design for global development and enhancing infrastructure and economic development by strengthening regional cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. The BRI has been receiving mixed judgments through media reports from multiple angles of International Relations, Economics, and Geopolitics, around the world with its possibility of continually influencing the geopolitical dynamics. Thus far, more than 40 African countries have joined the BRI. At the same time, more and more Chinese firms come to Africa to do business and make investments, which consist of different forms, sizes, and managerial abilities.

It seems that China is receiving even more attention than those former aid-providing countries like the European countries, the U.S., which also remain influential with a tremendous amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) flow to Africa. Figure 1 displays the Chinese FDI flows to Africa from 2010 to 2017, the Chinese FDI stocks in Africa from 2003 to 2018, and the American FDI stocks in Africa from 2000 to 2018. From this figure, we can learn that in many years the American FDI stocks doubled the Chinese FDI stocks in Africa. However, in the year 2014, the American FDI stocks decreased sharply, while the amount of Chinese FDI stocks has been increasing steadily. In 2018, a notable trend is the Chinese FDI stocks surpassing the American FDI stocks in Africa.

Regarding the Afro-Sino nexus (means bonds/ connections/ links), in recent decades, China's impact and its role in the development of African countries have extended, and the numbers of Chinese MNEs that are investing in sub-Saharan Africa are mushrooming (Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2017). As a continent with many emerging and developing countries, Africa has abundant unskilled labor forces. Because of the shortage of highly educated and well-experienced human resources, dispatching expatriates may be a possible solution to Chinese MNEs investing in Africa, but the tough living conditions and diversified indigenous culture make cultural adjustment difficult. Also, Chinese MNEs in Africa are still facing problems in product quality management, managing and motivating local workforces, and the protection of local labor rights, which all have detrimental effects on the improvement of organizational performance and long-term sustainable development. Schlunze *et al.*, (2014) showed that locational preferences for interpersonal relations and trust are most important for the creation of cultural synergy. Synergetic and innovative managerial practices are crucial for managing and motivating employees and stakeholders of transnational firms. To achieve sustainable development, Chinese companies continuously adopt different business and corporate strategies (e.g., management localization, relational approach for social embeddedness) beyond the low-cost advantage through trial and error (Lam, 2017).

The U.S.'s OFDI stocks in Africa from 2000 to 2018 (unit: billion dollars)

China's OFDI flows to Africa from 2010 to 2017 (unit: billion dollars)

China's OFDI stocks in Africa from 2003 to 2018 (unit: billion dollars)

69
60.9
57
55.8
54.8
52
50.4
49.9
43.9
46.10
43.30 43.19
41.1
39.88
36.7
34.69
33.7
32.6
32.35
31.7
29.8
28.2
26.19
25.2
24
22.8
21.1
21.73
20.4
19.8
16.24
16
15.5
13.04
11.9
9.33
7.80
4.46
2.56
1.60
0.90
0.49

2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

Figure 1: The U.S.'s and China's OFDI stocks in Africa (Adopted from *U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis*, URL: https://www.bea.gov/, *Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment 2018*, URL: http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/fec/201901/20190128155348158.pdf, and updated using *Data: Chinese Investment in Africa*, URL: http://www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa accessed on 29/10/2020.)

According to a governmental report[2], due to the Covid-19, the situation in Africa is grim. Coupled with the collapse of international oil prices and the occurrence of locust plagues in East Africa, the African economy and society have been negatively affected. Against this background, the resistance to China-Africa economic and trade cooperation has risen. For example, contracts for infrastructure construction projects have declined to some degree during the first half of this year. But the unity between China and Africa to fight the pandemic and cooperation in the digital economy has become new a highlight. In the first half of 2020, China-Africa trade volume dropped by 19.1% year-on-year. The main trading partners are South Africa, Angola, Nigeria, Egypt, and Ghana. Since June, imports and exports, and trade between China and Africa have increased in varying degrees from the previous month. Chinese OFDI in Africa increased in the first half of the year by 1.7%, which is US$1.72 billion. The new investments have covered 46 countries in Africa, of which 24 countries have achieved more than 10% growth. The top five investment destinations are Zambia, Nigeria, Angola, and Uganda. The value of newly signed contracts for contracted engineering projects was US$29.1 billion, a year-on-year increase of 33.1%. Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire,

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Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia were the top five engineering and construction markets in Africa in the first half of the year, and newly signed contracts in these countries accounted for nearly 60% of the whole amounts. The Chinese government is actively helping and reciprocating African countries, providing multiple batches of anti-virus and medical materials to 53 countries with diplomatic relations and the African Union, and sending medical teams to guide and assist local anti-epidemic works. China has also actively fulfilled the debt relief initiatives proposed by the G20 Summit. Chinese companies in Africa are actively fulfilling their social responsibilities, donating money and medical resources to African countries, and building shelter hospitals for African countries. During the pandemic, Chinese companies shared their experience in using ICT and AI technology to support and develop "Cloud Economics" with African countries. The online cooperation platforms, online product promotion conferences, live-streaming products selling, and other E-business forms of cooperation have flourished, and effectively bridging the Chinese and African firms and stimulating the export of African products to China.

1.2 Chinese MNEs in sub-Saharan Africa and the Belt and Road Initiatives

In 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was newly proposed by the Chinese government as a grand design for global development and enhancing infrastructure and economic development by strengthening regional cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. The BRI has been receiving mixed judgments from the media reports from multiple angles of International Relations, Economics, and Geopolitics, around the world with its possibility of continually influencing the geopolitical dynamics. Thus far, more than 40 African countries have joined the BRI. At the same time, more and more Chinese firms come to Africa to do business and investments, which consist of different forms, sizes, and managerial abilities. To promote the BRI, the Chinese state government held the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). China plans to launch eight major initiatives in collaboration with African countries in the future. The eight initiatives are as follows[3].

- ✧ *Industrial promotion initiative*
- ✧ *Infrastructure connectivity initiative*
- ✧ *Trade facilitation initiative*
- ✧ *Green development initiative*
- ✧ *Capacity building initiative*
- ✧ *Health care initiative*
- ✧ *People-to-people exchange initiative*
- ✧ *Peace and security initiative*

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[3] Available from URL:
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjb_673085/zzjg_673183/fzs_673445/dqzzhzjz_673449/zfhzlt_673563/zfhzltgk_673565/ (Accessed on 10/04/2020.)

The main themes that were shared in the conferences are a vision of pursuing mutual development, win-win cooperation, cultural prosperity, common security, and harmony within the China-Africa community. To study Chinese MNEs' IHRM functions and relative issues, Shen and Edwards (2006) conducted interview surveys with ten Chinese MNEs in 2001 (seven of them are SOEs). From their findings, about twenty years ago, as more newly internationalized than Western or Japanese firms, Chinese MNEs encountered many challenges and difficulties of international competition. For example, the difficulty of hiring and retaining high-caliber human resources in the international arena, the complexity of IHRM, the lack of international experience, etc. At that time, Chinese MNEs themselves had many weaknesses that constrained their international development.

Thus far, most of the International Business (IB) studies have been conducted with Chinese private-owned enterprises (POEs), Chinese provincial SOEs, and Chinese self-employed entrepreneurs doing business in Africa. There are many anecdotal media reports regarding the employee relationships issues of Chinese SOEs in Africa. Still, existing empirical studies about Chinese SOEs' organizational behaviors and cross-cultural management and IHRM practices in sub-Saharan Africa are inadequate.

Previous relevant studies reveal the challenges that Chinese MNEs in Africa have been facing, like language barriers, lacking intercultural talents and training, cultural clashes among workplaces, etc. (Jackson, 2004; Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004; Jackson, 2012; Jackson, Louw, and Zhao, 2013; Xing, *et al.*, 2016; Lam, 2017; Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2017; Jackson and Horwitz, 2018; Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2019). For example, to provide implications for organizations and management in Africa, Prof. Jackson, Prof. Xing, and their research teams discussed the cultural-crossvergence potentiality of Chinese Confucian cultural values and African Ubuntu cultural values, the Western-African-Chinese HRM policy and practice of different 'ideal type' organizations and the linkages between theoretical assumptions such as modernization theory, dependency theory, and postcolonial theory (Jackson, 2012; Jackson, Louw, and Zhao, 2013; Xing *et al.*, 2016). Lam (2017) interviewed managers and employees of Chinese Provincial SOEs and did fieldwork in West African countries in 2009 and 2010. She found that some Chinese POEs and Chinese Provincial SOEs started to take social embeddedness networking strategy and workforce localization strategy at that time, but still cultural conflicts problems happened in the daily workplaces.

Researchers such as Dr. Yanyin Zi (see Zi, 2015; Zi, 2017; Zi and Mogalakwe, 2018) conducted fieldwork studies in Africa and wrote several ethnographic studies regarding employment relationships and cultural clashes among the Chinese shop owners and the local staff members. Her papers convey a message that the Chinese shops are the non-governmental "intercultural contact zones" in the host countries, and thus, to guide and regulate their behaviors is critical in improving the people-to-people communication of the China-Africa nexus.

Beholding a starting point of promoting African development, scholars are solicitous about whether African people can speak out their authentic voices or not, and questioning the appropriateness and effectiveness of the existing knowledge flow (transfer or knowledge sharing through mutual-learning) processes within the foreign organizations in Africa (e.g., Jackson, 2012; Kamoche and Siebers, 2015; Jackson, 2021; Zi and Linke, 2021). Regarding China's engagement

in Africa, the main concerns from previous studies are listed below (see Jackson, 2021; Kamoche and Siebers, 2015; Zi and Linke, 2021):

a. Weakening African indigenous voices. For example, Kamoche and Siebers (2015) wrote that: *"Further research might consider how the failure to give 'voice' to an African labour force and management cadres differs from the existing approaches by Western firms. This will lead to a better understanding of the types of incompatibilities that prevent the development of appropriate business and human resources practices."*

b. Ethnocentricity and ethnocentric management.

c. Cannot efficiently provide more job opportunities to local communities. Glass ceiling exists, and thus, cannot promote local talents to key/managerial job positions.

d. Cannot effectively share/learn knowledge through mutual learning.

e. Cross-cultural communication problems, misunderstandings, and conflicts exist at workplaces with local colleagues.

f. Living separately with isolation, and language barriers lead to having little connections with local communities, and thus, the ideal scenario of possible cultural synergies, which are realized by building trust relationships among Chinese expatriates and African hosts may hard to be actualized.

1.2.1 Chinese provincial state-owned enterprises, private-owned enterprises, and self-employed business entities in Africa

To study the Chinese provincial SOEs' internationalization path in Africa, Lam (2017) traveled to Ghana and Benin for fieldwork. She carried out an ethnographical investigation to provide empirical stories of many Chinese provincial SOEs' relational approaches, globalization patterns, and dynamics to challenge the predominant view of the unequal power relationship between China and Africa. Apparently, regarding the presence of China in Africa, there are two schools of perspectives: pessimistic and optimistic (Lam, 2017, p.1). However, it seems that both of them consider Chinese MNEs' globalization and Chinese investment to be the decisive factors for Africa's future, and the problem is that Africa has long been passively responding to or sometimes even having difficulties in managing those factors (Lam, 2017).

When evaluating the role of China in Africa, this kind of asymmetrical power relationship becomes the fundamental research context. Under this context, Chinese SOEs are presumed by many international scholars to enjoy the political and economic advantages from the Chinese State that is actively supporting them in investing in Africa (Lam, 2017, p.2). This kind of perspective gave rise to the assumption that a powerful and dominating Chinese State is behind the globalization movements of the Chinese SOEs (Lam, 2017). Another widely recognized perspective of Chinese business advantage is the low-cost advantage (Lam, 2017). There are plenty of reports of how Chinese firms win projects through a lower bidding price than Western firms, how they employ large numbers of cheap Chinese workers to produce inexpensive 'made in China' products, and so on. For example, from about a decade ago till now, many ethnographic studies of the China-Africa

relationship about the "China shops phenomenon" have appeared (e.g., Laribee, 2008; Zi, 2015; Zi, 2017; Zi and Mogalakwe, 2018), and their study subjects are the highly visible Chinese private traders in large urban markets in Africa (Lam, 2017).

Zi (2017) did several ethnographic studies in Botswana with Chinese individual operators (the self-employed Chinese shopkeepers) and their shop staff (Botswanians). Her studies disclosed the significance of non-governmental exchanges at a grassroots level of Chinese and African people to improving the sustainability of Chinese-Africa cooperation. During her fieldwork trips to Botswana, she found that the Chinese owners (and their family members live together with them in Botswana) are often from not that wealthy households with low education levels. Many of them do not speak English well, even did not know about Botswana at all before they went there. They often feel being isolated in Botswana. Their presence raises controversial views. The "Fong Kong Goods" they bring to the local markets are sold like hotcakes, which objectively have improved local people's living standards, but simultaneously blackened Chinese merchants' social images and further brought negative influences on Chinese firms' development in Africa nations. Chinese shop owners and local staff do not have mutual respect, mutual understanding, and mutual trust. The owners think that local employees are lazy, tricky, and always stealing things from the shop. Local employees have no ideas why their Chinese bosses often get angry with them, assaulting them, verbally abusing them. Although these Chinese shops provide many job opportunities to local people, they still are not reported positively in the local media press. Zi (2017) wants to convey a message that the Chinese shops are the non-governmental "intercultural contact zones" in the host countries, to effectively guide and regulate their behaviors is critical in improving the people-to-people communication of the China-Africa nexus.

On the other hand, because of the high visibility of the self-employed Chinese merchants and private-owned enterprises (POEs), it is much more accessible for academic research and media press reports. Contrarily, Chinese SOEs are rarely investigated directly by researchers with difficulties in accessing possible cooperative personnel for collecting relevant data and information (Lam, 2017). Lam (2017, p.2) further stated that how "to effectively differentiate the Chinese government from its SOEs remains a key barrier in evaluating China's role in Africa", which indicates the knowledge gap in understanding the Chinese SOEs, that "continues to hinder a more effective collaboration among the international community, African countries, and China on the continent's development." She found that Chinese provincial SOEs proposed the localization strategy, and maintain local social networks as necessary social capital and business resources in host countries. Her study is set forth from an angle of economic geography studies in investigating Chinese provincial SOEs' relational approaches for achieving embeddedness in Ghana and Benin. This thesis is more focused on exploring the IHRM and organizational change issues of Chinese central SOEs' globalization process in sub-Saharan African countries. Lam's interviews with the Chinese expatriates in Ghana and Benin were conducted from 2009 to 2010 when the Chinese State had not proposed the BRI. During that time, the competitions between the Chinese provincial and central SOEs were fierce in Africa. There was a lack of coordination and cooperation among Chinese SOEs. One of the BRI's positive impacts is that it helps the Chinese MNEs (SOEs and

POEs) clarify the development direction, which is to perform each company's advantages and collaborate more with each other in avoiding unnecessary internal frictions and conflicts. For example, Chinese central SOEs can cooperate with African governments to construct and operate industrial parks and free trade zones. In these kinds of areas, other Chinese provincial SOEs and POEs can come for investments, which increases the unity and cooperation among Chinese MNEs.

In Lam's book, she mentioned the strategy/policy of workforce localization and pointed out that it is not "a top-down political initiative of the Chinese Embassy" (Lam, 2017, p.96). Around the year 2011, "the Chinese State and Chinese SOEs finally became more proactive in publicly communicating the Chinese workforce localization efforts in Africa" to counter-argue some anecdotal media reports and "mitigate the controversial Chinese presence in Africa" (Zhao, 2014; Lam, 2017, p.96). After that, it seems to become an official wording of "best practice", and further to be recognized as a socially sound business strategy that has been successfully adopted by some Chinese SOEs' overseas branches (Lam, 2017, p.96). The Chinese State began to encourage this strategy and spur Chinese MNEs to create more job opportunities for African people. But still, at the operational level, the reality is that many labor relations problems need to be solved.

Under the controversial and complicated context of the Sino-Afro nexus, other scholars suggest that as a new geopolitical dynamic, the presence of China in Africa should be incorporated into the way IHRM is studied cross-culturally, but still little previous empirical research has been conducted at the organizational level (Jackson, Louw, and Zhao, 2013, p.2512). Jackson, Louw, and Zhao (2013) consider that the growing South-South dynamics can be integrated into a consideration of power dynamics and cultural crossvergence. They raise the importance of conducting studies about hybrid forms of organizations instead of sustaining cross-cultural scholarship merely on cultural comparisons. Following the same consideration, Xing *et al.* (2016) propose a model showing the dynamic process of Chinese managers' crossvergence in HRM practices, which contributes to understanding the implications to people management in South-South cooperation, and also contributes theoretically to the development of cross-cultural management and IHRM studies as well. Inevitably, under the complicated political, economic, legal, social, and cultural environments, adjustment problems as well as gaining mutual respect and support from the local society have become prerequisites for Chinese MNEs achieving business success in Africa. Hence, enhanced communication and cross-cultural synergy creation process are crucial to the planning and improvement of IHRM and CCM practices of Chinese MNEs.

1.2.2   Problems of labor relations and management, and the business strategies of Chinese provincial SOEs in Africa

1.2.2.1 The critiques and concerns on employment

The Chinese engagements in Africa draw on major concerns and critics on labor relations and management issues. Media reports that Chinese firms often bring numerous Chinese workers and thus contribute little to providing more job opportunities to local people. Rumors that Chinese firms

use Chinese prisoners as workers in Africa are widely spread on the internet as well. Scholars observed that media and politicians also prefer to present Chinese cases to associate China with concepts of Neocolonialism, Neo-imperialism, and "immoral Chinese in Africa" (Sautman and Yan, 2014; Lam, 2017). These anecdotes and rumors have long been careening around the world through claims of politicians, journalists, even at the grassroots levels of developing countries (Lam, 2017). Scholars (e.g., Brautigam, 2009; Yan and Sautman, 2012; Lam, 2017) found that there is no empirical evidence that supports those anecdotal media information pieces (Lam, 2017).

Another commonly seen criticism is that Chinese companies have failed in offering African workers sound employment conditions (Lam, 2017). But if we look into the historical context of African mining and industrial sectors, before the arrival of Chinese firms, job insecurity and casualization had already been a predominant phenomenon of the recent social-economic evolution (privatization) in Africa (Lee, 2009, p.650). Similar to China, in the 1980s, African countries started to privatize public companies (state-owned companies) and limited the size of public services which caused massive layoffs that threatened the permanent employment status of African workers (Lam, 2017). As a result, underemployment has become one of the major hurdles of the African economy.

In the post-colonial period, "Africanization" has become a strong feature of the decolonization process in Africa (Nkomo, 1986). Localization of employment is a similar concept to "Africanization", but not yet systematically developed by MNEs in Africa. Lack of trust in local employees is a problem that MNEs all have to deal with. For example, Decker (2010) revealed that some Western companies recruit local management staff just for decoration ("window dressing") to improve their social image, which reminds Chinese MNEs to practice the localization management strategy sincerely and profoundly in Africa.

1.2.2.2 Problems derived from negative stereotypes

Latour and Shabou (1974, see p.18 and p.22) found that European managers considered their African employees to be lazy, dishonest, and incapable. Similarly, Lee (2014, p.55) also discovered stereotypes among Chinese expatriates and Zambian workers in Chinese mining companies. For example, Chinese managers judged that Zambian staff could not be as good at "eating bitterness" (hard-working) as Chinese workers, and Zambians argued that absenteeism was due to the precarious employment that led them to have second jobs. Stereotypes make people become more prejudiced and thus hinder the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Avoiding these stereotype mindsets is another challenge for Chinese MNEs in Africa.

1.2.2.3 Problems in the daily management of African employees

There exist criticisms about Chinese expatriates live in isolation from the local communities in Africa. But Lam (2017) found that Chinese expatriates of the Chinese provincial SOEs studied could not be completely isolated, as they work with African colleagues daily and develop personal relationships with them as well outside of working hours. Unfamiliarity with each other's cultures

and language barriers generate intercultural communication problems in the workplace, which have made skills training, knowledge transferring, and sharing difficult and may create tension at work between Chinese and local staff (Lam, 2017, p.83). Therefore, intercultural communication, employee motivation, and engagement, training and HR development, strategies for avoiding labor conflicts are common challenges for Chinese companies in Africa. Chinese managers are trying to tackle the daily management problems and learn to avoid being controlled by the local agency powers at the same time (Lam, 2017, p.80). Taking the Chinese construction SOE as an example, it is difficult to recruit skillful and affordable technicians and engineers locally (Lam, 2017). One reason the Chinese managers explained is that local talents who have study experiences in Western countries prefer to choose Western MNEs as their first choices (Lam, 2017, p.78). As both sides recognize that there are significant cultural differences between each other, Chinese MNEs ought to think of better professional or economic incentives to motivate Chinese and African employees to learn and become more familiar with each other's culture (Lam, 2017).

1.2.2.4 Social network embeddedness strategy

From a network perspective, international managers are the important social capital of MNEs. Correspondingly, their cultural values and norms strongly influence social networks (Schlunze, 2012). Czinkota *et al.*, (1999) pointed out that change agents are the fastest and best managers who can adjust to and create new practices and skills. Schlunze (2012) proposed that a good performer of international managers should possess the role of a change agent who helps implement Headquarters' (HQ) strategies and policies and transfers organizational culture to the local employees. Additionally, these change agents can adapt and modify the corporate, market, and living environments continuously by delivering the activities mentioned above. International managers often need to cross boundaries linking host and home cultures, attitudes, and behaviors. Their social capital values lie in specific local and global business communities, although they are capable of practicing global action. Still, to fully exert their expertise, they have to maintain a network with customers, co-workers, and advisors at the local and global levels for consulting (Schlunze, Agola, and Baber, 2012). As the interviewed Chinese provincial SOEs have to adjust to African agency power, expatriate managers need to cultivate and maintain strong relationships with local stakeholders, and thus, strengthen their negotiating power (Lam, 2017).

1.2.2.5 Workforce localization strategy

The Chinese provincial SOEs that were studied by Lam (2017) employed local managers who could act as "ambassadors" or "bridge" to help them build a socially responsible image and achieve employer branding improvement. Some Chinese firms with a long history of investing in Africa adopted the strategy of "locals manage locals", which is believed by Chinese senior managers as a competitive advantage to new investors (Lam, 2017). But at the current stage, localization management has not yet developed into the localization of decision power, which means that there

is still a lack of local senior management members in Chinese companies (Lam, 2017). It takes time and consistent efforts to improve mutual trust among Chinese and local employees.

1.2.3   The instrumental and humanistic views of people management

Jackson (2002a, 2002b, 2010, p.66) proposed his concern that in the contexts of non-Western countries, the universal application of the concept of HRM may not be suitable, and there may be limited implications for the management of people with different cultural values. The utilitarian values of managing people as a resource are derived from an instrumental view of people management in organizations, while there is a humanistic view that emphasizes the "intrinsic values of people in their own right" (Jackson, 2011, p.66). The humanistic view of people management recognizes individuals' internal values, "rather than what they can do for the organization" (Jackson, 2011, p.66).

Jackson (2010, p.67) further elucidate the importance of the instrumentalism-humanism concept:

"The first is that it provides a critique of the concept of human resource management as a set of policies, principles, and practices that can be employed universally, and indeed challenges the ethicality of doing so. It relates HRM to a Western concept of the values of human beings in an organization. Where the ethicality of regarding a person purely as a resource may be problematic. Secondly, in a global context of cultural crossvergence, it does cast doubts on whether it is possible to construe 'value dimensions' as simple opposites, such as femininity-masculinity or individualism-collectivism."

Many non-Western emerging and developing countries have highly collectivist societies, where people are connected with strong ties in cohesive social groups (Jackson, 2011, p.67). Therefore, Jackson (2010, p.67) questioned the appropriateness, desirability, and ethicality of assuming Western participation is better than other management forms in light of a contingent approach on learning cultural differences. Cultural differences challenge international managers' decision-making ability on the determination of whether to "go along with local culture", or "impose principles from their own culture", or "try to meld the two" (Jackson, 2011, p.69).

These sorts of cultural collision problems indicate the importance of thinking about how to successfully generate cultural synergies at intercultural workplaces. According to Adler and Gunderson (2008), synergy is a potential advantage that provides greater openness to new ideas, increasing creativity, flexibility, and problem-solving skills in the organization. Creating synergy in organizations is vital for developing intercultural competencies (Ji, 2013). Schlunze and Ji (2012) found that hybrid managers could create mutual acculturation and cultural synergy, and therefore showed implications about how organizations can achieve success through purposeful cultural-crossvergence learning processes. Earley and Ang (2003) point out that global talents should

possess high Cultural Quotient (CQ), or high cultural intelligence, which is deemed a person's capability to adapt as he or she interacts with others from different cultural regions; a capability that can be developed in the process of interaction. Bird *et al.* (2010) also mention that the importance of intercultural competence is increasing in today's global workplace due to the collaborative and coordinating demands increasingly stretching leaders' capacities to perceive, interpret and act in ways that achieve organizational goals. Thus, to produce cultural synergy, international managers should gain intercultural competencies and improve their global leadership performance. International organizations should provide intercultural training programs according to expatriate employees' learning needs. Therefore, investigating the ways of people management that Chinese MNEs are formalizing in sub-Saharan countries may provide important implications to the advancement of IHRM studies and the development of appropriate and effective IHRM practices.

1.3 The thesis's structure and research purpose

This thesis consists of three sections. Firstly, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 comprise the introduction section introducing the research background, literature review, research framework, research question and focuses, and methodology. Secondly, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 form the analyses, findings, and discussion section. Finally, Chapter 7 is the conclusion section.

This research is conducted aiming to contribute to the discourse and narratives on Chinese engagement in sub-Saharan Africa through the international human resource management (IHRM) discipline through a cross-cultural lens. Hence, the main purpose of this research is to explore the IHRM architecture of Chinese Central SOEs and overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa through a cross-cultural lens that is originally synthesized by the author from the literature review. Additionally, the research utilizes the mixed methods approach with both the quantitative and qualitative research instruments and analyses to investigate multiple subunits embedded in a single case study, which can be seen as the efforts made to capture a holistic picture with detailed, nested, and in-depth information of IHRM architecture and empirical operations in the studied Chinese Central SOE and its overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature review, research framework, and question

2.1 IHRM in Emerging Market MNEs

Glancing around today's global political economy, the global economic power shifting from mature and developed markets to Emerging Markets (EMs) has become the highlight, which signifies the needs for International Business (IB) scholars and key stakeholders (e.g., multinational and local firms, policymakers, institutions such as trade unions) to proactively understand the dynamics of IHRM in EMs context and develop new HR policy and practice for EMs (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). Emerging economies are defined as 'low-income, rapid-growth countries under the circumstance of economic liberalization' (Hoskisson, *et al.*, 2000). MNEs often play a pivotal role in the development of emerging economies. Therefore, they have to possess competitive strategies to deal with the extensive scope and rapidity of complex economic and political change in emerging economies (Meyer, 2004; Hoskisson, *et al.*, 2000). Emerging economies often perhaps have less sophisticated market supporting institutions and fewer locational advantages based on created resources, namely infrastructure and human capital (Hoskisson *et al.*, 2000).

China is representative of large emerging economies. It seems that Western developed countries are losing their economic primacy and are no longer able to affect emerging economies by making unilateral decisions (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). Globalization has sparked HRM research themes regarding the key determinants of IHRM practices and policies in emerging countries, the possible context-specific challenges for HR managers in EMs, the debate of convergence-divergence or crossvergence. As the importance of HRM studies has been gradually recognized, effective IHRM policies and practices now are accepted as valuable contributors for improving organizational performance in overseas contexts. Each emerging market has unique socio-cultural, economic, legal, and political characteristics, which bring about complexity and diversity in developing efficient and pertinent HRM policies and practices. Therefore, to contribute both to theory and practice development, scholars should further examine and conduct empirical studies about the HRM systems within the EMs context and enable readers to better understand the 'context-specific nature' of HRM (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). By providing and conveying the relevant information and knowledge to policymakers and business students, they may improve the awareness of the diverse and unique configurations of national factors (e.g., cultural, institutional, and business environment), that shape and brew HRM in EMs settings.

As the representatives of EMs, the BRICS nations are increasingly reaching trade and tariff agreements and advancing direct investment with each other and other emerging and developing countries (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). For example, China and India have now become major foreign direct (FDI) investors in Africa. Africa once was labeled as the 'hopeless continent' by the Economist magazine, but now it has become one of the attractive destinations for FDI. To the global community, Africa has enormous development potential with large numbers of energetic labor resources, abundant natural and energy resources, and a market with enormous potential. All these factors attract numerous merchants and investors from the outside. No matter where they are from,

there are always people who are doing lawful business, and there are also speculators who transgress local laws, violate labor rights, or aggravate social problems, for example through bribery and corruption. It is acknowledged that the whole world is facing the same topic, which is how to protect our living environment and achieve ecological, peaceful, and sustainable development [4]. This should be kept in mind by those investors and practitioners doing business in Africa. Apart from complying with local laws and regulations, they ought to set up proper codes and high standards of morality and ethics in fulfilling their social responsibilities.

Therefore, choosing EMs as a research subject is highly relevant for the contemporary theoretical context for IB studies, which "is making waves into the emerging economies and extends the cross-cultural lens beyond the dominant and oversaturated West/East epistemology" (Abugre and Debrah, 2019, p.86). To provide implications for organizations and management in Africa, scholars discussed the cultural crossvergence of Western-African-Chinese HRM policy and practice of different 'ideal type' organizations and the linkages between theoretical assumptions such as modernization theory, dependency theory, and postcolonial theory (Jackson, 2012; Jackson, Louw, and Zhao, 2013; Xing *et al.*, 2016). They remind us that there is still a shortage of empirical relevant studies and research for capturing the realities.

2.1.1 The institutional theory, the systemic perspective on strategy, the cross-cultural lens, and the Afro-Sino nexus

Scott (1995) found that regulative, normative, and cognitive social systems are central institutional elements/pillars for context analysis (see Figure 2). The institutional theory can facilitate investigating how HR decision-makers initiate and sustain institutional changes to the organizational field and environment (Miles, 2012). Academic literature about HRM has mainly focused on one domestic location without looking at cross-boundary complexities (Morris and Snell, 2009). Many works of literature have assumed that there is a specific model of HRM, which is the universal, high commitment-high performance, or the "best practice" model (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012). However, if we view the alignment of HRM with strategy from the systemic perspective (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, also see Granovetter, 1985) it is not hard to find that the architecture and operation of people management various between organizations, as it is affected by external and internal factors (e.g., social, cultural, legislative, economic, and political factors). Granovetter (1985) suggests that strategy is formed through the process of embedding to a specific social system and his notion of "social embeddedness" captures the sense of systemic perspective on strategy.

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[4] Available from URL: https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/reports/africa-sustainable-development-report.html (Accessed on 03/12/2020).
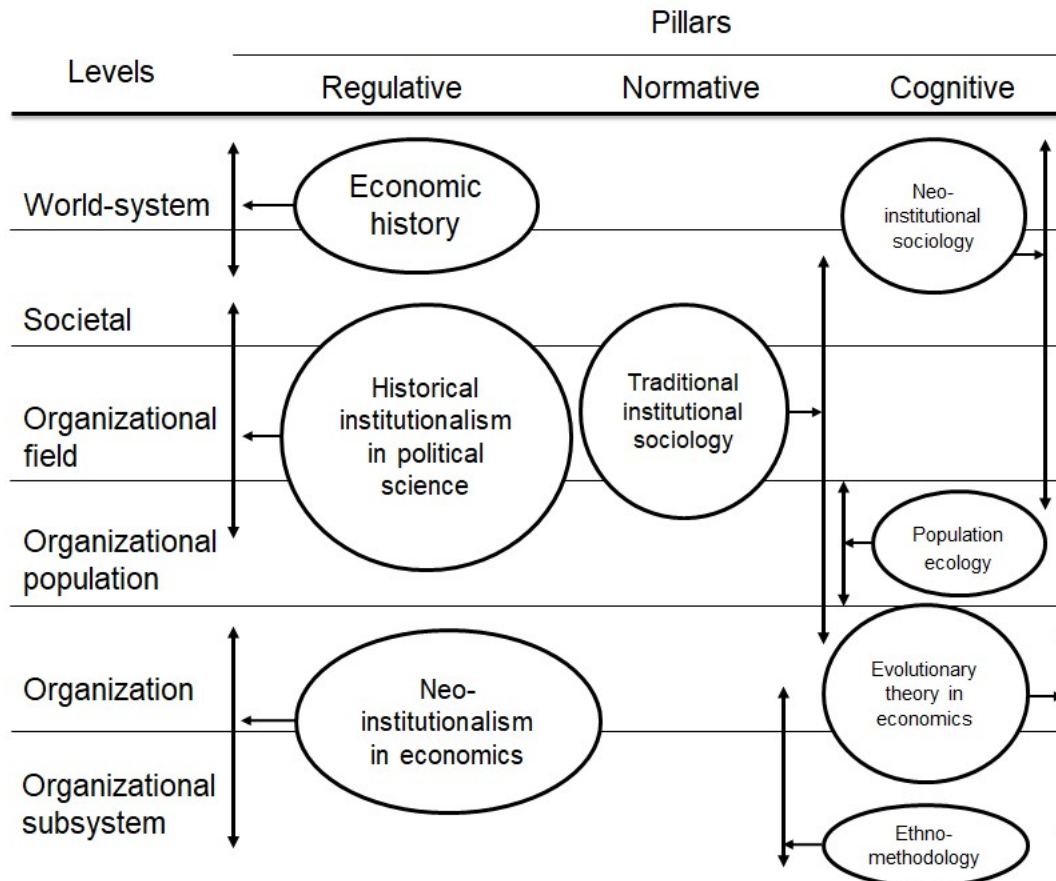
Figure 2: Institutional pillars and varying levels: illustrative schools (Adapted from Scott, 1995, p.59)

Marchington and Wilkinson (2012, p.16) further explain that business strategy reflects the internal dynamics by referencing Sission (2010), "between the existing structures of finance and corporate governance and the institutions, processes, and rules of employment relations, both of which are deeply embedded institutions." The systemic perspective requires us to not only look at the level of the employing organization but also examine the institutional factors. Besides, one should be aware that employers may not be able to determine their strategies freely in some situations. Critical social norms and cultural traditions should not be ignored and certain HR practices may work in one country but apparently cannot be parachuted unchanged into other countries (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012), which arise the importance of studying IHRM of Chinese SOEs through a cross-cultural lens.

Elucidating through the cross-cultural lens, emerging market multinational enterprises (EMMNEs) are facing great challenges in creating and implementing appropriate IHRM systems that enable them to compete globally (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Aycan, 2005). It is difficult to find a balance between global and local, standardization, and localization (Aycan, 2005). As a sub-discipline of international management studies, cross-cultural management research provides us a cross-cultural lens to focus on how and to what extent cultural, institutional, and structural factors shape IHRM practices. Furthermore, the debate of the culture convergence vs. divergence or crossvergence in IHRM studies can also facilitate scholars and practitioners exploring the interplay

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between cultural and institutional/structural factors in the home or host countries on IHRM architecture.

Hence, this thesis explores the IHRM architecture within the Afro-Sino nexus through a cross-cultural lens. The following parts of this section introduce the political, economic, and social-cultural contexts of China and Africa, also explain the characteristics of the so-called "hybrid models" of Chinese and African people management underpinned by the contingency perspective and cultural-crossvergence theory. At the end of this section, the research framework and research questions are explained.

2.1.2 Political and economic contexts

In the post-colonial time, after the movements of national independence and the liberation of the people, philosophies like 'Africa Renaissance' and 'Pan-Africanism' were born (Jackson, 2012). There have been growing interests in researching and learning about indigenous and diversified African histories and cultures. According to data provided by the World Bank, in the year 2019, the population of the sub-Saharan Africa region was about 1.107 billion people, with a GDP of 1.755 trillion U.S. dollars, and from 2002 to 2019, the school enrollment (primary) ratio, the life expectancy at birth, and the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased substantially[5]. It is no longer the 'hopeless continent, but a brisk and energetic continent. Although sub-Saharan Africa is still at the low middle-income threshold (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016), there is great potential for development.

Whilst taking a look at China, the perspectives might be contradictory, as China is now the second-largest economy in the world, but it is still considered as the largest 'emerging market' (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). Although China is increasingly perceived as a developed country or even a 'superpower' by some media presses, it is also a fact that China embraces one-fifth of the world's population. Therefore, the issues of the stage of development cannot be discussed accurately without GNI per capita and other socio-economic indicators. The reason why the BRICs are still considered as EMs is that they have large populations with lower average incomes and are deficient in large-scale human development, poverty, and inequality reduction (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2016). EMs are transitional societies with complex and diverse economic models, mixed cultures, and ethnicities that bring about even harder challenges of infrastructure and human development than mature and refined markets (Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). Hence, when establishing the South-South cooperation relations, the EMMNEs are facing steeper hillsides when trying to tackle these issues to survive and achieve long-term sustainability.

Cooke, Wang, and Wang (2018) pointed out that it is because of the socialist market economy (SME) system, which is preferred by the Chinese government, there is a distinctive feature to China's involvement in the economic development of African countries in recent years. That is the Chinese government providing financial support and guiding or participating in infrastructure

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[5] Available from URL: https://data.worldbank.org/region/sub-saharan-africa (Accessed on 08/15/2020).

construction projects through its major state-owned enterprises. Regarding the SME system and China's involvement in Africa, the comments and perspectives among international media and scholars have always been contentious. Some scholars have argued that the contemporary Chinese economy can be described as 'Chinese capitalism' (e.g. Gabriel, 2006; Guthrie, 1999; Huang, 2008; Kennedy, 2011; Redding and Witt, 2007) or 'authoritarian capitalism' (Witt and Redding, 2014). Nevertheless, the Chinese economy comprises features of continuing state intervention as well as features of a liberalized market economy (Cooke, Wang, and Wang, 2018), which is deemed in line with national circumstances and the state's interests.

Qi and Kotz (2020, p.97) dissected the positive role of Chinese SOEs in developing the Chinese economy:

> • *Economic stabilizer, which offsets the adverse effect of economic downturns*
> • *Promoter and investor in technical progress*
> • *Practitioner of the High-Road approach* (see Gill and Meyer, 2008)

They found that among the reasons for the contradictory perspectives regarding the impact of Chinese SOEs on economic development, one is that the positive effects might not appear immediately, another reason might be the ideological bias of believing that SOEs are "definitely" harmful to economic development (Qi and Kotz, 2020).

The Chinese State officially termed the current economic development stage as the "new normal" stage, with features of slowing down, a higher debt/income ratio, observing industrial overcapacity, a housing bubble, and rising wages (Qi and Kotz, 2020). Qi and Kotz (2020) further suggested that privatization might not be a suitable solution and it would even be harmful to China's economic development in the long run, as privatization might destroy the role of Chinese SOEs of being the central pillar for China with the background of the "new normal" economic development stage. Therefore, without damaging the critical status of Chinese SOEs as the backbone of the national economy, Chinese scholars should study what kinds of internal reforms of Chinese SOEs for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of governance and management are happening in the domestic and global markets.

2.1.3 Social-cultural contexts

"The 'thickness' and embeddedness of certain culture context constructs such as African 'Ubuntu' and Chinese Confucianism combined with locally legitimate nuanced approaches to doing business such as 'Blat' in Russia, 'Guanxi' in China and 'Jeitinho' in Brazil can shape certain elements of both the adoption and adaption of HRM practices along with legitimate managerial practices, postures and negotiating styles" (Horwitz, Budhwar, and Morley, 2016, pp. 471-472). In the nations with the cultural features of social cohesion and group harmony (collectivism), negotiations appear less adversarial and more strongly collaborative than the traditional win-lose adversarial and short-term contractually oriented negotiations in Western Anglo-Saxon culture

(Horwitz, Budhwar, and Morley, 2016, p.472). Emerging countries often have relationship-rich cultures. International managers of MNEs should notice the differences to avoid bedeviling "effective cross-cultural diversity, negotiation and relationships building vital for effective development and implementation of contextually relevant HRM policies and practices" (Horwitz, Budhwar, and Morley, 2016, p.472). Thus, improving cultural intelligence (CQ) and intercultural competence are found to have a positive connection with relationship building and the development of trust (Earley and Ang, 2003; Morley and Cerdin, 2010; Gammelgaard, Kumar, and Worm, 2013). Consequently, it is necessary to study the cultural impacts, institutional idiosyncrasies, and the preferred approaches chosen by different stakeholders emanating from what is considered to be acceptable and legitimate practice (Horwitz, Budhwar, and Morley, 2016).

Note: Arrow thickness represents hypothesized relative power relationship
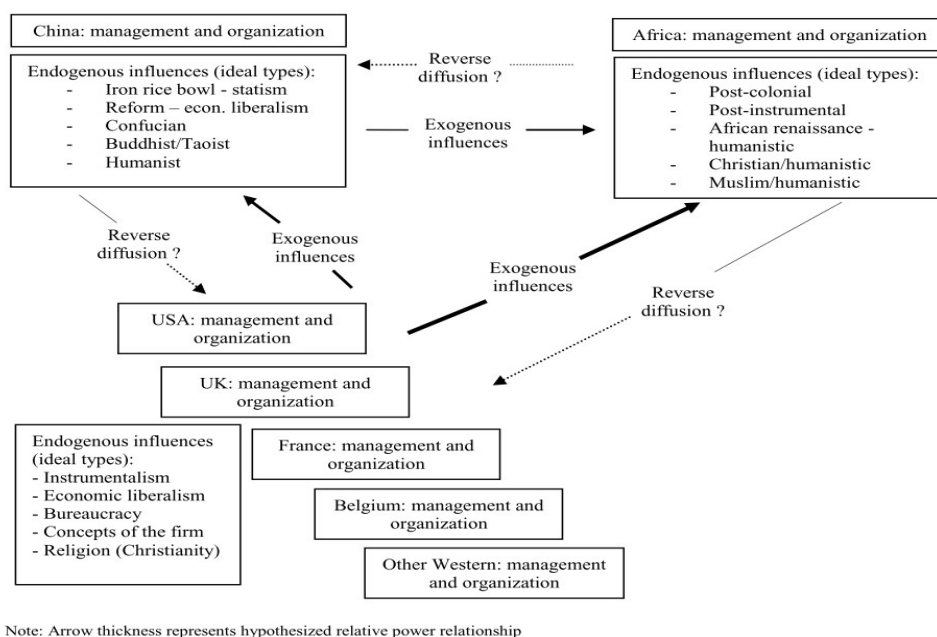
Figure 3: The exogenous influences and reverse diffusion of cultural values among Chinese-African-Western management models and organizations (Adapted from Jackson, 2012, p.17).

Regarding the Afro-Sino nexus, in recent decades, China's impact and its role in the development of African countries have extended, and the numbers of Chinese MNEs that are investing in sub-Saharan Africa are mushrooming (Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2017). Jackson (2012), and Jackson and Horwitz (2018) stressed the importance of researching and conceptualizing China's presence in Africa as it appears to be part of a new geopolitical dynamic that may be affecting the way management and organizational knowledge from the South flow (see Figure 3).

They identify similarities and differences in cultural concepts such as African Ubuntu and Chinese Confucianism (see Table 1) in the context of these North-South interrelations. These include the adoption or adaptation and inward infusion of Western HRM practices such as performance management, reward, and career management in EMs. They pose several vital questions such as what impact Chinese organizations are having in Africa; how management decisions and actions are contributing to employment opportunities, employability, skills, and

knowledge development, and what partnerships or joint ventures between Chinese and African organizations are contributing to mutual learning (knowledge sharing). Similarly, Mayer, Louw, and Boness (2019) addressed the importance of managing differences to solve intercultural conflicts and concentrating on similarities to create cross-cultural synergies during the communication and interaction among people from different cultural and ethnic groups. They studied Chinese POEs in sub-Saharan Africa and suggested that international organizations should keep cultural knowledge-sharing in mind to achieve a sustainable long-term intercultural collaboration (Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2017; Mayer, Louw, and Boness, 2019) and that these phenomena lead to new intercultural experiences and perceptions among Chinese and African employees of these Chinese MNEs.

Table 1: The principles of Chinese Guanxi culture and sub-Saharan African Ubuntu culture (Adapted from Karsten and Illa, 2005; Xing *et al.*, 2016.)

Ubuntu	Confucianism Guanxi
Unconditional dedication	Sincerity and earnestness
Solidarity	Loyalism
Tolerance and inclusiveness	Saving each other's face
Dignity	Benevolence and kindness ("仁", Ren)
Stewardship	Etiquette of Li ("礼", courtesy)
Compassion and sympathy	Trust ("信", Xin)
Hospitality and legitimacy	Reciprocal obligation and mutual benefit
Familial atmosphere	Family kinship
	Harmony

It is suggested that there are similarities between the Chinese Confucianism Guanxi and the African Ubuntu social network (Jackson, Louw, and Zhao, 2013; Xing *et al.*, 2016). The Ubuntu philosophy of Africa can also be an important 'management concept' (Karsten, and Illa, 2005), 'because it correctly understands that we are truly human only in community with other persons' (Lutz, 2009, p.314). Lutz (2009) also proposes that 'since all human persons share a common human nature, and since cultures that have stood the test of time tends to live a more genuinely human way of life than modern cultures', there is a substantial agreement between African tradition and Asian Confucian tradition. 'Guanxi', which is an important heritage of Chinese Confucian culture, also emphasizes the sincerity, loyalty, and obligation of cardinal relationships and represents direct particularistic ties between two or more persons (Chen, and Chen, 2004). The cultural proximities may have great impacts on the cultural crossvergence in Chinese managers' managerial practices on managing African employees and adjusting to the African business environment (Xing *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.4 The convergence-divergence-crossvergence debate in IHRM studies within the Afro-Sino nexus

2.1.4.1 Exploring Chinese MNEs' strategic IHRM in Africa with the contingency perspective

Examining Chinese MNEs' IHRM in Africa through a cross-cultural lens requires researchers to adopt a pluralistic perspective, which is the contingency approach (Farndale and Sanders, 2017). Adler and Gunderson (2008, p.62) question in their book whether organizations around the world are becoming more similar or maintaining distinctive cultural characteristics. The debate between convergence versus divergence or crossvergence has puzzled global scholars and practitioners for a long time. Observing the current circumstances, we are probably witnessing more similar organizational structures and technologies on the macro level, but more different behaviors of people within organizations across national boundaries on the micro level. For instance, many researchers found that the changing Chinese SOEs' HRM system within China might be a hybrid model with both Western and Chinese features (Xiao and Cooke, 2020).

Adler and Gunderson (2008, p.62) also imply that "the importance of organizational culture will not erase or diminish national culture." In Africa, there are Chinese expatriate managers and employees, local managers, and employees within the Chinese SOEs, who bring their cultural background and ethnicity to the workplace. As a result, organizational culture may contain host and home countries' cultural differences, as "employees maintain or enhance their culturally specific ways of working" in MNEs or global organizations (Adler and Gunderson, 2008, p.63). What are the implications of Chinese SOEs investing in Africa? What features does the African management model have and how does it influence the architecture of the IHRM system in those subsidiaries of Chinese SOEs in sub-Saharan Africa? Those are the questions we need to investigate from conducting empirical studies.

Horwitz, Kamoche, and Chew (2002) highlight that, it is necessary to consider the influences of the crossvergence theory and its features in developing particular IHRM practices. The convergence theory states that the changing technologies influence people's values systems by shaping the economic, political structures, and educational demands through the industrialization of societies (Webber, 1969; Ralston *et al.*, 1993). The divergence theory implies that sociocultural factors influence individuals to adopt a specific values system according to different external drivers (Webber, 1969; Ralston *et al.*, 1993). At first, scholars debated convergence and divergence theories (Adler *et al.*, 1986; Dowling, 1999; McGaughey and DeCieri, 1999). After that, Ralston *et al.* (1993) innovatively proposed the concept of crossvergence, as they noticed that the existing theories could not provide appropriate explanations to the situations they were exploring. The crossvergence theory points out that the dynamic interaction and integration of sociocultural influences and business ideological influences drive people to develop new value systems (Ralston *et al.*, 1993). Sisson (2001) pointed out that the debate of convergence/divergence is not a simple two-alternative-choice task. Cultural-crossvergence or HRM hybridization in MNEs requires IHRM managers and practitioners to think of practices and policies by balancing the global and local

contextual influences through an admixture of various cultural factors, and eventually may direct them to the adoption of hybrid HRM models (Edwards and Kuruvilla, 2005; Jackson, 2004).

2.1.4.2 The African management characteristics and HRM hybridization

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world with plentiful natural and mineral resources, which is also featured by the diversity that spans geographical, cultural, historical, economic, and social-political contexts (Florence *et al.*, 2016). Within sub-Saharan Africa, although there are differences in cultures among countries from the east, west, south, and central Africa, the concept of Ubuntu (humanness or humanity), which is pronounced slightly different over a wide geographical and social region in the east, central and southern Africa (e.g., Tanzania's "Banto"; Zulu tribes' 'Abantu'; central Africa's 'Ngumtu', 'Kubuntu', 'Edubuntu'; East African Swahili people's 'Watu') can be used in connection with HRM (Florence *et al.*, 2016). Ubuntu can be translated as 'I am who I am through others', which stands for the togetherness or people as being together (Mbigi and Maree, 1995; Mangaliso, 2001; Horwitz *et al.*, 2002; Jackson, 2002; Karsten and Illa, 2005; Lutz, 2009; Bell and Metz, 2011; Li, 2014). It means that a person's identity is derived from the community's collective social influences (Florence *et al.*, 2016).

It is a cultural orientation to humanism, collective solidarity, and relationship building (Horwitz *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, African culture appears strongly related to work relationships. Florence *et al.* (2016, p.418) referencing Anakwe (2002) found some basic principles underlying the African organizational system or HRM system. They are listed as follows.

- *Work as organizing based on unitary ideology as pluralistic objectives among members of the workgroup in organizations do not exist. Although teamwork is emphasized, competition among members.*
- *Categorization of the work structure into hierarchies is non-existent and there is no formalized system of worker-employer relationship.*
- *Status differences are recognized between the head of the group and the members and that the head is regarded as the father of remuneration, even though the working relationship is not contractual (paternalism leadership).*
- *Authority is based largely on experience and wisdom, which are inferred from age, resulting in age is the determining factor in the choice of the person for leadership positions.*

Florence *et al.*, (2016, p.418) comment that these principles are common among many African societies, "such as the Bemba of Zambia, Tallensi of Ghana, Lugbara of Uganda, Kikuyu and Nandi of Kenya, and some indigenous societies in Nigeria among others are underpinned by the beliefs, values, and attitudes of the people". They found that these principles also reflect Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions of the African value system, which is characterized by "collectivism, loyal commitment and strong relationship orientation as opposed to a strong emphasis on individualism,

control and achievement orientation in some Western societies" (Florence *et al.*, 2016, p. 418). For example, Jackson (2004, p.167) suggests that because African employees appear to be team workers, reward and compensation may be better reflecting the group orientation, which means to avoid rewarding communally oriented staff on an individual basis that will separate them into classes by money and grading system. Scholars also find that traditional African culture has features of the belief in the extended family system and kinship (Debrah, 2000; Anku, 2009). But in contemporary times, there are also new changes occurring. For example, Mpabanga (2004, p.25) found that "the HRM practices in organizations in Nigeria were a blend of Western or foreign practices and local practices reflecting the significance of local context, which support a 'crossvergence perspective'. Kamoche *et al.* (2004) found that in urban Kenya, employees of formal organizations had a preference for individualistic management practices. Therefore, contemporary Africa management is probably to some extent a hybrid model with Western features and traditional African characteristics following the cultural crossvergence theory.

2.1.4.3 The hybrid model and the HRM studies about Chinese SOEs

Regarding the HRM research on Chinese SOEs, Xiao and Cooke (2020) conducted a systematic review of 178 articles published in 43 English academic journals from 1993 to 2017. They discovered that Chinese SOEs had developed a hybrid model, which integrates market-driven elements of the Western HRM practices with the socialist-oriented labor management system (Warner, 2014; Xiao and Cooke, 2020). During the last three decades, along with the different reformation and transformation periods of Chinese SOEs, HRM studies also have changed their research preferences and interests (e.g., theoretical paradigms, methodological choices, and analyzing levels) on HRM issues (Xiao and Cooke, 2020). It is because Chinese SOEs are part of the state institutions and a notable stakeholder in the economy, therefore more likely to be affected by changes in economic and political policies than POEs (Xiao and Cooke, 2020). The people management system in Chinese SOEs is shaped by a series of marketization reforms of the Chinese State. Researchers wrote about the signs of a more strategic approach to HRM in Chinese SOEs (Xiao and Cooke, 2020). Exploring the HRM practices and policies in Chinese SOEs may provide the potential to build a new HRM theoretical framework (Xiao and Cooke, 2020).

From 1949 to 1978 (see Figure 4), which was the period of the state-planned economy, Chinese SOEs had the so-called "iron rice bowl" system. This complete socialist personnel management system contained the features of "lifetime employment, egalitarian compensation, centrally planned job allocation, and management promotion, high job security and cradle-to-grave welfare and benefits" (Warner, 1993; Zhu and Dowling, 2000; Xiao and Cooke, 2020, p.53). After 1978, with the promulgation of the open-door policy, the reformation of SOEs has begun. As a result of the institutional transformation, the majority of Chinese SOEs abolished the former 'iron rice bowl' system and adopted the market-oriented HRM system (Xiao and Cooke, 2020). Practices of contract employment, performance-based compensation, and market-oriented recruitment, training, and HR development became widely used in Chinese SOEs. However, Chen, Su, and Zeng

(2016) observed that the current HRM system within Chinese SOEs still keeps some traditional socialist characteristics: social benefits and welfares provided by some SOEs are larger than non-SOEs (Zheng, Morrison, and O'Neill, 2006), the appointment of senior executives are still influenced considerably by the administrative power of Chinese governmental officials (Hassard *et al.*, 2006). In conclusion, the hybrid HRM system with mixed features of Chinese SOEs that are different from the non-SOEs and non-Chinese contexts partially proves the cultural crossvergence theory.

1949 to 1978	• **The "iron rice bowl" system** • **Egalitarianism**
After 1978	• **The open door policy led to inner-reformation** • **Established the market-oriented HRM system**
Currently	• Some of the traditional socialist characteristics changed little • **Social benefits and welfares** provided by some SOEs are larger than non-SOEs (Zheng, Morrison, and O'Neill, 2006) • The **appointment of senior executives** are still influenced considerably by the administrative power of Chinese governmental officials (Hassard et al., 2006)
The "New Normal" stage	• **Belt and Road Initiatives (2013), overseas investments increased** • **Economic development slow down** • **The organizational transformation of becoming more sustainable becomes the Chinese SOEs' new development goal.**

Figure 4: The historical development stages and the different features of Chinese SOEs

Xiao and Cooke (2020) further revealed that after the mid-2000s, cross-sectional studies among HRM and other fields (e.g., strategy, economics, organizational psychology, organization behavioral studies, and sociology) increased extensively. These kinds of cross-sectional studies help HRM scholars to combine theories from other disciplines with HRM studies and create an interdisciplinary picture of what constitutes the real HRM practices that are practiced inside organizations (Zhu *et al.*, 2008；Xiao and Cooke, 2020). The HRM studies about Chinese SOEs (see Figure 5) reflect this phenomenon by discussing the institutional theory, strategic HRM, organizational behavior (OB) theories, social relationship theories, and cultural theories as the theoretical underpins (Xiao and Cooke, 2020).
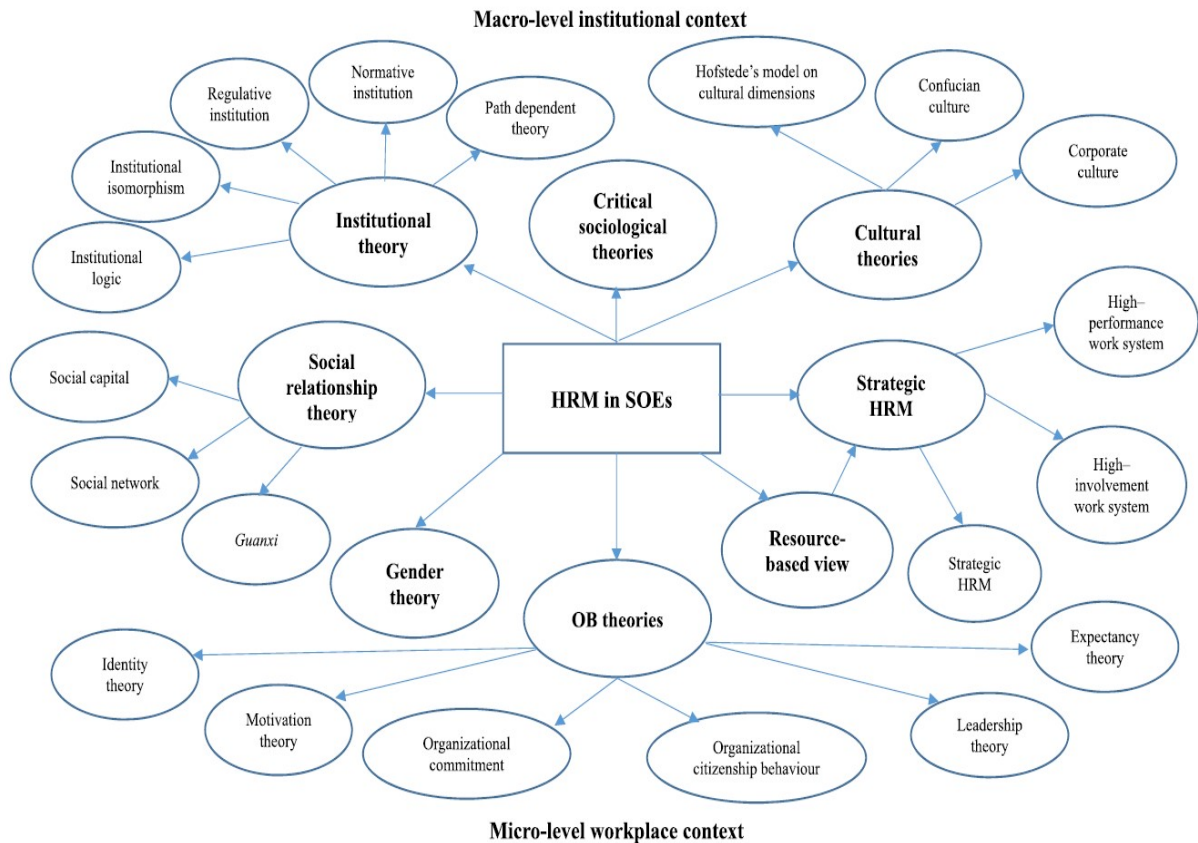
Figure 5: Theoretical paradigms of HRM research on Chinese SOEs (Adapted from Xiao and Cooke, 2020, p. 55)

To respond to the consistent call for a contextual focus in HRM studies, from around the year 2010, studies emphasis on the analysis of traditional Chinese values (e.g., respect for hierarchy, collectivism, harmony) and Guanxi (social network) theories are growing steadily (Cooke, 2018; Xiao and Cooke, 2020). Many scholars try to construct a conceptual HRM model with Chinese characteristics with 'inside out' approaches, which means establish frameworks with Chinese traditional cultural elements to inspire Western HRM systems (Xiao and Cooke, 2020). There have been researchers studying about paternalistic HRM model to fit with values of harmony and loyalty, and others theorizing Guanxi patterns to analyze sentimental ties in the SOE workplace (e.g., Vickers and Fox, 2010; Zhu, Zhang, and Shen, 2012; Chen, Cheng, and Huang, 2013; Luo, Cheng, and Zhang, 2016; Gu and Nolan, 2017; Xiao and Cooke, 2020).

Although the traditional culture and institutional factors in China may complicate the context, learning and researching about HRM in Chinese MNEs with a cross-cultural lens will bring about new insights into the debate in IHRM regarding the globalization patterns of standardization/localization/integration, and convergence vs. divergence/ crossvergence (Cooke *et al.*, 2019). Relevant research findings will further inform policy and management decisions (Cooke *et al.*, 2019) in the process of organizational transformation of Chinese SOEs to achieve sustainable development. For example, what values and ethos should be emphasized in establishing organizational culture? How to architect a more flexible and innovative management system? How

to conduct employee engagement and improve employee commitment? How to design and operate the strategic alignment and integration of HRM functions with organizational development strategies? How to be more socially responsible for external and internal stakeholders? All of these are important questions that need to be investigated.

2.2 Expatriate manager's social networking practices, locational preferences, cultural intelligence, and intercultural competence

HRM is now a truly international subject of global importance and is shaped and influenced by cultural and institutional variations in context across the globe (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012). MNEs often encounter cultural differences and CCM problems. As a result, strategically designing IHRM practices becomes important. The resource of humans is one of the most valuable resources to MNEs and has come to be seen as a core competitive advantage. But in IB studies, there is an inherent problem that most theories are from and for advanced economies. Research topics of IHRM and CCM are often treated as side stories in the IB research field (Engelen and Brettel, 2011). Still, less is known about emerging and developing economies. However, since MNEs are investing increasingly in emerging and developing economies, relative knowledge has become more valuable for international marketers and corporate planners.

International managers are one of the main propellers of the cultural crossvergence process of people management. How to successfully generate cultural synergy is a significant concern. According to Adler, and Gunderson (2008), synergy is a potential advantage that provides greater openness to new ideas, increasing creativity, flexibility, and problem-solving skills in the organization. Creating synergy in organizations is vital for developing intercultural competencies (Ji, 2013). Schlunze and Ji (2012) found that hybrid managers could create mutual acculturation and cultural synergy, and therefore showed implications on how organizations can achieve success through purposeful cultural crossvergence learning processes.

Earley and Ang (2003) point out that global talents should possess high Cultural Quotient (CQ), or high cultural intelligence, which is deemed as a person's capability to adapt as he or she interacts with others from different cultural regions and not necessarily given but can also be developed in the process. Bird *et al.* (2010) also mention that the importance of intercultural competence is increasing in today's global workplace due to the collaborative and coordinating demands increasingly stretching leaders' capacities to perceive, interpret and act in ways that achieve organizational goals. Thus, to produce cultural synergy, international managers should gain intercultural competencies and improve their global leadership performance.

Osland (2008) defines a definition of global leadership as "the process of influencing the thinking, attitudes, and behaviors of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goal." Expatriate adjustment competency is critical to global leadership. It refers to the ability to adjust to the work, social and general cultural dimensions of a new culture and has influences on subsequent productivity in an overseas assignment (Kraimer *et al.*, 2001; Harrison and Shaffer, 2005, Bird *et al.*, 2010). Successful expatriate adjustment predicts

task completion and relationship building effectiveness during the overseas assignment (Bird *et al.*, 2010, p.813). Relationship management addresses people's orientation toward the importance of relationships in general. From a networking perspective, relationships provide a source of information to help people understand other cultures as well as serve as a source of social support (Bird *et al.*, 2010, p.817). Similarly, Morris, Snell, and Wright (2006) view MNEs' international assignments as a way of developing social capital, for the reason that the fostered interpersonal linkages can be used for informal control and communication purposes. Scholars note that the development of positive relationships is a vital aspect of effective intercultural job performance (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005; Mol *et al.*, 2005; Bird *et al.*, 2010). Mol *et al.* (2005) conducted a meta-analytical review of the expatriate performance literature and found that interpersonal interest is a solid predictor of expatriate job performance. Also, within this domain, interpersonal engagement, which refers to the degree of measuring people's desire and willingness to initiate and maintain relationships with people from other cultures, and emotional sensitivity are considered important dimensions (Bird *et al.*, 2010). Dowling, Festing, and Engle (2008, p.73; p.64) conclude that the roles of expatriates are complex and have essences of competence and knowledge transfer. They can be an agent for direct control, a socialization agent, a network builder, a boundary spanner, and a language node (Au and Fukuda, 2002; Birkinshaw and Hood, 2001; Fenwick, DeCieri, and Welch, 1999; Goodall and Roberts, 2003; Harzing, 2001; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch, 1996; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch and Welch, 1999; Morris, Snell and Wright, 2006; Schweiger, Atamer and Calori, 2003; Welch, Fenwick, and DeCieri, 1994). From those roles, network builders and boundary spanners are interrelated closely with one another. Harzing (2001) describes expatriates with the role of network builders as 'spiders'. Schweiger, Atamer, and Calori (2003) find out that international assignments can assist one's network development. International managers tend to nurture and protect their unique networks, and they are very selective about how to use the connections (Dowling, Festing, and Engle, 2008, p.63). Managers use their networks for building ties of interpersonal obligations with people that directly affect their performance (Gargiulo, 1993).

2.2.1 Guanxi, the resource-based view, and the social capital theory

According to Purcell *et al.* (2009), RBV is useful for assessing the strategic resources available to a firm from an economic perspective. Guanxi is seen as a critical social capital from the perspective of RBV. RBV prescribes that firms need to combine heterogeneous and imperfectly mobile resources to succeed, which offer sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, 1991). Ferner *et al.* (2011) find that Chinese people are well known for valuing the development of informal social networks for personal and business gains. This is in line with the argument that social capital can lead to the improvement of organizational performance and corporations should pay attention to developing, maintaining, and exploiting such relationships. Cooke (2012) finds that many studies highlight the crucial role of social capital in the successful implementation of MNEs' business strategy. Adler and Kwon (2002, p.23) define social capital as 'the goodwill available to individuals

or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor.' And they further differentiate social capital into 'bonding (internal) social capital' and 'bridging (external) social capital'. According to Cooke (2012), internal social capital helps members within an organization work together in achieving shared goals, whereas external social capital ties actors together in social networks outside the organization, which all enable organizations to yield value from these inside and outside networks. Kostova and Roth (2003, p.301) state that 'social capital creates a psychology environment conducive to collaboration and mutual support and is likely to lead to positive and cooperative behaviors.' Studies indicate that personal social ties are crucial in helping corporates develop internationally (Anderson, 1993; Ellis, 2000; Mäkelä, Björkman, and Ehrnrooth, 2009).

Expatriate managers' social ties, contacts, and networks are considered to have beneficial effects on corporations' strategic choices and organizational performance in a transition economy and these kinds of relationships link performance, the micro-level construct, and the macro-level phenomenon together (Peng and Luo, 2000). It is defined as "executives' boundary spanning activities and their associated interactions with external entities" (Burt, 1997; Geletkanycz and Hambrick, 1997, p.654). Most scholars tend to agree with the perception that the social capital embodied in managerial ties and networks, for instance, Guanxi networking, matters for Chinese MNEs in achieving business success when operating international subsidiaries (Granovetter, 1985).

Relevant studies suggest that 'Guanxi' has positive impacts on organizational performance by lowering transactional costs and gaining competency through privileged access to rare resources such as connections with governments (Standdifird and Marshall, 2000; Park and Luo, 2001). In the study of Gu, Hung, and Tse (2008), which is based on social capital theory (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), Guanxi is perceived to have beneficial effects on improving market access, but managers should capitalize on the growth of Guanxi networks from the personal to the corporate level. Besides, managers need to be aware of the dark sides of Guanxi, which are reciprocal obligations and collective blindness that may cause moral and ethical problems or even law-breaking issues. Still many studies indicate that social network is necessary for emerging and developing countries where legal institutions tend to be weak in power and local government officials hold strong power and will remain a key factor for long-term business success (Luo, 2001; Park and Luo, 2001; Warren, Dunfee, and Li, 2004).

2.2.1.1 Guanxi, expatriate manager's boundary spanning role in trust-building

The importance of collaboration, communication, and trust-building has increased rapidly. As a result, the role of boundary spanners also becomes critical, for they are particularly significant 'for holding together today's geographically dispersed, internally differentiated, and culturally diverse organizations' (Yagi and Kleinberg, 2011, p.630). The role of boundary spanners is considered to be multidimensional (Yagi, and Kleinberg, 2011). In their study, they concluded common functions: "information processing, representing the organization externally, acquisition

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and disposition of resources, and acquiring and acting as an agent of influence for the organization (Yagi, and Kleinberg, 2011, p.630)". According to Johnson, and Duxbury (2010), a boundary-spanner who wants to fulfill the role successfully, must not only have a profound understanding of the business environment, but also the socio-cultural, economic, and political influences on that environment.

Buckley, Clegg, and Tan (2003) believe that the business strategy of the foreign entrant and teamwork between foreign and local partners are two fundamental approaches to reach the goal of succeeding in knowledge transfer and localization. Si and Bruton (1999) also argue that nurturing a solid partnership is critical for international business success. Therefore, building social network relations, or in Chinese, 'Guanxi', means to build trust and long-term relationships among the members within one's network. Scholars also point out that Chinese culture is different from Western culture in many aspects (Buckley, Clegg, and Tan, 2006; Chen, and Francesco, 2000; Child and Lu, 1996; Tung, 1986). The common characteristics of Chinese culture, for instance, "family orientation, Guanxi, relational interdependence, giving face (Mianzi), favor and harmony are found to have influences on MNE's relationship cultivation strategies (Buckley, Clegg, and Tan, 2006, p.276)."

Among the characteristics mentioned above, Guanxi and Mianzi can be seen as the most notorious concepts that have great significance for interpersonal and internal organization dynamics (Buckley, Clegg and Tan, 2006; Child and Lu, 1996; Tung, and Worm, 2001; Xin and Pearce, 1996; Yeung and Tung, 1996). Especially, Guanxi is the fundamental social network web of interpersonal relations spread throughout the whole Chinese society, and so for the Chinese MNEs. Chinese MNEs are very skillful in using Guanxi-based business strategies and practices to reduce uncertainty, lower search and other transaction costs, provide usable resources and a sense of connectedness (Buckley, Clegg, and Tan, 2006, p.276).

Lockett (1988) pointed out that Mianzi is vital for nurturing Guanxi in Chinese culture. He defined Mianzi as the recognition by other people of a person's social status and position. To save Mianzi means to protect one's dignity and prestige in Chinese. Guanxi relations are often operated on a reciprocal basis, which indicates that all groups of a certain business relationship network have to show respect to and save 'Mianzi' for, each other. Thus, in Chinese culture or building social contacts with Chinese people, 'Mianzi' and 'Guanxi' must be considered together.

Trust is viewed as the most important managerial issue of the corporate agenda (Doney, Cannon, and Mullen, 1998; Schoorman, Mayer, and Dacis, 1996). Firms can receive potential benefits such as reliable and open information exchange, improved coordination, and less bureaucratic cost of unified governance (Ebers, 1997). Ellis (1996) suggests that establishing trust between cooperators in strategic alliances is indispensable for the long-term success of the partnership. In particular, Xin and Pearce (1996) comment that when doing business in unstable environmental conditions as in emerging and developing countries, trust should be well nurtured and maintained, to reduce risks and obtain better business control.

2.2.1.2 Locational preferences and Guanxi networking practices

Schlunze *et al.* (2015) conducted a study investigating the intercultural networking behaviors of Chinese expatriate managers in Japan, which contributes both theoretically and practically to cross-cultural management and IHRM studies. According to Schlunze *et al.* (2015), if a corporate leader possesses higher cultural intelligence, the decision making of that company will focus more on the local preferences of corporate, marketing, and living environments by gathering all kinds of tangible and intangible resources for constructing a profound 'Guanxi network'.

The whole process is assumed to be of great importance in creating cultural synergy, and thus, improving organizational performance. In their research, they proposed a model for performance appraisal to show the causality among preference, cultural intelligence, network, and organizational performance by surveying 149 Chinese expatriate managers in Japan by questionnaire and interviewed four of them. They concluded three main findings. First of all, although most of the interviewees have a Japanese educational background and business level Japanese language proficiency, they still encounter many intercultural communication problems and find cultural adaptation not easy in Japan. Secondly, they did a conjoint analysis of Chinese managers' locational preferences and found that they have strong preferences for human resources and market locations. These strong preferences on "Human Resource Access" in the corporate environment and "Collaboration with Customers" in the market environment relates to the use of Guanxi networking practices in the workplace and market. Thirdly, with the influence of Chinese culture, they found that Chinese managers value Guanxi networks as one of the most significant social capitals and make great use of it in achieving business success in Japan. As for the implications of CCM studies, they suggested that expatriate managers should continuously spend more effort on improving cultural intelligence as a necessary competence. For instance, employing experienced local managers with enhanced international business skills and adopting a hybridization model from a cultural crossvergence perspective. Besides, Schlunze *et al.* (2014) perceived that international networking is beneficial to expanding the global market and the organization's sustainable development.

2.2.2   Stakeholder theory, HRM-CSR linkage, and sustainable IHRM

In China, where HR processes are still evolving, the shareholder perspective seems to be accepted by many firms. Cooke and He (2010) researched the Chinese textile and apparel firms. They found that in China, more and more firms are beginning to realize the importance of including CSR in their businesses. Most of them still do not have a formal written CSR policy and have not obtained CSR standards. Those firms intend to implement CSR practices to enhance their reputations. In other words, they mainly focus on the marketing facet of CSR. They only want to 'improve customer satisfaction and reduce operating costs' (Cooke and He, 2010, p.372). These kinds of approaches reflect the current situation among the majority of enterprises in China.

From the above, it is obvious that the rise of CSR in China has significant implications for

the strategic role change of HR function. It is a strategic priority especially for MNEs, for the reasons that CSR is inseparably linked with corporate governance and relying on effective HR policies. As Japanese MNEs have the traditional corporate culture of valuing talented people and the development of employees, they seem to be willing to embrace the new concepts of HRM and CSR. And in fact, they have long been leading the way in doing so.

The organizational transformation in Japan has long been an important issue and business challenge. After the Post Bubble Economy era, the Japanese manufacturing industry continues to transform the traditional Japanese business style. During the 1980s, several Japanese competitive manufacturing firms emerged in the global economic arena and many scholars used to perceive that Japan was the symbol of the economic superpower at the time (Takeuchi, 2009). Porter, Takeuchi, and Sakakibara (2000) state that in the early 1990s, Japan's economy began to decline and fell into a time influenced by the prolonged crisis, namely the 'bubble bursting' period. Both the researchers and practitioners realized that Japan's economic recession during that period had been related not only to deficiencies in the political and legal environment but also to inefficient management (Takeuchi, 2009, p.34).

Takeuchi (2009) also wrote in his research that the traditional ways of management (the so-called 'Japanese-style management') have constrained and limited the ability of many Japanese firms in obtaining better performance. He found that, in the Post Bubble era, some companies had intended to conduct a transformation process by integrating Western management concepts with conventional Japanese know-how. For instance, in the area of HRM, two pillars of 'Japanese-style management', namely 'lifetime employment' and 'seniority-based wage', seem to have been reconsidered to varying degrees to enable firms to cope with the dynamic and competitive pressures now surrounding them (e.g., Morishima, 1996; Takeuchi and Wakabayashi, 1998; 1999; Wakabayashi, 2001, Takeuchi, 2009, p.34)."

The 2008 Economic Recession, originating from the US, became a catalyst for a worldwide domino effect. After that people broadly began to recognize that globalization does not only bring about financial influences but also social, health, and environmental implications (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012). The traditional model of employment relationships in Japanese firms began to decline steadily. In searching for sustainability, companies invested a large number of resources in supporting and respecting talent development, improving employee motivation, etc. Since then, they have realized that Human Capital and the skills or knowledge possesses by their employees are the most valuable resources. Also, as the stable root of CSR management, the reconstruction and transformation of HRM is one of the major challenges faced by firms and should not be neglected by firms who want to gain sustainable competitive advantages. In response to these concerns, Japanese MNEs have started to rethink the feasibility of the 'Toyota way' including the lean production system (LPS) and scientific management for mass production. Chen and Kuo (2013) point out that, "environmental management has become an important component of business management beliefs for most firms, and Japanese firms that belong to environmentally-sensitive industries are even more active in using CSR reports as an effective tool to establish their legitimacy image." Recently many firms start to reconsider their business strategies and develop new policies

that focus on how to operate their business in a more ethical and socially responsible manner based on Stakeholder Theory. The efforts Japanese MNEs take in fulfilling social responsibility, the use of socially responsible HR practices that considering employee well-being and diversity management, and the way they deal with public relations issues have implications for Chinese MNEs' organizational transformation towards sustainable development. For example, Figure 6 and Figure 7 illustrate clearly Toyota Corporation's CSR initiatives and HR practices for achieving sustainable growth.
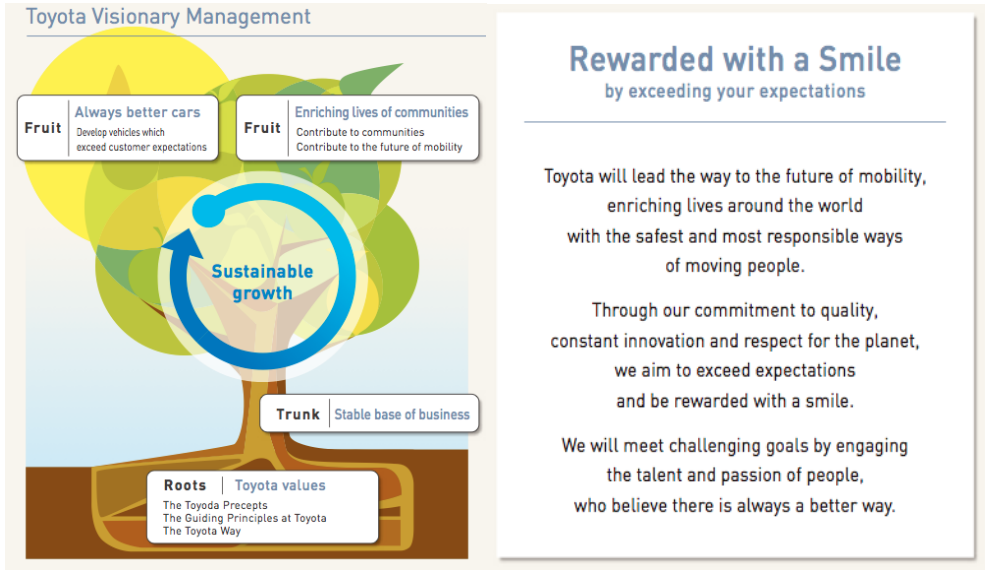
Figure 6: Toyota management vision (Adapted from TOYOTA Sustainability Report 2013, p.5)
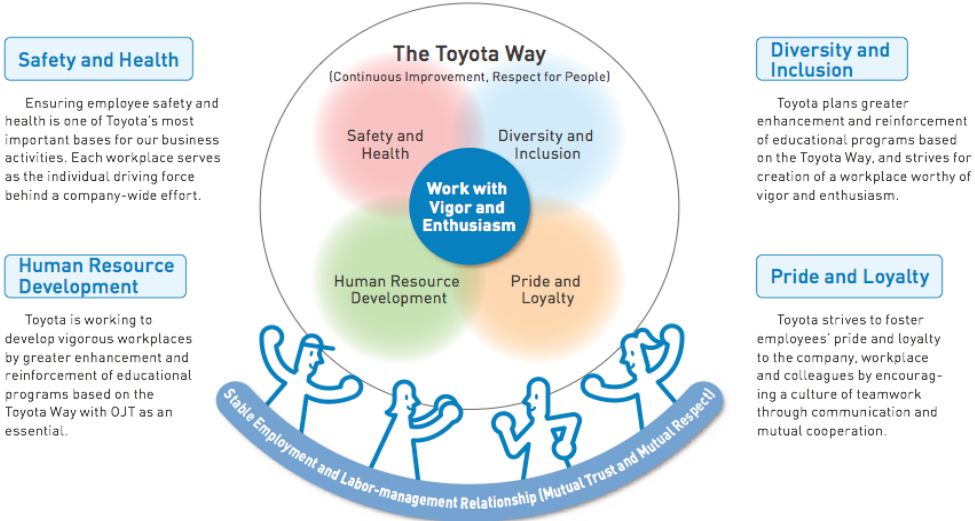
Figure 7: The Toyota way of HRM (Adapted from TOYOTA Sustainability Report 2013, p.33)

The president of Toyota said, since 2009, Toyota has faced a series of extended crises, including the problem and recall of some products. Toyota learned that it is important to shift the direction to the pursuit of sustainable growth. They proposed the goal of building true

competitiveness that cannot only be measured financially. As a result, Toyota adopted the TNGA (Toyota New Global Architecture) and used this insight to construct a new long-term business structure. This sustainability report is aiming to "convey Toyota's efforts to realize harmony with all stakeholders and the global environment, as well as a sustainable society through 'Monozukuri' (manufacturing) (TOYOTA Motor Corporation, 2013)."
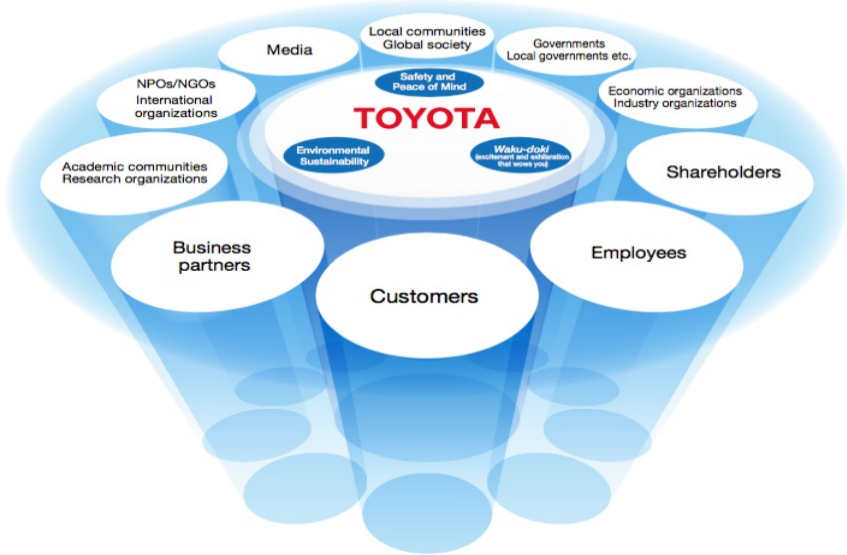
Figure 8: Toyota's 'Together with our Stakeholders' (Adapted from TOYOTA Sustainable Management Report, 2016, p.24)
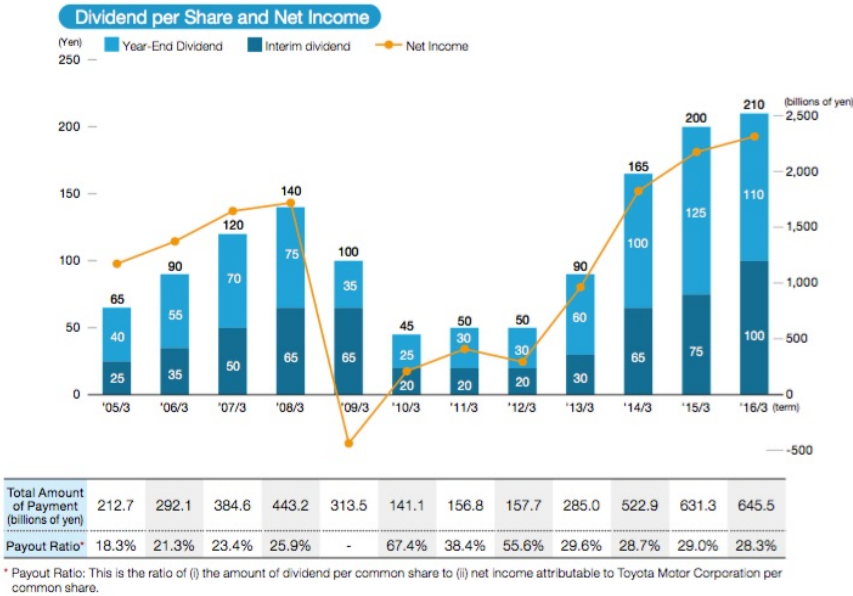
Figure 9: Toyota's Dividends per Share and Net Income from 2005 to 2016 (Adapted from TOYOTA Sustainable Management Report 2016, p.32)

In its 2016 Sustainability Report, the president mentioned the goal of Human Resource Development: "*Through the introduction of the in-house company system, we want to create a*

"smaller Toyota" out of each organizational unit. I hope it will be an organization that encourages employees to give themselves a new challenge and will be a company through which employees are able to sense their own personal growth. (Toyota Motor Corporation Sustainability Report 2016, p.2)" This sort of work style innovation indicates they are making effort on developing the employer brand and employees' long-term commitment, which reflects a more holistic HRM-CSR approach. Also, Figure 8 indicates that Toyota constructs business strategy, organizational mission, and vision in line with the Stakeholder Theory. Taking a glance at the financial performance of Toyota (see Figure 9), the orange line chart shows the net income from 2005 to 2016. Apparently, 2008-2010's economic recession brought about a great loss to Toyota, and till 2012 did the net income start to sustain a recovery. This sharp growth represents the success of Toyota's sustainable management.

In line with Stakeholder Theory, Pfeffer (2010) proposes that "to be socially responsible, organizations ought to consider both the effects of management practices on the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees and focus on the impacts on both physical and social environment." Recently, a growing list of HRM literature has put the focus on employee interests and needs. For example, HRM ethics (e.g. Winstanley, Woodall, and Heery, 1996; Greenwood, 2002), HR diversity management (e.g. Shen, *et al.*, 2009), high-involvement HRM (Guthrie, 2001), flexible employment (Guest, 2004), family-friendly HRM (Bagraim and Sader, 2007) and work-life balance (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999; Bardoel, DeCieri, and Mayson, 2008). At the same time, Shen and Zhu (2011) state that society in general and particularly business organizations have placed more attention on CSR activities inside the organization. Maintaining harmonious employment relationships within the organization and its global value chain has become a significant part of CSR agendas. Furthermore, to implement generalized CSR initiatives, such as philanthropic activities, extra organizational resources are required as part of the investment, for example, human resources. Hence, regarding the transformation or change of the whole system of HRM, a newly appeared perspective of socially responsible HRM, which addressing 'the interests of, and satisfy, both internal and external stakeholders (Shen and Zhu, 2011, p.3021)', has begun to attract scholars' notice.

The alignment of HR practices and strategies with the CSR agenda can be seen as a holistic approach to manpower planning and engagement around work-life balance and social responsibility. It is expected to bring about positive effects on employee commitment and motivation, as well as employee loyalty. Thus, the HR function has to play a key role in developing and promoting the organization's CSR agenda and help build a consistent employer brand.

Tuss, Mankin, and Kelliher (2012) predict that HR functions will have three imminent developments:

- *Becoming the heart of the organization, taking on a new remit that will incorporate and influence many other aspects of the business.*
- *Being the center of organizations' CSR agenda in the organization.*
- *Taking on more of a transacting role where the activity is outsourced.*

This research intends to enrich the research gap about the emerging concepts of socially responsible HRM and sustainable HRM, as well as the relationship among those concepts, the internal focuses of CSR initiatives in the intercultural contexts. The findings are expected to be beneficial to Chinese MNEs operating overseas businesses. First of all, the study reminds them that CSR is more than philanthropic activities and thus it may help them appreciate more of the CSR's internal focuses. Secondly, it will promote the change in HR's roles and functions in improving the HRM processes to match society's calls for sustainability. Last but not least, constructing an effective HR-CSR-Performance model may help them improve employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment and bring about further development.

2.2.3 CSR in China

As a result of the economic recession of 2008, including some emerging economies such as China and India that had been continually growing, many countries were unable to prevent this crisis and are suffering some form of a financial meltdown. Kaletsky (2010, p.200-201) argues that the new post-2009 version of capitalism should encourage much clearer and more constructive thinking about the new incentives required for changes in technology and behavior to reduce pollution… [and] promote investment in a new global energy infrastructure.

In response to these concerns, recently an increasing number of organizations started to reconsider their business strategies and develop new policies that focus on how to operate their business in a more ethical and socially responsible manner. Consequently, the concept of CSR, which stresses business ethics, has been readdressed to define and give an explanation to these new approaches and management fashions (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012). Maintaining organizational commitment is deemed as a priority for organizations in developing economies such as China that face high employee turnover and scarcity of skilled workforce (Hofman and Newman, 2014). Research shows that the ability of employee retention in Chinese firms is positively related to their innovation ability. In the developed world, a growing research concern is paid on topics regarding CSR. Nonetheless, few studies have been done in emerging countries.

Recently, the Chinese government has introduced new regulations and guidelines of CSR for corporations; for instance, the Labor Contract Law, People's Republic of China (PRC) Company Law was renewed (Hofman and Newman, 2014). The central government's guidelines on how to implement social responsibility within state-owned enterprises were also refined (Lin, 2010). Moreover, the combination of increasing protest against poor working conditions among migrant workers in the manufacturing sector, the rising media coverage of these labor conditions, and public statements of high-level government officials condemning firms that mistreat their workers have led to significant pressure on firms to adopt more socially responsible employee-oriented policies and practices (Hofman and Newman, 2014, p.632). Because of these developments, some studies began to recognize the increasing concern of firms in China who are conducting CSR initiatives as a powerful tool to improve employee commitment and employee retention (Shen and Zhu, 2011).

2.2.4   The changing concepts of HRM

Stone (2005, p.4) defined HRM as "[the] productive use of people for achieving the organization's strategic objectives and the satisfaction of individual employee needs." First of all, the study reminds HR practices are now more and more aligned with firms' business strategy and associated with business performance. Purcell *et al.* (2009, p10) found that recently scholars have applied features of organizational behavior, for instance, organizational values and culture, to HRM and its effects on performance. They also added, "Questions of leadership, culture and managerial behavior are commonly seen to fall within the HR manager's area of activity with growing roles in the management of change and organizational transformation". Thus, they concluded that, on grounds of theory, and also from the perspectives of employees and HR managers, it is necessary to have a wider definition of HRM. For example, Paul and Anantharaman (2003) and Purcell *et al.* (2003; 2009) proposed a new term as "people management".

The changes of the definition represent the development of HRM literature in the past three decades, as well as "the shift of focus from the rational administration of employees to employee motivation and job satisfaction" (Hartel, *et al.*, 2007). According to Shen and Zhu (2011, p.3020), this shift can be seen as the response to the 'constantly growing concerns of industrialized (particularly Western) societies regarding employees' rights, wellbeing, and personal and developmental needs.' Despite falling behind the Western countries, China is transitioning to an industrialized society nowadays. Therefore, Chinese MNEs are now paying more attention to the changes and development of HRM concepts and HR practices.

2.2.5   Go beyond strategic HRM: Sustainable HRM

Boxall, Purcell, and Wright (2007) stated that Strategic HRM is a more specific way of managing people that involves various HR strategies designed to improve organizational performance and evaluates the effects of the strategies on organizational performance. Therefore, from the perspective of Strategic HRM, HRM activities ought to be integrated with organizational strategic objectives and specific context factors (Kramar, 2014). It is assumed by some scholars that the effective and efficient alignment of different HRM activities can reinforce the positive impacts of each other and improve organizational performance (Kramar, 2014).

But Kramar (2014) also criticized that the Strategic HRM literature fails to take into account a variety of stakeholders' requirements and national contexts. It is more likely influenced by the Shareholder Theory. Strategic HRM literature also has many other drawbacks. First of all, it does not pay enough attention to the topic of the inconsistency of HRM practices within an organization. Secondly, it does not acknowledge the complexities such as the ambiguities, paradoxes, dualities, and dilemmas coexisting with HRM practices (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000). Besides, it pays little attention to the direct impact of external factors on HRM policies and practices (Kramar, 2014). These issues indicate that Strategic HRM literature should move in new directions. "Three of these directions include examining process, taking into account various stakeholder interests,

and identifying the capabilities required to manage the negative ecological outcomes of managerial decision-making (Kramar, 2014, p.1074)." Besides, the interest in the connection between Strategic HRM and sustainability challenges some premises and frameworks of the Strategic HRM literature (Kramar, 2014).

The notion of sustainable HRM appeared more than a decade ago. But the relative literature is still fragmented, varied, and fraught with difficulties (Kramar, 2014). Sustainable HRM has been used to refer to social and human outcomes that contribute to the long-term sustainability of organizations. A similar term, Green HRM (GHRM) also mentions organizations' positive environmental outcomes. The concept of sustainable HRM reflects a new, holistic approach to people management and it is an extension of Strategic HRM (Kramar, 2014). It is an approach that addresses the particular HRM practices which are necessary for the development of the human resource advantage needed to operate in a more environment-friendly society with different demographic and social pressures (Wilkinson, Hill, and Gollan, 2001; Clarke, 2011).

"A sustaining organization fully incorporates the tenets of human and ecological sustainability into its operations and also supports the application of sustainability more widely (Dunphy, Griffiths, and Benn, 2007, p.62)." Therefore, sustainable HRM practices have to be more flexible with human capability development, participative decision-making, diversity management, workplace health and safety, and performance indicators that reflect ethical concerns (Kramar, 2014). To summarize, sustainable HRM literature is an alternative approach to HRM and raises the importance of the impact of HRM on more than economic outcomes (Kramar, 2014).

2.2.6   CSR and HRM nexus

2.2.6.1 CSR, the stakeholder theory, and employee commitment

In the 1950s, the concept of CSR was brought up (Bowen, 1953), and from that time it has developed vigorously (Carroll, 1998; Porter and Kramer, 2002; Basu and Palazzo, 2008). It is also seen as a success factor to maintain business sustainability in the long term (Gnyawali, 1996; Carroll, 1998; Porter and Kramer, 2002). Many empirical studies show that CSR can enhance corporate reputation. As a result, customer loyalty and employee retention will be improved (Shen and Zhu, 2011).

It is not easy to design and implement CSR strategies and policies. Blowfield and Murray (2008) said one reason is that CSR is a problematic concept. It is also hard to operationalize (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012, p.258). But Porter and Kramer (2006) pointed out that firms should integrate CSR as a crucial part of their business strategy. "Because CSR is the extent to which an organization is managed in an ethical and socially responsible manner to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012, p.258)."

To learn about the stakeholders of the CSR's ambit, Cohen (2010, p.20) defines the stakeholders as "all those who affect a business, and all those who are affected by a business". Managers, employees, customers, investors, shareholders, suppliers, government settings, local

communities, society at large, and the natural environment are all included in the range of stakeholders. Freeman (2011) proposes the Stakeholder Theory, which is a significant development in the concept of CSR. To be recognized as socially responsible, organizations should take into consideration the interests of multiple stakeholders (employees, consumers, suppliers, investors, communities, etc.), because that they all have influences on organizational performance outcomes. Although Greenwood (2007) criticizes the statement above that stakeholder inclusion does not always mean organizations will act responsibly. Still, their findings imply that CSR practices depend on the stakeholders that the organization considers relevant (Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite, 2012).

In the Stakeholder Theory, CSR requires firms to be responsible to both employees and the external stakeholders, such as shareholders, customers, suppliers, community, NGOs, and governments (Carroll, 1998; Hopkins, 2003; Lee, 2008). CSR has internal and external focuses. The internal focus is mainly on how to manage an organization and its impact on employees. "It includes practices such as HRM, diversity management, health and safety, and environmental protection" (Mankin, 2009).

Stakeholder Theory is very important in understanding CSR from a long-term strategic perspective. In contrast to the Shareholder Theory that tends to encourage a short-term vision with an economic perspective on globalization (Zink, 2005, Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012). Freeman (2011) comments that the Stakeholder Theory requires organizations to focus more on social and environmental values than profit maximization. It stresses that to all those who have a stake in the business, firms have a moral obligation and should fulfill their responsibilities. Hence, Stakeholder Theory reflects a social perspective on globalization (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012).

Zink (2005) also states, increasing numbers of firms realize that long-term sustainability relies not only on the shareholders but also on other stakeholders. Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher (2012, p.260) said that "ss a successful CSR strategy involves a two-way relationship between business corporations, as well as other types of a large organization, and the societies within which they interact." Nowadays, this perspective has begun to underpin organizational approaches to CSR (Burchell and Cook, 2006). Cooke and He (2010) argued that the Stakeholder Theory is perceived to be more relevant to HRM. Although there remains a lack of empirical evidence and studies to support this claim. Some studies do have conclusions, such as CSR activities can "enhance employee commitment and satisfaction, increase employee's trust and engagement, improve employee retention, and help attract new employees (Mankin, 2009; Kim, 2011; Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012, pp.260-262)."

From the research of Shen and Zhu (2011, p.3020), there are three conclusions: "Labor-related legal compliance HRM and general corporate social responsibility facilitation HRMs have a significant positive relationship with affirmative commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC)". Additionally, "employee-oriented HRM has a significant positive relationship with AC and NC, but not CC". Furthermore, "the relationship between socially responsible HRM (SR-HRM) and AC is stronger than those between SR-HRM and CC and NC". Those conclusions indicate that SR-HRM has constructive effects on bringing profits and improving

business performance.

2.2.6.2 CSR and strategic HRM

According to World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 1999), CSR is defined as an organization's commitment to a discretionary behavior that leads to economic development and contributes to the welfare of its employees, local community, and society at large (Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite, 2012). But Fenwick and Bierema (2008), also Inyang, Awa, and Enuoh (2011) note that understandings and definitions of CSR varied and are the contention among researchers.

Looking back at the history of the development of CSR concepts, Carroll (1979, p.500) firstly defines CSR as "the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time". In Carroll's study (1998), CSR's definition has four dimensions: doing business should be economically profitable, law-abiding, ethically oriented, and socially supportive (Inyang, Awa, and Enuoh, 2011). CSR is also defined as "the social obligation to impact society beyond pure profit maximization objectives" (Erondu *et al.*, 2004; Jamali and Neville, 2011).

Inyang, Awa, and Enuoh (2011) perceive that an organization's CSR activities should be aligned with its managerial practices including HRM practices. Thus, CSR can be seen as a planned process strategically links to organizational mission and core competencies (Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Porter and Kramer, 2011). As academics and practitioners facing the challenge of building CSR'S strategic capability, HRM function and its strategic role may "help firms to amplify their CSR efforts and achieve worthwhile and substantive outcome values" (Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood, 2015, p.127). Hence the HRM function is increasingly realized to have a pivotal impact by using unique knowledge and skills to support and drive change in people management practices and consider the people implications of changes to strategy and policies (Strandberg, 2009; CIPD, 2011; Jamali, Dirani and Harwood, 2015). Inside an organization, the person with top HR responsibility should be included on the board and involved in the business strategy development (Conner and Ulrich, 1996). It has been recently recognized that HRM can help create win-win outcomes for organizations and their relative stakeholders through better alignment with the organizational mission and strategic direction (Guest, 2011; Wright and McMahan, 2011).

As a significant advance of the Strategic HRM (SHRM) literature, Ulrich (1997) presents the HRM strategic partnership model, in which HR managers should focus more on deliverables and outcomes and restructure the delivery of their services (Jamali, Dirani and Harwood, 2015). A summary of the four roles of HRM is provided in Table 2 and Table 3. Sharma, Sharma, and Devi (2009) also suggested that HRM should take a leading role in advancing CSR activities at all levels. Organizations' CSR activities should not only remain at the stage of philanthropic activities. A strong corporate culture requires companies to stress CSR values and competencies to obtain synergies. Also, the employees should be seen as the central role in constructing such a culture that

is underpinned by CSR values and competencies. In their research, they explored the engagement of HRM professionals in carrying out CSR. Meanwhile, they pointed out the importance of social obligation and the internalization of CSR. They found that the combined impact of CSR and HR activities could strengthen desirable behavior and contribute significantly to pursuing long-term success (Sharma, Sharma, and Devi, 2009).

Table 2: The four roles of HRM (Adapted from Conner and Ulrich, 1996; Ulrich, 1997; Jamali, Dirani and Harwood, 2015)

Strategic Partner	• Focusing mainly on executing activities that are aimed at aligning HRM strategies with the general business strategy. • Involving translating business strategies into HRM practices and helping in achieving business goals and bringing about all kinds of performance outcomes through effective strategy execution.
Administrative Expert	• Designing and delivering HRM functions (staffing, training and development, performance appraisal, managing employee mobility, etc.) in an efficient manner (Conner and Ulrich, 1996; Ulrich, 1997; Jamali, Dirani and Harwood, 2015).
Employee Champion	• Focusing on how to maximize employee commitment and competence development. • Taking care of employees' daily work-life balance, health, and needs. • Providing sufficient resources to gratify employee needs to motivate employees to perform efficiently.
Change Agent	• Helping and managing organizational transformation and change. • "As change agents, HRM professionals should help identify and implement various roles and action plans for managing, adapting, and responding to change, while at the same time remaining sensitive to and respecting the traditional values and history of the organization" (Ulrich, 1997, cited in Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood, 2015, p.130).

Table 3: Definition of HRM's four roles (Adapted and modified from Ulrich, 1997, p.24; Jamali, Dirani and Harwood, 2015)

Metaphor role	Role	Deliverable outcome	Activity
Strategic partner	Management of strategic HR	Executing strategy	Aligning HRM and business strategy: 'organizational diagnosis'
Administrative expert	Management of firm infrastructure	Building an efficient infrastructure	Reengineering organizaiton functions: 'shared services'
Employee champion	Management of employee contribution	Increasing employee commitment and capability	Listening and responding to employees: 'providing resources to employees'
Change agent	Management of transformation and change	Creating a renewed organization	Managing transformation and change:'ensuring capacity for change'

While discussing the role of HR in nurturing CSR culture in corporations, with the growing

attention paid to human capital as a success factor for today's organizations, the role of HR leadership has become more important in leading and educating about the value of CSR and the best way of implementing CSR policies and programs strategically within the parent company and subsidiaries abroad (Lockwood, 2004). From her perspective, HR ought to be aware that effective and efficient CSR initiatives require companies to respect cross-cultural and developmental differences and improve the sensitivity toward different values, ideas and beliefs when carrying out global HR policies and programs.

To improve business performance and satisfy all the relevant stakeholders, HR policies, such as diversified training and development opportunities for the workforce, and periodic appraisal of employee performance, will help increase motivation and employee commitment within the organization (Agrawal, 2007; Malikarjunan, 2006). Similarly, Krishnan and Balachandran (2004) suggested that HRM should take part in incorporating responsible practices within firms. It is due to the lack of involvement of employees and failure to implant the socially responsible values into the organizational culture that many CSR initiatives inevitably fail and they just become an exercise in public relations (Sharma, Sharma, and Devi, 2009, p.209).

From above, scholars have similar ideas that the role of employee involvement through HR in CSR initiatives should not be neglected. "But they paid little attention to how the internalization of CSR culture can happen with the initiatives of the HR department of an organization" (Sharma, Sharma and Devi, 2009, p.209). Questions such as how the company's values and policies for CSR can be reflected through different HR functions and how the HR function can be a powerful agent in developing and influencing organization-wide progress in its CSR performance outcomes should be recognized as an important research topic.

2.2.6.3 CSR and socially responsible HRM

Many studies make the verdict that CSR has positive effects on employee attitudes and performance (Shen and Zhu, 2011). While there is an increasing concern about CSR and employee's rights, wellbeing, work-life balance, and individual development needs, the effects of SR-HRM on forming organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) will long be a legitimate pursuit for HRM research (Shen and Zhu, 2011). Within an organization, CSR initiatives mainly belong to organizational citizenship behaviors that are discretionary and beyond legal requirements. "Nevertheless, the concern with CSR is having a major impact on business missions, operations, marketing, and management in MNEs (Shen, 2011, p.1353)."

There are three components of an SR-HRM system, which are labor law-related legal compliance HRM, employee-oriented HRM, and general CSR facilitation HRM (Shen and Zhu, 2011). Legal compliance HRM requires companies to obey local labor laws and standards (Shen and Zhu, 2011). It mainly includes justice, equal opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage, and the use of child labor (Rowan, 2000; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Shen and Zhu, 2011). Employee-oriented HRM focuses on family-friendly policies and employees' interests and needs in personal development and training. Furthermore, it addresses the adoption of

workplace democracy, such as communication, the empowerment and involvement of employees, and employee voice (Legge, 1998). The focal point of general CSR facilitation HRM is the application of HRM policies and practices that facilitate the engagement of general CSR initiatives (Shen and Zhu, 2011). All these components help organizations look after the interests of all the stakeholders including employees, and actualize both short-term effectiveness and long-term sustainability (Shen and Zhu, 2011).

Shen (2011) points out that although the literature about IHRM recognizes that IHRM is the key to success in IB assignments, it has not paid enough attention to the interests of internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, because of the growing importance of CSR, the present IHRM literature is considered to be insufficient in response to the current development of IB policies and practices. In IHRM literature, when building IHRM models, MNEs have to take account of both the host-contextual and firm-specific factors to achieve global coordination, local responsiveness, and strategic integration, in another word, the "best-fit" with their internal and external environments (Shen, 2011). However, because those models were emerged and developed in the 1990s before CSR became a focal point of organizations, they have not yet paid enough attention to the rights and interests of internal and external stakeholders (Shen, 2011). Shen (2011, p.1358) emphasizes that all the drawbacks mentioned above "determine employees' workplace attitudes, behaviors and performance and whether they achieve a sense of social recognition for their efforts and will inevitably compromise and create problems for the long-term sustainability of MNEs."

Being part of the research regarding sustainable business development, the increasing convergence between CSR and HRM has been observed recently, although this area of research continues to be conceptually underdeveloped (Zappalà, 2004; Fenwick and Bierema 2008; Strandberg 2009; Ehnert and Harry 2011; Greenwood, 2013; Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood, 2015). The HRM-CSR linkage has also received several research attentions. Some prior researchers focused on the issues of ethics in HRM (Guest, 2007; Margolis *et al.*, 2007; Kamoche, 2007). Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite (2012) then argue that HRM plays a critical role in promoting and enhancing CSR since it contributes to the development of the synchronicity between economic and social goals and organizational performance.

Traditionally, the process of nurturing from CSR policy conception to implementation and operating an organization's CSR activities is a top-management driven initiative, in which the organization's executive often plays an important role (Sharma, Sharma and Devi, 2009; Inyang, Awa and Enuoh, 2011). Inyang, Awa, and Enuoh (2011) point out that, employees have been outsiders of the CSR's ambit. Redington (2005) also mentioned that although employees should be the most important stakeholders of the organization for operating CSR activities, the connection is often neglected. In a survey, only 13% of the companies involved their employees in conducting CSR activities (Bindi, 2003). Besides, "the employees have also been less likely to fully internalize the corporate culture (Sharma, Sharma, and Devi, 2009, p.208)."

Strandberg (2009, p.2) argues that "it is through employee actions and decision-making that many CSR strategies come to life, and HR professionals are in a unique position to nurture and foster CSR performance within their organizations." As a key stakeholder of the firm, employees

belong to the asset to be developed and valued rather than being the cost to be managed (Zappalà, 2004; Deniz-Deniz and De Saa-Perez, 2003). The focus on a 'triple bottom line', which includes the economic, social, and environmental performance of organizations, has become a noticeable trend. As CSR commitment has been extended to include both ecological sustainability and social development, employees should be seen as the most strategic part of these stakeholders, whose involvement in CSR programs impacts greatly on the organization's bottom line (Inyang, Awa, and Enuoh, 2011).

Busiuniene and Kazlauskaite (2012) investigated the linkage between HRM, CSR, and corporational performance outcomes. This study has some limitations because few organizations are applying CSR-related HRM practices. But it does confirm the existence of HRM-CSR-performance linkage. They found that there is causality among them. "Organizations with better developed HRM, where HR plays a more strategic role and its performance is more evaluated, also have more developed formal CSR policies, which in turn have a positive impact on organizational and financial performance outcomes (Busiuniene and Kazlauskaite, 2012, p.5)." They used the performance measures presented by Dyer and Reeves (1995) to examine the effectiveness of CSR-HRM performance linkage and its outcomes:

- *Financial/accounting outcomes*
- *Organizational outcomes (e.g., productivity, quality, and service)*
- *HR-related outcomes (e.g., absenteeism, labor turnover, individual/group performance)*
- *Stock-market performance*

To understand the linkage between HRM and performance, Purcell *et al.* (2009) and some other scholars have been developing the concept of Human Resource Advantage (HRA) for some years. They point out that the bundles of HR policies, practices, and processes together contribute to the achievement of organizational competitive advantages. Their thoughts form a framework:

Human Capital Advantage (HCA) + Organizational Process Advantage (OPA) = HRA

Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood (2015, p.125) develop the CSR-HRM co-creation model (see Figure 10), "which accounts for the potential HRM roles in CSR and identifies a range of outcome values resulting from a more effective integration of the role of HRM within CSR." Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood (2015, p.125) proposed a model which is perceived to have the capability for enabling decision-makers to design CSR initiatives that leverage internal competencies as they seek to contribute more constructively to an improved workplace environment (Orlitzky *et al.*, 2011), positive perceptions of the firm (Morsing and Perrini, 2009), and meeting the expectations of internal and external stakeholders (McWilliams and Siegel, 2011). The CSR-HRM co-creation model helps create synergies between CSR and HRM disciplines. And the model concerns with providing a rationale and structured approach for CSR-HRM cross-fertilization. As Jamali, Dirani,

and Harwood (2015, p.139) point out that "it constitutes a robust, original contribution that highlights the links between CSR and HRM and emphasizes the sustainable outcome benefits that can result from their effective integration."
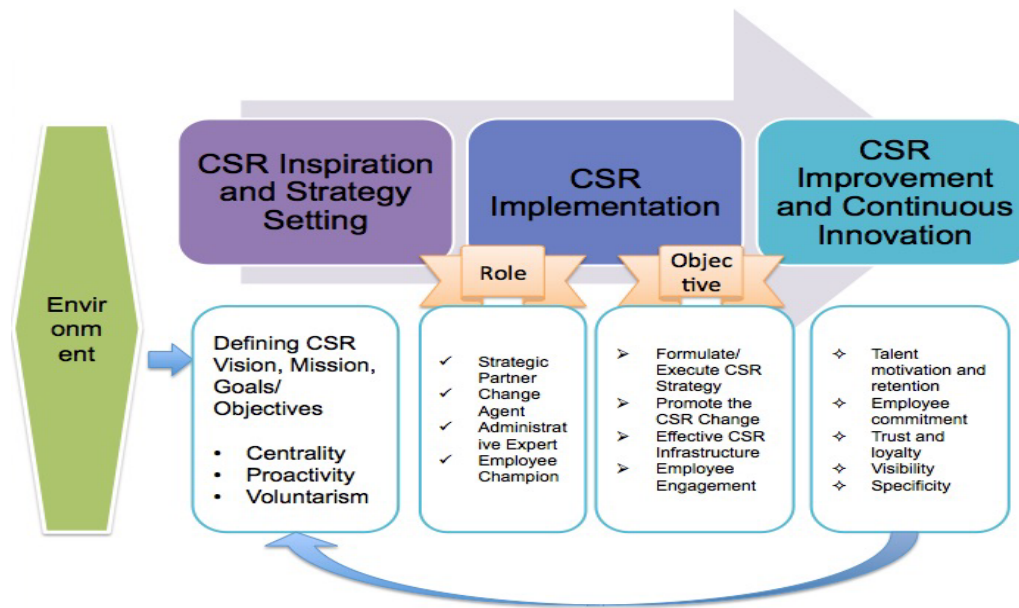
Figure 10: CSR-HRM co-creation model (Adapted from Jamali, Dirani, and Harwood, 2015)

2.3 The research framework and research questions

2.3.1 Linking economic sociology, institutional economics, and IHRM with embeddedness

'Embeddedness' is a term from economic sociology, and it has been utilized by other disciplines, for instance, new institutional economics, organizational and business management studies, and economic geography research (Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017, p.87). Different applications of embeddedness may cause problems, namely the lack of terminological consistency, various typologies, and different ways of measurement and definitions (Hess, 2004, p.167; Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017, p.87). Scholars have broad understandings of embeddedness. Originally, 'Embeddedness' was introduced in *The Great Transformation,* written by Polanyi (1944), and Granovetter (1985, 1992) further developed the concept of social-relational embeddedness. Granovetter (1992, p.33) wrote that: "Economic action and outcomes, like all social action and outcomes, are affected by actors' dyadic (pairwise) relations and by the structure of the overall network of relations".

Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) classify 'Embeddedness' in four different types, which are the structural-relational, political-institutional, cultural, and cognitive mechanisms of embeddedness. The following contents are the explanations:

- Structural-relational embeddedness follows Granovetter's (1985, 1992) concept of social embeddedness. "It reflects the social architecture of networks and indirect relationships within which a dyadic relationship is embedded and the impact of this structure on economic activity"

(Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017, p.91).

- Political-institutional embeddedness emphasizes the institutional (political, legal, etc.) framework or context of economic action (Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017). Zukin and DiMaggio (1996) explain that economic activities and decision-making are influenced by regulatory institutions, (e.g., state or governmental actors, local political factors, different legal systems and tax codes).
- Cultural embeddedness implies that individual or organizational economic actions and decision-making are influenced by shared collective understandings, beliefs, values, and norms (Dequech, 2003; Hess, 2004; Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017; Sigfusson
- and Harris, 2013; Wu and Pullman, 2015; Zukin and DiMaggion, 1990).
- Cognitive embeddedness means that in the individual psychological level, economic reasoning, behaviors are shaped or limited by the shared regulatory factors of mental processes, and different ways of thinking (Dequech, 2003; Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017; Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990).

When applying these four different types of 'Embeddedness' while conducting empirical studies, Ratajczak-Mrozek (2017, p.92) points out that the borderline between structural-relational and political-institutional embeddedness is rather fuzzy and unclear, and Dequech (2003) also draws attention to the intertwined relationship between cultural and cognitive embeddedness. But still, Zukin and DiMaggio's classification of the four comprehensive types of 'Embeddedness' is a great analytical contribution in help researchers break down and learn about different aspects, facets, and mechanisms of the 'social' (Hess, 2004). Because these four mechanisms are not consistent categories (Ratajczak-Mrozek, 2017), in this study, when applying the cross-cultural lens to analyzing the studied Chinese Central SOE, firstly, I used the term 'External Embeddedness and Stakeholder Engagement' and 'Internal Embeddedness and Stakeholder Engagement' to distinguish the general embeddedness mechanisms, efforts, and processes happened in the Macro-level, and within the Meso-level (including the Micro-level). Secondly, to further analyze and explain the specific mechanisms that occurred in different levels, Zukin and DiMaggio's classification will be applied in analyzing the interview narratives, Chinese expatriates' social networks, and the answers to the three open-ended questions from the online questionnaire.

IHRM receives external influences from the institutional framework that MNEs are embedded in, should be operated within the internal frameworks that link to organizational strategies (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012). Hence, Marchington and Wilkinson (2012, p.25) point out that "integration is the heart of HRM." There are two types of integration as follows.

- *Vertical integration: linking HRM with business strategies and the political, economic, social, and legal forces that are relevant in shaping (or be shaped by) organizations.*
- *Horizontal integration: the coordination or fit between different HRM policies and practices (HRM bundles).*

"Think globally, act locally" is not that simple to practice. Knowing the integration types of HRM is not enough. Scholars have warned that many HR managers still lack the knowledge and skills to innovatively deal with issues that relate to globally diversified workforces (Morris and Snell, 2009). It is also important to reconsider the changing functions and roles of HRM. As the factors or changes mentioned can also affect practitioners' management choices, employee attitudes, and behaviors, HRM can be defined as the "the management of employment so incorporating individual and collective relations, the whole range of HR practices and processes, line management activities and those of HR specialists, managerial and non-managerial actors" (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.24). For example, the management styles are not only determined by business goals but also by different external and internal stakeholders' interests.

Table 4: Major functions and issues of IHRM (Adapted from Shen and Edwards, 2006, p.7)

IHRM functions	Major Issues/roles
Recruitment and selection	Staffing approach, criteria, and procedures of recruitment and selection; reasons for using different approaches; expatriate failure, repatriation, flexpatriation
Training and development	Provision of training, training programs, and methods, reasons for the failure in providing training, career planning, criteria for management development, inpatriation
Performance appraisal	Approaches to appraisal, appraisal criteria, and procedure. Purpose of appraisal
Reward and compensation	Approaches to reward and compensation, key components of reward and compensation
Employee relations	Trade unions, participation, involvement, and communication (employee voice)
IHRM strategic integration	The strategic role of the IHR function, the structure of the IHR function, the input of IHR in strategic decisions, locus of IHRM decisions, IHR planning, IHR strategy, and the linkage of strategy with IHRM policies and practices

Admittedly, the roles of the internal HR function and external HRM supportive agencies are vital to organizational management success. But line managers are the direct actors of the whole system in delivering HRM practices and policies at the workplace (e.g., expatriate managers, project managers, local HR assistant managers, and engineering/construction supervisors). Therefore, one crucial task for HR specialists is how to improve line management commitment in advancing the effectiveness of HRM practices and policies. See the major functions and issues/roles of IHRM from Table 4 (Shen and Edwards, 2006, p.7).

2.3.2 The multidisciplinary feature of IHRM studies and the multi-level modeling approach

Björkman and Stahl (2006, p.6) remind that IHRM is a 'highly dynamic and constantly evolving field'. Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri (2018, p.1) further explain that IHRM is a field that

is evolving new themes underpinned with 'insights from parallel fields that have traditionally been neglected by IHRM studies'. Some scholars notice that the mainstream studies in this field are written with 'a narrow performative perspective and managerial storytelling on taxonomies of practice', and appeal that, to be more relevant to both researchers and practitioners, IHRM studies should also aim to contribute more to theoretical development to reflect the comprehensiveness and complexity of the emerging issues in people management under international contexts (Delbridge *et al.*, 2011, p.489; Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri, 2018, p.1).

Klerk (2018) further points out that in the field of IHRM studies, the debate of choosing disciplinary rigor or a cross-disciplinary approach always exists. For instance, at the macro-level, management researchers tend to borrow concepts from sociology, while micro-level management studies tend to incorporate concepts and theories from psychology (Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri, 2018, p.3). In the field of IHRM, scholars should not only emphasize 'taxonomies of practice', but also place IHRM more 'within historical, socio-economic, and transformative terms' (Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri, 2018, p.3).

Minbaeva and DeCieri (2018, p.18) introduce that using multilevel logic in theorizing, modeling, and building micro-foundations for strategic management studies has been gaining more and more interest and attention from HRM and IB researchers (e.g., Abell, Felin, and Foss, 2008; Hitt *et al.*, 2007; Mathieu and Chen, 2011; Molloy, Ployhart, and Wright, 2011; Peterson, Arregle, and Martin, 2012; Teece, 2007; Wright and Nishii, 2007; Wright and Van de Voorde, 2009). Regarding multilevel reasoning, Molloy, Ployhart, and Wright, (2011) observe that it can be related to multidisciplinary research (e.g., economics, sociology, and psychology), and a three-system-level research framework (social and economic, organizational, individuals and groups systems) is suitable for bridging the multidisciplinary divides in the field of Strategic IHRM (SIHRM) research field.

The collaborative approach of integrating multinational and multidisciplinary research in SIHRM studies (see Farndale *et al.*, 2010) helps investigate "big questions" regarding complex phenomena and relationships and has the potential to bridge different disciplines (Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018). The advancement of the SIHRM scholarship requires researchers to explore 'across multiple levels and beyond organizational boundaries' by applying multilevel reasoning in relevant studies (Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018, pp. 22-23).

To answer this cross-disciplinary call in IHRM studies, the research framework is derived from the literature review (see Figure 11). And the main research question is proposed as follows.

➢ **Primary research questions:**
Through a cross-cultural lens, how does the studied Chinese Central SOE architect a culturally sensitive and sustainable IHRM system in sub-Saharan Africa nowadays?

➢ **Sub-questions:**
➢ How does cultural-crossvergence lead studied Chinese Central SOE and its subsidiaries to IHRM hybridization?

➢ What IHRM hybridization dynamics and efforts of <u>embeddedness</u> can we observe in these processes?
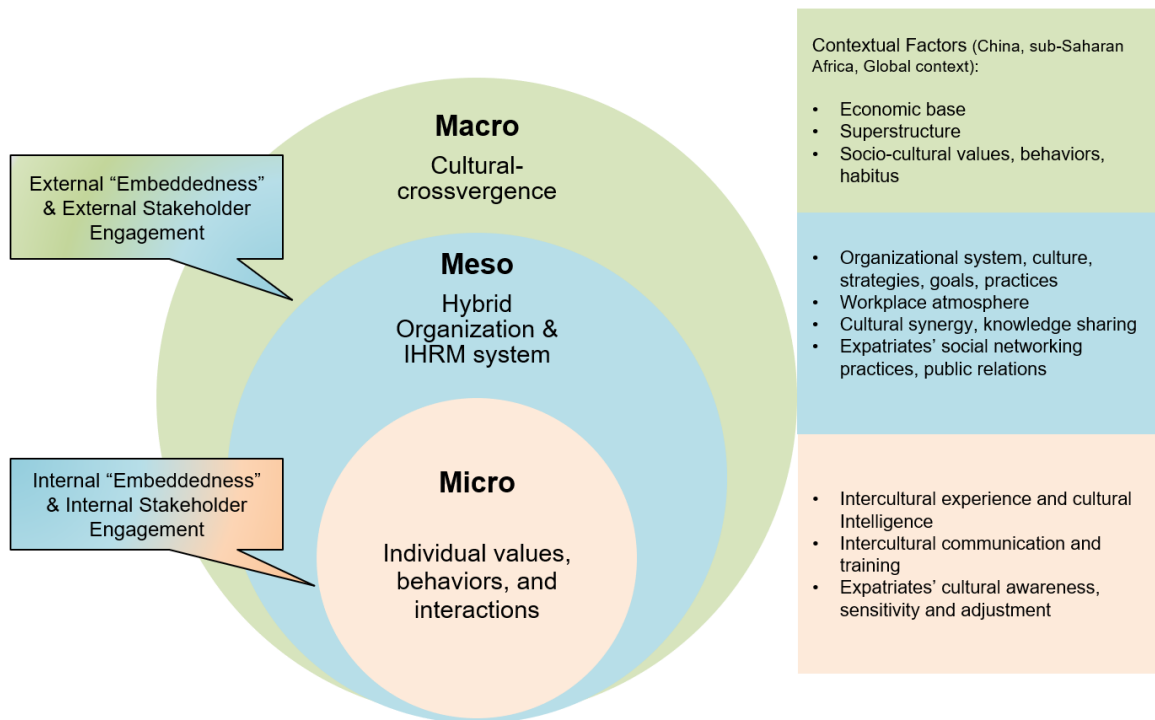
Figure 11: A cross-cultural lens for studying hybridization of Chinese SOEs' IHRM

Through a cross-cultural lens, in the macro-level (outside the organization) context, underpinned by relevant cultural and social relationships theories, Chinese expatriates' behaviors and perceptions regarding political, cultural, structural-relational, and cognitive embeddedness are investigated. Furthermore, it is necessary to learn about the perceptions from Chinese expatriate employees and managers on Chinese and African culture, their cross-cultural communication and interaction experiences cumulated, and lessons learned from practicing IHRM and CSR initiatives during the overseas assignments in sub-Saharan Africa to develop effective and appropriate IHRM practices and policies that fit in the home and host country contexts simultaneously.

In the meso-level (organizational) context, the Stakeholder Theory, the contingency perspective in strategic HRM theories is utilized for exploring the HRM-CSR linkage.

Besides, in the micro-level context, Chinese expatriate managers' different practices and perceptions are explored to understand the socially responsible IHRM practices for internal and external stakeholder engagement in achieving sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Associating with the research framework and the research question, three groups of research focuses are developed as follows:

I. (Macro-level context) What are the external impacts of the home and host country culture in developing an understanding of IHRM processes that led to preferable crossvergence building hybrid organizations? (External contexts and environments influences)

II. (Meso-level context) What kind of the cultural crossvergence and embeddedness process in IHRM can be observed in Chinese SOEs underpinned by the Stakeholder theory and the Contingency theory? (Organizational internal capability)

III. (Micro-level context) Observing the IHRM architecture and strategic alignment of IHRM practices and CSR initiatives carried out by Chinese expatriate managers, will Chinese SOEs be capable to achieve long-term sustainable organizational development? (Individual perceptions and behaviors) What kinds of further training and interventions are necessary for the further development of Chinese expatriates' cultural intelligence in achieving better intercultural performance?

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

3.1 A mixed methods research approach and research procedures

Yin (2009; 2018) states that case study research can be designed as a holistic case study with the examination of a single unit of analysis, or as an embedded case study with more than one unit of analysis. The research methodology taken in this thesis is an exploratory sequential designed mixed methods embedded single case study with multiple units to be analyzed, and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and triangulated to address findings and results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Figure 12 displays the research procedures.
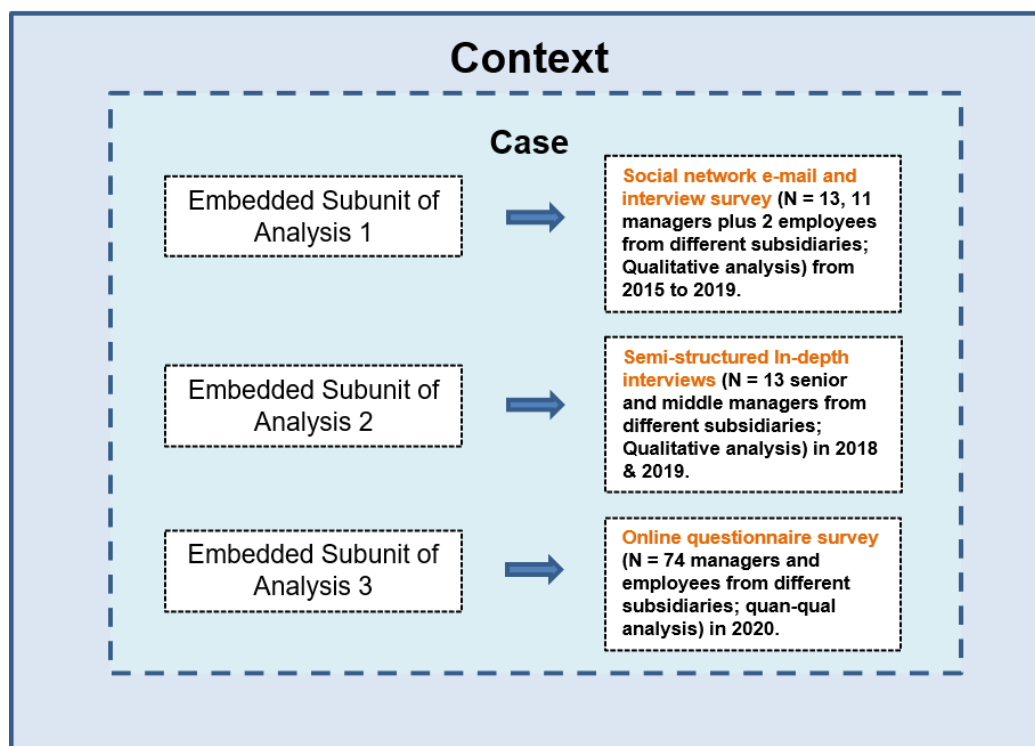
Figure 12: The research structure and procedures of the mixed methods embedded (nested) single case study (Adapted and modified from Yin, 2018, p.48)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and audio recorded with thirteen Chinese expatriate managers with ten interview focuses (see Appendix 1) derived from the research framework and research focuses from 2018 to 2019 in Beijing, China. In-depth transcripts were collected for qualitative analysis following the hermeneutical research paradigm (see Appendix 2 and 3 for the interview questions and exemplary quotations). From 2015 to 2019, via email surveys and in-depth interviews, I collected thirteen Chinese expatriates' (eleven senior and middle managers, two employees from different subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa) locational preferences and social network information for making the social network maps with the VennMaker[6], which

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[6] Available from URL: https://www.vennmaker.com/?lang=en (Accessed on November 18, 2020.)

is analytical software for visualizing one's social network. It was developed within the research cluster at Trier University and Mainz University in Germany.

The online questionnaire surveys were answered by Chinese expatriate employees and managers with the snowball sampling method. The questionnaire survey has the contents of three open-ended questions and 7-point Likert scale questions of cultural intelligence (20 items) (see Appendix 4). This online questionnaire survey was designed to examine the hypothesis of cultural intelligence (CQ) has a positive relation with expatriate's intercultural communication competence and effectiveness and thus facilitate managing local employees and smoothing employee relations, and also for collecting their perceptions about intercultural interaction with local employees and examine the cognitive status (knowledge and cognitive bias) of Chinese expatriates about sub-Saharan African cultures.

The online questionnaire survey was created using the Tencent Questionnaire Service[7]. The web link of the questionnaire was shared by a Chinese senior manager (interviewee A, see Table 5) with his colleagues (employees, middle managers, and senior managers belong to the group companies and overseas branches of the Chinese central SOE) who have working experiences in sub-Saharan African countries via WeChat (on June 24, 2020). Thirty-seven people answered the control variables and CQ scale questions (see Ang, *et al.*, 2007). I then shared the link of the questionnaire to Chinese managers (37 responses received) of another group firm, which is also a subsidiary of this Chinese Central SOE (on June 25, 2020). Therefore, the data now comprises 74 individuals' control variables and CQ scale data, and the answers to the three open-ended questions. (The questionnaire was also shared by interviewee A on June 17, 2020, and received 128 persons' CQ scale data. These 128 people include his friends and acquaintances from the subsidiaries of Chinese SOEs and POEs in sub-Saharan Africa. Although 128 persons' data were not analyzed in this thesis, they do not overlap with the 74 samples' CQ scale data, and thus, can be combined into one database for conducting future research.)

3.2 Research design and data collection

3.2.1 The rationale of using the mixed methods approach

The research theme is about Chinese Central SOE's IHRM architecture in sub-Saharan Africa, a single method cannot grasp the whole story within complex contexts in multi-levels. Accordingly, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) point out that both numbers and words are necessary for elucidating heterogeneous contexts. For instance, Abugre and Debrah (2019) and Abugre, Williams, and Debrah (2020) conducted their studies about expatriates' cross-cultural communication and cultural adjustment issues in overseas subsidiaries using the mixed-method approach. The mixed-

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[7] Available from URL: https://wj.qq.com/ (Accessed on November 18, 2020.)

method design helps observe the details and trends of research themes in organizational behavioral studies and international business studies (Creswell, 2005; Abugre and Debrah, 2019). It is rigorous and comprehensive and can enrich the data for describing a holistic picture of the research subjects (Johnson and Turner, 2003; Abugre and Debrah, 2019).

The mixed-methods approach has more than 30 years of history, for example, see Jick (1979), with several development stages (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.48). Mixed methods research can enable the complementation between qualitative research and quantitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.12). Here are some further explanations of why it can be a synergized way to provide more evidence for studying a research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, pp.12-13):

> "*One might argue that quantitative research is weak in understanding the context or setting in which people live. Also, the voices of participants are not directly heard in quantitative research. Further quantitative researchers are in the background, and their personal biases and interpretations are seldom discussed. Qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the research, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalizing findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants' strengths of one approach make up for the weaknesses of the other.*"

The choice to conduct a mixed methods design is based on the need of using 'both quantitative and qualitative information to best describe a case or to compare cases' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.117). The advantages and challenges of using the mixed methods approach in case study research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, pp.118-120):

The advantages:
1. *The advantages commonly associated with cases study designs, such as developing in-depth, practical understandings and conclusions that are particularized and transferable, are realized in the use of a complex mixed-methods case study design.*
2. *Mixed methods case study designs are useful for understanding the complexity of a case (see Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2016; also Luck, Jackson, and Usher, 2006).*
3. *Descriptive profiles of the case(s) can provide a detailed level of information about the case(s) that offers a realistic picture.*
4. *The design can be appealing to researchers undaunted by the complexity of a system and comfortable with emergent approaches within a research study.*

The Challenges:
1. *Having the necessary expertise --- ---Researchers need to understand good case study research procedures*

2. Deciding when and how to identify cases

3. Deciding on the number of cases

4. Representing the cases in written reports

Some researchers use a positive deviance approach in which high-performing cases are purposefully identified and studied to identify good practices (Bradley et al., 2009)

When using the mixed methods approach, one can use various available tools of data collection and analysis 'rather than being restricted to those types typically associated with quantitative research or qualitative research' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.13). The mixed-methods approach can bridge quantitative and qualitative research and improve collaboration among quantitative and qualitative researchers, as people often tend to solve problems using both numerical and linguistic approaches.

Mixed methods research encourages scholars to have multiple worldviews, or paradigms, beyond the traditional distinction of quantitative or qualitative paradigms. One of the worldviews that are suitable for mixed methods research is 'Pragmatism', which 'draws on many ideas, including employing "what works", using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p. 39). Pragmatism worldview makes 'researchers adopt a pluralistic stance of gathering all types of data to best answer the research questions' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p. 42).

Mixed methods researchers can incorporate a social science theoretical lens into their mixed methods studies to help form conceptual frameworks that provide general explanations of what they expect to find with their researches (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.45). The research framework (the cross-cultural lens) of this thesis has a nested multi-level structure, which demands the mixed methods approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, pp. 8-11) give the reasons as follows:

"One type of evidence may not tell the complete story, and the type of evidence gathered from one level in an organization might differ from evidence examined from other levels. Therefore, using only one approach to address the research problem would be deficient sometimes."

3.2.2 The rationale of the embedded (nested) single case design

A case study investigates a phenomenon and its dynamics in its natural settings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Case study research explores a research topic or phenomenon within its context, or within several real-life contexts. The data sources required are diverse, which can ensure the research topic is not studied from one angle. Yin (2009) also highlights the importance of context, adding that, within a case study, the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context, adding that, within a case study, the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not always apparent. This is potentially an advantage of case study research. Four criteria are used to assess the rigor of case study research (Campbell and

Stanley, 1963): internal validity, construct validity, external validity, and reliability. Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki, (2008) described how to enhance these criteria for case study research. They find that "case studies emphasized external validity at the expense of the two more fundamental quality measures, internal and construct validity" (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki, 2008, p.1465).

This thesis is designed using the single case study method to highlight under-researched phenomena and provide new a lens and interpretation of previous relevant research findings provided by several researchers (Edwards, 1998; Kamoche, 2000; Vaara *et al.*, 2005; Lervik, 2011). The research is designed using the hermeneutic approach (Mayer, Boness, and Louw, 2017) while adopting an explorative and descriptive research methodology.

In International Business studies, for example, a holistic design may be chosen in a single case study to examine the global nature of an organization, but when subunits are necessary to be analyzed in a single setting, then, one can choose the embedded single case study approach (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki (2011, p.174) studied Yin (2009) and noticed that when taking a single organization as the case study subject, data collection and analysis, and the presentation of findings, may occur at multiple levels, including the individual, subgroups of individuals, and thus, an equal emphasis should be placed on both the subunits of the study.

Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki (2011, p.174) point out the necessity of using the embedded design with an example:

"*In practice, case researchers in the IB area encounter difficulties in identifying and selecting interlinked concepts that may serve as units of analysis in a case study project. For example, the study of autonomy in subsidiaries of MNCs also entails the investigation of various related concepts such as a subsidiary's unique resources, empowerment of the subsidiary, subsidiary initiative, innovativeness, of the subsidiary and its entrepreneurial output… …This may require an embedded case study design in which researchers progressively discover the unit of analysis and its relevance to other concepts embedded in the context of the case study.*"

Patton (2002, p.228) argues that "each unit of analysis implies a different kind of data collection, a different focus of analysis of the data, and a different level at which statements about findings and conclusions would be made". The unit of analysis is a key ingredient of case study research, as Stake (2005; p.443) explains that a 'case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied'. Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki (2011, p.173) proposed four overlapping categories regarding the unit of analysis:

- *Social units may be an individual or individuals, a role, a group, an organization, a community, or social interactions*
- *Temporal units may be an episode or encounter, an event, or a period*
- *Geographical units may be countries, towns, or states*
- *Artifacts may be books, photos, newspapers, or technological objects*

Choosing this design is because of the research subject, which is a mega construction Chinese Central SOE (code name: CCSOE) with a great number of domestic affiliates, group companies, and overseas branches in more than 120 countries around the world. There are different units from different branches of CCSOE analyzed in this thesis. The Interviewees and the Chinese expatriates who provide their social network information are from one of its group companies (code name: CSOEa) and CSOEa's overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa. CSOEa has overseas subsidiaries and offices in over 100 countries and regions around the world. It has a long history of providing aid and executing construction projects in Africa.

In recent years, CSOEa has been planning to upgrade its business, by constructing and operating industrial parks and free trade zones, etc. Table 5 and Table 6 display the information about interviewees and an overview of the interviews. The qualitative interview data is expected to provide in-depth descriptions of the implemented IHRM practices, CSR initiatives and policies, and explanations of the IHRM hybridization process. The acquired rich narratives of the managers will be used in conducting in-depth content analysis, and depicting an information-rich case for explorative study (Almond *et al.*, 2005; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Because Shen and Edwards (2006, p.14) studied Ferner (1997) suggest that qualitative analysis is suitable for "exploring the dynamics of organizational micro-politics and constraints within which the firm operates, evaluating the influences of historical legacies, and assessing the subtle interactions between national and corporate culture with organizational structure and strategy".

Because of Covid-19, the author could not travel to China for in-person interviews. Therefore, a questionnaire survey with several semi-structured and open-ended questions was conducted to further understand the perceptions of Chinese expatriate managers and employees regarding cultural similarities and differences, intercultural communication, and collaboration in June 2020 via WeChat using Tencent Online Questionnaire and received 74 responses with overseas assignment years from 0.5 to 25 years (see Table 7 to Table 11 for the candidate profiles).

The sampling method can be categorized as snowball sampling. The questionnaire was first answered by a senior manager from the chosen Chinese SOE. Then this person shared the online questionnaire link with his colleagues. These candidates then shared the web link with the people they perceived as meeting the sample criteria (Chinese expatriates who have working experience in sub-Saharan Africa). The survey data is expected to provide evidence about the challenges in intercultural collaboration among Chinese and local employees, and the perceived effective and appropriate IHRM practices for local employee engagement.

The 74 Chinese expatriates who answered the online questionnaire are from CSOEa and another group company of CCSOE (code name: CSOEb). CSOEb also has many overseas branches in sub-Saharan African countries. Compared with CSOEb, CSOEa is more like a veteran investing in Africa. Besides the infrastructure construction projects, CSOEa also cooperates with and provides the know-how to African governments to develop and manage several free trade zones and industrial development parks. Although it is a single case, CCSOE itself is multi-leveled and very complexly structured, which can provide ample and rigorous information and pieces of evidence from different subunits to increase the reliability of conducting empirical studies. Furthermore, to

ensure reliability and validity, the interview transcripts, the analyzed social network maps, and questionnaire data were sent to the representative members of the Chinese expatriates in June 2021, to check the appropriateness, and they are required to give their signatures after reading and checking (see the Appendix for the file of the letter of consent attached).

Table 5: Interviewee information

Code	Gender	Age	Education background	Tenure	Working location and duration	Department and Job position
A	Male	50s	Master degree and MBA certification (in the U.S.); Chinese, English	8 years	Nigeria; 6 years	The joint-venture company, Senior manager
B	Female	40s	Bachelor degree; Chinese, English	12 years	Nigeria; 4 years	Human Resource Management Department, Director
C	Female	40s	Master degree (in Germany); Chinese, English, German	10 years	Ethiopia, 2 years	Legal Management Department, Director
D	Female	40s	Two bachelor degrees Chinese, English	16 years	Nigeria,2 years Ethiopia,2 years Tanzania, 3 years	Public Relations Department of Party Committee，Director Assistant
E	Male	50s	Master degree; Chinese, English	29 years	11 years	Senior Researcher and Deputy Director of the Research Office in the headquarters
F	Male	40s	Master degree; Chinese, English	18 years	Nigeria, 9 years	Engineer, Deputy General Manager of a subsidiary in Nigeria, and General Manager of the Supports Department in the headquarters
G	Male	40s	Bachelor degree; Chinese, English	15 years	13 years in African countries	Deputy General Manager of an overseas division in Mozambique
H	Male	50s	Master degree; Chinese, English	28 years	10 years in three African countries	Chief International Business Expert in the headquarters
I	Male	40s	Bachelor degree; Chinese, English	14 years	12 years in Nigeria	Marketing Department in a subsidiary, Director Assistant
J	Male	40s	Master degree; Chinese, English	8 years	5 years in Nigeria	Marketing Controller of a subsidiary
K	Male	50s	Master degree; Chinese, English, Arabic	15 years	10 years in Arabic countries and African countries	Senior management personnel of the Foreign Affairs Office in the headquarters
L	Male	50s	Bachelor degree; Chinese, English	21 years	16 years in African countries	Senior management personnel of the Engineering Administration Office in the headquarters
M	Male	40s	Master degree; Chinese, English	12 years	12 years in Nigeria	Manager in a subsidiary in Nigeria

Table 6: Interview overview

Code	Interview sound recording time	Work contents	Assignment location
A (Interviewed twice)	The first time: video chat using WeChat and was not recorded, notes were taken down; the second time: 74 minutes, audio recorded	Joint-Venture company: operating the Free Trade Zone	Lagos, Nigeria
B	85 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction	Abuja, Nigeria
C (Interviewed twice)	The first time: 50 minutes; audio recorded; the second time: 73 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: construction and operation of the Industrial Park	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
D	100 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiaries and overseas office: multi-business investment, civil engineering, and construction, management and development of industrial parks, Roads and railways construction	Abuja, Nigeria; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
E	84 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction, etc.	Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique
F	37 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction	Abuja, Nigeria
G	79 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiaries and overseas office: multi-business investment, civil engineering, and construction, management and development of industrial parks, Roads and railways construction	Nigeria; Mozambique
H	51 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiaries and overseas office: multi-business investment, civil engineering, and construction, management and development of industrial parks, Roads and railways construction	Not mentioned specific countries.
I	79 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction	Abuja, Nigeria
J	65 minutes, audio recorded	Joint-Venture company: operating the Free Trade Zone	Lagos, Nigeria
K	48 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction	Not mentioned specific countries.
L	124 minutes, audio recorded	Wholly owned subsidiary: multi-business investment, engineering, and construction	Botswana
M	61 minutes, audio recorded	Joint-Venture company: operating the Free Trade Zone	Lagos, Nigeria

Table 7: Foreign Language Ability

English	70
English and French	2
English and Arabic	1
English and African Indigenous Languages (Hausa, Swahili, etc.)	1

Table 8: The educational background

Bachelor Degree	45
Master Degree	27
PhD	2

Table 9: Overseas study experience

Yes	9
No	65

Table 10: Gender

Female	11
Male	63

Table 11: Firm Type

SOE and its overseas branches	69
The joint venture of SOE and local shareholders	5

Chapter 4: External embeddedness, social networking practices and external stakeholder engagement

4.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly introduces and discusses the results and findings from the e-mail surveys and interviews to explore Chinese expatriates' (of the studied CCSOE) social networking practices and external stakeholder engagement experience. I firstly collected the detailed information of their network actors to visualize their social network maps with VennMaker and made descriptive statistical tables that display how many actors are in each location sphere. VennMaker also has various convenient functions that enable the partition of three environments (corporate, market, living), and the display of strong, normal, or weak ties by choosing the thickness of the lines among actors, to help examine the roles and importance of different network actors (stakeholders). Additionally, there are different symbols to label the actors (e.g., gender marks, institutional marks, individual marks, group marks, etc.). Secondly, I extracted the key internal and external stakeholders according to the collected information of all the network actors and made a paradigm stakeholder map to compare with Toyota's and Novozymes' stakeholder maps. By qualitatively analyzing the interviewees' explanations, the general picture of their external embeddedness processes and efforts can be derived. Furthermore, the specific practices, problems, and implications of external stakeholder engagement are also provided.

Stakeholder analysis is a process of systematically collecting and analyzing qualitative information about the key individual, group, and organizational actors who can bring about influences to or are influenced by a social and natural phenomenon, to evaluate and assess their relevant interests and roles in decision-making or policy-making process (Reed *et al.*, 2009; Schmeer, 1999; Holland, 2007; Brugha and Varvasovszky, 2000; Grimble, 1998; Dos Muchangos, Tokai, and Hanashima, 2017). From a network perspective, the connections with stakeholders represent flows of material or non-material resources (Vance-Borland and Holley, 2011). Applying social network analysis (by creating network models and graphs) to identify the key external and internal stakeholders cannot only help study the relationships' patterns, and can also help clarify the relationships' structures (Otte and Rousseau, 2002; Park, Lee, and Jun, 2015; Holland, 2007).

As for the concepts of internal and external embeddedness, according to (Scott-Kennel and Michailova, 2016, p.138). internal embeddedness indicates "*the subsidiary's positioning within the MNE's global structure, and more specifically to internal network relationships between the subsidiary itself, the parent firm (headquarters) and peer subsidiaries.*" External embeddedness implies positioning the subsidiary in the local context and addresses its ability to synergized the firm-specific competences of external stakeholders (e.g., alliance partners, customers, clients, suppliers, and competitors) and the locational specific innovative resources from academic organizations and research institutes (Gulati, Nohria, and Zaheer, 2000; Verbeke, 2009; Scott-Kennel and Michailova, 2016, p.138).

To balance these two forms of embeddedness, subsidiaries should position themselves as the

bridge between internal MNE (corporate) and external host market relational networks (Scott-Kennel and Michailova, 2016). This important balancing position of subsidiaries can not only help MNEs exchange knowledge and achieve mutual development via both the internal and external network channels but also can support the rest of the MNE to establish unique and unit-specific competences (Scott-Kennel and Michailova, 2016, p.138)

4.2 Information of Chinese expatriates' locational preferences and social network maps

4.2.1   General Manager in Ethiopia (Qc)

✧   Preferences more important than others:

1) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

2) Human Resources accessibility (CE)

3) Governmental supportive settings (ME)

✧   Less important preferences:

All of the 3 preferences in LE

Figure 13: Guanxi network map of the General Manager in Ethiopia

In the Corporate Environment (CE), he has strong links with the Chinese CEO, Market

Department GM, and other Board members, as well as the Ethiopian Chairman and Ethiopian special advisor. In the CE, he also maintains relationships with institutional settings (local governments, Industrial Park Development Corporation, Ethiopia Investment Commission, Ethiopian ministries in charge of electricity and power, etc.)

In the Market Environment (ME), most of the relationships are with institutional settings (client firms, services providers, suppliers, etc.). The relationships with the local, foreign, and Chinese firms within the Industry Park (at which their company has governance function) are stronger than other firms in Ethiopia.

In the Living Environment (LE), he has strong links with his wife in China. In the local area, he has relationships with the local communities. He also has relationships that are not so strong with the Local Immigrant Service Agency, and other Chinese family members in China.

4.2.2 General Manager in Mozambique (Qd)

Figure 14: Guanxi network map of the General Manager in Mozambique

◇   Preferences more important than others:

1) Market Opportunities (ME)

2) Governmental supportive settings (ME)

3) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

60

◇   Less important preferences:

7) Working atmosphere (CE)

8) Livable local environment (LE)

9) Manifold City Life (LE)

In the CE, he has strong relationships with his colleague and agent within his firm in Maputo, the headquarters in Beijing, and also with the directors of government officials (roads, ports, and railway). In the LE, he has strong connections with his wife and daughter in China.

In the CE and ME, he has many relationships with institutions (law firms, accounting firms, government settings, local firms, Chinese firms, South African firms, and EU firms). He also knows some Chinese managers of the Chinese firms operating in Maputo. In the LE, he has relationships with the local communities, and weak links with Chinese Travel Agent and Chinese restaurants in Maputo, Chinese Embassy in Mozambique. He also has normal links with his classmates in China and colleagues in Botswana.

4.2.3 Top management member in Lagos, Nigeria (Qe)
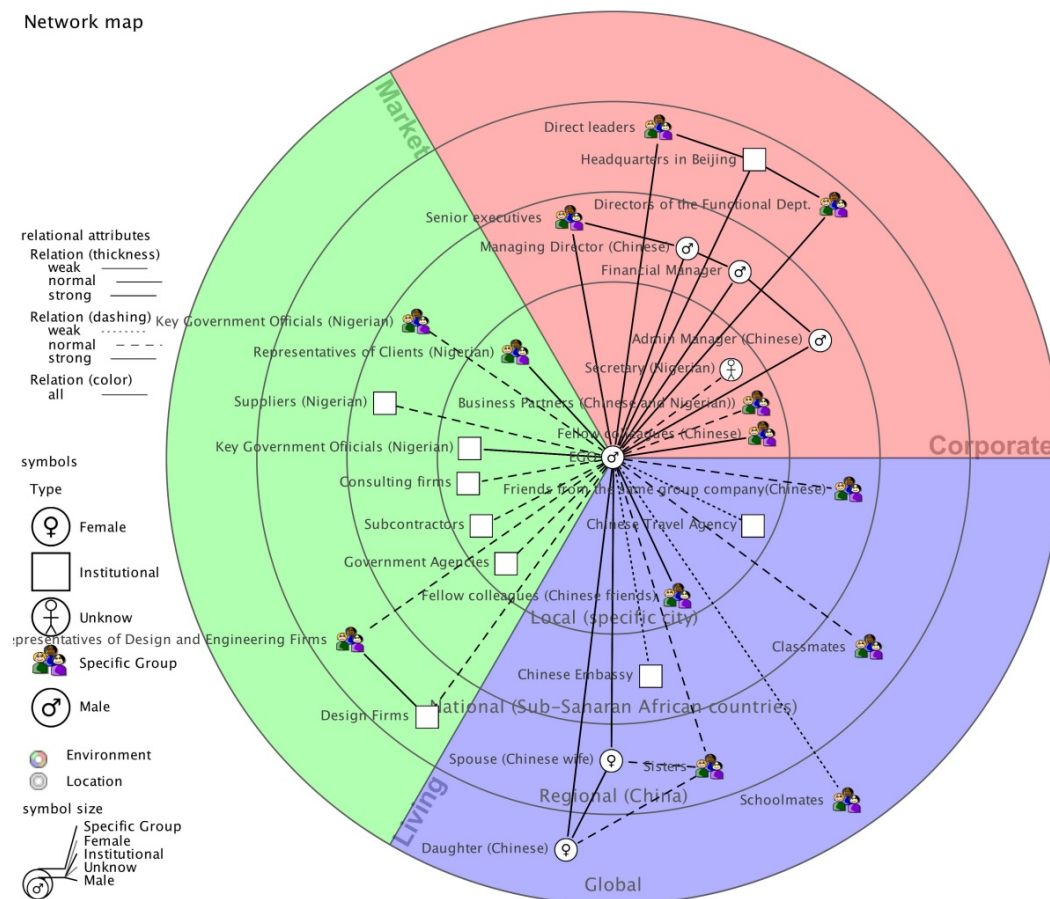
Figure 15: Guanxi network map of the top management member in Nigeria

◇   Preferences more important than others:

1) Market Opportunities (ME)

61

2) Governmental supportive settings (ME)

3) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

◇   Less important preferences:

All of the three preferences in the LE

In the CE, he has strong relationships with his colleagues, also with the Top-management team in Nigeria (Senior Executives, Managing Directors, Financial Manager, Admin Manager) and the Headquarters in Beijing (direct boss in HQ, Managing Directors in HQ, etc.). He has normal ties with a Nigerian secretary, and local business partners (Nigerian and Chinese).

In the ME, he has strong relationships with the local representatives of clients (Nigerian and Chinese) and key government officials (Nigerian). He has many normal links with local and Nigerian governments, Nigerian suppliers, subcontractors, and consulting firms. He also has normal links with representatives of Design and Engineering Firms, and other Design Firms in China.

In the LE, he has strong connections with his family members. He has normal ties with local colleagues (Chinese friends) and other colleagues in Nigeria. In China, he has normal ties with his sisters and classmates. He has weak ties with the local travel agency (Chinese), the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, and some schoolmates living in overseas countries (he has the experience of studying abroad).

4.2.4 Marketing Manager in Lagos, Nigeria (Qf)
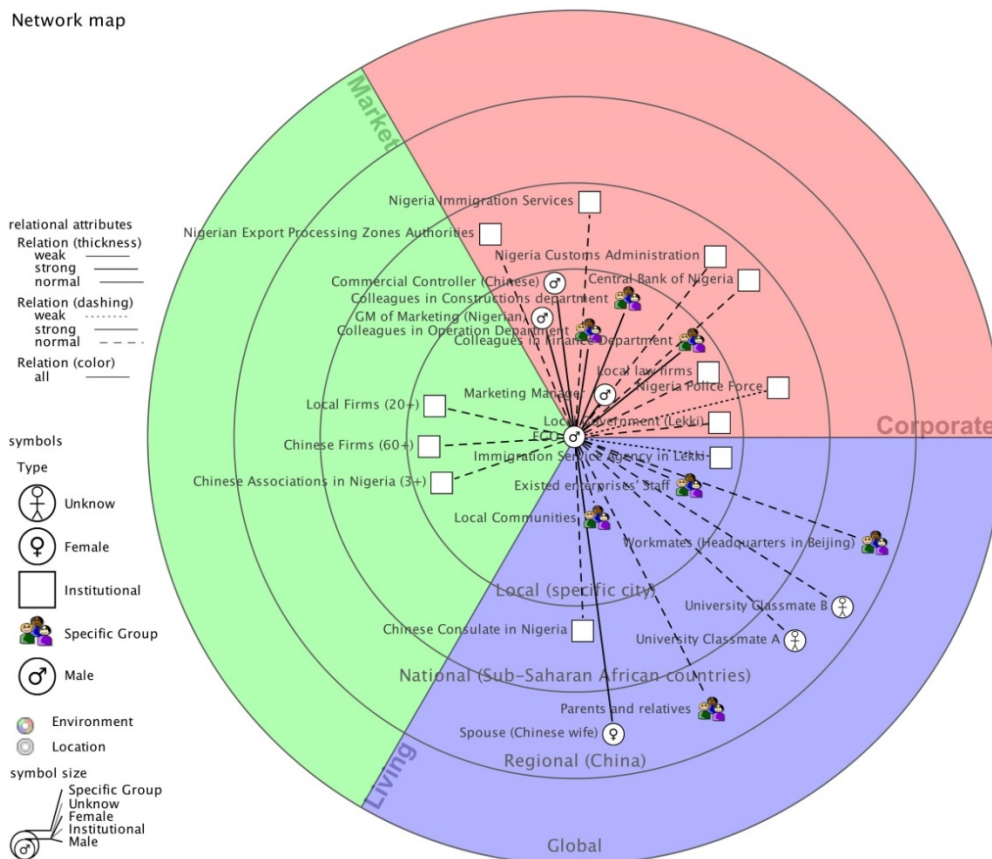
Figure 16: Guanxi network map of the Marketing Manager in Nigeria

62

◇ Preferences more important than others:

1) Governmental supportive settings (ME)

2) Market Opportunities (ME)

3) Cooperation with Suppliers and Customers (ME)

◇ Less important preferences:

All of the three preferences in the LE

In the CE, he has strong relationships with the GM of Marketing (Nigerian), Commercial Controller (Chinese), and colleagues (Chinese and Nigerian) in Lagos. He has normal links with local (Lekki, Lagos) governments, law firms, Nigerian governments, Nigerian banks, etc. In the ME, he has normal relationships with local firms, Chinese firms, and Chinese associations in the Lekki Free Trade Zone. In the LE, he has strong connections with his wife in China. Also, he has normal relationships with his parents and relatives in China, workmates in Beijing, Classmates in China.

4.2.5 Operation Department Manager in Lagos, Nigeria
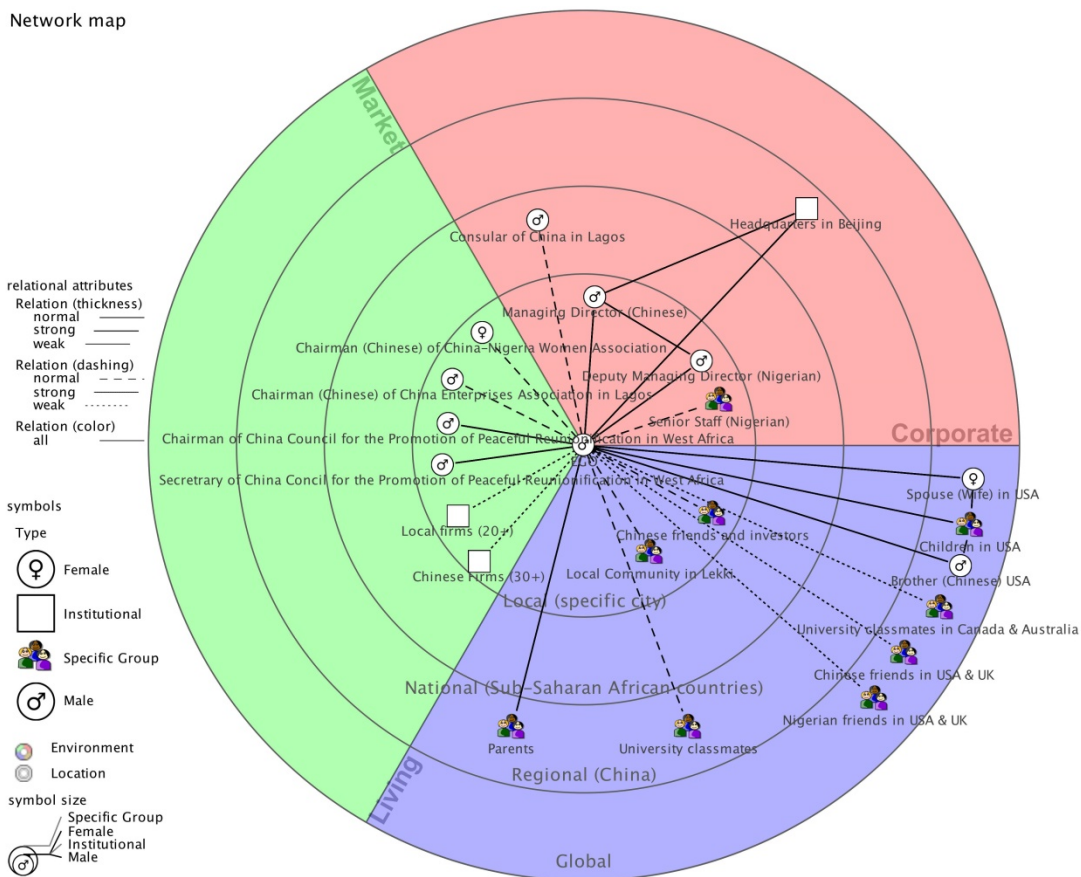
Figure 17: Guanxi network map of the Operation Department Manager in Nigeria

◇ Preferences more important than others:

1) Governmental supportive settings (ME)

2) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

3) Human Resources Accessibility (CE)

✧ Less important preferences:

7) Local Information Network (LE)

8) Manifold City Life (LE)

9) Cooperation with Suppliers and Customers (ME)

Figure 17 shows his extended globalized network map steaming from his educational background of studying abroad. In the CE, he has strong links with Chinese MD and Nigerian DMD, and also with the HQ in Beijing. In ME he has a strong link with the Chairman/Secretary of China council for the promotion of peaceful reunification in West Africa. In the LE, He has strong links with his parents in China, his wife, and children in America. In the CE, he has normal relationships with eh senior staff (Nigerian). In the ME, he has normal relationships with the chairman of the China & Nigeria Women Association, the Chairman of China Enterprises Association in Lagos, Local firms, and Chinese firms. In LE he has normal relationships with the local community, Chinese friends, and investors in Lagos. Also, he has normal relationships with his brother in the U.S. and some weak links with his classmates and friends (Chinese and Nigerian) living in overseas countries (Canada, Australia, UK, US).

4.2.6 Deputy General Manager in Abuja, Nigeria
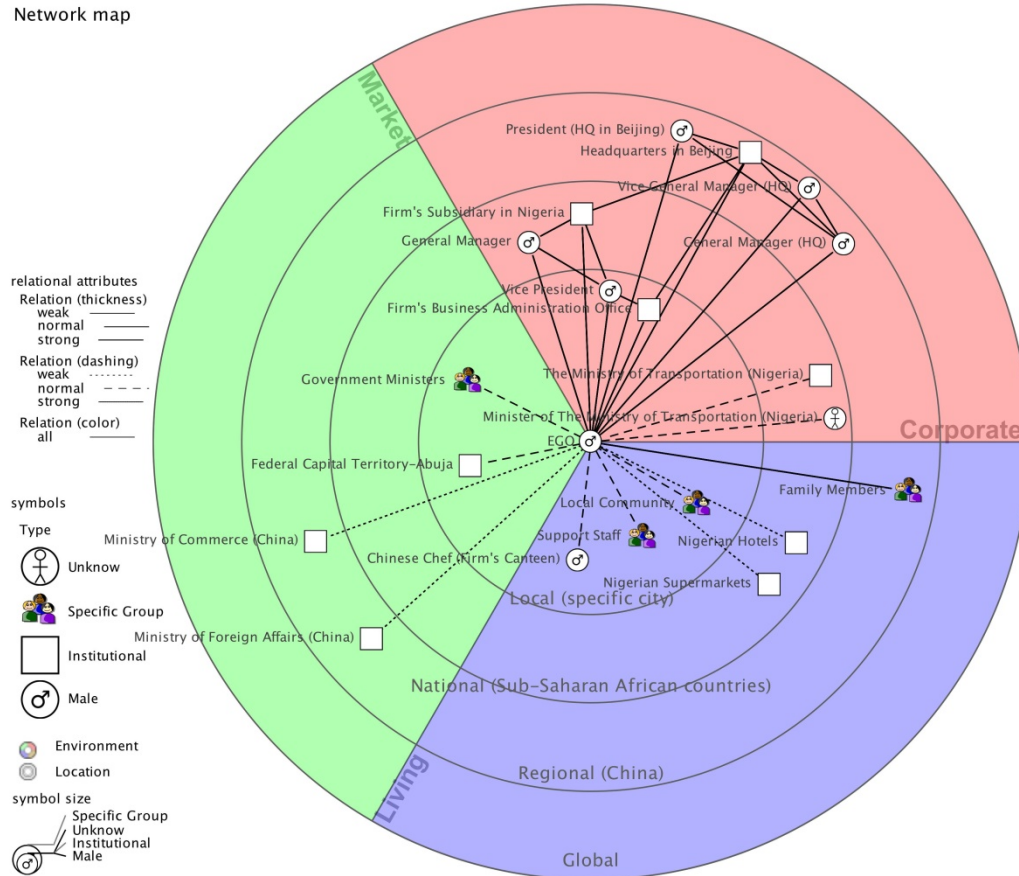
Figure 18: Guanxi network map of the Deputy General Manager in Abuja, Nigeria

✧ Preferences more important than others:

1) Human resources accessibility (CE)

2) Market Opportunities (ME)

3) Working atmosphere (CE)

✧ Less important preferences:

7) Manifold City Life (LE)

8) Cooperation with suppliers and customers (ME)

9) Local information network (LE)

In the CE, he has strong relationships with the HQ in Beijing, President (HQ), General Manager and the Deputy General Manager (HQ), firm's Business Admin office in Abuja, the Deputy General Manager of this office, and the subsidiary in Nigeria (another city) and the General Manager. In LE, he has strong relationships with family in China. In the CE, he also has normal links with the Nigerian minister of the Transportation Ministry, because his firm constructed a project cooperating with the Transportation Ministry.

In the ME, he has normal links with the local government officials and ministers (Abuja). He has normal links with the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China.

In the LE, he has normal links with Chinese cooks working at the firm's canteen, local support staff, and the local community. He also has weak links with Nigerian hotels and supermarkets, since he often visits these places when he goes on business trips.

4.2.7 Female Deputy General Manager in Ethiopia

Preferences more important than others:

1) Human resources accessibility (CE)

2) Market Opportunities (ME)

3) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)/ Governmental Supportive Settings (ME)/ Cooperation with Suppliers and Customers (ME)

Less important preferences:

7) Livable Local Environment/ Local Information Network (LE)

8) Working Atmosphere (CE)

9) Manifold City Life (LE)

Her locational preferences are different from other managers. But still, the important preferences concentrate on the CE and ME. In the CE, she has strong links with the local corporate management members, the Chinese president of the firm, Deputy General Manager of another city in Ethiopia. She has normal links with local governments, local law firms, the Ethiopia Investment Commission, and the Industrial Park Development Commission. She also has a strong link with the HQ in Beijing. In the ME, she has normal links with the China Chamber of Commerce in Ethiopia, local firms (50+), and Chinese firms (80+) in the industrial park. In the LE, she has a strong link with her

parents in China and normal links with High School Classmate A and University Classmate B.
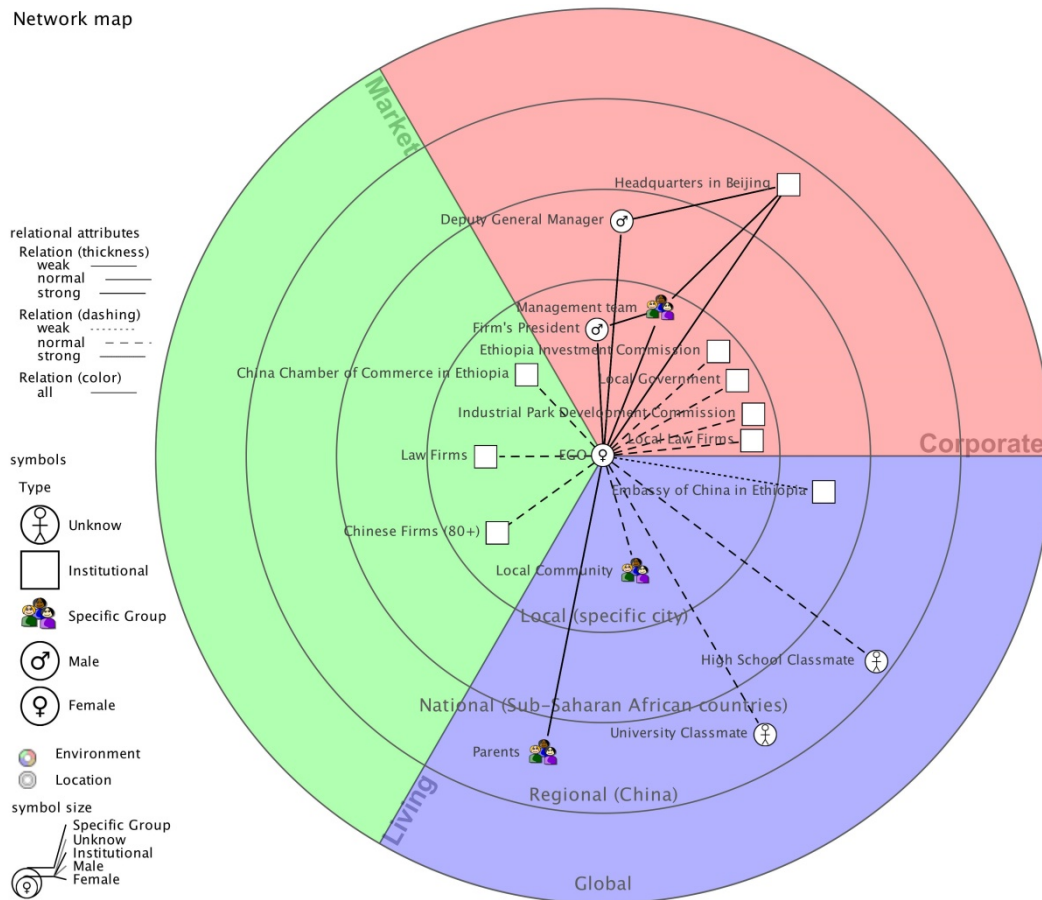
Figure 19: Guanxi network map of the Deputy General Manager in Ethiopia

4.2.8 Manager in charge of tender in Lagos, Nigeria

✧   Preferences more important than others:

1) Human resources accessibility (CE)

2) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

3) Market Opportunities (ME)

✧   Less important preferences:

7) Cooperation with Suppliers and Customers (ME)

8) Local Information Network (LE)

9) Manifold City Life (LE)

Figure 20: Guanxi network map of the Manager in charge of tender in Nigeria

In the Local CE, he has strong relationships with the Chinese Managing Director, DMD, Engineering Controller (Chinese), and the GM of the Construction Department. In the National CE, he has strong relationships with the Chinese Embassy, Chinese Consulate, and Economic and Commercial Section of the Chinese Consulate in Nigeria. Also, with their secretaries and Chief Officers who are supportive of his work. In the Regional CE (China), he has a strong connection with the HQ in Beijing. He has relationships with many Local and National institutions (e.g., Local government, Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authorities, Immigrant Services Office, Customs Office, Police Office).

In the Local ME, he knows the MDs & DMDs of the investors inside the Free Trade Zone. In the Local LE, he has Nigerian and Chinese friends (Colleagues). He has relationships with the local communities, local supermarkets, and stores. In China, he has a strong connection with his wife.

4.2.9 Department Manager in Lagos, Nigeria

✧   Preferences more important than others:

1) Market Opportunities (ME)

2) Human resources accessibility (CE)

3) Working Atmosphere (CE)

◇   Less important preferences:

7) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

8) Manifold City Life (LE)

9) Local Information Network (LE)
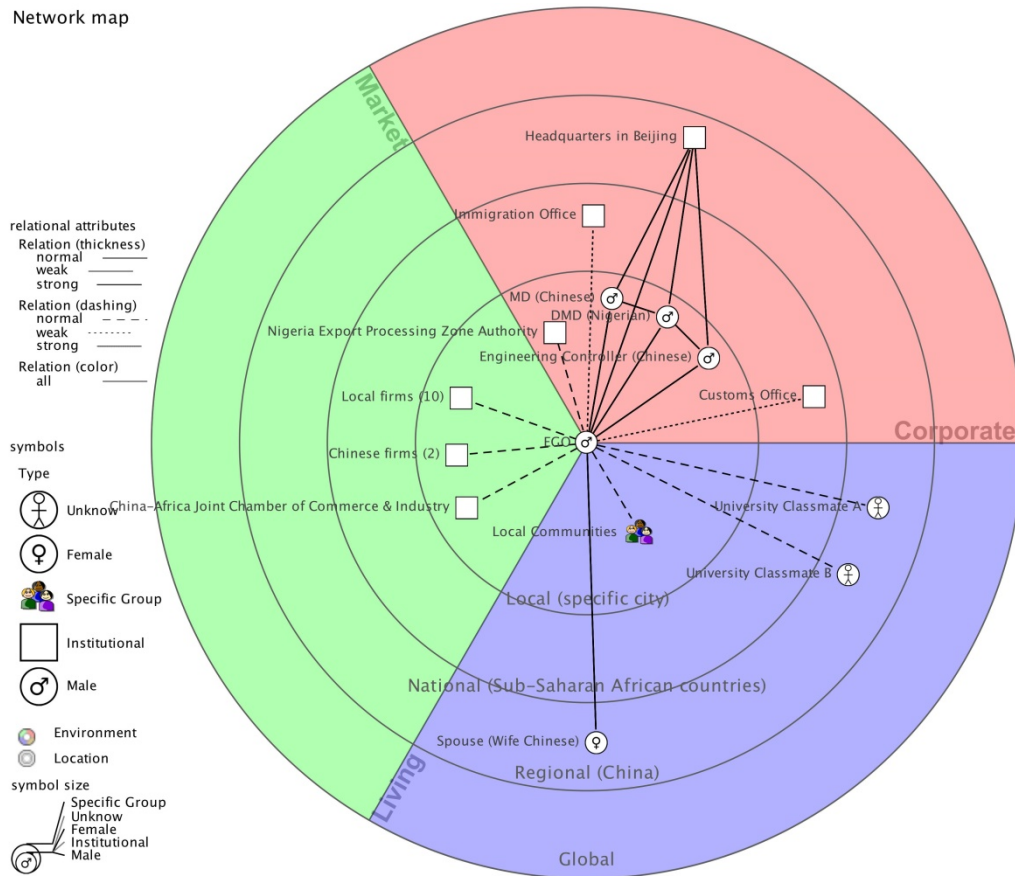
Figure 21: Guanxi network map of the Department Manager in Nigeria

His social networks are concentrated in the Local and China area. In the local CE, he has strong relationships with Chinese MD, Nigerian DMD, and Chinese Engineering Controller. He has normal relationships with the local Immigration, Customs Office, and Nigeria Export Processing Zone Authority. He has strong relationships with the HQ in Beijing.

In the local ME, he has normal relationships with local firms (10), Chinese firms (30), and the China-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry. In the LE, he has relationships with the local communities. He has strong connections with his wife in China and normal relationships with University Classmates A & B in China.

4.2.10 Manager/ interpreter in Abuja, Nigeria

◇   Preferences more important than others:

1) Working Atmosphere (CE)

2) Livable Local Environment (LE)

3) Collaboration within MNEs (CE) and the three preferences in ME

✧   Less important preferences:

7) Human Resources Accessibility (CE)

8) Manifold City Life (LE)

9) Local Information Network (LE)
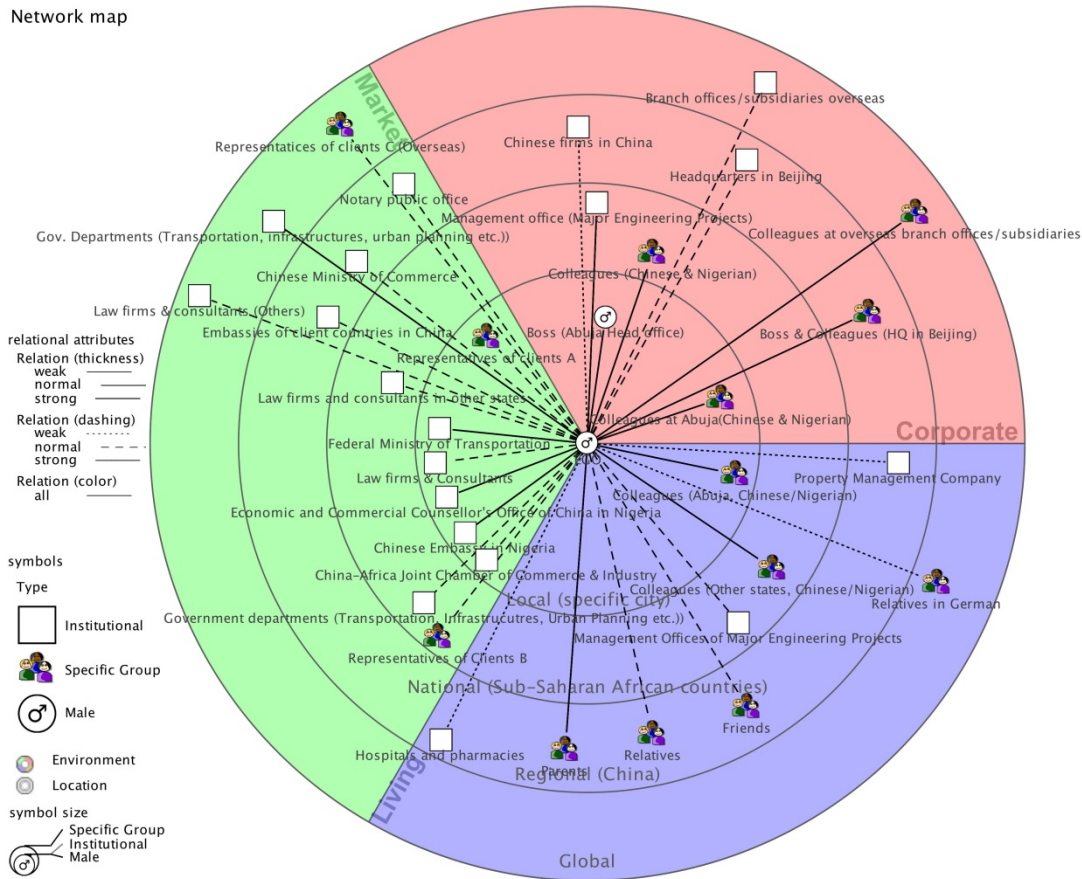
Figure 22: Guanxi network map of the Manager/Translator in Nigeria

This person is both a manager and a translator. He made a unique order of locational preferences. In the CE, he has strong links with his boss and colleagues at the Abuja office (Nigerian & Chinese), colleagues (other offices in Nigeria), and management offices of major engineering projects (at other cities of Nigeria). He has strong relationships with the HQ in Beijing, boss & colleagues in Beijing, other departments of the HQ, and normal relationships with overseas Departments of the HQ. He has strong relationships with colleagues at overseas branch offices/subsidiaries and the company's overseas branch offices/subsidiaries. He has normal relationships with other subsidiaries in overseas markets.

In the ME, he has strong relationships with the Federal Ministry of transport and works, the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, Economic and Commercial Counselor's Office of China in Nigeria. He has normal relationships with local law firms and consultants and the China Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He has normal relationships with representatives of clients at Lagos and other cities in Nigeria, government departments in charge of transportation

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infrastructures/ urban planning, etc., in client states, other law firms, and consultants in Nigeria. In China, he has normal relationships with the Notary public office, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, and Embassies of Client Countries. In Global ME, he has relationships with representatives of clients in various countries, government departments in charge of transportation/infrastructure/urban planning, etc., in client countries, and law firms and consultants in various countries.

In the LE, he has strong links with colleagues at Abuja head office (Chinese/Nigerian), and colleagues at other offices in Nigeria. He has a strong link with his parents in China. He has normal links with Chinese relatives and 2 or 3 Chinese friends. He has weak links with Property Management companies, Pharmacies, and Hospitals in China. He has relatives who are living in Germany (Chinese/German).

4.2.11 Interpreter in Mozambique
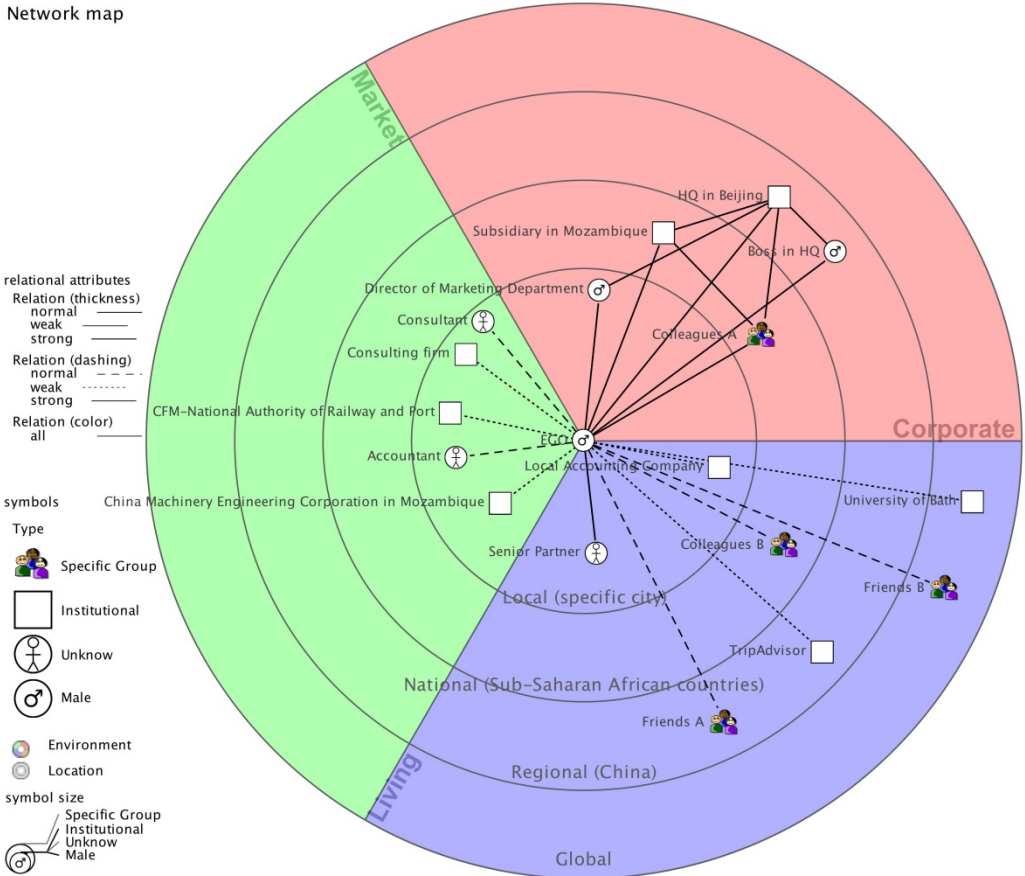
Figure 23: Guanxi network map of the Translator in Mozambique

✧   Preferences more important than others:

1) Manifold City Life (LE)

2) Livable Local Environment (LE)

3) Working Atmosphere (CE)

✧   Less important preferences:

7) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

8) Human Resources Accessibility (CE)

9) Cooperation with Suppliers and Customers (ME)

In the local CE, he has strong relationships with the Managing Director of the Marketing Department. In Mozambique, he has strong relationships with his colleagues and the subsidiary. In China, he relates to the boss and the HQ in Beijing strongly.

In the ME, he has relationships with local Accountants, Consultants, Aries Sercon (Accounting & Consulting firm in Mozambique), the National Authority of Railway and Port, and China Machinery Engineering Corporation in Mozambique.

In the LE, he has strong relationships with a local senior partner. He has relationships with colleagues (friends) in Mozambique. He has friends in China and the UK (University classmates). He has a weak link with TripAdvisor (Website).

4.2.12 General Manager's Secretary in Lagos, Nigeria

Figure 24: Guanxi network map of the General Manager's Secretary in Nigeria

◇   Preferences more important than others:

1) Manifold City Life (LE)

2) Local Information Network (LE)

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3) Livable Local Environment (LE)

✧   Less important preferences:

7) Collaboration within MNEs (CE)

8) Working Atmosphere (CE)

9) Market Opportunities (ME)

In the Local CE, he has strong links with the Managing Director and the Engineering Controller. He has normal relationships with the local government, local law firms, and the Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authorities. He has normal relationships with the Chinese Consulate in Nigeria. In China, he has strong relationships with the HQ in Beijing.

In the ME, he has normal relationships with CEOs from In-zone enterprises (30+), local firms (30+), Chinese firms (40+), China-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry, China-Africa Business Council, and the Nigeria Investment Promotion Committee.

In the LE, he has relationships with the local communities, Immigration Service Agency in Lekki, and the Chinese Consulate in Nigeria. In China, he has strong relationships with his wife Beijing. He also has a normal link with his University Classmate A.

4.3 External embeddedness, social networking, and external stakeholder engagement

Table 12 and Table 13 display the network actors of the Chinese expatriates in different locations. From these two tables, it can be observed that most of them are locally embedded in host countries, as there are generally more network actors located in host countries than in other locations. Social networks are valuable social capital for stakeholder engagement. Chinese expatriates' social networks tend to match with their locational preferences in Corporate, Market, and Living Environments. One's locational preferences (cognitive embeddedness) influence what kinds of relationships (and the degree of strength or weakness) they would like to construct, or what kind of person or institution they would like to choose as their business supporters in sub-Saharan African countries (see Figure 25).

From the surveys and interviews, the managers tend to value locational preferences like 'Market Opportunities' or 'Human Resources Accessibility', while the employees often show inclination for 'Manifold City Life' or 'Livable Local Environment'. The department that he or she works in or the position may also influence his or her locational preferences. For example, a Market Department General Manager thought that the preferences in the Market Environment are more important. Differently, non-management staff (normal employees, like the secretary, or the translator) thought the three preferences in the Living Environment are more important to them. Managers have to concern about whether their business activities or initiatives (assignments) can be successful or not in the host country. Thus, their locational preferences affect positively their strategic business decision-making and social network building initiatives.

Table 12: The network actors of the Chinese expatriates' social networks (at the Joint Venture firm in Lagos, Nigeria)

	Qa	Qe	Qf	Qg	Qj	Qk	Qn
Local city actors	>114	>10	>107	>61	>43	>20	>108
Other actors in Africa	8	>8	>6	1	8	2	7
Actors in China	4	8	>6	>3	>3	4	3
Global actors	1	2	0	>6	0	0	0
Total	>128	>28	>119	>71	>54	>26	>118

Note:

Other actors in Africa = actors in other cities of the host country and actors in other African locations

Qa = Senior manager A; Qe = Senior manager E; Qf = Middle manager F (Marketing Department); Qg = Middle manager G (Operation Department); Qj = Middle manager J (Bidding Department); Qk = Middle manager K (Administration Department); Qn = Employee n (Senior manager's secretary)

Table 13: The network actors of the Chinese expatriates' social networks (in other sub-Saharan African subsidiaries)

	Qc	Qd	Qh	Qi	Ql	Qm
Local city actors	>98	>61	>7	>90	>12	8
Other actors in Africa	10	7	>6	2	>7	3
Actors in China	>2	5	>7	5	>12	4
Global actors	0	0	0	0	>6	2
Total	>110	>73	>20	>97	>37	17

Note:

Other actors in Africa = actors in other cities of the host country and actors in other African locations

Qc = Senior manager C in Ethiopia; Qd = Senior manager D in Mozambique; Qh = Middle manager H in Abuja, Nigeria (Administration Department); Qi = Middle manager I in Ethiopia (Legal Management Department); Ql = Middle manager L in Abuja, Nigeria (also a translator); Qm = Employee M in Mozambique (an Interpreter)

Meanwhile, their social networking behaviors also reflect characteristics of Chinese and African social-cultural factors. For example, Interviewee A (see Figure 26 for his social network map) explained his social network (Guanxi) practice as follows:

"*As being a natural person, living and working in the host country, Guanxi or building social networks can be a very effective way for increasing understanding about local culture, and intercultural adjustment. Learning how to interact and communicate with local colleagues, local business partners, and local communities, maintaining a long-term friendship with local people benefit in improving living security and safeness, also in enriching my personal life experience. As being a member of senior management, I must adhere to Chinese and Nigerian laws and*

regulations. Besides, if I want to be a more successful senior manager, *I must think of how to merge the original organizational culture with the local culture. It is important to incorporate the particularities of local culture, while maintaining institutionalization, to achieve administrative effectiveness.* As for my networking practices in Nigeria, we humans are social beings, wherever we go and try to settle in, we need to make friends. The social network is a necessity for everyone. In Nigeria, I built relationships with business partners, and also with government officers. My Guanxi in Nigeria has four categories:

Relationships with governmental settings:

As the Federal Government and the State Government are the shareholders of our Joint-Venture company, I have established cooperative relationships with some ministers and officers from their urban planning, infrastructure construction, legal services, and human resource management departments. I also have relationships with the Customs Agency in the Free Trade Zone. I kept regular contact with the Chinese Embassy and Consulate, also the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. These are legalized and normal relationships at work.

Relationships with business partners:

When operating the Free Trade Zone, I need to attract investors. Also, I need to find contractors for different construction projects. Therefore, I have built business partnerships with their senior managers and some technological engineers. The relationship is twofold, I keep in contact with some of them in private times, and these people have become my friends. Some friendships turned into a close and long-term connection.

Relationships with local colleagues:

It is also twofold, at the workplace, and in private times. We went for a walk and had chitchats together. We played table tennis or chess games together, just to name a few.

Relationships with local people outside our firm:

I had some daily interactions with the local communities, local police officers, and local merchants selling souvenirs, and so on."

Figure 25: The dynamics of locational preferences, cultural values, cultural-cognitive embeddedness, and social networking practices
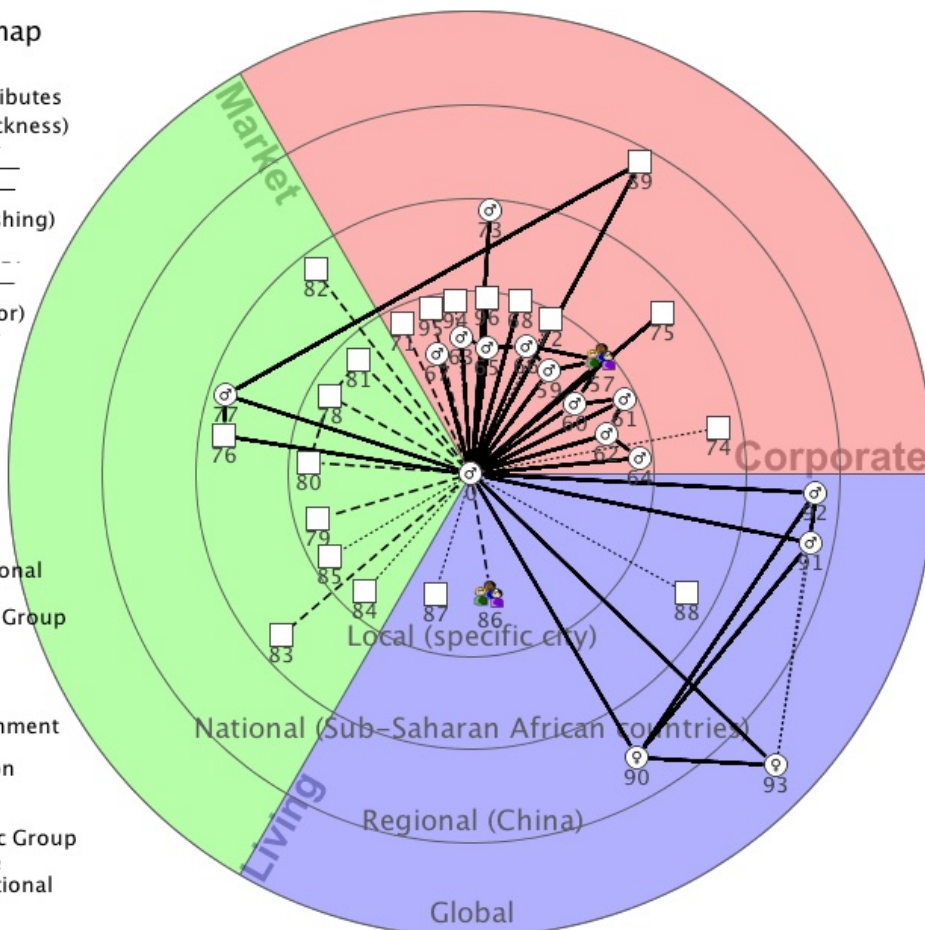
Figure 26: Manager A's social network map
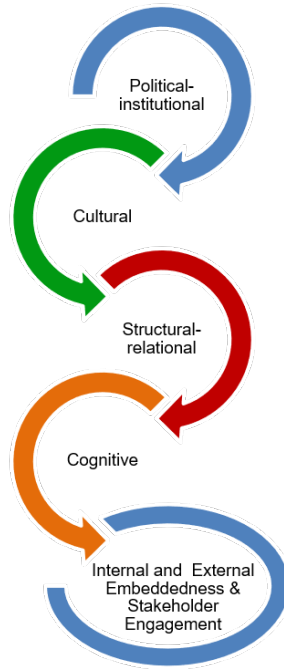
Figure 27: Embeddedness process towards internal and external stakeholder management

Following Interviewee A's narratives, Figure 27 is designed to reveal the Embeddedness process for achieving successful internal and external stakeholder engagement. For example, "*I must adhere to Chinese and Nigerian laws and regulations*" (Interviewee A) represents the efforts made for political-institutional embeddedness, and "*I must think of how to merge the original organizational culture with the local culture*" (Interviewee A) indicates the efforts made for cultural embeddedness.
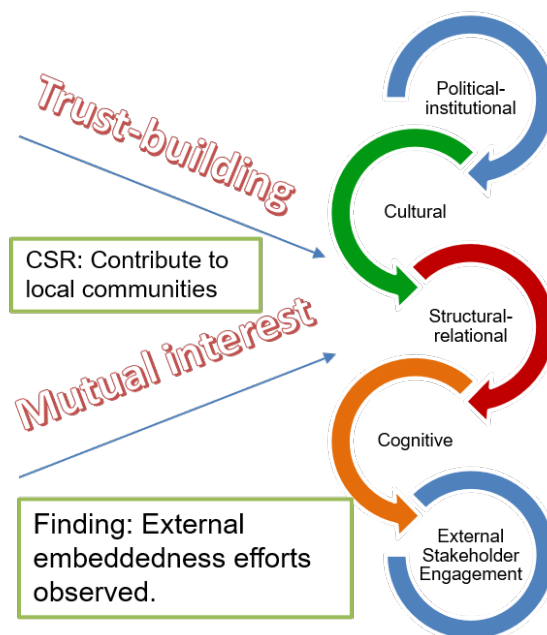
Figure 28: The mechanisms of the external Embeddedness process

Interviewees explained the key mechanisms (see Figure 28) of the external embeddedness process, which are building trust, finding mutual interests, maintaining long-term relationships with external stakeholders, and contributing to local communities:

- **Interviewee G:** "*We should pay attention to high context and low context culture…. Trust is crucial to winning the customer's heart. Western management stresses more on rational working relationships, not so emotional like us. …We built up friendly and pleasant relationships with them.*"
- **Interviewee A:** "*… I do have a basic understanding of sub-Saharan African Cultures. I read about the history of Africa. …In the post-colonial times, they fought for freedom and became independent. …In Nigeria, I've learned about the Yoruba culture. Alike with Chinese people, Yoruba people are also family-oriented. Also, they value social networking, accept the existence of hierarchy relationships, and the importance of maintaining mutual-beneficial social ties. Furthermore, similar to us, they also keep long-term relationships.*"
- **Interviewee L:** "*Botswana has a … efficient government and we cooperated with them and built many livelihoods infrastructure projects. We encourage local architecture students to come to our firm to do internship works. We have good relationships with local people and communities…I made many local friends as well. …We donated stationaries and computers to local primary schools and uniforms to local soccer teams. It feels great to help others as one's capacity allows.*"

By analyzing all of the thirteen social network maps and the detailed information of the internal and external stakeholders (see Table 14 to Table 17), Figure 29 and Figure 30 are finally synthesized to show the structural-relational embeddedness process, exhibiting the strong ties with their internal stakeholders (Chinese & local employees, Chinese & Local management members, and the HQ in China) that indicate the locational preference of 'Collaboration within MNEs'. Regarding other external stakeholders, Interviewees introduced that the relationships with Chinese & local colleges and universities are important channels for them to employ suitable local talents, which correspond with the locational preference of 'Human Resources Accessibility'.

As for the external stakeholder engagement, the company is now cooperating with Chinese and local universities to help cultivate skills and knowledge of local talents by providing financial support and study opportunities to local college students in Chinese universities. After receiving the courses, local talents will be provided with internship opportunities at the HQ, or formal employment opportunities at the subsidiaries in their home countries.

Another two necessary external stakeholders are the China-Africa Business Council and the Chinese-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The long-term cooperation relationships with these two associations are crucial for the company to find potential suppliers and clients, which adhere to the locational preferences of 'Market Opportunities' because within these two

associations there are many Chinese POEs and Chinese SOEs.

The connections with the local governments (as shareholders) and Chinese governmental organizations (e.g., Chinese embassies, consulates, and the Ministry of Commerce) reflect the locational preference of 'Governmental Supportive Settings'. Chinese & Local law firms and business consulting firms, and China International Contractors Associations are supportive stakeholders that have positive influences in political-institutional and cultural embeddedness processes, as they provide strategical know-how and specific knowledge that can improve organizational learning.

Table 14: The internal stakeholders of the Joint Venture Company in Lagos, Nigeria

Internal Stakeholder	Qa	Qe	Qf	Qg	Qj	Qk	Qn
HQ in China	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese & Local Colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese & Local Management Members	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 15: The internal stakeholders of the Chinese expatriates in other subsidiaries

Internal Stakeholder	Qc	Qd	Qh	Qi	Ql	Qm
HQ in China	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese & Local Colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese & Local Management Members	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 16: The external stakeholders of the Joint Venture Company in Lagos, Nigeria

External Stakeholder	Qa	Qe	Qf	Qg	Qj	Qk	Qn
Local Firms as Shareholders	✓			✓			✓
Local Governments as Shareholders	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Chinese & Local Colleges and Universities	✓					✓	✓
Chinese & Local Law Firms & Business Consulting Firms	✓	✓	✓				✓
China-Africa Business Council	✓		✓	✓			✓
Chinese-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Representatives of & Suppliers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Representatives of & Client Firms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
China International Contractors Association	✓		✓				✓
Chinese Governmental Settings (e.g., Embassy and Consulate, Ministry of Commerce)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Local friends & Local Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spouse & other Family Members	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 17: The external stakeholders of the Chinese expatriates in other subsidiaries

External Stakeholder	Qc	Qd	Qh	Qi	Ql	Qm
Local Firms as Shareholders	✓					
Local Governments as Shareholders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese & Local Colleges and Universities						
Chinese & Local Law Firms & Business Consulting Firms	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
China-Africa Business Council						
Chinese-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry		✓	✓		✓	
Representatives of & Suppliers	✓	✓				✓
Representatives of & Client Firms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
China International Contractors Association					✓	
Chinese Governmental Settings (e.g., Embassy and Consulate, Ministry of Commerce)			✓		✓	
Local friends & Local Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spouse & other Family Members	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 29: The typical social network map of the Chines expatriate managers in sub-Saharan Africa (internal embeddedness)
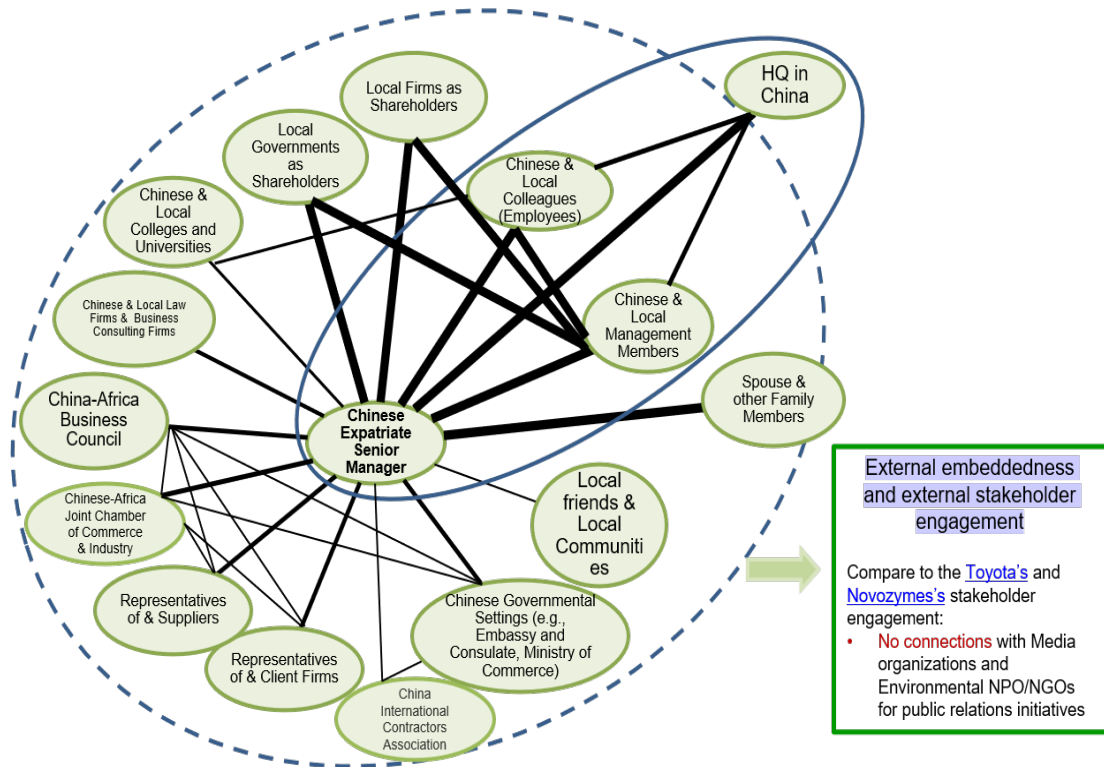
Figure 30: The typical social network map of Chines expatriate manager in sub-Saharan Africa (external embeddedness)
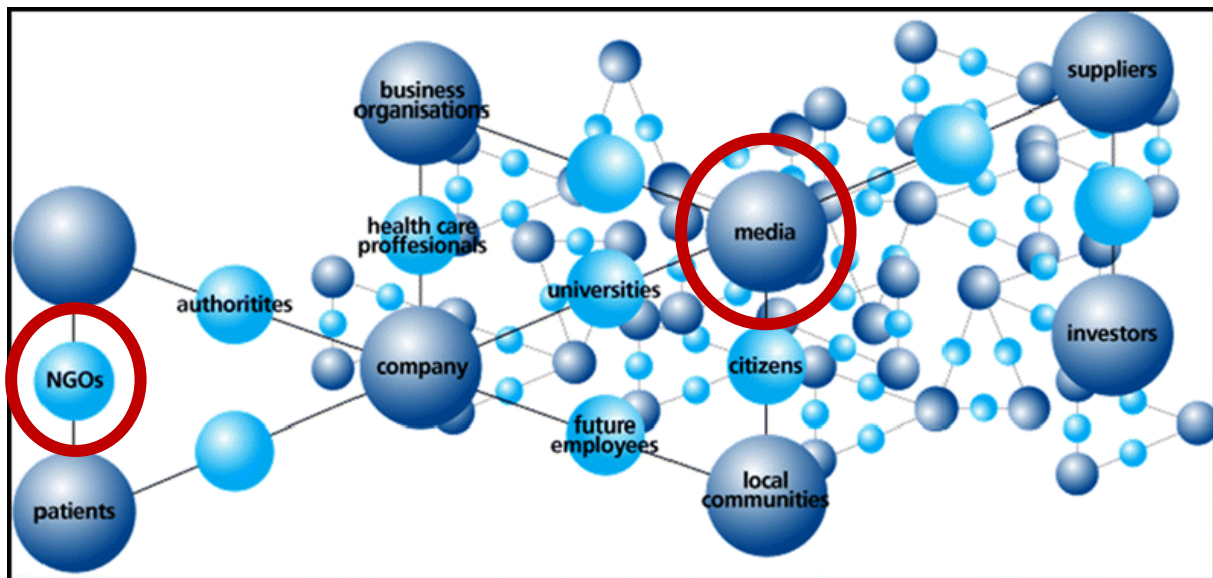
Figure 31: Novozymes' stakeholder map (Adapted and modified from Strand and Freeman, 2015, available from: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-013-1792-1, accessed on 2021/07/02)

Compared to Figure 31 (the stakeholder map of Novozymes; see Strand and Freeman, 2015) and Figure 9 (the stakeholder map of Toyota in Chapter 2), the studied Chinese Central SOE and its subsidiaries lack connections with media organizations and environmental NPOs/NGOs, which

exposes problems of lack supportive resources and information channels in building social image and external stakeholder engagement:

> **Interviewee B:** "…*the CSR management and affairs are not systematically done as some Western firms. <u>We are not so good at publicity or advocating what we have done before to the public. … It probably has something to do with Chinese people's characteristics and traditions of being modest. There is a saying in China:</u> "做好事不留名"（<u>do good deeds without leaving a name. Chinese people prefer to keep a low profile. We are afraid of too much advocating may lead to unexpected negative social estimation in host countries.</u>"*
>
> **Interviewee D:** "*Our firm is carrying on fulfilling CSR … <u>But it is also true that we have ignored publicity issues and we do not want too much exposure.</u> In Tanzania, we built a road for the local community. After finishing the construction, local residents expressed thanks to us. Later, a Japanese firm came to invest in that area. They built a primary school for the local communities and painted the national flags of Japan and Ethiopia. <u>They know how to advocate for themselves. We just provided a simple steamed bun to the local community, whilst they provided a well-made croissant with butter to the local community.</u> We should learn from them how to build a better social image.*"

From the exemplary quotations above, there are several problems identified. First of all, interviewees perceived that the CSR initiatives were not systematically conducted. Interviewees explained that their company has passive attitudes and is unskillful in dealing with publicity problems. They also admitted that their company is not good at employer branding and social image building. Therefore, they proposed the need of learning from other MNEs (e.g., the Japanese firm mentioned by Interviewee D), being more considerate of local people and communities' interests and demands, and further developing skills and strategies to handle public relations problems effectively in the future.

Organizational learning and change have the potential to develop the organization and transform it into a dynamic and self-learning organization. Also, organizational learning can allow the parallel transformation from an organization to its stakeholders and the whole society (Martinuzzi and Krumay, 2013). The main revelation of economic depression or unstable geopolitical environment is that individuals and organizations should be more sensitive to the changing context factors. This is a significant issue for survival. To adjust to the current and future context and compete with other firms, organizations should pay more attention to how to nurture and develop human resources to the largest extend and how to obtain resistant and sustainable performance. with transparency, risk management, and the alignment of HR strategies with CSR initiatives. More and more Japanese MNEs begin to stress sustainable development. For example, Toyota is undergoing a transformation focusing on CSR initiatives and new ways of HR management.

Specifically, concluded from the case of Toyota, there are some implications around HR

policies for CSR. The first group of implications is for the recruitment policy: first of all, the company should use social networks and business links adequately to identify potential human capital and talents, and then the company should recruit people who show commitment to socially responsible management and ethical management. The second group of implications is for diversity and equal opportunities policy: treating employees fairly is the minima. Moreover, the company should maintain ethical standards in managing employment relationships and developing social inclusion. Thirdly, as for the improvement of employee involvement and communications, the company should inculcate employees with the purpose of organizational CSR strategy and policies. Senior management should demonstrate a commitment to CSR and build trust with employees. Regarding organizational culture, employee values need to be aligned with the organizational values that underpin the CSR strategy and policies. In addition, managers should encourage employee voices and provide chances to let employee express their true perceptions. Furthermore, the HR department should assist the company to develop employee volunteering. As for the performance management and appraisal policy, the HR department should help create meaning in work to improve employee's engagement and commitment. Also, the HR department should ensure employee wellbeing is monitored. As for the final part, training and development policy, it is necessary to educate employees about the significance of an organization's ethical standards and code of conduct. HR department could design training courses to support culture change initiatives and help embed a commitment to CSR (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012).

According to Takeuchi (2009), although Western HRM research has major influences both academically and in real practices, the Japanese management style is somewhat unique and different from the Western management style. More and more companies seem to discard the traditional 'Japanese way' that barred them from efficient management and gaining profits. A phenomenon of organization and HRM transformation pursuing business sustainability is detected with a variety of evidence, especially on the issue of the strategic alignment of HRM and CSR agenda underpinned by Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (2011). CSR initiatives begin to take a multi-stakeholder view and aligned the internal focus to HRM activities. They provide support to each other and eventually contribute to the improvement of performance both economically and socially. There are some possible features of HRM-CSR-Performance linkage:

(1) Economic downturn leads to a 'Green world' with changing HR function facilitates CSR activities. HRM and CSR fuse and organizations demand sustainability.

(2) The CEO will drive the people management strategy for the company with the belief that employees' roles and behaviors determine organizational performance. Hence, he or she will work closely with an executive team comprising the heads of HRM, CSR, and marketing departments, data specialists to drive a whole, sustainable management program.

(3) HRM will become a more holistic approach that combines people with society. HR departments play a key role in developing CSR programs.

(4) Job seekers prefer an employer brand with strong environmental and social credentials. Regarding job design, HR departments will help nourish a close connection between employers and employees' aspirations and lifestyles. The incentive package will not be just

reward-related. For example, by promoting a flexible working style, employees may be allowed to work at home or may have paid secondments and sabbaticals to work for needy causes. Employees may enjoy working in flat and fluid organizational environments with less hierarchy and have more opportunities to participate in decision-making to feel their responsibility for the organization's success.

(5) From now, diversity and work-life balance will be viewed as sources of strength and competitive advantage. Organizations will dedicate more energy to engage all of their stakeholders. CSR policies and activities will focus more on socially responsible HRM, and it will help organizations gain sustainability and achieve better performance by improving employee engagement and reforming organizational culture. As organizations adopt a more holistic HR development approach, employees are more engaged and likely to have a job for life.

Successful CSR programs rely heavily on enlightened people management practices, and in this context, the HRM department is suggested to be the coordinator of CSR activities in constructing harmonious employment relationships and caring about the interests of external stakeholders (Sharma, Sharma and Devi, 2009). It seems that there is a growing trend that organizations have started to use CSR activities armed with a strong and committed organizational culture as well as socially responsible HRM policies and practices to build a reputation and improve profitability, employee engagement, social performance, and legitimacy.

It is recognized that in fact, the role of the HR function in embedding the CSR values in the organizational culture is enormous and has been highlighted by more and more corporations from the developed world like Japanese firms. Also, adopting socially responsible HRM practices and CSR policies for organizational learning are also important parts of the effective inter-unit knowledge transfer of MNCs. This transformation appears to be global, since it is also detected in MNEs' subsidiaries in emerging countries, for instance, in China, which justifies its description as a future trend.

4.4 Discussion and implications for stakeholder management and HRM-CSR linkage

The company begins to put more effort into employee diversity and stakeholder engagement. For example, Interviewee C emphasized that:

> "*Absolute fairness or absolute distinguishing can all make people think of discrimination and feel uncomfortable. Diversity management and intercultural management are delicate and complicated. Thus, we should think of the nuances, and provide treatment with flexibilities*".

From her narratives, the company is now valuing flexibility in diversity management. To engage the internal stakeholders (employees), especially listening to the local employees' voices, there exist direct channels connecting local employees with their directors (line managers), and

with the senior managerial members to convey their needs and demands in overseas branches. Furthermore, they rely on the local HR manager/assistant to help solve conflicts and build trust relationships with local employees. Interviewee C also further said that they are now hiring more female employees and paying attention to young generation employees' needs and demands both in the host and home countries. Further details will be introduced and discussed in Chapter 5.

As for the external stakeholder engagement, to prevent conflicts and learn local legislation knowledge, they also maintain long-term cooperative relationships with local lawyers and legal consultancy firms to help them with contract making and dispute resolution with local employees. Moreover, they have well relationships with local monarchs and local tribal chiefs to help with smoothing the intercultural communication with residents of local communities. All of these efforts help them develop more ethical social networking practices (ethical Guanxi) to engage internal and external stakeholders.

From the official website of the Chinese government, the BRI[8] has visions and goals as follows.

> "The connectivity projects of the Initiative will help align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, tap market potential in this region, promote investment and consumption, create demands and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and mutual learning among the peoples of the relevant countries, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace, and prosperity."

All of the interviewees mentioned that the BRI has strategic importance to their company, especially to the overseas branches. The BRI provides them guidance for thinking of how to improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of their management practices and policies and emphasizes the significance of humanistic care as one of the most important values in their organizational culture.

The overseas branches have contributed to local societies by paying attention to environmental protection in the decision-making process as well as in the implementation phase. They have helped the host countries improve infrastructure development and industrialization. They have created a large number of diversified job opportunities for local people with different skills, talents, and educational backgrounds. They have put a lot of effort into improving local employee engagement with satisfied and flexible incentives and rewards. They incorporate the philosophy of humanistic care into managing local employees' wellbeing.

Although they think that it is important to build good social reputations and a socially

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[8] The State Council of China (2015). Full text: action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative, URL: http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/publications/2015/03/30/content_281475080249035.htm, accessed on November 13, 2020.

responsible brand image for achieving sustainable development. They have been taking a relatively passive attitude towards publicity and advocating issues. They have been avoiding overexposure, due to the worry of generating opposing or unexpected negatives social impressions. Interviewee D admitted that their company should learn (e.g., learning from Japanese firms) how to build their social image to appeal to the preferences of local people. Interviewee B also pointed out that BRI has a strategic significance on the company, but it is easier said than done. There are achievements and also failures. Therefore, an important task for Chinese SOEs is to collect and analyze public sentiments. The public relations management of this Chinese SOE has not been of interest, as the Chinese expatriates deem that as long as they are playing their part well in accordance with the code of conduct of their firms and comply with local laws and regulations, the "smear campaigns" (as perceived by the Chinese expatriates) of some media press would not bring about actual damages to their social networks and strong ties. However, public relations management is also a crucial part of organizational CSR initiatives for connecting external stakeholders. Although the Chinese SOE is now issuing the annual sustainability report from the headquarters, and overseas branches are also contributing to the local communities, each branch does not have its sustainability CSR report published to local people. This gap may let others question information transparency. Moreover, the propagation should be in a heartfelt manner, to win the recognition and acceptance of local communities and people.

Chapter 5: Internal embeddedness, cultural-crossvergence, IHRM architecture, and internal stakeholder engagement

5.1 Introduction

Minbaeva and DeCieri (2018, p.21) point out that obtaining management legitimacy is a big challenge to MNEs and their subsidiaries when the two sides' institutional demands are distinct. Different institutional context factors cause difficulties to subsidiaries in maintaining internal and external legitimacy, as they need to confirm their management practices to the logic of the different institutional environments in home countries and host countries (Kostova and Roth, 2002; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999). The evaluation standards or 'rulers' for assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of IHRM practices and policies are not homogenous in divergent institutional environments. Moreover, sometimes because the headquarters or the sister subsidiaries may hold different expectations on a specific subsidiary's role in transferring HRM knowledge or practices, more complicated problems will probably occur (Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018, p.21). Therefore, another considerable challenge is how to align IHRM practices and policies with the anticipations and demands held by different internal and external stakeholders.

Nowadays, in a turbulent global environment, at the corporate (meso) level, SIHRM metrics should pay more attention to employees' needs, demands, and interests, and should embrace effective HR practices and policies that related to employee wellbeing, to improve sustainability (Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018). At the micro-level, individual employees' feedbacks toward implemented HR practices and policies may also differ, depending on how they perceive and interpret relevant HR information and experience (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018). Regarding the differences in organizational intent, the actual HR practices, and individual feedback, there is still not enough empirical studies, which is possibly related to the lack of multilevel theoretical modeling and multilevel research in the Strategic IHRM field (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Gerhart, 2005; Minbaeva and DeCieri, 2018; Wright and Nishii, 2007).

With the concerns above, based on the multilevel framework (see the cross-cultural lens in Chapter 2), this chapter provides summarized qualitative results, findings, and detailed discussions on how cultural and institutional/structural contingency factors influence the strategic alignment of IHRM practices with organizational goals and strategies and IHRM architecture in the cultural-crossvergence process and exploring the legitimacy and appropriateness of their IHRM practices, and how they conduct internal stakeholder engagement to facilitate embedding themselves into sub-Saharan African countries. As participants mentioned in the semi-structured interviews, although the company has been providing various types of training for HR development, they thought that it is still necessary to design more sophisticated and more effective courses and programs, especially for Chinese expatriates and African employees in their subsidiaries to improve their intercultural competences and build the foundation of smooth intercultural communication at intercultural workplaces. This point is important for the company to conduct internal stakeholder engagement and realize internal embeddedness.

5.2 Data analysis and findings

5.2.1 Company development history, vision, and strategies

Table 18 below shows the timeline and symbolic event/action/features of organizational changes that happened before 1979 and from 1979 till nowadays based on the company's official website and the narrative of interviewee A and interviewee C. All of the interviewees mentioned the importance of adopting localization strategies, philosophies, and principals. From analyzing the company materials, it appears that some major changes happened. For example, the headquarters and the overseas branches all began to pay more attention to organizational transformation and legal management.

Table 18: Timeline of Organizational Change

Period	Event/Action & Features
Pre-1979	The company belonged to the Foreign Aid Bureau of the Ministry of Railways.
1980-the 1990s	The company reported a lack of talents, specialists, and expertise in operating overseas businesses and projects for the early phase. • Exemplary quotation: *In some overseas branches, there were no legal management employees. Chinese engineers, project managers, and marketing managers had to ask local lawyers and local law firms to help in solving conflicts and disputes.* (Interviewee C)
1995-2005	The overseas projects that the company was doing as a contractor grew geometrically. It was a period of rapid development and the company recruited and designated many talents (engineers, legal management personnel, project managers, translators & interpreters, etc.) as expatriates to overseas branches. In 2003, The company merged and became a group firm of another Chinese central SOE.
2008	In China, domestic laws and regulations were amended (external environment). The company became a listed corporation on the stock market. The legal management of the company was improved as well (internal environment). • Exemplary quotation: *As a listed corporation, we are controlled and receiving scrutiny from both domestic and international laws and regulations, which indicates that we should set a higher standard for ourselves and stringently carry on self-controlling and self-management. Our department is now participating more and can have a say in the decision and strategy-making process.* (Interviewee C)
2018 till now	The company launched a new strategy focusing on the "*Grand Vision and Abiding Goal of Overseas Development*". • Exemplary quotation: *It can be called the "1+N" strategy, which means to reform (the organization) and become more diversely structured. We will keep enhancing our specialties of constructing and operating railways, real estate, roads, bridges, city planning projects, airports, and water conservancy projects as a contractor, whilst expanding our business investment into Trade and Logistics industries, Industrial investment, property management, and Free Trade Zones' development as an investor. This is a role upgrade in a new stage of development.* (Interviewee A)

The headquarters put forward the new strategies, visions, and long-term development plans that focus on investing and operating the business in overseas markets. The company would like to keep the strengths and specialties of being a construction contractor and develop other businesses as an investor or an operator. The headquarters is the initiator and the coordinator. Meanwhile, the

overseas branches are the implementers and practitioners in this holistic and systematic organizational change and transformation process.

As being a member of the company's top management personnel, Interviewee A explained the company vision and strategies holistically and systematically:

> "*There is an old proverb in China, which is 'without compass and square, one cannot form squares and circles'* （无规矩不成方圆，WúGuīJǔBùChéngFāngYuán）*. No matter in China, or Africa, a modernized MNE should be on an internationalized and commercialized development path. As for being an international conglomerate, our business philosophy, or policies, and principles are Internationalization, Specialization, Localization, and Commercialization. These four mindsets formed the cornerstone.*
> - ✧ *Internationalization: we should possess a Global Vision.*
> - ✧ *Specialization: no matter of managing Free Trade Zone or industrial parks, or being a contractor for civil engineering and construction projects, different professional markets demand different dedicated talents or human resources. Specialization is the key to achieving excellent business efficiency.*
> - ✧ *Localization: as I mentioned before, this is the premise. We need to deepen intercultural awareness, otherwise, we will become like duckweed, floating with a rootless feeling in host countries.*
> - ✧ *Commercialization: as a central state-owned enterprise, we should also obey the competitive principles and regulations of the modern market competition. This is the threshold.*"

From interviewee A's explanation, we can observe the contingency approach this CCSOE has been taking in the reconciliation of "Globalization" and "Localization". The four mindsets mentioned in the novel organizational strategies exhibit that they are not practicing a dichotomous way of thinking, but a stereoscopic way of thinking in strategic planning and decision-making processes.

5.2.2 The strategic integration of IHRM practices and policies and the cultural crossvergence process of the IHRM system

According to Interviewee A's quotation above, this company is practicing the new business strategy of "*Internationalization, Specialization, Localization, and Commercialization* (marketization)" as the guidance of operating overseas business and organizational transformation. Table 19 shows the summarized interview results. Based on the research questions listed in Chapter 2 and the interview questions asked to the thirteen interviewees, the interview transcripts are categorized and analyzed under the four research objects (IHRM integration/ cultural-crossvergence process; strategic alignment of IHRM practices and policies with organizational/ business strategies; IHRM and cross-cultural collaboration/ communication; and socially

responsible IHRM and HRM-CSR linkage). According to the different themes of the four interview objects, keywords related to their organizational culture, management system, HRM practices and policies, cross-cultural management practices, and CSR practices were extracted from the transcripts.

Table 19: The research objects and the corresponding themes and keywords from interviewees' narratives

Research object	Main theme	Keyword
IHRM integration/ cultural-crossvergence process	a. IHRM system architecture b. Differences and similarities in HRM systems of the HQs and overseas branches c. The role and function of the HRM department and members	a. The dual-track HRM system/ Hybrid organizational culture b. Integrated HRM system/ marriage and fusion c. Chinese expatriate HR manager/local HR manager or assistant/ knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing
Strategic alignment of IHRM practices and policies with organizational/ business strategies	a. Novel organizational/business strategies and the influences of BRI b. Selection and recruitment c. Employee retention/ engagement/commitment d. Training and HR development e. Legal, ethical, and diversity management f. Performance appraisal, reward, and compensation	a. Localization/ marketization/ internationalization strategies/ Chinese managerial persons' perceptions about BRI and the strategic implications of BRI b. Workforce localization/ on-campus recruitment with local universities/the employment criteria of educational background and skill c. Humanistic care/ employees' voices and communication channels for needs d. The 'Mentor and Apprentice' programs (on-the-job skill training)/ foreign language training programs (French, English, Portuguese)/ orientation meetings and briefings for overseas assignments/ the 'Rainbow Plan' for developing young employees e. Consulting local law firms and learning local laws and regulations/ taking care of female employees', young employees', and local employees' needs and demands with flexible management policies and solutions f. Cannot use the 360-degree appraisal stiffly without flexibilities/ maintaining workplace harmony/ equal pay for equal work/ overseas assignment incentives for Chinese expatriate staff, and holiday/ vacation arrangements
IHRM and cross-cultural collaboration/ communication	a. Intercultural experiences, cross-cultural learning, and cultural adjustment b. Intercultural communication and awareness/ sensitivity	a. The introductions of Chinese Expatriates' self-learning experiences and learning experiences provided by their company, of the local histories, ideologies, culture, traditions, values, and organizational culture / their perceptions on the similarities and differences between African Ubuntu culture and Chinese Confucian culture b. The introductions of intercultural workplace relationship problems/ workplace atmosphere/employee relations/ mutual trust and understanding/ conflict solutions/

			ethical and culturally sensitive Guanxi networking with internal stakeholders
Socially responsible IHRM and HRM-CSR linkage	a.	Internal and external embeddedness, and stakeholder engagement	a. Employer branding/ localization/ humanistic care and ethics/ environment protection and CSR contribution to local communities/ ethical Guanxi networking/ social image, reputation, and public relations
	b.	Sustainable IHRM and organizational transformation for long-term development	b. Sustainability/ organizational learning/ no stiff mimic, learning the advantages of Western, Japanese, Nigerian MNEs and Chinese POEs while keeping Chinese SOE characteristics

5.2.3 The current IHRM practices, policies

5.2.3.1 Employment, recruitment, and selection

The Chinese SOE has consistent criteria and requirements for employee recruitment. They have a high requirement of foreign language proficiency in English, French, Portuguese, etc. As for the educational background, most of the employees graduated from "211, 985" universities[9] in China with academic excellence. Some of them have overseas study experiences. Some departments, for instance, the Legal Management Department, require Chinese applicants at least to have a master's degree and major in jurisprudence when they study in graduate or post-graduate programs. Local applicants will be assigned to different job positions according to their educational backgrounds and skills as well.

In overseas branches, to practice the workforce localization strategy, the company employed a large number of local employees and during the graduate season, they organize job affairs at local universities. For example, in Nigeria, the subsidiary has 15,000 local employees and about 800 Chinese expatriates. Many departments in subsidiaries begin to employ more local employees as middle or senior managerial persons, but still, most of their occupations are deputy managers/ assistant managers/ assistant directors. At the Joint Venture, they have a Nigerian Chairman and several Nigerian senior board members.

5.2.3.2 Employee retention, training, and career development

The headquarters organizes orientation meetings for Chinese expatriate employees before they go aboard. Foreign language training courses are provided to Chinese employees. In the subsidiaries, as they now are practicing the workforce localization strategy, they have employed a large number of local employees. Therefore, they provide them a training program with knowledge learning and sharing of techniques, skills, which is called as the "导师带徒 (DaoShiDaiTu)" and "传帮带

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[9] The "211 Project" focuses on the construction of 100 universities according to a strategy of developing country through science and education. The "985 Project" is the central government of China main target of construct first class universities. Available from: http:// www.besteduchina.com/universities_of_211_project_and_985_project.html (Accessed on November 7, 2020.)

(ChuanBangDai)". The English translation is to impart, give support, and tutor new employees as a mentor. Presently, the headquarters proposed a career development plan for the young generation and new employees, which is called the "Rainbow Plan". The headquarters have noticed the different mindsets of the young generation employees compared to other employees. They have a few local senior managerial personnel. Local employees are now having more opportunities for being promoted to be middle managerial personnel. They design and use HRM policies and practices of payment, vacation arrangements to comply with local laws and regulations.

5.2.3.3 Employee relations and intercultural communication

Regarding intercultural communication and cross-cultural management of the company, Interviewee A responded that:

"The basic fundamental point is to utilize institutionalized, standardized, and law-based management. We should keep in mind that within the marketing economics environment, firms must obey market rules and principles. Under this prerequisite, we should also consider social and cultural factors to show humanistic care and solitude in the process. Hence, it is important to add flesh and bones to building a holistic and systematic administration system with flexibility. When solving conflicts from an oriental culture or Asian perspective, tortuous discussions may be more preferred and more acceptable. By improving the mutual understanding and awareness of each other's similarities and differences, and emphasizing similarities and benefits to reach common ground, these kinds of mindsets are valued as more wise choices. If one has to figure out solutions for the problems that have already happened, then that would be seen as firing belated shots. Always remember that prevention is better than cure."

From the 74 responses to the online questionnaire survey, 50 people did not know about the concept of Ubuntu, 22 people knew but are not very familiar with this concept, and only two of them knew well about Ubuntu. Table 20 shows that the most frequently answered overseas assignment locations of the Chinese expatriate employees and managers are Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, which may explain why most of them do not know the concept of Ubuntu that originated from South Africa. As for the IHRM or CCM training experiences, 24 people had experiences of attending IHRM or CCM training programs, 50 people did not have any experiences. Table 21 and Table 22 show the details of the educational background and training experience information.

Scanning the answers of the Chinese managers and employees summarized in Table 23 and Table 24, the Chinese expatriates had a holistic but vague cognition about the sub-Saharan African cultures. It seems that they lacked profound understandings concerning African management concepts and thoughts, such as the management philosophy of Ubuntu. The qualitative quotations (see Table 24) are pieces of evidence showing to what extent the Chinese expatriates aware of cultural similarities and

differences, what are the challenges they are facing when communicate and interact with local employees and colleagues at multicultural workplaces, what intercultural actions and behaviors they actually took to solve intercultural problems/conflicts at the multicultural workplace. One can also observe and sense there are different attitudes (positive and negative) from their answers towards the intercultural communication/interactions in multicultural workplaces.

Table 20: Overseas Assignment Location (Host Country)

Assigned Countries	Number of expatriates
Algeria	1
Ethiopia	2
Iraq, Israel, Ethiopia	1
Kenya	20
Kenya and Tanzania	1
Nigeria	24
Nigeria and Ethiopia	1
Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Kenya	1
Sierra Leone	12
South Africa	1
Tanzania	8
UAE, Ethiopia	1
Zimbabwe	1

Table 21: The educational background

	Numbers	Education
Group of employees	30	Bachelor degree: 20
		Master degree: 10
		Ph.D.: 0
Group of middle managers	31	Bachelor degree: 18
		Master degree: 12
		Ph.D.: 0
Group of senior managers	13	Bachelor degree: 6
		Master degree: 6
		Ph.D.: 1

Table 22: The training experience of the groups by job position

	CCM/IHRM training program experience	
Group of employees	Yes: 8	No:22
Group of middle managers	Yes: 13	No:18
Group of senior managers	Yes: 3	No:10

Table 23: The research focuses and main themes of the questionnaire survey

Question / Focus	Main theme
Similarities and differences between Chinese and sub-Saharan African cultures	• Similarities: benevolence; mutual-care; social connections; family kinship; respect the old and cherish the young；son-preference; hierarchy; collectivism; obedience to authority • Differences: religious belief; attitude towards life; the concept of time; marriage custom; Confucianism vs. indigenous cultures and colonial legacies; African people have higher self-dignity and self-confidence, while Chinese people value modesty and humbleness
Problems encountered when interacting with local colleagues	• Linguistic problems (lack of Chinese expatriates who can speak African indigenous languages; local employees have different English accents) • Local employees sometimes cannot understand the Chinese management modes and may lack the flexibility of the actual executions of management practices and policies • Problems of local employees' working attitudes, efficiency, and responsibility • How to improve the trustiness among Chinese expatriates and local colleagues • Chinese expatriates should respect and be aware of local colleagues' different religious beliefs • How to nurture and improve local employees' skills and abilities • How to improve local employees' commitment • How to deal with the relationships with local governments and trade unions
Examples of current effective solutions learned from previous experience	• Procedural justice • Employing local talents with high professional abilities as HR assistants and HR managers to manage local employees • Incorporating paternalism and humanistic care into organizational culture • Establishing effective communication and consultation mechanism • Equality, mutual respect, frank, and patient attitude • Improving rewards and compensation practices and policies to motivate local employees • Seeking help and supports from local law and consultancy firms and Chinese embassies and consulates

Table 24: Example answers with English translations of the 74 Chinese expatriates for the three open-ended survey questions

Code No. & Assignment country	Question 1 cultural similarities and differences	Question 2 IHRM problems, and obstacles	Question 3 Solutions in current IHRM practices
58; Kenya	肯尼亚宗教信仰以天主教，基督教，伊斯兰教为主，且教徒大多数虔诚。 The religious beliefs in Kenya are mainly Catholic, Christian, and Islam, and most of the believers are devout.	中国以吃苦耐劳为荣，加班加点工作很正常。当地员工多喜欢享受生活，思想行为上多有松懈。 Chinese culture values a hard-working attitude and Chinese employees often feel okay working overtime. Local	安排当地管理人员先平息事态，具体调查了解情况，召开听证会寻求解决方法。 Consulting and arranging local management personnel to remedy the situation firstly, and then

		employees like to enjoy their lives, and thus, have a laxer attitude.	conduct specific investigations to find out the problems. Finally, establish a special committee to hold hearings and seek solutions.
57; Kenya	非洲部落文化比较浓厚，风俗习惯除了原生的，大多继承自宗主国，宗教信仰哲学价值类似 African tribal cultures still have relatively strong influences. Meanwhile, except for these indigenous cultures, most of the customs and habits had been influenced by the former suzerain countries' cultures, including religious beliefs and philosophical values.	语言、文化障碍，工作理念不同，目的不一致等 Language and cultural barriers are still obstacles. Moreover, we hold different values, attitudes, and goals towards 'Work'.	沟通、文化障碍，工作理念不同，此时我做的更多的是与当地人谈论，分析利弊，让大家都得到满意的结果 Communication is essential. Due to cultural barriers and different work philosophies, I need to communicate more with local people and analyze the pros and cons， so that everyone can get satisfactory results.
37; Ethiopia	除与人为善外，与中国的传统儒家文化差距较大 We share the similarity of being kind to others, but there are many differences between African cultures with Chinese traditional Confucian culture.	主要问题还是对待工作和生活的态度不同，当地员工较看重及时享乐 The major problem is that local employees prefer to be 'Carpe Diem'. We have different attitudes toward work and life.	充分沟通 Ample and effective communications are needed.
36; Nigeria & Ethiopia	部族文化和宗教文化交织 Integrated tribal and religious culture.	需关注工会其他非正式组织作用 We need to learn about the roles and functions of local trade unions and other informal organizations (e.g., NPOs and NGOs).	通过当地高级雇员或朋友做深入沟通和协调 Conducting profound communication with local employees and harmonizing the relationships by local middle/senior managerial persons or local friends.
35; Nigeria	类似点：家庭观念很强，比较典型的农耕文化。 **Similarities**: Strong familial bonds; the traditional agricultural culture.	语言文化冲突较大，当地员工对外国企业的认同感不强。 Language barriers; Local employees have a weaker sense of belonging with foreign organizations.	采用当地人事经理进行管理，尽量实现属地化管理。 Hiring local HR managers and practicing localization management strategies.
34; Zimbabwe	类似的：强调善行和人与人之间的爱、对社会的爱。不同点：我们更愿意把成功或者好的结果归因于努力和奋斗，当地人则归因于上帝。 **Similarities:** Emphasizes noble deeds; love, and empathy among people; love, and care for the whole society. **Differences:** We are more willing to attribute individual success or sound performance to hard-working attitudes and perseverance, while local	不守时、不会严格遵守规章制度、工作态度不是非常认真 Local employees sometimes lack punctuality and serious working attitudes; do not strictly obey rules and regulations.	依照当地法规、参照当地企业做法、选拔当地人员进行管理 Complying with local laws and regulations; referring to local corporate practices; selecting local management personnel to manage local employees.

	people attribute individual success to God.		
26; Sierra Leone	不同点：1、酋长制 2 信仰基督教和伊斯兰教 3、文化比较西化，实习西方政治、法律制度 4.、主要注重金钱 **Differences:** They have more westernized cultural values. They have been learning from the Western political and legal systems. The desire for material goods and money is quite common.	1、 节假日发工资也不加班 2、 发了工资就请假不来 1. Not willing to work extra hours (with extra payments) in holidays/vacations. 2. Asking for day-offs immediately after receiving salaries.	选出一名比较有教养、素质、有威望的当地员工做领导，来协商与当地员工的关系 Selecting and promoting a cultivated, decent local manager with high prestige to communicate and negotiate with local employees in dealing with workplace relations issues.
9; Sierra Leone	撒哈拉以南非洲国家多存在酋长制，公共关系处理时除了要处理好政府方面的关系外还要处理好与酋长的关系 **Differences:** Many local tribal chiefs have high social status and are very influential in sub-Saharan African countries. When handling public relations initiatives, it is necessary to maintain relationships well with local governments and local chiefs.	效率低，偷盗现象严重，企业归属感差 Lower working efficiency; pilferage exists; a lower sense of organizational belongingness.	当地雇员管理要根据当地法律建立管理制度，同时聘用当地高级雇员协助人事管理，出现问题或冲突时按制度办理，以友好解决，不激化矛盾为原则 We should establish an HRM system in accordance with local laws, and at the same time employ local HR managers to assist in personnel management. When problems or conflicts arise, the principle of amicable settlement and not intensifying the conflicts is important to bear in mind.
8; Nigeria	也分很多种，殖民地时期宗属国不同影响也不尽相同。有信仰穆斯林、基督教、天主教等等。文化差异也不小。真是"一国一个样"，与中国文化大都完全不同。 There are many differences among African cultures. The influences from the colonial period are also varied. African cultures are quite different from Chinese culture.	以前每天、每周发工资，第二天就不上班了，喝酒去了，没钱了再回来。现在每周发少量生活费，月底发全薪，钱多了，倒不急着买酒喝了。 We used to pay local staff daily or weekly. But they would not show up the day after they received the payments, as they instantly spent their daily/weekly wages to buy things without a long-term plan. We then started to pay them a small amount of money weekly for their basic living needs, and pay the rest of the wages at the end of one month. Although they have more payments weekly, they do not go for drinks (and use the money up) now. (With this practice, many of them know the importance and advantages of saving money against rainy days.)	没什么冲突，老板和雇员关系，相对简单很多。 I did not experience severe conflicts. We have rather simple employer-employee relationships.

7; Nigeria (this respondent wrote the answers in English)	Family culture	Not use to the way we are working.	Calm down take time to explain but not Compromise.
6; Nigeria	我觉得最核心的不同是：人的价值观，或者叫荣辱观。我们是"耻辱"文化，光宗耀祖文化，这一点深深地嵌入中国人的基因里。非洲人呢，缺少耻感文化，缺少荣誉感或者责任感，"心太大"，以至于做事不能成功，不能知耻而后勇，不断进步。话又说回来，非洲人这种"心大"也有好处，人生何必背负那么大的责任呢，生活原本该轻松一点。 **Differences:** The core difference between us is that we have different values on honor and disgrace. Our traditional shame-based culture and the mindset of bringing glories to our families influence us profoundly. African people do not have this kind of shame-based culture, and lack the sense of honor and responsibility with a 'big heart', which means that they do not understand "to know shame is akin to courage". These features sometimes cannot lead them to success. But on the other hand, there are also advantages of having a 'big heart'. There is no need to carry so many responsibilities in one's life. Our lives should be more relaxed and joyful.	管理非洲员工时，他们的工作生活节奏感，工作习惯，工作完成度都和中方差异很大，很影响工作的进展。 When managing African employees, their work-life rhythms, working habits, and the degree of work completion are all quite different from Chinese employees, and thus, negatively influence the progress of work.	解决的办法就是，降速和他们同步，同时慢慢培训，中国的管理者不可能把老外都变成中国人，这不现实也不可能。 The solution is to be patient and keep pace with them while training them. It is unrealistic and impossible for Chinese managers to change local employees' mindsets into a completely Chinese way of thinking. Therefore, mutual understanding is very important.
5; Nigeria	非洲大部分国家均有宗教信仰，不同宗教信仰之间能相互包容，相互理解，实现和平共处。或许因为宗教原因，非洲人对生死的看待比中国人要平淡很多，相信人的去世是上天的安排，不会过于偏激或索取高额赔偿。 In most African nations, people have religious beliefs, and they have mutual understanding and tolerance to make them peacefully living together. Maybe it is because	当地员工管理的问题比较多，最突出的是没有存钱的习惯，发完工资后好几天不见人，花完钱以后再来上班，对正常的工作有一定的影响。主要矛盾是文化理念上有冲突，中方人员秉承勤劳，守时（精神），善于学习。少部分当地工人工作随意，上进心不强，有时管理上会因此有较大冲突。 There are some problems when managing local workers. One of the key issues is that they do	解决方案是双方加强沟通，互相理解。 The solution is to be more effective in communication with local workers and improve mutual understanding.

	of religious beliefs, compared to us, they have a much calmer attitude towards life or death. As they believe in God, so they tend not to go to extremes or ask for compensation excessively.	not have the habit of saving money. Some of them often do not show up after receiving wages and come back to work after spending the wages, which brings about (negative) effects to the progress of regular projects. The main problem is caused by different cultural values and concepts. Chinese workers tend to adhere to (the spirits of) diligence and being punctual and are skillful in learning. A small part of local workers has arbitrary working attitudes, and lack self-initiative, which may bring about problems and conflicts at our workplaces.	
4; Nigeria	和中国文化相同点：尊老爱幼，家族观念很重，重男轻女。 和中国文化的不同点：有信仰，不会仇富，吃大户心态 **Similarities:** We (Chinese and African people) all respect the elderly and care for the young generations. We have similar family-oriented cultures and son-preference cultures. **Differences:** African people have religious beliefs.	当地人效率低下，需要盯着，适合简单重复劳动，需要使用制度进行管理，但同时要兼顾人性化。 Because of the low working efficiency of local workers, they should be constantly supervised. Also, there is a need for a systematic and balanced management approach with proper regulations and humanistic care.	沟通很重要，属地化经营，中国人不能够高高在上，以以前那种西方殖民者的心态来处事，中国人是合作共赢来了，一定要尊重当地文化，当地习俗，尊重当地人，平等对待，同时利用中国的管理方法的艺术来管理，才能事半功倍。 Communication is important. Localization (is necessary), we Chinese should not consider ourselves superior, and should firmly prohibit the Western colonial mentality. We must respect local people, local culture, and traditions. We should remember that we are here to cooperate with local people to achieve Win-Win development. We should also practice and improve Chinese management know-how since a good method will bring twice what we expect.
1; Nigeria	类似：注重人际交往，有上下级观念，注重亲属家族关系，向往发达国家的生活等。 区别：多种族文化并存，殖民影响很深，家族势力强大，宗教深入日常生活，对民主和专治的两难选择等。 **Similarities:** Emphasizing social relations building and	对当地风俗习惯的了解欠缺，对公司制度的机械推行，在处理法律事务时有畏难情绪，过度依赖当地法律资源。 Lack of flexibility, lack of knowledge about local customs and habits; lack of confidence or feel hesitant to deal with	充分沟通，了解情况，尽可能找到兼顾各方利益的综合方案。 Ample communication is required to acquire detailed knowledge of the situation and taking into consideration the interests of multiple stakeholders to

communication; similar values on social orders and hierarchy; family kinship and familial relations; yearning for the living life in developed countries. **Differences:** The co-existing of multiple ethnic cultures; profound colonial influences; the domination of the aristocratic power; religious beliefs are intertwined with daily lives; the political choice dilemma of 'demography' vs. 'autocracy', etc.	legal affairs; relying too much on local law resources.	synthesize a comprehensive approach.
69; Kenya	在部分事情的时候思维差异很大。举个简单例子，给当地工人每双周的周三发前两周的工资，比如：本周三发工资，下下周周三发工资，再过两周的周三发工资。当地人就很难理解，询问我，每两周发工资，那一个月发28天工资，我剩下的几天工资哪去了？ Sometimes we have different modes of thinking. For example, local workers receive their salaries on Wednesday every two weeks. Some of them did not understand this mode and think that they only received 28 days' payments, and asked me where the other two or three days' payments were. (In fact, they work from Monday to Friday, so they receive their 10-day payment every two weeks.)	耐心，耐心，耐心，重要的事情说三遍。本来语言就都不是母语，非洲人因为历史原因导致现在的自尊心很强，不能侵犯，有时话说急了都会适得其反。 I would like to say three times, 'Patience, Patience, Patience', as it is really the pivotal principle. Because of historical reasons, Africans tend to have stronger self-esteem. And we should show understanding and respect to them. Sometimes speaking in a hurry can be counterproductive.
	本人在肯尼亚，坦桑尼亚生活过，与中国之间的差异很大。坦桑与中国最大的差异是文化自信，坦桑人民对自己的语言等文化过度自信，相对封闭不知外界发展的世界变化。肯尼亚就相对 open 的多。 I have living experiences in Kenya and Tanzania. There are differences compared with Chinese culture. The biggest difference between Tanzanian culture and Chinese culture is cultural confidence. Tanzanian people sometimes have overconfidence in their culture and language, because they are relatively conservative. Kenyan people are more open-minded.		
68; Kenya	差异远大于相似。且非洲国家与国家之间，部落之间存在差异性。受西方影响较深，绝大多数追求民主社会，在一些相对发展较好的国家，有对个人自由，公民权利与义务的追求。"宽容"或者"容错"也许可以映射一些其宗教影响下的哲学价值观。风俗习惯也不相同。因经济发展程度差异，风俗传承程度也不同。宗教信仰可见伊斯兰教，基督教，天主教，印度教。对非洲传统宗教不太了解，客户和工作环境中较少见到偏激宗教信仰者，绝大多数为基督教徒。 As they have been deeply and historically influenced by	通常在时间管理，工作完成质量，劳工关系等方面存在问题。 There are problems in time management, quality of work, and labor relations.	遵守合同条款和当地劳动法。遇到问题时，如因我方违反相关规定所致，及时补偿，更正。如因对方无理要求，则诉诸法律。时刻关注媒体报道，当地媒体通常职业道德感较低，会以政治目的或利益关系来扭曲真相，扩大事情影响。 We should comply with contract terms and local labor laws. When encountering problems, if we violate relevant regulations, we will promptly apologize and provide compensations. If they make unreasonable

	Western cultures, most of them are now pursuing a democratic society. In some relatively well-developed countries, they value individual freedom, civil rights, and obligations. The values of "tolerance" or "fault tolerance" may reflect some philosophies underpinned by religious beliefs. I do not know much about traditional African religions, as in my workplace, most of my local colleagues are Christians.		requests, then we have to consult lawyers to solve the problems. Always pay attention to media reports. Some local media have a low sense of professional ethics and often distort the truth because of their political stances or interests.

More and more of them began to realize the significance of cross-cultural communication and interaction. One of the answers (Code No.4) thinks that Localization management and effective intercultural communication are important management strategies and initiatives, and replied that:

"*Chinese should not consider ourselves superior, and should firmly prohibit the Western colonial mentality. We must respect local people, local culture, and traditions. We should remember that we are here to cooperate with local people to achieve Win-Win development. We should also practice and improve Chinese management art since a good method will bring twice what we expect ('事半功倍', ShiBanGongBei).*"

Although this answer and the interview contents convey an image of Chinese expatriates' willingness to adjust to the local context, it appears that many of the Chinese expatriates rely on self-learning about local culture, and organizational learning experience that can systematically improve the reverse infusion (Jackson, 2012) of local management philosophies remain insufficient. The employment of local HR managers and assistants might be a useful channel or method to improve knowledge sharing and cultural crossvergence among Chinese expatriates and local colleagues. But the possible mutual effects should be further studied by surveying local employees and local managers.

5.2.3.4 A hybrid/ cultural-crossvergent organizational culture

Hadebe and Nkomo (2019, p.37) stated that mutual cultural appreciation becomes increasingly significant in Chinese-African interactions and collaborations. The understanding of cultural nuances and cultural sensitivity are essential intercultural communication skills to avoid prejudice, stereotype thinking, and offensive behavior. The African cultural concepts are comprehensive to learn about, as the cultural landscape of Africa has been shaped by colonial conquests, also most of its traditional culture and history have been orally inherited (Hadebe and

Nkomo, 2019, p.38). During colonized history, Africans were excluded from the commercial sphere, "only involved as objects to further colonial interests" (Hadebe and Nkomo, 2019, p.40). In the post-colonial times, Africans had to establish their education and business model imitating the former colonizer (Hadebe and Nkomo, 2019, p.40). Similarly, from the 1840's first opium war to 1949, China had also been semi-colonized for about a hundred years. This is why some of the interviewees said that they have resonating feelings with African people and they shared the actions their organization takes in preventing intercultural communication problems as follows (see Table 25).

Hadebe and Nkomo (2019, p.40) further reminded that since many of the studies about Chinese culture and work ethics are written in Chinese, Africans have to rely on "western notions of the Chinese, together with the associated stereotypes and distortions of the Chinese". Meanwhile, Chinese people often get information about Africans "from European writings----which were ill-conceived not only from ignorance but also from the arrogance of a perceived cultural superiority" (Hadebe and Nkomo, 2019, p.40). Therefore, African and Chinese people should improve mutual understanding about each other's culture and language and avoid using convenient shortcuts of "the West as the middleman" (Hadebe and Nkomo, 2019, p.40).

Chinese expatriates also pointed out the differences between Chinese culture and African culture such as, obviously, religion. The Christian religion, Catholicism, and Islam have extensive influences on African people's daily lives as well. In China, materialism is widely advocated, and because of the different political systems, although religious toleration exists officially, many Chinese people do not have religious beliefs or are not willing to make their religious beliefs known publicly. Chinese expatriate managers said that when living in Africa, they always show respect to local staff's religious beliefs, seldom talk about religious issues with them, and never interfere with their religious activities.

Table 25: The examples of the interviewees' perceptions about intercultural communication and interaction

Perception	Action
Interviewee A: "… … *I do have a basic understanding of sub-Saharan African Cultures. I read about the history of Africa. During colonial times, they received a lot of influences from foreign cultures, religions, ideologies, languages, and management concepts. In post-colonial times, they fought for freedom and became independent. It is the time of the Africa Renaissance."*	**Interviewee A:** "… …*We will carry on persevering in the fulfillment of social responsibilities. Our behaviors must comply more strictly with local laws and regulations, as well as safety, health, and environmental standards. At the same time, on reflection, we have to collate and promote the related information in a more formal and standardized way. After we became a listed company, we must report to the public and society empirically and regularly, to strengthen transparency and publicity. As an investor in host countries, we should be cognizant of the significance of contributing to local communities, education, and so on, with the best of our capabilities. For example, because in some areas near the Free Trade Zone, residents are suffered from the lack of money and techniques for drilling deep well, so we helped the local communities drill about 50 wells this year, and we provide scholarships continuously for local college students who are studying in universities located in Lagos as a sponsor. Furthermore, every year, our company invites local employees,*

	including the middle and senior managerial personnel to visit and study in China with financial supports. Another employee engagement approach that we are doing is the annual selection of outstanding employees through public appraisal and election. We reward and provide financial support to the voted outstanding local employees with a trip to Beijing, where they can visit the headquarters. At the headquarters, they attend the year-end gatherings. During the gatherings, the top executives will reward them with prizes and certificates of merit."
Interviewee E: "*I have not been to South Africa. Therefore, I am not so familiar with the Ubuntu culture. I feel that African cultural values are unique with many traditional features. Ubuntu cannot represent the whole African culture from a pluralistic perspective. Each country, each ethnic group has its own culture. If there existed one unitary culture among African people, then the whole continent would have become a united country. Looking at the map, you will find that the borders of each nation are usually square and unnatural, which reveals the bitter and gloomy colonial history of the Africa continent. Sometimes I feel sympathy with African people, as we Chinese also have a similar history that we do not want to recall. I like the brotherhood spirit of helping each other.*"	**Interviewee E:** "*... ...We, Chinese people, have the saying of 'if you want to get rich, build roads first'* (要想富先修路). *Building roads and railways to connect each nation will facilitate economic development and improve living standards. African countries used to receive colonial oppressions, even though they succeeded in pursuing independence, they are still weak in infrastructure development.... ... We need to realize that when you establish the organizational culture with profound consideration of local culture, it will help new employees to fit in with the organization more quickly. There are three fundamental values that we should remember. One is 'All men are created equal'* (人生而平等), *the second one is 'Observing the relevant code of conduct and the law and honestly'*（遵纪守法，廉洁奉公）*, the last but not least is 'Take a long-term perspective and look with a broadened horizon'*（风物长宜放眼量）. *If we establish our organizational culture with these three values, at least we will help keep IHRM from crossing the baseline. Of course, we will encounter little problems, but with continuous learning and practicing, we can accumulate knowledge for us to improve and transform our organization step by step.*"
Interviewee J: "*Nigerian culture has some similar features to us, for example, they also value humane feelings and social relationships. Like us, Nigerian people are family-oriented. But they are more willing to help strangers than us. I have seen that people on the street helping someone injured from a traffic accident spontaneously, and the scene makes me feel that local people are warmhearted and compassionate. Colonial history still influences them more or less. I have been to some underdeveloped places in Nigeria. At those places, poor people are still afraid of seeing Western people and calling them 'Master', which gives me a complicated feeling.*"	**Interviewee J:** "*Therefore, our company has always been stressing the importance of respecting local people. Racial discrimination is strictly forbidden within our company. We should enhance communication and mutual understandings with local employees.*" **Interviewee G:** "*One should convey their meanings to local employees clearly, or misunderstandings and troubles might occur. Our firm is like a big family. We should see local employees as members of the big family as well. Therefore, providing humanistic care to local employees becomes necessary.*" **Interviewee H:** "*It is necessary to have different policies to fit in with distinct markets. ... ... Our organizational culture emphasizes cultural tolerance and mutual integration. We should see local employees also as family members of our company. We should put effort into letting local employees feel a sense of belonging to the company. Moreover, we ought to respect their culture, values, religious beliefs, etc. Chinese organizational culture has flexibility. There should be regulations, but also humanistic care and flexibility. After all, we are all human beings, not machines and robots.*"

Figure 32: The internal embeddedness process of formalizing a hybrid organizational culture at the CCSOE's overseas subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa

Figure 32 shows the internal embeddedness process of how the company has been formalizing a hybrid organizational culture. One can observe the efforts made in achieving political-institutional, cultural, and cognitive embeddedness from interviewees' narratives:

• **Interviewee B:** *"... The organizational culture of our company values humanity, and we are carrying out relatively humanistic management and aiming at providing humanistic care to employees. Chinese and Nigerian employees formed a big family, and we are linked together with common joys and sorrows, we share weal and woe in the same boat."*

• **Interviewee G:** "*One should convey their meanings to local employees clearly, or misunderstandings and troubles might occur. Our firm is like a big family. We should see local employees as members of the big family as well. Therefore, providing humanistic care to local employees becomes necessary.*"

• **Interviewee E:** "*We need to realize that when you establish the organizational culture with profound consideration of local culture, it will help new employees to fit in with the organization more quickly. There are three fundamental values that we should remember. One is "All men are created equal" (人生而平等), the second one is "Observing the relevant code of conduct and the law and honestly"（遵纪守法，廉洁奉公）, the last but not least is "Take a long-term perspective and look with a broadened horizon"（风物长宜放眼量）. If we establish our organizational culture with these three values, at least we will help keep IHRM from crossing the baseline. Of course, we will encounter little problems, but with continuous learning and practicing, we can accumulate knowledge for us to improve and transform our organization step by step.*"

• **Interviewee H:** "*It is necessary to have different policies to fit in with distinct markets. ... Our organizational culture emphasizes cultural tolerance and mutual integration. We should see local employees also as family members of our company.*

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We should put effort into letting local employees feel a sense of belonging to the company. Moreover, we ought to respect their culture, values, religious beliefs, etc. Chinese organizational culture has flexibility. There should be regulations, but also humanistic care and flexibility. After all, we are all human beings, not machines and robots."

These quotations of interviewees B, G, E, and H indicate that at the Joint Venture Company in Nigeria, a culturally synergized/ hybrid organizational culture has been established, with the values of "humanistic care", "a big family", "flexibility", "equality", "a long-term perspective", etc. These values were also frequently mentioned by many Chinese expatriates who answered the online questionnaire survey (n = 74), which reveals that the Chinese expatriates of the studied CCSOE have been applying what they have learned during their overseas assignments in sub-Saharan African countries to formalize a new organizational culture in subsidiaries, and these processes of political-institutional, cultural-cognitive embeddedness also brought about influences to the headquarters in China. Since 2018, the headquarters in China have launched novel organizational strategies (introduced by Interviewee A).

5.2.3.5 The dual-track IHRM system and local HR managers

The knowledge flows of headquarters-to-subsidiary are usually influenced by factors like the number of expatriates, the job position of expatriates, the communication frequency and effectiveness between headquarters and overseas branches, the usage of local human resources, the dependence on the local sources, and the dependence on headquarters (Rosenzweig and Nohria, 1994; Demir, 2005). Expatriate managers and employees can be seen as the carriers of the home country culture and usually transfer home country management and HRM practices to overseas subsidiaries (Tayeb, 1998). The more an MNE relies on the knowledge transfer from the parent company, the more convergent the IHRM practices would be (Demir, 2005). According to the interviewees' narrative, an integrative framework of IHRM is made (see Figure 26) and displays the knowledge flow process of the strategic integration of IHRM practices and policies between the headquarters and the overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa of the studied Chinese SOE.

Besides the HRM system that is operated in the headquarters, there exists a vertical knowledge flow between the headquarters and the overseas branches. In the overseas joint venture company and subsidiaries, they established a dual-track HRM system with features of hybridization and decentralization, and have horizontal knowledge flows between Chinese expatriate managers and local HR managers/assistants via intercultural communication and knowledge sharing. It was specifically designed to manage Chinese expatriate employees and local employees respectively in an intersectional manner.
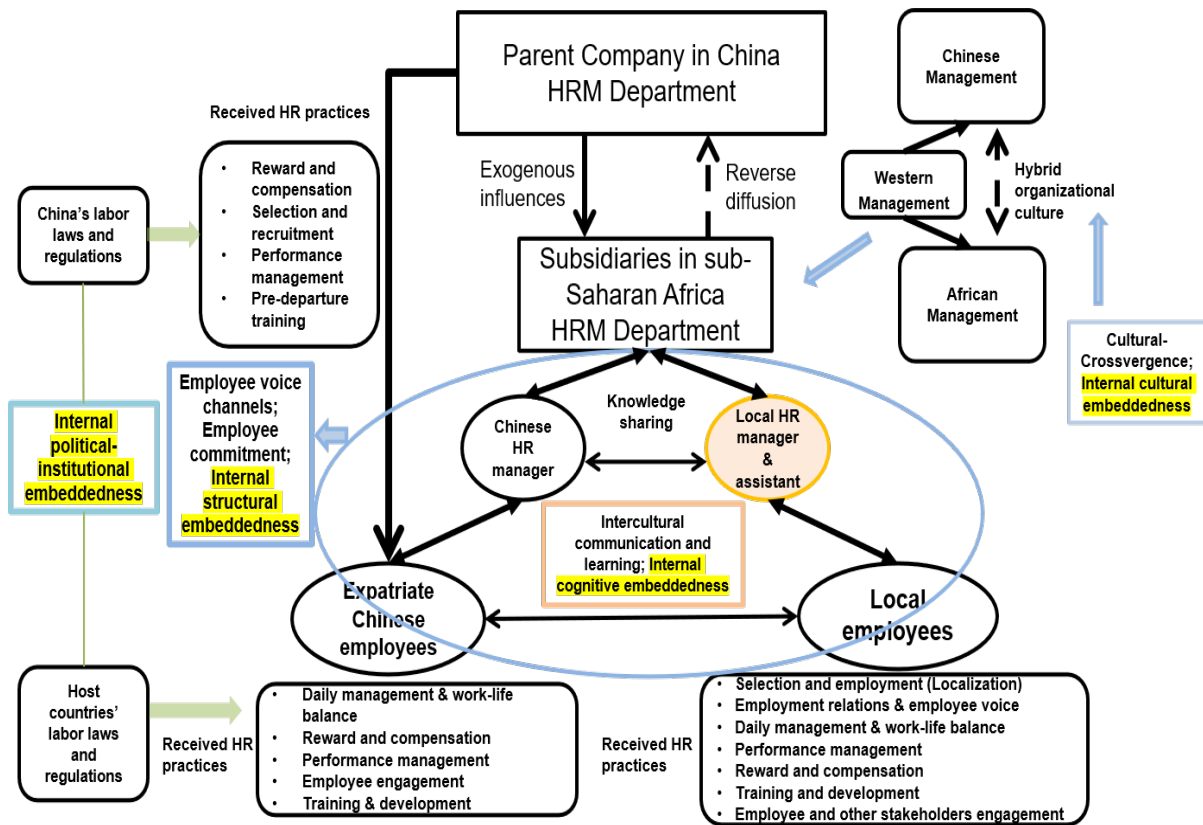
Figure 33: The architecture of the dual-track IHRM system and the internal embeddedness processes
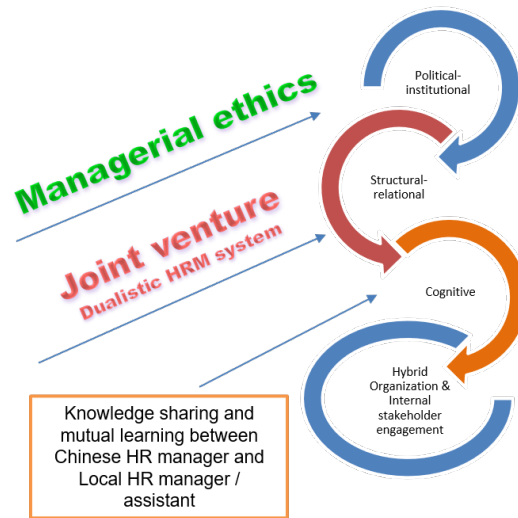
Figure 34: The internal embeddedness processes toward IHRM hybridization in the Joint Venture companies in sub-Saharan Africa

As shown in Figure 33 and Figure 34, a dual-track IHRM system is now established at some overseas subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the joint venture firms that were invested by the studied Chinese Central SOE and local shareholders (in Nigeria and Ethiopia). From Figure 33, one can find clearly that four types of embeddedness mechanisms occur in the dual-track IHRM

system. Interviewee E and Interviewee B gave detailed explanations about the political-institutional (e.g., "comply with local labor laws"), structural-relational (e.g., "a dualistic HRM system"), and cognitive embeddedness (e.g., "the employment of local HR managers and assistants") mechanisms:

- **Interviewee E:** "*As for the HRM system, practices, and policies, we are now operating a dualistic HRM system in African countries. Apart from some specific HRM practices and policies that are designed and transferred from the Headquarters to manage Chinese expatriates, we manage Chinese and local employees with another HRM system designed by ourselves in daily work. In this localized HRM system, we designed the practices and policies that comply with the local labor laws. For example, local and Chinese employees are managed by the same work attendance checking system. But there are slight differences. As for managing Chinese expatriates, we need to obey the Chinese labor laws and local labor laws. Therefore, we provide them with both Chinese and local social insurances. Also, the Chinese expatriates can receive allowances from the HQ for doing overseas assignments. Meanwhile, we also provide local employees with different incentives, allowances, and training programs. For example, additional overtime payment, short-term training program, and study trip at the HQ in China for local employees. To sum up, we design HRM practices and policies depending on different circumstances and try to make these suitable for managing Chinese and local employees respectively. This kind of dualistic HRM system is gradually developing and maturing in overseas offices in Nigeria and Ethiopia, especially the joint venture company in Lagos, Nigeria.*"
- **Interviewee B:** "*To handle the employee relations and employee voice issues, we've hired the local HR manager and HRM assistants to help us. We believe that this method will receive more acceptance from local employees and be more trustworthy. The local HR managers that we've recruited usually have a high social status and are highly respected by local communities. For example, some of them are family members of the local chief or the local squires. As being influenced by suzerain countries in colonial times, the local labor union is very powerful. Also, we understand the importance of obeying the local labor laws. Local HR managers and assistants can also help us coordinate and negotiate with the local labor union.*"
- **Interviewee D:** "*We should create and maintain a harmonious and friendly workplace atmosphere. Hence, we make some requirements for attention to Chinese employees about how to interact with local employees. We organize entertainment and sports activities regularly for our employees. For example, Chinese employees play a soccer game with local employees together, and we have New Year gatherings together. We also organize trips for employees. During the time of the traditional festival, we also provide local employees with a bonus. We arrange vacations concerning their religious beliefs, living habits. We are initiative in building a better brand image. In an overseas subsidiary, we have a relatively flat management structure. Local*

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Comparing these with the interviews that were conducted by Shen and Edwards (2006) in 2001, it appears that some Chinese SOEs have been making progress in organizational transformation and learning by incorporating some merits of Western HRM, whilst maintaining some Chinese characteristics. This is following the perspective of Shen and Edwards (2006), and Jackson (2012). To investigate Chinese MNEs' IHRM functions and issues, Shen and Edwards (2006) conducted interview surveys with ten Chinese MNEs in 2001 (including seven SOEs). From their findings, about twenty years ago, as newly internationalized than Western or Japanese firms, Chinese MNEs encountered many challenges and difficulties of international competition. For example, the hardness of hiring and retaining high caliber human resources in the international arena, the complexity of IHRM, the lack of international experience. At that time, Chinese MNEs themselves had many weaknesses that constrain their international development. For instance, Chinese MNEs used to adopt a more centralized and ethnocentric approach in IHRM practices, and the reliance on the parent company was high. They assigned more expatriates as senior management persons than Western MNEs and paid less attention to previous international experiences and no attention at all to cultural empathy or emotional maturity and stability as intercultural competence in the expatriate selection process.

Chen (2005) found that many Chinese MNEs appeared to have no clear international strategies, and had problems in collecting accurate market information. Especially private firms (POEs) did badly in overseas markets, as they did not have a good comprehension of industry operation, the laws, and regulations in host countries (Shen and Edwards, 2006). Although Chinese MNEs had realized the shortage of qualified international managers, they seemed not to pay much attention to the importance of international training (e.g., IHRM, CCM). Some of the interviewed MNEs provided only limited or *ad hoc* pre-departure training for expatriates, most of them did not systematically collect or analyze the training needs from employees, nor did they attempted to link training programs to business strategies, as most of them thought that 'training is not magic' or training might not be effective in improving employee's technical skills (Shen and Edwards, 2006). Other reasons for providing little training programs or courses relevant to intercultural competency listed by the interviewed firms are lack of time and expertise (Shen and Edwards, 2006). From the interviews, they also found that there were both convergent and divergent tendencies between Chinese IHRM and Western IHRM, and both globalization and localization tendencies, as "the Chinese MNEs adopted corporate-wide IHRM policies and practices to facilitate coordination, control equality, and management transfer, on the other hand, adapted to local practices to respond in a best-fit manner to changes in local markets" (Shen and Edwards, 2006, p. 169). Regarding the cultural-convergence/divergence/crossvergence process of Chinese MNEs with Western MNEs Shen and Edwards (2006, p.169) list their findings as follows:

- *First, there is increasing awareness of the significance of IHRM although most of the time both Chinese and western MNEs do not pay sufficient attention to IHRM. Effective IHRM is largely regarded as sustainable competitiveness.*
- *Second, devolution to line managers of responsibilities for some IHRM activities is common in both Chinese and Western MNEs.*
- *Third, Chinese MNEs adopt an integrative IHRM approach, which is consistent with the experience of Western MNEs, arguing that there is no pure ethnocentric, polycentric, or geocentric approach in IHRM practices.*
- *Fourth, many firms operate with a dual system where corporate HR manages a core of senior staff and key personnel while the rest of lower-level management and staff are managed at the subsidiary level. This argument is proven to be valid in the case of Chinese MNEs. Chinese MNEs are relatively centralized in recruitment and selection, management, and reward and compensation, but decentralized in training, performance appraisals, and employee relations.*

Because this company has been stressing workforce localization strategy for some years, the intercultural collaboration and interaction between the Chinese expatriate HR manager and the local HR manager/ assistant may be an effective channel for knowledge sharing and leading the cultural-crossvergence/ hybridization process. Still, it depends on to what extent the local HR manager/assistant can have a say in the decision-making process, and play his/her line manager role and functions, which is one of the challenges and should be the focus for the company's further organizational development in the future.

As Shen and Edwards (2006) point out that Chinese MNEs are not alone in neglecting and downgrading the HR role, as in some Western MNEs, the HR function did not play a critical role in strategic decision making as well (Hunt and Boxall, 1998; Tung, 1984). Therefore, here are some implications for organizational further transformation and development. For example, synthesizing and learning about previous experiences and lessons of overseas management, establishing and developing systematic organizational management knowledge and learning system, strengthening employee training, etc.

The current training programs are still focusing too much on technical skills and project management. The pre-departure training programs for expatriates are unitary and may be too general, and thus, cannot satisfy different needs and requirements from Chinese and local employees. The company encourages employees to study MBA or other programs in other institutions and provides financial reimbursement to them. However, they can also collaborate with universities and Think Tanks with expertise together in organizing diversified training programs focusing on IHRM, CCM, and CSR themes in the future. There are opportunities provided for expatriate employees to learn English, French, or Portuguese, but the company can also arrange training programs for Chinese employees to study the indigenous African languages that can smooth intercultural communication in sub-Saharan Africa. Regarding the problems mentioned above, the findings prove what Jackson and Horwitz (2018, p.1856) explain that "there are potential synergies

between Chinese and African cultural values, moderated by low importance of the knowledge transfer role of Chinese expatriates, also moderated by the relational nature of career development including expatriate selection and a low emphasis on pre-departure training."

Another important task for Chinese SOEs is to collect and analyze public sentiments. The public relations management of this Chinese SOE has not been of interest, as they deem that as long as they are playing their part well, the smear campaigns of some media press would not bring about actual damages. However, public relations management is also a crucial part of organizational CSR initiatives for connecting external stakeholders. Although the Chinese SOE is now issuing the annual sustainability report from the headquarters, and overseas branches are also contributing to the local communities, each branch does not have its sustainability CSR report published to local people. This gap may let others question information transparency. Moreover, the propagation should be in a heartfelt manner, to win the recognition and acceptance of local communities and people.

To sum up, this Chinese SOE is continually accumulating IHRM, CCM, and CSR (e.g., business ethics, code of conducts) knowledge for organizational transformation and has clear-defined organizational strategies to achieve their organizational goal and vision. There are potentialities of crossvergence and knowledge sharing between Chinese and African management practices and policies. However, Chinese MNEs should value the roles and functions of HRM more and integrate IHRM practices and policies with long-sighted organizational strategies, and establishing a socially responsible and people-oriented management system in achieving sustainable development.

Organizational learning and change have the potential to develop the organization and transform it into a dynamic and self-learning organization. Organizational learning can also allow the parallel transformation from an organization to its stakeholders and the whole society (Martinuzzi and Krumay, 2013). To adjust to the current and future context and compete with other firms, an organization should pay more attention to how to develop and exploit human capital resources to the largest extend and how to obtain sustainable performance with transparency, risk management, and the alignment of HR strategies with CSR initiatives.

The company should use social networks and business links adequately to identify potential human capital and talents, and then the company should recruit people who show commitment to socially responsible management and ethical management. For diversity and equal opportunities policy: treating employees fairly with flexibility is the minima. Moreover, the company should maintain ethical standards in managing employment relationships and developing social inclusion. Thirdly, as for the improvement of employee involvement and communications, the company should inculcate employees with the purpose of organizational CSR strategy and policies. Senior management should demonstrate a commitment to CSR and build trust with employees and other stakeholders. Regarding organizational culture, employee values need to be aligned with the organizational values that underpin the CSR strategy and policies. Besides, managers should encourage employee voices and provide chances to let employee express their true perceptions. Furthermore, the HR department should assist the company to develop employee volunteering. As

for the performance management and appraisal policy, the HR department should help create meaning in work to improve employee's engagement and commitment. Also, the HR department should ensure employee wellbeing is monitored. As for the final part, training and development policy, it is necessary to educate employees about the significance of an organization's ethical standards and code of conduct. HR department could design training courses to support culture change initiatives and help embed a commitment to CSR in achieving sustainable development (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher, 2012).

5.3 Weakness, bottlenecks, and suggestions for internal embeddedness in host countries

As being the managerial personnel, all of the interviewees have understandings and accumulated knowledge regarding sub-Saharan cultures, histories, religions, customs, and traditions to a certain extent. But the learning process is spontaneous on one's accounts and interests. The interviewees gave critical perceptions that, from the company side, it still lacks systematic and holistic approaches to employee intercultural training and learning. Suggestions were also listed by the interviewees. To tackle this weakness, the company should take prompt actions in collecting information from Chinese expatriates' feedbacks and experiences, as well as perceptions and demands from local employees effectively and adequately. After the information gathering process, a more diversified and professional training and learning system should be established. Taking the language learning course for Chinese expatriate employees as an example, English, French and Spanish courses are provided, but employees may want to learn Hausa and Swahili languages, as some interviewees mentioned that the indigenous languages in sub-Sahara Africa create language barriers, which lowers the effectiveness of communication among Chinese and local people.

Interviewee E gave a case of how to solve a disagreement that happened in the workplace by subtle communication among local and Chinese employees:

> *"Generally speaking, with a long time of mutual-adjustment and the management practice of localization, we now have a cordial and harmonious working atmosphere in our workplace, among Chinese and local employees. In the first few years, some problems occurred because of cross-cultural collisions, misunderstandings, and even prejudices. Cultural synergy and crossvergence: Therefore, we must establish a new organizational culture in overseas subsidiaries with cross-cultural fusion or integration, to help new employees adjust to the workplace and create synergy effects in cross-cultural teamwork. Nowadays I feel that our local employees show a similar level of loyalty and commitment to our company as Chinese employees do with subtle influences of daily cross-cultural communications and interactions among local and Chinese employees during these years of operation in Nigeria.*
>
> *Talking about workplace conflicts, I remembered that there were very few cases and not so serious. For example, in the engineering department, we have several local*

middle management personnel. They have experience of studying in western countries and are quite outstanding talents. But perhaps, because of the discrepancies of ideology issues and different educational backgrounds，they first wanted to choose some Western firms as successful bidders, as they did not know much and could not trust other Chinese firms at that time. So, they disagreed with Chinese colleagues. They exchanged different opinions, and Chinese colleagues introduced the information of the Chinese firms bidding for our project in detail to them. They finally agreed to have a try in choosing a Chinese firm as a successful bidder. So other than this case, I seldom heard of cases of conflicts in our workplace. As for the relationships with local labor unions in sub-Saharan Africa, we meet different situations in different countries.

I think that in the manufacturing industry, these kinds of problems might be more noticeable, not only Chinese firms are having conflicts with the local labor unions, but also some South Korean firms and Western firms are facing similar problems. Our firm got involved in small conflicts with labor unions several times in the beginning, and we learned the lessons and put effort into seeking solutions. There are some precautions and instructions that I would like to share with you. First of all, foreign firms should be familiar with and comply with local laws and regulations. Although local labor unions are not that flawless as Western labor unions, foreign firms should always remember the importance of communication and the establishment of mutual trust and mutual understanding with local employees. For example, in the year 2003, we were constructing accommodation buildings for athletes. We hired 1500 local employees at that time. Because of lacking experience, we forgot to provide labor protection appliances (protection gloves and so on) to local employees inadvertently and failed to give a detailed explanation to them. Therefore, local employees started a strike to deliver their demands to us. We immediately reacted to the strike by appeasing their feelings. We admitted it was our fault and quickly supplied the required protection appliances to local employees. The problem was solved."

Interviewee A revealed his own experience of how to prevent an intercultural dilemma among Chinese and Nigerian senior management board members by communication approach that saving Mianzi (face) of each other:

"Conflicts and contradictions inevitably exist in daily works. As being senior management personnel, the most important thing that I should consider is how to negotiate and communicate through policies and the decision-making process. This is an intercultural management process that encounters merge and collision of culture. And there are two layers of the process, one is the board meeting, another is the communication among managerial personnel. The basic fundamental point is to use institutionalized, standardized, and law-based management. We should keep in mind

that within the marketing economics environment, firms must obey market rules and principles. Under this prerequisite, we should also consider social and cultural factors to show humanistic care and solitude in the process. Hence, it is important to add flesh and bones to building a holistic and systematic administration system with flexibility. <u>When solving conflicts from an oriental culture or Asian perspective, tortuous discussions may be more preferred and more acceptable.</u> By improving the mutual understanding and awareness of each other's similarities and differences, and emphasizing similarities and benefits to reach common ground, these kinds of mindsets are valued as more wise choices. If one has to figure out solutions for the problems that have already happened, then that would be seen as firing belated shots. Always remember that prevention is better than cure. In the Joint-Venture company, the chairman of the board of directors is Nigerian. We have six Chinese board members and four Nigerian Board members, including the Nigerian chairman and me. This is distributed and arranged by a shareholding ratio.

I will give you an example of our decision-making process. Once we had a board meeting about a real estate project in the Free Trade Zone, the Nigerian board members suggested that to offer a property to each senior management personnel with a preferential price. In Nigeria, it seems that this suggestion is acceptable and has no problems at all. In China, 15 or 20 years ago, the housing allotment ('福利分房政策') provided by firms was not a problematic issue as the laws and regulations were still rudimentary and incomplete, also there were not so many anti-corruption approaches at that time. <u>Nowadays, in China, you can see a completely different picture, housing allotment, or providing preferential prices for buying properties is not allowed in China. If Chinese board members accept this suggestion, then this is the behavior of gaining benefits illegitimately and breaks the law. Also as being a communist party member, this is not acceptable according to my belief in communist ethics and morality.</u> The Nigerian members and Chinese members were insisting on opposite opinions.

<u>I tried to avoid the worst situation of voting since the Chinese members would win as the majority, and then it would create a serious emotional crack among the relationships of Chinese and Nigerian board members.</u> To solve this dilemma, we reached a compromise to put this suggestion on the shelf. As the General Manager, I have to take responsibility for organizing a meeting among Chinese board members before the next boarding meeting and to have a discussion on how to euphemistically reject the suggestion and save the Mianzi (face) of Nigerian members at the same time. After this meeting with Chinese members, I visited the Nigerian chairman in his office. We had a pleasant conversation while drinking Chinese tea and having some Chinese refreshments that I brought with me. He expressed the expectations of the Nigerian members to me at first. Then I explained the reasons why Chinese members could not accept this suggestion <u>with a sincere attitude.</u> Finally, he kindly showed understanding. At the next board meeting, all the members reach the agreement of not accepting this

suggestion without having to vote formally. This example indicates that management should not be done with dichotomous thinking. Things are not always black or white. There is no true or false question, but a multiple-choice that needs to be made with a high level of emotional quotient (EQ). As a senior managerial member, dogmatic and narrow thoughts, as well as stiff approaches are what I should avoid doing so."

They all mentioned the influence of cultural-crossvergence (e.g., "integration", "fusion", "marriage" between Chinese culture and local culture) on forming organizational culture in overseas subsidiaries that is different from the headquarters.

Granovetter's (1973, 1974) discussion about weak ties versus strong ties in job-hunting activities and found that when using personal social networks to search for a new job, weak ties (relationships that are interacted infrequently and less intimate) might be more effective than strong ties. But Bian (1997) argued that in Chinese society, people spend time and effort on maintaining Guanxi, which are the relationships that Chinese people use to exchange favors. Therefore, strong ties might be more helpful for bridging social networks than weak ties among Chinese people. Scholars point out that there are places where "informal economies" are organized through personal, familial, ethnic networks of trust, and obligation (Bian, 1997). According to Bian (1997), strong ties can function as bridges in such places.

All of the interviewees know well about Chinese Guanxi culture, social networking behaviors, and mechanisms. Meanwhile, they all understand that Guanxi is a double-edged sword. Accordingly, they reminded that one should be aware of the dark side of Guanxi, for instance, one should avoid using Guanxi as a tool of doing law-breaking and unethical behaviors, namely bribery, corruption, etc. Culture is like an iceberg. Only scratching the surface of it will not help the adaptation progress. As a natural person who is assigned to work in foreign countries, one should make effective use of the bright side of Guanxi (ethical Guanxi) in helping with increasing communications and interactions with residents of local communities, to enhance the insights about local cultures, avoid stereotype thinking, and smooth the cultural adjustment process (see the quotations below).

> **Interviewee D:** *"The local employees who have been working with us for a long time will be more receptive to Chinese Guanxi culture. When they want to report some problems or propose their needs to me, as they are familiar with Chinese culture, they will first ask the Chinese colleague who is my good friend for help. This colleague will then come to me and communicate with me about this issue. During the local festival times, we exchange gifts and presents with each other. In private, we have developed many friendships with each other. Local employees also use SNS apps like WeChat. We receive the influence of each other's culture at the same time.*
>
> *I think Guanxi and Ubuntu philosophy has positive influences on intercultural teamwork management. Employees live and work together inside of our overseas subsidiaries. We are a big family. Just like students live in the same dormitory in a*

college. It is a collective way of living, and we formed an integrated community that *consists of Chinese and local employees. For example, in Nigeria, we provide buffets made by Chinese and local cooks in our canteens. We enjoy meals together. Every Saturday, we have a dinner gathering together, drinking wines, Baijiu, chatting, and singing together happily, to be more emotionally connected.*

As for the relationships outside our firm, I think local people are also good at *maintaining social relationships with each other. The neighboring company, local chiefs, and residents, governmental officers will also give us small presents at festival times. And we will give presents to them as well. Generally speaking, we are all human* *beings after all and everyone has sympathy. We cannot live without social networks.* *Local employees are very outgoing and like to interact with us. When we become friends, some local employees will invite us to visit their homes and meet their families. They will tell us the information about where we can find restaurants with tasty cuisine, or where we can buy traditional wooden handicrafts and souvenirs. Now, although I've* *been back to the headquarters, I still keep in touch with some local colleagues and* *friends."*

The interviewees (see the quotations below) mentioned the African history (e.g., the colonial times, the post-colonial times, the "African Renaissance"), indigenous cultures, and traditions (e.g., Yoruba culture, Ethiopian culture), which shows that they have some cognitions and knowledge reserves of sub-Saharan African cultures. It seems that some of the interviewees did not have enough knowledge about the name or origin of the Ubuntu philosophy. But they gave perceptions that are similar to the features or principles of Ubuntu culture, for example, collectivism, family and community relationships, etc. But it appears that they do not have a thorough and profound understanding of Ubuntu, and thus, the company should provide more cultural training lectures to Chinese employees. During the interviews, some interviews started searching about Ubuntu on the internet immediately after hearing the related question. They showed an intense interest in further learning about Ubuntu. Ubuntu philosophy can be the enlightenment for them to improve ethical corporate governance, how to do better in the fulfillment and publicity of CSR, and how to think of different approaches that satisfied the external and internal stakeholders respectively using ethical Guanxi networking practices.

- **Interviewee A:** *"I think my knowledge about sub-Saharan African Cultures and Ubuntu philosophy is limited. That is because I have only worked and lived in Nigeria. But I do have a basic understanding of sub-Saharan African Cultures. I read about the* *history of Africa. During colonial times, they received a lot of influences from foreign cultures, religions, ideologies, languages, and management concepts. In post-colonial times, they fought for freedom and became independent. It is the time of the Africa Renaissance for them to reform self-identification, and to advocate the great and*

unique values of their indigenous cultures, their original ideologies, philosophies, and traditional values. The whole process can also be seen as merging foreign cultures while keeping the significance of their own cultures. In Nigeria, I've learned about Yoruba culture. Alike with Chinese people, Yoruba people are also family-oriented. Also, they value social networking, accept the existence of hierarchy relationships, and the importance of maintaining mutual-beneficial social ties. Furthermore, similar to us, they also keep long-term relationships."

5. **Interviewee B:** *"I don't know much about the Ubuntu philosophy, but I know that it was advocated and preached by President Mandela, whom I admire very much. Also, I learned that the southern part of Africa has a very different culture compared with the northern part of Africa. African people may not have much money, and they may not have a lot of pursuits or be very goal-oriented as Chinese people, but they have a stronger sense of well-being and emotional happiness than us. In Chinese culture, people endeavor to hoard money, to let their children receive better education, and will leave their fortune and properties to their children. We, Chinese people, have the saying of '望子成龙，望女成凤' (English translation: 'Hopes for the son to grow up into a dragon, hopes for the daughter to grow up into a phoenix', which means that hoping children to have a bright future). In Chinese culture, there is the traditional philosophy of family wealth inheritance, and Chinese people all put this thinking in their minds more or less. Chinese people are aiming to let their children have a head start over others all the time, and that's why life has become a burden to us. In contrast, African people seem to be untroubled with these sorts of thoughts. They have the living attitude of 'Carpe Diem'. Just simply to live in the present and enjoy the moment.*

Favor exchange via social networking to deepen emotional connection with each other is common among human beings' social networks. No matter the Western cultures or the Oriental cultures, technological development doesn't mean everything, and high-technological MNEs still need to construct and make use of their social networks. In my opinion, effective social networking is more than giving gifts to each other. Building mutual trust and maintaining long-term relationships is of more significance. Chances and opportunities will come to you through social ties.

China is a traditional Guanxi society. Similar to sub-Saharan Africa, or other places around the world, wherever we humans exist, social ties and networks exist. Chinese people do have some know-how on how to maintain long-term relationships with each other. In a society that values social networks, Chinese people may feel like fish in the water. Chinese expatriate managers often show modest, honest, and sincere attitudes when they are building new social ties in host countries, which will help give good impressions to local people and eventually will help them form good friendships with local people in private. I don't know much about the discourse of "Weak Ties", but I think that Nigerian people have received quite a lot of influences from the Western culture because of the colonial history while keeping their traditions. In China,

family kinships are very close and will remain to be a lifetime relationship. Parents will keep on caring for the children, even after they grow into adults. But <u>*in Nigeria, as far as I've noticed, Nigerian parents may not do as Chinese people, even though they also value family kinships. In Nigeria, people are willing to help their relatives or neighbors. We Chinese people also have a similar way of thinking.*</u>*"*

• **Interviewee D:** *"*<u>*African people have a similar patriotic mind, which is valuable for Chinese people to learn from. For the differences, my perspective that came from my own experiences is that Ethiopians are smart, talented, and diligent. Nigerians pursue a cozy life and they enjoy the pleasure of the here and now without too many unnecessary worries about the future.*</u>* For example, they don't have the habit of saving money. Some local employees that have received their payment will not come to work the next day. They just ask for a few days' leave and spend all of their wages in a very short-term time. When they come back to work, some of them have to ask for the payment in advance, since they don't have enough money for daily expenses.* <u>*At first, I was astonished by this phenomenon, as Chinese people often have long-term plans for how to spend their money. But gradually, I understood that this is their way and their culture.*</u>* Our company would accept their demands and provide them the payment in advance. I don't know much about Ubuntu philosophy. But* <u>*I think that African people are friendly to strangers. They are very warmhearted and willing to greet and help strangers. They are more of being natural socializers (自来熟) than Chinese people. Chinese people may not help strangers that they meet on the street.*</u>* African people and Chinese people both value family kinships. We both emphasize building mutually beneficial relationships with communism and collectivist mindsets.* <u>*But I feel that the range or the size of the social circle of family kinships is different. Chinese people may focus on the relationship with the core members of one's family.*</u>*"*

• **Interviewee E:** *"I have not been to South Africa. Therefore, I am not so familiar with the Ubuntu culture.* <u>*I feel that African cultural values are unique with many traditional features. Ubuntu cannot represent the whole African culture from a pluralistic perspective. Each country, each ethnic group has its own culture. If there existed one unitary culture among African people, then the whole continent would have become a united country.*</u>* Looking at the map, you will find that the borders of each nation are usually square and unnatural, which reveals the bitter and gloomy colonial history of the Africa continent. Sometimes I feel sympathy with African people, as we Chinese also have a similar history that we do not want to recall.* <u>*The spirit of helping each other and brotherhood is a little bit similar to primitive communism.*</u>* During the trip to the industrial park in Ethiopia, I met an Ethiopian line manager and we had a pleasant chat.* <u>*He told me that it is very common that Ethiopian people providing pecuniary aid to their family members and relatives when they receive their monthly salaries. Ethiopian culture has collectivist features. But different from Chinese people, Ethiopian people enjoy instant gratification.*</u>* We Chinese people often save money for*

a rainy day or spend a great amount of money on educating our children. I have lived in Africa for many years, and I found that the problem of education inequity exists. Only the children from elite families can have the opportunities to receive better education or study abroad. At first, I saw many young workers spent their wages quickly and recklessly, and then asked us to give the next month's salary to them in advance. Perhaps they were lack of the mindset of how to financially sustain their family with a long-term perspective.

The most important thing is that, while respecting the host country's culture, we should also elaborate on the influence of our organizational culture on local employees. Nowadays, many Ethiopian employees have become willing to work overtime and start to save money for children's education with long-term plans. African people value social relationships as well. For example, they would like to introduce their relatives and friends or acquaintances from the same tribe or community to work with our company. I feel that African people are more affectionate than Chinese people. Because even though I am now back in China, my local colleagues and friends still regularly contact me to keep our friendships. African countries lack highly skillful talents. Therefore, providing appropriate long-term training programs for local employees is very important."

- **Interviewee J:** *"Nigerian culture has some similar features to us, for example, they also value humane feelings and social relationships. Like us, Nigerian people are family-oriented. But they are more willing to help strangers than us. I have seen that people on the street helping someone injured from a traffic accident spontaneously, and the scene makes me feel that local people are warmhearted and compassionate.*

Colonial history still influences them more or less. I have been to some underdeveloped places in Nigeria. In those places, poor people are still afraid of seeing Western people and calling them "Master", which gives me a complicated feeling. Therefore, our company has always been stressing the importance of respecting local people. Racial discrimination is strictly forbidden within our company. We should enhance communication and mutual understandings with local employees."

The interviewees gave suggestions regarding employee engagement approaches. The company should keep improving the fairness, efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of the employee communication channel. Employee voice is an important channel for employees, which can influence factors that affect employees' attitudes and behaviors at work, for instance, employee satisfaction, commitment, innovation, productivity, improvement of organizational and individual performance, etc. Moreover, the company should provide more opportunities for local talents for job promotions, in particular, to become middle and senior managerial personnel (see the quotation below).

Interviewee C: *"Our firm does care about the rights of female employees. Furthermore, African countries have the traditions of respecting and caring for female employees.*

We pay attention to adhere to these traditions. No matter the blue collars or the white collars, we would never fire them only because they are pregnant. We provide them with allowances and vacations according to local laws and regulations.

Also, we often receive letters of thanks from Nigerian employees, as our company and Chinese colleagues give them '红包' (means a red envelope containing some amount of money as a gift) when they get married, give birth to a child, or at the time they have family members who are hospitalized for the treatment of very serious disease. In my perspective, absolute fairness or absolute distinguish can all make people think of discrimination and feel uncomfortable. Diversity management and intercultural management are delicate and complicated. Thus, we should think of the nuances, and provide treatment with flexibility.

Sometimes we have to keep the confidentiality about some information to our local employees. It does not represent that we are not respectful of them. Risks of information leaks do exist. Unexpected things happened before. There were a few local employees who sold our information to other competitors for a big amount of money and therefore brought about a financial loss to our firm. To sum up, *thorough psychological, social, and economic context analyses are vital in dealing with this issue.*

Nowadays, we live in the information age of marketization. Talent flow, job motility, and dual-way selection increased rapidly. In the recruitment phase, we deliberately check an applicant's background and interview him or her to see whether the person wants to work for a long term or a short term. As for employee retention, I think that improving treatments, payments, and incentives may be a practical method. But still, the young generation has different mindsets. Some young employees left our company after they worked for about two or three years and went to study abroad. Some of them went back to their hometown cities. The living expenses in Beijing are too high for them. It is hard for young people to buy properties and settle in here. Nevertheless, *our company remains attractive to job applicants as being a state-owned enterprise, which can provide relatively stable jobs with high payments in China. Many new graduates of "211 and 985" (excellent universities in China) are in favor of us and come to apply for jobs every year, as well as many young people with overseas studying experiences.*"

Although currently, employee turnover is not an emergent problem, considering that employees of the young generations ("the 85s，90s，and 2000s", similar to the generation Y and generation Z) are the worthy successors for achieving sustainable development, managerial persons should learn about the mindsets, demands, and needs of young employees initiatively, and be more flexible with humanistic care, to be more attractive to young generation talents.

To improve the abilities and skills of cultural adaptation and conflict resolution in achieving higher intercultural task performance, organizational leaders, especially the senior and middle managerial personnel should develop their emotional and cultural intelligence (EQ and CQ). They should understand that to have an effective and peaceful dialogue when negotiating with local employees or colleagues, flexibility, and humanistic care, and thus, ensure leadership success in a cross-cultural environment. As the organizational leader, Interviewee A expressed his perspective on the future development of the company to upgrade the organizational transformation and achieve sustainable development underpinned by the new business strategies. Also, Interviewee B emphasized the importance of emulating the advantages of other MNEs (e.g., German MNEs, Chinese POEs, and Nigerian MNEs). The role up-gradation of HRM is crucial for MNEs. There should be more strategic alignment vertically between senior managerial personnel and HRM Department, and the functional cooperation horizontally among HRM Department, Legal Management Department, CSR Department, and Public Relations/Publicity Department. Furthermore, those departments should be incorporated into the decision-making process to get a floor and have a voice in the decision-making process.

Chapter 6: A developmental perspective on the relationships between Chinese SOE expatriates' intercultural experience and cultural intelligence

6.1 Introduction

Human resource development (HRD) and talent management are challenges for foreign firms operating in sub-Saharan Africa (Oseghale, Mulyata, and Debrah, 2018). Expatriate training and development are critically important in stimulating skills and lifelong learning at all levels in the organization (the workplace with cultural diversity), providing employees with a more positive response to these challenges (Machado, 2018, p.177). Mayer (2019, pp.6-7) emphasized that in international management, managers' abilities of intercultural communication, planning and administration, multinational teamwork, strategic action, global awareness, and emotional intelligence with self-management are essential in coping with international and intercultural challenges. See Hellriegel *et al.* (2007, pp.22-35) as follows:

• *Communication competence includes informal and formal communication and negotiation.*

• *Planning refers to the areas of time and project management, financial management, and problem-solving.*

• *Teamwork competence emphasizes designing teams, providing supportive environments, and managing team dynamics.*

• *Strategic action highlights the understanding of industry and organizations when taking strategic actions.*

• *Global awareness competence is based on cultural knowledge and understanding, openness, and sensitivity.*

• *Emotional intelligence and self-management competence deal with integrity and ethical conduct, personal drive, and resilience, balancing work and life issues, self-awareness and development, as well as spiritual intelligence.*

Expatriate employees of MNEs ought to learn how to make use of cognitive, affective, and behavioral resources to deal with intercultural challenges and contribute to establishing a harmonized intercultural workplace (Mayer, 2019). To tackle these real-world challenges, intercultural competence research has gained insightful progress in revealing which traits, attitudes and worldviews, and capabilities anticipate success in intercultural interactions and contexts (Leung, Ang, and Tan, 2014). However, Michailova and Ott (2018, p.59) pointed out that these studies might have been heavily focusing on cultural intelligence (CQ) as an antecedent that has positive impacts on different intercultural interaction outcomes (performances). For instance, Earley and Ang (2003) found that global talents, who possess high Cultural Quotient (CQ), or high cultural intelligence, may perform better in social relationship building and the development of trust relations with local stakeholders during the cross-cultural communication process. They also

emphasized the importance to shift research focus to 'investigate if and how CQ can be development', which means to study the relationship between international or intercultural experience and the development of one's cultural intelligence (Michailova and Ott, 2018, p.59).

Leung, Ang, and Tan (2014, p.508) concluded that intercultural experiences can be development tools and also emphasized the necessity of conducting relevant research on how different types of intercultural competence interventions affect one's intercultural competence, intercultural leadership, etc.:

"The literature on the leader and executive development suggests that 70% of development occurs through direct, on-the-job experiences, whereas training accounts for less than 10% of development, and coaching and mentoring account for the remaining 20% (DeRue and Wellman 2009, McCall 2004, McCauley et al. 1994, Robinson and Wick 1992). Similarly, Erez et al. (2013) and Pless et al. (2011) provided evidence for the effectiveness of direct experiences in developing intercultural competence. Many scholars have advocated direct, on-the-job experiences as the primary developmental tool, with other forms of development (i.e., formal training, coaching, and mentoring) playing a supporting role (DeRue and Wellman 2009). Robinson and Wick (1992) argued that to enhance the value of challenging experiences, accountability and autonomy should be involved, as these characteristics combine interactively to heighten an individual's arousal, which is positively linked to learning (DeRue and Wellman 2009). Future research should evaluate the extent to which accountability and autonomy in intercultural competence interventions contribute to the interventions' effectiveness.

Basit (2003) explained that the establishment of categories and the extraction of themes are not only organizing tools but are also meaningful interpreted outcomes acquired from the qualitative data analysis process. Basit (2003, p.144) found that the process of obtaining the eventual qualitative research results was termed as the 'data condensation' or the 'data distillation' (Tesch, 1990, p.139). From Chapter 4, several interview themes were extracted from the semi-structured interviews with thirteen Chinese senior and middle managers. The third research object is about IHRM and cross-cultural collaboration and communication and there are two themes extracted from interviews, which are 'intercultural experiences, cross-cultural learning and cultural adjustment', and 'intercultural communication and awareness/ sensitivity (see Table 26). During the interviews, interviewees introduced their self-learning experiences as well as the training programs and HR practices development of their company, and also gave their perceptions on the similarities and differences among sub-Saharan African cultures and Chinese culture (see Table 26). Furthermore, interviewees shared their episodes, stories, and experiences of intercultural communication and cultural adjustment that happened in their workplaces, and how to appropriately and effectively handle and solve employee relations and communication problems. They mentioned that effective intercultural communication or collaboration may improve knowledge sharing

between Chinese expatriates and local talents.

Table 26: The second and the third research objects, extracted themes, and keywords from the interviews

Research object	Main theme	Keyword
Strategic alignment of IHRM practices and policies with organizational/ business strategies	g. Novel organizational/business strategies and the influences of BRI h. Selection and recruitment i. Employee retention/ engagement/commitment j. Training and HR development k. Legal, ethical, and diversity management l. Performance appraisal, reward, and compensation	g. Localization/ marketization/ internationalization strategies/ Chinese managerial persons' perceptions about BRI and the strategic implications of BRI h. Workforce localization/ on-campus recruitment with local universities/the employment criteria of educational background and skill i. Humanistic care/ employees' voices and communication channels for needs j. The 'Mentor and Apprentice' programs (on-the-job skill training)/ foreign language training programs (French, English, Portuguese)/ orientation meetings and briefings for overseas assignments/ the 'Rainbow Plan' for developing young employees k. Consulting local law firms and learning local laws and regulations/ taking care of female employees', young employees', and local employees' needs and demands with flexible management policies and solutions l. Cannot use the 360-degree appraisal stiffly without flexibilities/ maintaining workplace harmony/ equal pay for equal work/ overseas assignment incentives for Chinese expatriate staff, and holiday/ vacation arrangements
IHRM and cross-cultural collaboration/ communication	c. Intercultural experiences, cross-cultural learning, and cultural adjustment d. Intercultural communication and awareness/ sensitivity	a. The introductions of Chinese Expatriates' self-learning experiences and learning experiences provided by their company, of the local histories, ideologies, culture, traditions, values, and organizational culture / their perceptions on the similarities and differences between African Ubuntu culture and Chinese Confucian culture b. The introductions of intercultural workplace relationship problems/ workplace atmosphere/employee relations/ mutual trust and understanding/ conflict solutions/ ethical and culturally sensitive Guanxi networking with internal stakeholders

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) point out that MNCs' overseas branches often have to deal with the dilemma of concurrently accepting and obeying organizational (MNCs) internal regulations, and replying to and meeting local demands and requirements. Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) observed that 'ambidextrous behaviors' for coping with ambidextrous contexts may exist in overseas branches and subsidiaries. To analyze these 'ambidextrous behaviors', the multidimensional concepts of 'Embeddedness' were proposed to reflect the linkages of overseas

branches with different external and internal stakeholders (Grannoveter, 1985; Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990). By analyzing the extracted keywords from the interviewees' narratives, I found various efforts that display the feature of crossvergence, from both the studied organizations and individuals of developing the 'political-institutional embeddedness', 'cultural embeddedness', 'structural-relational embeddedness', and 'cognitive embeddedness' in sub-Saharan Africa. However, they also pointed out some insufficiencies of their current training and learning programs, as many of them had been spending their spare time in self-learning by interests. There is a need for improvement of the workplace intercultural learning design and increasing intercultural experiential opportunities to support HRD (e.g., help employees learn local indigenous languages and cultures intensively in the future), which may influence their intercultural awareness and sensitivity, as well as intercultural communication abilities and skills that can facilitate the knowledge sharing between Chinese expatriates with local colleagues in the processes of 'cognitive embeddedness', 'cultural embeddedness', and 'structural-relational embeddedness' in intercultural workplaces, to rectify and reform an integrated organizational culture. It is an imperative task since organizational culture has a key role to play 'in developing social norms and values regarding knowledge sharing in intercultural workplaces and creating an atmosphere or climate of trust (the central element of relational social capital/ resources) (De Long and Fahey, 2000; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Vaiman and Collings, 2018, p.219).

This chapter is the third phase of the mixed methods single case study research project (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) that consists of both quantitative and qualitative analyses using multiple research instruments and methods. With the online questionnaire surveys conducted using the application of Tencent Questionnaire Service for WeChat [10], the main research aim is to explore the relationships between Chinese expatriates' intercultural experiences with the development of their cultural intelligence during the 'internal embeddedness' and cultural-crossvergence process at the micro-level, underpinned by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory discussed in Michailova and Ott (2018) and Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory also suggested by Ng, Van Dyne, and Ang (2009). Further qualitative answers from the respondents were also collected and analyzed in Chapter 4 with the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interviews to find out how they perceive the similarities and differences between Chinese culture and sub-Saharan African cultures, what IHRM problems their company confronted, and to further discuss the role and function of IHRM in internal stakeholder engagement and talent/ HR development in intercultural workplaces. The collection of these qualitative answers from the Chinese expatriates is required, as the 'model attraction and the values of the portrayed behaviors' will influence the development of cultural intelligence (Michailova and Ott, 2018). Because during the intercultural experience, by observing local people's behaviors and learning from other business professionals in host countries, expatriates may improve their Metacognitive CQ (CQ strategy) and Cognitive CQ (CQ knowledge) by imitating the native and local models' verbal and non-verbal behaviors and accumulating cultural knowledge (Michailova and Ott, 2018).

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[10] URL: https://wj.qq.com/; https://www.wechat.com/ (Accessed on 05/09/2020).

The sampling approach is the chain-referral sampling method by utilizing the social networks of the initial two informants to share the web link of the questionnaire to other respondents with the features and traits that meet the eligibility criteria via WeChat on June 24 and June 25, 2020, and received 74 answered surveys. After the data analyses, the analyzed data and results were provided to the representative respondents to ensure the appropriateness and collect further feedbacks in June 2021.

6.2 Literature Review

6.2.1 Linking social psychology with IHRM research: Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Bandura's SLT and Kolb's ELT have been applied to explain skill development and other areas of human resource development (HRD) (Michailova and Ott, 2018; Ng, Van Dyne, and Ang, 2009), for example, Black and Mendenhall (1990) formalized a theoretical framework to examine the effectiveness of intercultural training programs for expatriates. Bandura's SLT describes one's learning process as consisting of three key elements, which are 'attention', 'retention', and 'reproduction', and is influenced by 'motivation', 'incentives', and 'consequences (Michailova and Ott, 2018). The learning process includes continuous and reciprocal interactions among cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants (Michailova and Ott, 2018). Elucidated by Bandura's SLT, when expatriates being a part of the intercultural workplaces (the learning environment), paying attention to local colleagues and other stakeholders' behaviors, and gaining direct or indirect experiences of the consequences may lead to the development of their cultural intelligence (CQ) (Michailova and Ott, 2018). Kolb's ELT has four stages: 'concrete experiences', 'reflective observation', 'abstract conceptualization', and 'active experimentation' (Ng, Van Dyne, and Ang, 2009). When related to expatriates' CQ development, it requires international organizations to provide physical, mental, and psychological opportunities and interventions for employees to experience, reflect, think, experiment, and interact actively at intercultural workplaces (Ng, Van Dyne, and Ang, 2009, p.513). These two psychological theories of learning provide theoretical and foundational implications for international organizations to design effective instructional learning programs and interventions for their employees. Thus, these two theories are reviewed to explain the mechanisms of intercultural learning and the development of one's cultural intelligence.

6.2.2 Intercultural experiences

Cultural understanding which is rooted in knowledge (cognitions) can be developed by didactic training and other forms of developmental opportunities (Caligiuri and Dragoni, 2018, p.229). There are different types of intercultural experiences. Work-related experiences and non-work-related experiences exist. For instance, some of the work-related experiences like online or face-to-face cross-cultural training courses, which have been commonly offered in international

organizations to international assignees (expatriates) previously (Caligiuri and Dragoni, 2018). Different types of intercultural experience 'vary in terms of their quantity (e.g., tenure, length of a task has been performed) and quality' (Caligiuri and Dragoni, 2018, p.231). See the following table:

Table 27: Different types of intercultural experiences (Adopted from Caligiuri and Dragoni, 2018, pp.229–231)

Intercultural experience type	Exemplary form
Cross-cultural training (helping expatriates and global leaders understand cultural differences and learn how to behave appropriately in intercultural contexts)	• Culture-general knowledge training (the knowledge of the societal-level values and norms) • Cultural-specific training (the deeper cognitions with specific or indigenous local culture) via courses, orientations, coaching, or online tools
Other cross-cultural experiential opportunities	• Long-term or short-term international assignments • International business travels • Intercultural social interactions

6.2.3 The conceptualization on cultural intelligence (CQ)

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has four dimensions reflecting one's intercultural capabilities: Metacognitive CQ (CQ strategy), Cognitive CQ (CQ knowledge), Motivational CQ (CQ drive), and Behavioral CQ (CQ action) (Earley and Ang, 2003; Ang and Van Dyne, 2008; Van Dyne, Ang, and Livemore, 2010; Leung, Ang, and Tan, 2014). According to Leung, Ang, and Tan (2014), CQ dimensions as the independent variables, can consistently predict psychological outcomes (e.g., intercultural adjustment), behavioral outcomes (e.g., knowledge sharing and social network development with culturally different actors), and performance outcomes (e.g., task performance, intercultural leadership effectiveness), and there are pieces of empirical evidence showing all of the four dimensions have significant and positive correlations with psychological and performance outcomes. Among the pieces of evidence, they also found that Motivational CQ is more strongly causing psychological outcomes, while Metacognitive CQ and Behavioral CQ are more strongly led to performance outcomes (Leung, And, and Tan, 2014).

6.3 Research variables, framework, and questions

From the interviews, Chinese expatriate managers introduced their intercultural experiences (see Figure 35) received from the individual side (the independent variables: Overseas Studying Experience and Ubuntu, which stands for the self-learning experience of local cultural knowledge) and organizational side (the independent variables: Job Position and CCM/ IHRM Training Experience). Some of the Chinese expatriate managers (the interviewees) mentioned that they had overseas studying experience in Western countries (e.g., U.K., U.S., and Germany). Accordingly, 'Overseas Studying Experience' (OSE) represents whether or not the respondent has study abroad experience in higher education at mostly the Western Countries before being employed by the

studied Chinese Central SOE. Several interviewees also acknowledged that they know about Ubuntu culture or other indigenous African cultures and histories, but these kinds of knowledge are often accumulated by self-learning experiences. Thus, the variable of 'Ubuntu' stands for Chinese expatriates' intercultural self-learning experiences about Ubuntu culture. Additionally, from the interviews, I found that managerial positions often have longer working experiences in sub-Saharan Africa, as in the studied company, most of their new employees will be sent to overseas branches for 2 to 3 years, and then many of them will come back to China and work in the Headquarters or other domestic branches. Therefore, the variable of 'Job Position' indicates the length of their intercultural experiences. Last but not least, the variable of 'CCM/ IHRM Training Experience' shows whether or not the Chinese expatriates have received any forms of Cross-cultural or IHRM training from their company.
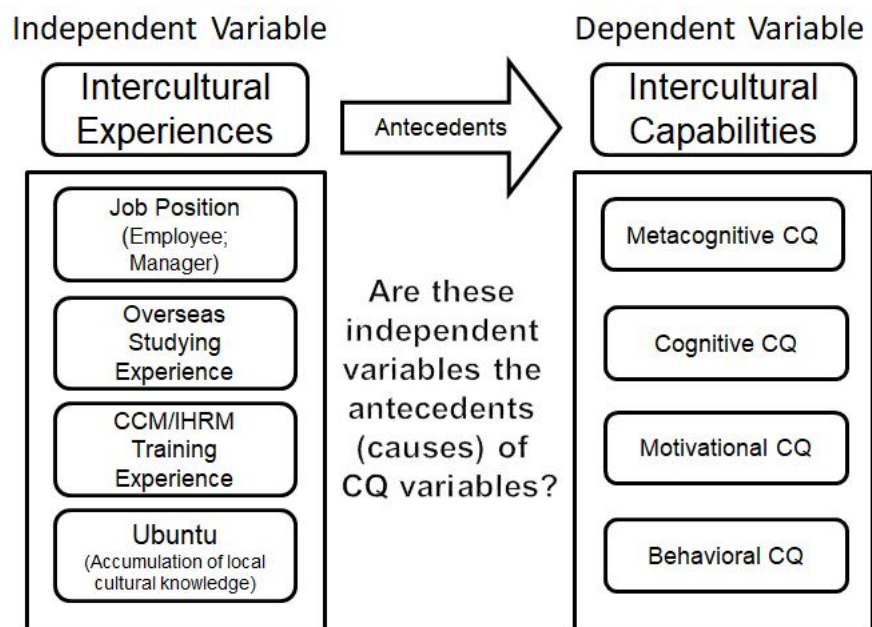
Figure 35: The research framework for quantitative analysis

The quantitative research questions are listed as follows:

a. What are the relationships between Chinese expatriates' 'Overseas Studying Experience' with 'Metacognitive CQ', 'Cognitive CQ', 'Motivational CQ', and 'Behavioral CQ'?

b. What are the relationships between the variable of 'Ubuntu' with 'Metacognitive CQ', 'Cognitive CQ', 'Motivational CQ', and 'Behavioral CQ'?

c. What are the relationships between the variable of 'Job Position' with 'Metacognitive CQ', 'Cognitive CQ', 'Motivational CQ', and 'Behavioral CQ'?

d. What are the relationships between the variable of 'CCM/ IHRM Training Experience' with 'Metacognitive CQ', 'Cognitive CQ', 'Motivational CQ', and 'Behavioral CQ'?

6.4 Methodology

This phase is designed with an explanatory quantitative approach. The online questionnaire has three parts with 33 items (see Appendix 1). Part 1 contains ten close-ended questions for collecting the data of demographic variables and independent variables. Part 2 is formed with the twenty items of the cultural intelligence scale (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008), using a seven-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and agree). Part 3 has three open-ended questions for qualitative data collection, which the analyzed and extracted results were introduced in Chapter 4 to compare the intercultural awareness/ sensitivity of this larger group of respondents with the group of the previously interviewed thirteen Chinese managers. The respondents typed down small paragraphs to answer the open-ended questions. The content analysis of their answers was conducted manually and carefully with coding procedures for theme extraction. The first question is: "Please give a simple description of the similarities and differences between Chinese and sub-Saharan African cultures." I received 62 valid answers. The second question is: "Please give a simple description of the problems you encountered when managing local employees." I received 67 valid answers. The third question is: "Please give a simple description of how to solve conflicts and problems with local employees." I received 67 valid answers.

Because of the problem of accessibility, the sampling method used is the chain-referral sampling method. The 74 respondents came from CSOEa (code name) and its subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa and CSOEb (code name) and its subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa. CSOEa and CSOEb are all group companies of the studied Chinese Central SOE with the code name of CCSOE. The quantitative data collected from Part 1 and Part 2 were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software [11] and generated descriptive and regression statistical results.

This phase of the research was conducted following the guidelines of the Ritsumeikan Research Ethics Book [12]. Respondents were informed about the research purposes and aims of the whole research project and this phase, and also about their confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to freely withdraw from the study. All information was stored in a personal USB flash drive that can only be used and accessed by the author and will be deleted after the submission of this thesis to ensure information safety.

6.5 Data analysis, results, and discussion

6.5.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 28 shows the descriptive statistics of the 74 respondents' data of the first part of the questionnaire. 85.1% of the respondents are male expatriates. 49.5% of the respondents are managers (middle or senior managerial personnel). 100% of the respondents have a bachelor's

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[11] URL: https://www.ibm.com/support/pages/downloading-ibm-spss-statistics-26 (Accessed on 05/09/2020).
[12] URL: http://en.ritsumei.ac.jp/research/rosupport/starting-research/before/ (Accessed on 05/09/2020)

degree and can speak English. 39.2% of them have higher educational degrees (master's or doctoral degrees). The average overseas assignment tenure of the respondents in sub-Saharan Africa is six years, and the shortest is 0.5 years, the longest is 25 years. 73.8 % of them have 0.5 to 10 years of experience working in sub-Saharan Africa, which indicates that about ten years ago, more investments occurred from the organizational side and more expatriates were assigned to sub-Saharan African markets.

Regarding intercultural learning, 32.4% of the respondents have organizational training experience. Although coincidently, 32.4% of them know about Ubuntu culture, according to previous interviewees, the knowledge came from self-learning. However, still this is a considerably high percentage, as their working locations are grouped in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania, and only one person has working experience in South Africa, where the Ubuntu culture originated.

Table 28: Frequency and percentages of the descriptors (N = 74, Code No.1 to No.74's data analysis)

Descriptor	Detail	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	11	14.9%
	Male	63	85.1%
Job Position	Employee	30	40.5%
	Manager	44	49.5%
Education Background	Bachelor Degree	45	60.8%
	Master Degree	27	36.5%
	Doctoral Degree	2	2.7%
Overseas Study Experience	Yes	9	12.2%
	No	65	87.8%
Overseas Assignment Tenure (Years) (Average 6 years, longest 25 years, shortest half year)	0 to 3 years	28	37.8%
	4 to 10 years	34	46.0%
	More than 10 years	12	16.2%
Cross-cultural Management/IHRM Training Experience	Yes	24	32.4%
	No	50	67.6%
Ubuntu Knowledge	Do not know	50	67.6%
	Know	24	32.4%
Foreign Language Abilities	English	74	100%
	French	2	2.7%
	Spanish	0	0%
	Portuguese	0	0%
	Arabic	1	1.4%
	African Indigenous Languages	1	1.4%
Overseas Assignment Locations	Algeria, Ethiopia	1	1.4%
	Ethiopia	2	2.7%
	Iraq, Israel, Ethiopia	1	1.4%
	Kenya	20	27%
	Kenya, Tanzania	1	1.4%
	Nigeria	24	32.4%
	Nigeria, Ethiopia	1	1.4%
	Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya	1	1.4%
	Sierra Leone	12	16.2%
	South Africa	1	1.4%
	Tanzania	8	10.8%
	United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia	1	1.4%
	Zimbabwe	1	1.4%

6.5.2   Inferential statistics

6.5.2.1 Reliability, validity, and correlations results

Table 29 displays the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the inferential statistics analysis.

Table 29: Means (MN), Standard Deviations (SD) of all the variables (N = 74)

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	.85	.358	74
EB	.39	.492	74
JP	.59	.494	74
OSE	.12	.329	74
TE	.32	.471	74
UBUNTU	.32	.471	74
MC	5.41554	.979479	74
COG	4.85586	1.136540	74
MOT	5.14324	1.041348	74
BEH	5.04324	.972087	74
Abbreviations: JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management/ International Human Resource Management Training Experience, , UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, MC = Metacognitive CQ, COG = Cognitive CQ, MOT = Motivational CQ, BEH = Behavioral CQ			

Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh (2008) elaborated that CQ is one's capability to adapt and adjust to different cultural environments. Similar to other forms of nonacademic intelligence such as social intelligence, emotional intelligence, or other complements of cognitive intelligence, CQ is also important for high-quality personal relationships and effectiveness or adaptability to cultural diversities and intercultural interactions (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008, p.16). They developed the CQ scale with business school undergraduates (n = 576; 74% female; mean age 20; two years of work experience) in Singapore (Ang, *et al.*, 2007; Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008, p.19). Firstly, they designed a 40-item scale (1-7 Likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) that was structured with a four-factor structure (reflecting the four dimensions of CQ). Then, they assessed the dimensionality with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reduced the 'items with high residuals, low factor loadings, small standard deviations or extreme means, and low item-to-total correlations' (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008, p.19). CFA performed good fit of the hypothesized four-factor model to the data: $\chi^2(164df) = 822.26$, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = 0.91, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.92, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.06, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08 (p < 0.05). They retained 20 items with the strongest psychometric properties: four Metacognitive CQ, six Cognitive CQ, five Motivational CQ, and five Behavioral CQ (see Appendix for the 20 items). The generalizability of the cultural intelligence scale has been tested with different sample groups located in different cultural environments (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008).

The data collected with the Chinese expatriates (n = 74) of the four dimensions of the CQ

showed high reliability (MC = 0.841; COG = 0.908; MOT = 0.878; BEH =0.884, see Table 30). Regarding the validity, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.873 (see Table 31), which is well above the recommended acceptable level of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant. This indicated that factor analysis was appropriate for the data. The factors extraction method is Principal Component Analysis, and the extracted factors are showed with the rotation method of the Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The analysis yielded four factors, which explained 72.9% of the total variance. Table 32 reveals the Pearson correlations coefficient results among the control, independent and dependent variables. From this table, intercultural experience variables like JP, CCM/ IHRM TE, and UBUNTU have significant positive correlations with MC, COG, MOT, and BEH.

Table 30: Means (MN), Standard Deviations (SD), scale reliabilities, and inter-correlations of the CQ variables (N = 74)

Variable	MN	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Metacognitive CQ	5.42	0.98	(.841)			
2. Cognitive CQ	4.86	1.14	.640**	(.908)		
3. Motivational CQ	5.14	1.04	.663**	.659**	(.878)	
4. Behavioral CQ	5.04	0.97	.695**	.700**	.739**	(.884)
Note: Reliability coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal. *p<.05 (2-tailed) **p<.01 (2-tailed)						

Table 31: Validity of the CQS (N = 74)

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.873
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1179.139
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Table 32: The Pearson correlations coefficient results (N = 74)

	Gender	EB	JP	OSE	CCM/IHRM TE	UBUNTU	MC	COG	MOT	BEH
Gender[a]	1	.024	.197	-.309**	.127	.046	.198	.070	.109	.129
EB[b]	.024	1	.099	.294*	-.024	-.083	.041	-.135	.028	.039
JP[c]	.197	.099	1	.055	.102	.160	.409**	.354**	.380**	.305**
OSE[d]	-.309**	.294*	.055	1	.095	.184	.096	-.038	.108	.095
CCM/IHRM TE[e]	.127	-.024	.102	.095	1	.260*	.253*	.306**	.256*	.250*
UBUNTU[f]	.046	-.083	.160	.184	.260*	1	.364**	.395**	.323**	.292*
MC	.198	.041	.409**	.096	.253*	.364**	1	.640**	.663**	.695**
COG	.070	-.135	.354**	-.038	.306**	.395**	.640**	1	.659**	.700**
MOT	.109	.028	.380**	.108	.256*	.323**	.663**	.659**	1	.739**
BEH	.129	.039	.305**	.095	.250*	.292*	.695**	.700**	.739**	1

Note: n = 74

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

[a]0= female, 1= male

[b]0= Bachelor degree, 1= Master degree or Doctoral degree

[c]0= Employee, 1= Middle manager or senior manager

[d]0= no, 1= yes

[e]0= no, 1= yes

[f]0= no, 1= yes

Abbreviations:

JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management/ International Human Resource Management Training Experience, , UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, MC = Metacognitive CQ, COG = Cognitive CQ, MOT = Motivational CQ, BEH = Behavioral CQ

6.5.2.2 The Independent Sample t-Test and regression analyses results

Firstly, to test the relationships between JP and respondents' assignment tenure (the quantity of intercultural experience, with the abbreviation of OAY), I conducted an Independent Sample t-Test (see Table 33 and Table 34). From the results, there are significant differences between managers' and employees' overseas assignment years. Managers have longer working experience than employees in sub-Saharan Africa ($M = 8.77$, $SD = 4.97$), $t(72) = 6.43$, $p = 0.000$. Therefore, JP can be used as the independent variable that represents the length of intercultural experience.

Table 33: The group statistics of managers' and employees' overseas assignment years (N = 74)

	JP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OAY	Manager	44	8.77	4.966	.749
	Employee	30	2.70	1.730	.316

Table 34: The Independent Sample t-Test results of managers' and employees' overseas assignment years (N = 74)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
OAY	Equal variances assumed	17.700	.000	6.426	72	.000	6.073	.945	4.189	7.957
	Equal variances not assumed			7.474	56.996	.000	6.073	.812	4.446	7.700

Table 35: The Group Statistics of the Trained and Untrained Expatriates' CQS (N = 74)

	TE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MC	Yes	24	5.77083	1.042355	.212770
	No	50	5.24500	.909824	.128669
COG	Yes	24	5.35417	1.054451	.215239
	No	50	4.61667	1.105670	.156365
MOT	Yes	24	5.52500	1.022890	.208797
	No	50	4.96000	1.009344	.142743
BEH	Yes	24	5.39167	1.001701	.204471
	No	50	4.87600	.921303	.130292

Table 36: The Independent Sample t-Test of the Trained and Untrained Expatriates' CQS (N = 74)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
MC	1.451	.232	2.219	72	.030	.52583	.23695	.05349	.99818
COG	.146	.703	2.726	72	.008	.73750	.27057	.19811	1.27687
MOT	.018	.892	2.244	72	.028	.56500	.25171	.06319	1.06681
BEH	.176	.676	2.191	72	.032	.51567	.23535	.04651	.98482

Secondly, to assess the relationship between CQ variables and the CCM/IHRM TE, I performed another Independent Samples t-Test (see Table 35 and Table 36), comparing the means of those expatriates who have relevant training experience with those who have no relevant training experience. The results revealed that the CQ scores (see Table 10) are significantly higher for those who have received organizational training. Table 36 presents the results of the Independent Samples t-Test. The 24 Chinese expatriates who have intercultural/ IHRM training experiences scored

significantly higher in Metacognitive CQ ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.04$) than the 50 untrained expatriates ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 0.91$); $t(72) = 2.22$, $p=0.03$. They also scored significantly higher in Cognitive CQ ($M =5.35$, $SD=1.05$) than the 50 untrained expatriates ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.11$); $t(72) = 2.73$, $p = 0.008$, in Motivational CQ ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.02$) than the 50 untrained expatriates ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.01$); $t(72) = 2.24$, $p = 0.028$, and in Behavioral CQ ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.00$) than the 50 untrained expatriates ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.92$); $t(72) = 2.19$, $p = 0.032$. Hence, there are significant differences between trained expatriates' and untrained expatriates' Cultural Intelligence scores. From the results, CCM/IHRM training has the potential to heighten Chinese expatriates' intercultural cognitive, affective and behavioral knowledge and skills. It implies that at least after receiving CCM/ IHRM training, Chinese expatriates know about the "Dos and Don'ts" and are possibly motivated to behave accordingly.

Thirdly, to clarify if the independent variables are the antecedents of Chinese expatriates' cultural intelligence, regression analyses were conducted (see Table 37 to Table 40). In Table 37, compare to Model 0, the addition of JP variable (the quantity of intercultural experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.141$, $F = 5.188$, $p = 0.003 < 0.01$), the prediction value of JP on Metacognitive CQ (CQ strategy) is: $\beta = 0.385$ ($p = 0.001 < 0.01$). Compare to Model 0, the addition of UBUNTU (intercultural self-learning experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.130$, $F = 4.782$, $p = 0.004 < .01$), the prediction value of UBUNTU on Metacognitive CQ (CQ strategy) is: $\beta = 0.362$ ($p = 0.001 < .01$). Compare to Model 0, the addition of CCM/ IHRM TE variable also improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = .053$, $F = 2.415$, $p = 0.074 < 0.10$), the prediction values of CCM/ IHRM TE on Metacognitive CQ (CQ strategy) is: $\beta = 0.233$ ($p = 0.046 < 0.05$).

In Table 38, compare to Model 0, the addition of JP variable (the quantity of intercultural experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.131$, $F = 4.254$, $p = 0.008 < 0.01$), the prediction value of JP on Cognitive CQ (CQ knowledge) is: $\beta = 0.370$ ($p = 0.002 < 0.01$). Compare to Model 0, the addition of UBUNTU (intercultural self-learning experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.146$, $F = 4.769$, $p = 0.004 < 0.01$), the prediction value of UBUNTU on Cognitive CQ (CQ knowledge) is: $\beta = 0.384$ ($p = 0.001 < 0.01$). Compare to Model 0, the addition of CCM/ IHRM TE variable also improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.087$, $F = 2.912$, $p = 0.040 < 0.05$), the prediction values of CCM/ IHRM TE on Cognitive CQ (CQ knowledge) is: $\beta = 0.298$ ($p = 0.011 < 0.05$).

In Table 39, compare to Model 0, the addition of JP variable (the quantity of intercultural experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.134$, $F = 3.992$, $p = 0.011 < 0.05$), the prediction value of JP on Motivational CQ (CQ drive) is: $\beta = 0.374$ ($p = 0.001 < 0.01$). Compare to Model 0, the addition of UBUNTU (intercultural self-learning experience) significantly improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.116$, $F = 3.056$, $p = 0.034 < 0.05$), the prediction value of UBUNTU on Motivational CQ (CQ drive) is: $\beta = 0.323$ ($p = 0.006 < 0.01$).

In Table 40, compare to Model 0, the addition of JP variable (the quantity of intercultural experience) improved the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.080$, $F = 2.535$, $p = 0.064 < 0.10$), the prediction value of JP on Behavioral CQ (CQ action) is: $\beta = 0.290$ ($p = 0.015 < 0.05$). Compare to Model 0,

the addition of UBUNTU (intercultural self-learning experience) improved the prediction (ΔR^2 = 0.084, F = 2.654, p = 0.055 < 0.10), the prediction value of UBUNTU on Behavioral CQ (CQ action) is: β = 0.292 (p = 0.013 < 0.05).

Table 37: The regression analyses result of control variables, independent variables with Metacognitive CQ (N = 74)

	Metacognitive CQ				
	Model 0	Antecedent 1	Antecedent 2	Antecedent 3	Antecedent 4
Gender[a]	.197 .094	.122	.254 .042	.167	.180
EDU[b]	.036	.000	-.018	.043	.067
JP[c]		.385** p =.001			
OSE[d]			.180		
CCM/IHRM TE[e]				.233* p =.046	
UBUNTU[f]					.362** p =.001
ΔF		12.095** p =.001	1.975	4.114* p =.046	10.926** p =.001
ΔR^2		.141	.026	.053	.130
R^2	.041	.182	.067	.094	.170
Adjusted R^2	.014	.147	.027	.055	.135
df	(2,71)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3, 70)	(3,70)
F	1.50	5.188** p =.003	1.672	2.415† p =.074	4.782** p =.004

Note: n = 74
†p <.10, *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001
[a]0= female, 1= male
[b]0= Bachelor degree, 1= Master degree or Doctoral degree
[c]0= Employee, 1= Middle manager or senior manager
[d]0= no, 1= yes
[e]0= no, 1= yes
[f]0= no, 1= yes
Abbreviations:
JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, CQ = Cultural Intelligence, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management or International Human Resource Management Training Experience

Table 38: The regression analyses result of control variables, independent variables with Cognitive CQ (N = 74)

	Cognitive CQ				
	Model 0	Antecedent 1	Antecedent 2	Antecedent 3	Antecedent 4
Gender[a]	.073	.001	.083	.035	.055
EDU[b]	-.136	-.171	-.146	-.128	-.104
JP[c]		.370** $p =.002$			
OSE[d]			.031		
CCM/IHRM TE[e]				.298* $p =.011$	
UBUNTU[f]					.384** $p =.001$
ΔF		10.819 ** $p =.002$	.054	6.887 * $p =.011$	12.328 ** $p =.001$
ΔR^2		.131	.001	.087	.146
R^2	.023	.154	.024	.111	.170
Adjusted R^2	-.004	.118	-.018	.073	.134
df	(2,71)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3,70)
F	.853	4.254** $p =.008$	.580	2.912 * $p =.040$	4.769** $p =.004$

Note: n = 74
[†]$p <.10$, *$p <.05$, **$p <.01$, ***$p <.001$
[a]0= female, 1= male
[b]0= Bachelor degree, 1= Master degree or Doctoral degree
[c]0= Employee, 1= Middle manager or senior manager
[d]0= no, 1= yes
[e]0= no, 1= yes
[f]0= no, 1= yes
Abbreviations:
JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, CQ = Cultural Intelligence, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management or International Human Resource Management Training Experience

Table 39: The regression analyses result of control variables, independent variables with Motivational CQ

(N = 74)

	Motivational CQ				
	Model 0	Antecedent 1	Antecedent 2	Antecedent 3	Antecedent 4
Gender[a]	.109	.036	.161	.077	.093
EDU[b]	.025	-.010	-.025	.032	.053
JP[c]		.374** $p = .001$			
OSE[d]			.165		
CCM/IHRM TE[e]				.247* $p = .037$	
UBUNTU[f]					.323** $p = .006$
ΔF		10.945 ** $p = .001$	1.614	4.514 * $p = .037$	8.173* * $p = .006$
ΔR^2		.134	.022	.060	.103
R^2	.013	.146	.035	.072	.116
Adjusted R^2	-.015	.110	-.007	.033	.078
df	(2,71)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3,70)
F	.453	3.992* $p = .011$	.842	1.821	3.056* $p = .034$

Note: n = 74

[†]$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

[a]0= female, 1= male

[b]0= Bachelor degree, 1= Master degree or Doctoral degree

[c]0= Employee, 1= Middle manager or senior manager

[d]0= no, 1= yes

[e]0= no, 1= yes

[f]0= no, 1= yes

Abbreviations:

JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, CQ = Cultural Intelligence, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management or International Human Resource Management Training Experience

Table 40: The regression analyses result of control variables, independent variables with Behavioral CQ (N = 74)

	Behavioral CQ				
	Model 0	Antecedent 1	Antecedent 2	Antecedent 3	Antecedent 4
Gender[a]	.128	.072	.176	.098	.114
EDU[b]	.035	.008	-.010	.042	.060
JP[c]		.290* p =.015			
OSE[d]			.152		
CCM/IHRM TE[e]				.239* p =.043	
UBUNTU[f]					.292* p =.013
ΔF		6.219* p =.015	1.370	4.231 p =.043	6.569 p =.013
ΔR^2		.080	.019	.056	.084
R^2	.018	.098	.037	.074	.102
Adjusted R^2	-.010	.059	-.005	.034	.064
df	(2,71)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3,70)	(3, 70)
F		2.535 p =.064†	.890	1.869	2.654 p =.055†

Note: n = 74
†p <.10, *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001
[a]0= female, 1= male
[b]0= Bachelor degree, 1= Master degree or Doctoral degree
[c]0= Employee, 1= Middle manager or senior manager
[d]0= no, 1= yes
[e]0= no, 1= yes
[f]0= no, 1= yes
Abbreviations:
JP = Job Position, EDU = Education, UBUNTU = Ubuntu Familiarity, CQ = Cultural Intelligence, OSE = Overseas Study Experience, CCM/IHRM TE = Cross-cultural Management or International Human Resource Management Training Experience

6.6 Discussion

In summary (see Figure 36), it can be proved that JP (the quantity of intercultural experience), UBUNTU (self-learning intercultural experience to accumulate local indigenous cultural knowledge) have rather significant positive relationships with all of the four dimensions of CQ. CCM/ IHRM TE (organizational intercultural training experience) has positive relationships with Metacognitive CQ and Cognitive CQ, which indicates that the studied CCSOE should think of more effective approaches, incentives, or interventions to improve Chinese expatriates' Motivational CQ (CQ drive) and Behavioral CQ (CQ action) and their confidence in the intercultural learning process. The overseas studying experiences in Western countries do not have any significant relationships with CQ variables, which may be explained by Bandura's SLT that Chinese expatriates could not learn mimetic from suitable learning models in Western countries, where the cultural values, norms, communication approaches, behaviors different from sub-Saharan African countries.

136
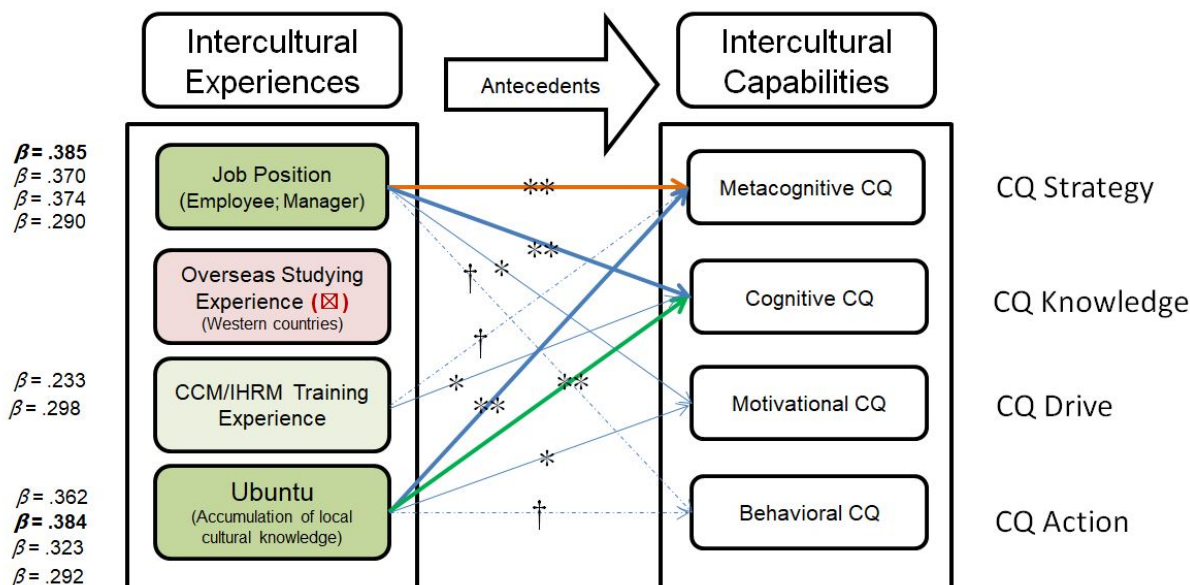
Figure 36: The research framework of the quantitative phase with results

Nevertheless, although there are needs for future improvements, for example, the interviewees mentioned that the organizational training contents are too general, the length and various forms of the intercultural learning experience within host countries, and the accumulation of specific local indigenous cultural knowledge appear to have more positive impacts on employees' intercultural capability development. Therefore, the studied CCSOE can also try to set some learning models chosen from the managerial persons who were tested with higher CQ scores and has longer working experiences in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, they can provide diversified learning opportunities about specific local cultural knowledge to both the Chinese and local employees who work in intercultural workplaces to facilitate the internal stakeholder engagement in the process of 'Cognitive Embeddedness', 'Cultural Embeddedness', and 'Structural-Relational Embeddedness'.

The quantitative analyses in this chapter studied the relationships among extrinsic and intrinsic intercultural experiences with cultural intelligence from a developmental perspective. The results of the quantitative analyses show that within the studied CCSOE, Chinese expatriate managers tend to have longer working experience in sub-Saharan Africa than Chinese expatriate employees, and longer working experience is positively related to the development of CQ. Furthermore, Chinese expatriates' self-learning that is motivated by intrinsic personal interests about local indigenous cultural knowledge (e.g., the Ubuntu cultural knowledge) has been contributing to their CQ development as well. The current CCM/ IHRM training provided by the company seems to be a wink link, as it contributes to expatriates' CQ knowledge accumulation and strategy preparation but is not effective enough to improve their CQ drives and CQ actions.

Vaiman and Collings (2018) concluded that the amount of intercultural experience, the time spent on intercultural experiences are beneficial, but are not enough to bring about substantial development of global leadership. Bandura's SLT and Kolb's ELT provide the theoretical basis that can help the HR department to understand the mechanism on how intercultural experiences become

'high-quality experiences', which can lead to better development of one's intercultural competence and capabilities (Vaiman and Collings, 2018).

Bandura's SLT perceives the influences of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants to the development of new capabilities (Michailova and Ott, 2018). Environments and people affect each other. In addition, SLT emphasizes the importance of vicarious learning (Michailova and Ott, 2018), which means intercultural empathy is formalized firstly in the cognitive processes within an intercultural environment. The next step is the reproduction process influenced by one's intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentives, which can help the person effectively interact in an intercultural environment through the processes of cultural metacognition (Michailova and Ott, 2018). Intercultural experiences can not only facilitate individuals obtain specific cultural knowledge, but also help them develop abilities and skills to deal with social interactions and cope with cognitive pressures from a new and distinctive intercultural environment (Michailova and Ott, 2018).

How to design intercultural learning in the workplaces of international organizations, firstly here are some characteristics listed by Machado (2018, p.181) of the organizations that provide the most effective training and development practices:

- *Top management is effectively involved in training and development and willing to devote large amounts of resources to training and development investments.*
- *Training is directly linked to the company's strategy and objectives.*
- *There is a systematic and comprehensive approach to training and training/retraining is felt at all levels, on an ongoing basis.*
- *There is a commitment to invest the necessary resources, provide sufficient time and money to implement training and development programs.*

Minbaeva *et al.*, (2012) point out using empirical evidence that employee's perception of the organizational commitment to knowledge sharing combined with extrinsic motivation directly affects how much employees would like to engage in knowledge sharing/ exchange at intercultural workplaces. Also, they found that individual employee's intrinsic motivation and social interaction engagement have mediation effects. Therefore, the HRM department has a key role and function and should put more efforts into improving human resource development potential and supporting intercultural talents development within the organization (Machado, 2018, p.182), and driving knowledge creation and sharing in the MNCs (Minbaeva, *et al.*, 2012; Vaiman and Collings, 2018, p.219).

The identification of different training needs of Chinese and local employees is the first step of determining and operating suitable training programs. Hence, the HR department needs to keep the consultation channels unobstructed for collecting Chinese and local employees' learning needs and demands. Moreover, there are three learning objectives that the HR department ought to keep in mind, which are cognitive learning, non-cognitive learning (behavioral learning), and psychomotor learning (Machado, 2018, p.189). Besides, there are multiple types of training

methods. For instance, training "On-the-job" and "Off-the-job", training within industry (TWI), training using case studies, dramatization/role-playing, job rotation, mentoring/coaching, assessing, facilitating, working groups/team learning, learning by doing, and so on (Machado, 2018, pp.193-197).

As for the limitations and future research, the sample numbers could be more, and the self-report CQ scores were used. The goals of future research are listed as follows:

- Require larger sample size
- Conduct same measurements/instruments with local employees, local managers
- Fieldworks, close and long period of observation, exercise the mixed method research, using ethnographical methodologies
- Conducting longitudinal studies, testing the CQS, and other intercultural variables first, provide a certain kind of training as an intervention, after several months, retest their CQS, and other intercultural variables, etc. Then compare the results.
- Study relationships of CQS with knowledge transfer/sharing, and knowledge reverse transfer variables

Chapter 7: Conclusion and limitation

7.1 Retrospection of research purposes, methodology, and outline of the thesis

As outlined in the introduction chapter, previous relevant research found that many Chinese MNEs and self-employed entrepreneurs in sub-Saharan Africa have IHRM, CSR problems, and challenges (e.g., intercultural conflicts, language barriers, inefficient HRM practices, the glass ceilings for local talents, and ethnocentricity in decision-making processes). However, as many of the studied samples are Chinese POEs or self-employed entrepreneurs, there is a need of studying more cases of Chinese SOEs and exploring their IHRM architecture and embeddedness challenges for obtaining detailed and extensive information. After the year 1978, within the context of the socialist market economy, more and more Chinese POEs emerged and raised. Meanwhile, Chinse SOEs have been undergoing organizational transformation, but still have some features that are different from POEs. Therefore, this research is aiming to explore the studied Chinese Central SOE's political-institutional, structural-relational, cultural, and cognitive embeddedness efforts made in IHRM cultural-crossvergence architecture in Africa, to overcome ethnocentricity in managing local employees and deal with the IHRM challenges.

By learning the perceptions of Chinese expatriate employees and managers about Chinese and African culture, their experiences of intercultural communication and interaction cumulated during the overseas assignments in sub-Saharan Africa and by investigating the cultural crossvergence process of IHRM architecture in the Chinese SOE studied and the IHRM system and the possible hybrid HR practices of the overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa with empirical cases, this study might find important implications and possible suggestions for enriching the knowledge bout emerging countries' IHRM studies, and for HRM specialists and practitioners in different types of Chinese MNEs to better engage local employees and improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategic alignment of IHRM, CSR, and CCM practices with organizational goals and strategies, and thus, contributing to their sustainable long-term overseas development. Furthermore, understanding the IHRM architecture and dynamics of Chinese central SOEs might help discuss how to establish appropriate IHRM systems, organizational cultures, and effective strategies of conducting organizational change for the further organizational improvement of Chinese MNEs.

To investigate the internal and external embeddedness and the cultural-crossvergence processes, a cross-cultural lens was formalized by reviewing relevant literature regarding economic sociology, institutional economics, IHRM, cross-cultural management, and CSR themes. Hence, this cross-cultural lens is a multidisciplinary and multilevel research framework. Based on the research framework, the research project was conducted with a mixed-methods embedded single case study approach, using an explorative sequential design. By integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses, I obtained detailed evidence and stories about their internal and external stakeholder engagement, and also collected the psychological data from Chinese expatriates about their different types of intercultural experience that facilitate the improvement of their cultural

intelligence.

Chapter 4 explains a clear picture regarding Chinese expatriate managers' general cognitive knowledge about sub-Saharan African markets, for instance, their locational preferences and impacts on the development and maintenance of their local social personal networks. Chinese managers' social networks can be seen as the informal networks connecting the external and internal stakeholders of the studied Chinese Central SOE in Africa. It is important to study their social networking behaviors and to explore the current circumstance of the Chinese Central SOE and subsidiaries' CSR initiatives and practices. Many interviewed Chinese managers expressed the will of learning from Western or Japanese MNEs with relevant expertise and excellence. Therefore, the example of Toyota Motor Corporation merging with a Chinese Central SOE in China and its stakeholder engagement map (presented in Chapter 2), and the example of Novozymes' stakeholder engagement map were introduced to compare with the research subject's stakeholder engagement map. The implication indicates the significance of developing socially responsible HRM (Green HRM) and the strategic alignment of HRM policies, practices with CSR initiatives in achieving sustainable organizational development (e.g., the HRM-CSR-Performance linkage).

The main contribution of this ongoing work is to conduct empirical research at the organizational level about the Chinese MNE's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa and observe how this may influence the development of IHRM systems. Chapter 5 shows evidence that instead of the "best practices" the bundles of "best fit" IHRM policies and practices are necessary for MNEs. During post-colonial times, African countries have been embarking on a track of steady development, but still, they are confronting problems of educational inequality, unemployment, poverty, and riots (Florence *et al.*, 2016). Although Chinese investments in Africa and the Chinese diaspora in Africa are increasing, we should remember that the group of Chinese firms in Africa is an uneven mixture of the brilliant and the mediocre. Current research reveals that socially responsible HRM practices such as organizational justice, equal opportunities, and diversity management help CSR establish credibility within the organization. There is still a long way to improve. Chinese MNEs should not be shortsighted and have to implement business ethics and morality into the process of pursuing long-term sustainable development.

Regarding the IHRM system architecture, this company is operating a dual-track HRM system, which means that the HRM systems are different between the headquarters and the overseas branches, and the overseas branches have the autonomy to some degree in designing their IHRM practices and policies to fit in with host countries' contexts. According to the interviewees, they recognize that the IHRM system in overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa is born from the fusion of Chinese and sub-Saharan African cultural values. The employment of local HR managers/assistants is underpinned by the workforce localization strategy. The local HR manager/assistant has the potentiality to become the 'bridge' for knowledge sharing and cultural-crossvergence with effective intercultural communication and interaction with the Chinese HR manager and create cultural synergy in overseas branches. The role up-gradation of HRM is a crucial task for this company. There should be more strategic alignment vertically between senior managerial personnel and HRM Department, and the functional cooperation horizontally among

HRM Department, Legal Management Department, CSR Department, and Public Relations/Publicity Department. Furthermore, those departments should be incorporated into the decision-making process to get a floor and have a voice in the decision-making process.

For the strategic alignment of IHRM practices and policies with organizational/business strategies, according to Interviewee A, who is a senior manager, this company is initiating novel strategies of: "*Internationalization, Specialization, Localization, and Commercialization*". Additionally, mentioned in Chapter 2, the BRI has visions and goals to establish people-to-people connections for cultural exchanges and enhance mutual respect, learning, understanding, and trust among nations. The interviewees stressed that the BRI has strategic importance to their company, especially to the decision-making and the organizational transformation of their overseas branches. The BRI provides them guidance for examining the effectiveness and appropriateness of their organizational practices and policies and emphasizing the significance of "Humanistic Care" as one of the most important values they have learned from sub-Saharan African cultures. For instance, the interviewees gave suggestions regarding employee engagement approaches in diversity management. The company should keep improving the flexibility, fairness, efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of the employee communication channels. The HR department and specialists should support in keeping the channels of employee voice clear for employees expressing their demands and needs, which may help improve employee commitment and increase organizational citizenship behaviors. Furthermore, overseas subsidiaries should break the glass ceilings and provide more opportunities for local talents to become middle or senior managerial personnel. Last but not least, although the company is now carrying out the Rainbow Plan as the career development plan for new Chinese young employees, the HR department and overseas branches should also learn about the mindsets, demands, and needs of local young employees initiatively, and provide appropriate human resource development programs to local young employees as well.

For the IHRM and cross-cultural collaboration/communication, interviewees shared their stories and experiences of cultural adjustment and intercultural communication in sub-Saharan African countries. They also recounted their knowledge about the similarities and differences between Chinese and African cultures, which are similar to the answers to the online questionnaire survey. Furthermore, interviewees spoke about the experience of how to handle and solve cross-cultural conflicts within the workplace or with local trade unions and pointed out that building and maintaining mutual respect, trust, and understanding is of great importance in intercultural collaboration.

Improving the cultural awareness of sub-Saharan African cultures, Ubuntu philosophy, and indigenous traditional cultures, is a prerequisite in cultivating organizational ethos and values, to conduct organizational reform and transformation. For instance, localization management and incorporating humanistic care are the current directions of their organizational development. Impacts of the crossvergence of values and ethos upon HRM, CSR, and CCM activities and behaviors are observed from the interviews and surveys. Although, the Chinese managers' relatively vague understandings about sub-Saharan African cultures indicate that they are still in a state of rather primary cognitive phase, incorporating cultural crossvergence theory may have positive

influences toward organizational transformation and intercultural knowledge sharing in exploring the hybridity of HRM.

7.2 Discussion and implications

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p.40) give the reasons why knowledge itself is never neutral, as the construction processes of knowledge are often influenced by human interests, and reflect 'the power and social relationships within society', with the main purpose to 'aid people to improve society'. For instance, Jackson (2021) points out that: "*Geopolitical dynamics have a major impact on the nature of knowledge, the way knowledge is transferred internationally and the nature of local knowledge resulting from and contributing to these dynamics.*" Regarding knowledge construction, Scott (2014, pp.229–230) perceived that media organizations have 'a surprisingly influential role' in reflecting and creating the international fields and the boundaries of the fields, and also shaping mental and social structures. In our globalized society, media organizations should aim to bring more positive impacts seeking common ground while reserving differences towards the common development of all humanity.

Some media reports with ideological bias and preconceptions may have been making Chinese MNCs, especially Chinese SOEs feel peculiar. For instance, a piece of online news with the title of "Joe Biden expands investment ban on blacklisted Chinese tech companies" of the South China Morning Post wrote that, "*Last month, the Coalition for a Prosperous America, a bipartisan advocacy group for American manufacturing and agricultural interests, urged the Biden administration to expand on the policies of the Trump administration and make sure that US capital markets were not accessible for 'companies that support the [Chinese Communist Party] military-civil fusion strategy'.*"[13]

These kinds of ideological biases and stereotypical views in some media reports will not help people truly understand China's engagement in Africa. Academic researchers observed different stories. For instance, Kamoche and Siebers (2015) acknowledged that although Chinese firms displayed diversity in their management practices in Kenya within challenging business environments and were struggling to secure contracts, expand the market and employ talents, there are not many differences in performance between large SOEs and Large Private firms, compared with SMEs:

> "*This contrasts with Ding, Zhang, and Zhang (2007) who reasoned that Chinese privately owned listed firms favour earnings boosting methods more than SOEs. We found no such distinction. We did find, however, that privately owned high-tech firms (as reported by CN21, CEO, high-tech firm) were more prepared to empower locals, and less reliant on interpersonal relationships and were therefore more inclined to*

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[13]URL: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3135972/joe-biden-expands-investment-ban-blacklisted-chinese-companies?module=lead_hero_story_2&pgtype=homepage, accessed on 6/6/2021.

adopt flexibility-orientated HRM systems in line with the findings of Chang, Gong, Way, and Jia (2013). Virtually, all the firms were considered (by both the Chinese and the Kenyans) as pursuing a low-wage strategy particularly in terms of the recruitment process which relied heavily on personal connections and word-of-mouth. This observation is in line with Peng and Luo's (2000) argument that Chinese managers have a cultural propensity to rely on informal ties and personal connections. Prospective local investors and policy-makers would find a higher level of formalisation and propensity to comply with the law amongst SOEs and large private firms as opposed to SMEs which tended to rely on informal practices and trust but often found this did not work as well as it did in China. (Kamoche and Siebers, 2015, p.2735)

Zi and Linke (2021) conducted an ethnographic single case study with a Chinese manufacturing company (POE), which has been doing business in South Africa for several years with notable FDI contributions. Zi and Linke (2021) focused on discussing the perceptions of both the Chinese expatriates and South African colleagues regarding their cognitions of the differences between Confucian culture and Ubuntu culture. From their interviews, they found that although there exist similarities between these two cultures, Chinese expatriates and South African colleagues have different cultural communication styles and time orientations (the authors used the "Planning horizon"), and view "Transparency", "Community building", and thus, causing communication problems that blocking communication channels and hindering trust-relationships building with internal and external stakeholders in South Africa (Zi and Linke, 2021, p.15).

The themes and findings of their study are conducive to Chinese MNCs' organizational learning and development of becoming more culturally attentive, as it reveals that in South Africa, where the Ubuntu Culture emerged from, local people are generally "sensitive to the issues of human rights and participative decision making", because of the historical negative colonialism and apartheid experiences (Zi and Linke, 2021, p.18). Although both the Confucianism Guanxi Culture and the Ubuntu Culture have a similar preference for elucidating an individual's identity and self-actualization through relationship-building, still communication problems and misunderstandings may be caused by the existing interpretation's gray zone.

One of the examples of the 'interpretation gray zone' given in their research is that a local employee complained that the approach of Chinese manager prizing employees' good performance was not that attractive compared to some German firms in South Africa, and they could not sense the appreciation from Chinese manager's reserved manner. When local employees feel that their needs are not met or they are not content with the workplace atmosphere, then you can hardly expect organizational citizenship behaviors and the sense of belongings from local employees. Hence, regarding internal stakeholder engagement, the key theme for Chinese MNCs is to think about how to reconcile cross-cultural communication problems by building more syncretistic and inclusive workplaces. Further tasks are how to design and act on appropriate IHRM policies and practices, and how to empower/develop both Chinese expats' and local employees' ability of mutual learning

and mutual understanding by intercultural training.

According to Ariss and Sifani (2016), the cultural-crossvergence perspective supports a 'best fit' approach to IHRM architecture, and the convergence in HR or other organizational practices is not necessarily the case. They suggest that many experienced MNEs acknowledge local practices or localization approaches often overrule the so-called 'best practices' (Ariss and Sifani, 2016). IHRM hybridization in intercultural workplaces may be a tortuous path that develops passively in intercultural workplaces because of neglect and unexpected experiences of cultural clashes. Chinese MNCs have to transform passivity into an initiative-taking attitude and use appropriate and effective interventions to lead the cultural-crossvergence process in the right direction. Similar to a finding of this research, the bridging role of local HR manager/assistant between Chinese expatriates and local colleagues in the studied Chinese Central SOE, Zi and Linke (2021, p.19) also emphasized that "*to address the communication gaps, in light of comparatively richly educated resources, it would be possible to find South African born or long-term Chinese residents of South Africa who are familiar with both Chinese culture and local culture*". They also recommended that Chinese firms in South Africa consult other well-experienced foreign companies, and local consultants on solving the problems (Zi and Linke, 2021, p.19).

Examining the case I investigated, the recommendations are already being practiced by this Chinese Central SOE and its overseas branches. For example, the interviewees mentioned that they are very keen on learning from Western or Japanese, and Nigerian firms' know-how and experience, as they believe that one cannot make a cart behind closed doors, as the saying goes. In recent years, their company has been emphasizing the importance of localization strategy because of the experience they learned from a well-performing German MNC in Nigeria. Meanwhile, when analyzing the Chinese expatriate managers' social network maps, you can find they have connections with local businesses or law consultancy firms. The interviewees said that they even hire local advisors on legal affairs to cooperate with the legal management departments of their subsidiaries in sub-Saharan Africa.

As interviewees also mentioned they are well aware of the "dark side" of Confucian Guanxi, another implication is to think of how to establish more ethical Guanxi relationships with local communities. As the places where the studied Chinese Central SOE's joint venture firms are located, the industrial parks in Nigeria and Ethiopia are now becoming communities with local residents and local workers. They have hospitals, local firms, Chinese firms, other foreign investors, etc. The joint venture firms are building residential areas in the industrial parks for local people. Near the bay area, they are also planning to help the local government to develop tourism business. Although Chinese expatriates of the studied Chinese Central SOE live in their dormitories in the industrial parks, they still live in these multi-cultural communities, and therefore establish relational connections with local colleagues (and their family members), communities, and local institutes and can create more diversified stakeholder connections to formalize more complexed social networks than other Chinese SMEs or POEs. As stakeholder connections diversified, their interests also tended to vary, which may become external and internal pressures pushing the studied Chinese Central SOE to behave more ethically and culturally sensitively in host countries.

Zi and Linke (2021) also reminded that senior managerial persons have the responsibility of bridging values gaps and developing trusting HR relations by guiding and passing know-how to the Chinese expatriate newcomers. Compared to the Chinese Central SOE I studied, I found that in the initial stage of investing and settlement/embedding, their recommendations are of great significance. When a company has accumulated some know-how and experiences, the next step can be providing further substantial well-designed and diversified training opportunities to both Chinese and local line managers and employees to facilitate intercultural learning and knowledge sharing. Therefore, in my thesis, as a starting point, I collected the CQ data of 74 Chinese expatriates from different subsidiaries of this Chinese Central SOE who have or had been assigned to sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, with their written answers to the three open-ended questions, I managed to conduct a "placement test" of their cultural intelligence and cross-cultural sensitivity/awareness.

The regression analyses further helped me figure out the elements or antecedents that may be possibly influencing their cultural intelligence. These results are important to guide them in designing training and strategies for improving employees' intercultural communication skills and cross-cultural knowledge learning ability. For example, learning indigenous cultural values and concepts, such as Ubuntu is useful in improving Chinese expats' cultural intelligence. At the same time, I found that the current CCM/IHRM training experiences of the Chinese expatriates resulted in higher Metacognitive and Cognitive CQ (CQ Strategy and CQ Knowledge), but not the other two CQ dimensions, indicating a necessity to incorporate new training forms, materials, and contents that can improve expatriates' motivational and behavioral CQ (CQ Motive and CQ Action) in the future. To conclude, these results further proved that appropriate and effective interventions and multiple embeddedness efforts are needed in the IHRM hybridization process.

From the interview, I found that they learned the "Humanistic Care" value from African cultures is of great importance for their organizational culture development and establishing the people-to-people connections proposed in BRI. Therefore, they have incorporated this value into their organizational culture at the branch firms in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, they also admitted that they will have to overcome many difficulties to transform these kinds of abstract concepts into concrete management policies and practices. There should be more sophisticated and well-designed policies and practices by firstly effectively hearing and collecting local employees' and local communities' voices.

In conclusion, this Chinese SOE is continually accumulating IHRM, CCM, and CSR knowledge for organizational transformation and has clear-defined organizational strategies to achieve their organizational goal and vision. There are high potentialities of cultural-crossvergence and knowledge sharing between Chinese and African management practices and policies. Still, Chinese MNEs should value the roles and functions of HRM more and integrate IHRM practices and policies with long-sighted organizational strategies, and establishing a socially responsible and people-oriented management system in achieving sustainable development. The new challenges for them are to think of how to absorb the good essence from African cultural values, to become more socio-culturally sustainable by elaborating and consolidating the HRM-CSR-CCM linkage to transform themselves into ethical and culturally sensitive business entities, and eventually

benefiting/contributing more to the development of Africa. Structural Embeddedness and Cognitive Embeddedness are important and changeable/manageable by Chinese expatriates themselves if they have the will to do so. Therefore, it is necessary to improve their CQ Drive and CQ Action, so as to motivate them to make better use of their accumulated knowledge and cognitions about local cultures.

There are mountains beyond mountains. Regarding the political-institutional and cultural embeddedness, Chinese SOEs should be more familiar with political, economic, judicial, and social contexts and environments in sub-Saharan Africa. As for the cognitive embeddedness, the cultivation of international business talents with global and long-term strategic visions, a high level of foreign language proficiencies, knowledge accumulation about Africa, is a crucial task for Chinese SOEs. The joint-venture mode could be a way of mutual learning and knowledge sharing for creating cultural synergy. Companies should also collaborate with local and Chinese Think-tanks and universities in doing related research projects.

To reduce the negative media exposure, and achieve structural-relational embeddedness, Chinese SOEs ought to comply with local laws and regulations, building a socially responsible HRM system, and improving the relations with labor unions, residents, and communities. Apart from complying with local laws and regulations, they ought to set up proper codes and high standards of morality and ethics in fulfilling their social responsibilities. Regular reflections of own experiences and lessons, and learning from others with an open attitude are necessary. Triangular cooperation (with Western/Japanese firms) could be a possible strategy in the future.

Meanwhile, the Africa continent consists of diversified ethical and cultural groups. It is hard to imagine that there exists one great panacea or best practice for MNEs' organizational management and operation in Africa. But an understanding of the concept of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Ubuntu concerning HRM practices might help scholars and practitioners understand certain values, attitudes, and behaviors within the sub-Saharan African context. To adjust to the changing external and internal environments, IHRM research themes of the debate of convergence, divergence, and crossvergence, and organizational change management are continually becoming significant to International Business (IB) scholars and MNEs themselves.

7.3 Limitations and future research agenda

According to Horwitz (2012) and Xing *et al.* (2016), the observed cultural proximity (similarity) between Chinese Confucian culture and African Ubuntu culture illustrates the synergy potential of win-win managerial practices within the Afro-Asian Nexus, and it offers a platform for further exploration of organizational transformation implications. Overseas subsidiaries and branches receive influences when developing their management practices from factors "include whether it is a green-field or brownfield location, how it was acquired, its stage in the life cycle, whether it is owned by one company or is a joint venture or franchise, as well as the degree of expatriate presence at the subsidiaries" (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.19). Xing *et al.* (2016) also pointed out that the cultural influences on IHRM architecture are complex because of the

interactions between national culture and organizational culture.

There is an old idiom: "Observing the sky through a bamboo tube and measuring the ocean with a seashell (管窥蠡测; GuǎnKuīLíCè)", which indicates the limitation of this research. Firstly, this research was conducted using a single case study design. All of the interviewees are working currently within the headquarters and the overseas branches of a Chinese Central SOE, as the research has a strong pertinence for providing implications to Chinese SOEs. It is observed to have high similarities among the data of interviewees. Therefore, it requires collecting more empirical data from other Chinese SOEs to improve validity and generalizability. Also, comparative studies of Chinese SOEs and POEs in Africa are necessary to add multiformity to the body of relevant research by revealing the commonality and differences in intercultural communication and management practices planning of Chinese MNEs with distinct ownership operating in sub-Saharan Africa. Secondly, although there are philosophical similarities in different cultures in Africa, still the heterogeneity of African cultures is not considered fully in this research. Therefore, the findings may not be applied to general contexts, which indicates the necessity of conducting longitudinal and fieldwork studies in the future. Moreover, research with a similar multidisciplinary and mixed methods methodological approach is also needed for collecting perceptions and data from local managers and employees upon related themes. Besides the limitations, a simple mindset has generalizability that international organizations should establish and develop their contingent IHRM systems and practices according to specific institutional and contextual factors. HR specialists in MNEs should apply their expertise to learning and understanding organizational circumstances and designing IHRM practices and policies that reflect organizational goals and strategies and internal, external stakeholder demands and interests. Because there is no single HRM practice that could work out successfully in all cases.

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Appendix

1. Interview focus

(1) Training experience/program/form
(2) HRM system architecture/practice and policies/cultural-crossvergence
(3) Organizational performance/comparison with Western/Asian/Local MNEs
(4) Organizational culture/values
(5) National culture/values/history/philosophy/ethos
(6) Intercultural collaboration/communication/employee relations/workplace atmosphere
(7) Internal and external stakeholder engagement/Guanxi/social network
(8) Self-assessment of expats performance/cultural adjustment/cultural intelligence
(9) CSR/sustainable development/reputation/public relations
(10) BRI/strategic management/organizational transformation

2. Interview question

Interview questions were asked with slight differences to each interviewee according to different job positions. For example:

Interviewee A (senior managerial personnel):

- Have you ever received any intercultural training before you went to Nigeria?
- Please tell me about HRM policies and practices of the Headquarters and the overseas branches respectively. How do you perceive the HRM system of your company from the perspectives of convergence, divergence, and crossvergence?
- Please make a comparison of performance between Chinese firms and the others in sub-Sahara Africa?
- Please tell me about the ethos, philosophies, values of IHRM, and intercultural management and the impacts on building and reforming organizational culture?
- How do you know about sub-Saharan Cultures and Ubuntu philosophy? How about Nigerian culture?
- How to handle problems of employee relations and conflicts? How to build a better atmosphere in the intercultural workplace?
- How about the relations with local labor unions? How to deal with problems of employee voice and communication with local employees?
- What is your perception of Guanxi in Chinese culture? Please tell me about your social networking practice used in Africa?
- Please conduct a self-assessment of your overseas performance, skills, and knowledge development?
- How much do you know about local employees' perceptions of senior managers from developed countries, and about senior managers from China? What is your perception regarding the accusation of "Neocolonialism"?
- There are news and academic reports of Chinese-funded firms destroying the environment, depredating nature resources, invading local employees' rights, and developing their firms in unsustainable and culturally insensitive ways in Africa. What are your perceptions about those negative reports?
- What kind of approaches your company is taking, regarding CSR/ sustainable development/ promotion/ public relations issues?
- What kind of plans has your company made regarding publicity affairs, building brand social image, transparency issues (e.g., employer branding/propaganda/publicity/transparency)?

- Please tell me about the BRI's, Ubuntu philosophy, impacts, and organizational change/development regarding strategic management?

Interviewee B (HRM Department Director):
- Have you ever received any employee cross-cultural training before you went to Nigeria?
- Please tell me about the HRM Policies and Practices in your company (the headquarters, the overseas branches).
- Please tell me about the local employee employment, recruitment Local employee recruitment plan, and Employee retention in your company.
- How about the Social influences/ Local employees' perceptions about your company's management policies and practices?
- Employee relations/ relationships with labor union/employee voice/communication/ How to handle and solve problems and conflicts?
- Culture/Ideology/ How do you know about sub-Saharan African cultures, and the Ubuntu philosophy and values?
- Cultural similarities and differences; Guanxi and Ubuntu/ Social networking influences?
- Western weak ties society? How about in Nigeria?
- The influences of BRI Initiatives on organizational development (IHRM, CSR, Cross-cultural management aspects)

Interviewee C (Legal Management Department Director):
- From a perspective of legal management, how do you view HRM and CSR policies and practices of overseas branches in sub-Saharan Africa?
- Please tell me about the HRM/IHRM policies and practices of your company.
- Guanxi (social networks) with local lawyers and law firms/ legal department governmental settings
- Criteria for recruiting legal department staff? Training before overseas assignments
- Except for the Language training/ is there any intercultural training to help with Cultural Adjustment: living environment adjustment/working environment adjustment?
- Do you have long-term training programs or career development plans for local employees? Can they be also promoted to be senior managerial personnel? Talent management/ local employee career development and training.
- How do you perceive the fulfillment of CSR in your overseas branches from the Legal management perspective?
- How do you view the negative reports from Western mainstream media writing about resource-seeking, corruption, discriminations upon local employees, conflicts with local employees, etc.?
- BRI and building good social image, reputation/ employer branding/ public relations.
- Stakeholder engagement/ internal and external stakeholder/ employee engagement/ employ voice/ relations/ commitment.
- Diversity management/ female employee rights/fairness and justice management for local employee.
- How to improve local employee loyalty?
- How to manage young generation/ employee mobility/retention, turnover/Talent management?

Interviewee D (Party affairs and Public Relations Department Assistant Director):
- Overseas experiences, Employee career development and cross-cultural training/ Online-training/learning program/ employee career development practices.
- IHRM system, practices, and policies.
- African traditional philosophies, ideologies, values, and cultures? What are the similarities and

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differences between African and Chinese cultures?

- Ubuntu and Guanxi, cultural similarities and differences/social networking Influences of Guanxi/Social networks; perceptions from local employees Ubuntu and teamwork management/diversity management.
- Perceptions about Western media negative reports.
- Comparison of the Western firm with Chinese firm (Western mode of localization)/ Cannot copy and paste Western style?
- Talent management/ Local employee career path (becoming middle/ top management members); recruitment criteria, etc. local senior managers？
- CSR/ employer branding/ corporation public image/ perceptions about western media's negative reports.
- Self-assessment of performance/ skills development.
- Cross-cultural adjustment/ cross-cultural awareness/ process of improving one's CQ (Spiral rise).
- BRI and soft power influences/competencies/ Private-owned vs. State-owned corporations.

Interviewee E (Senior Researcher and Deputy Director of the Research Office):
- Please tell me about the differences in training programs for expatriate employees and local employees.
- Please tell me about HRM policies and practices of the Headquarters and the overseas branches respectively. How do you perceive the HRM system of your company from the perspectives of convergence, divergence, and crossvergence?
- Please tell me about the practices and policies of the employment of local talents.
- What are your perspectives about Western media's reports about Chinese firms in Africa (e.g., conflicts with the local labor union, destroying the local environment, etc.)?
- How to handle problems of employee relations and conflicts? How to build a better atmosphere in the intercultural workplace?
- What kind of organizational culture does your company have? Are there any cultural crossvergence changes happening in your company? (e.g., strategic changes, value changes, IHRM system, practices, etc.)
- How do you know about Ubuntu culture (Similarities/ differences between Ubuntu and Guanxi; African cultures/ Chinese culture)?
- Please tell me about the influences of BRI Initiatives on organizational development (IHRM, CSR, Cross-cultural management aspects).

3. **Important interview exemplary quotations**

Interview question	Exemplary quotation
1. Training experience/ program/ form	A: I didn't receive any training from the firm, but I'm very interested in learning about local culture, customs, and traditions. So, I did some reading and learning by myself before I went to Nigeria. B: We have orientation meetings for Chinese expatriate employees before departure, but lack a long-term training program. C: As a large-scale state-owned enterprise, our overseas branches have a relatively good workplace and living environment, including accommodation conditions, free Wi-fi access, security, construction camps. We hire Chinese cooks to provide Chinese cuisines in canteens to expatriate employees. Chinese expatriate employees live in the accommodation areas next to the office buildings, which help reduce daily commuting, daily transporting time. We also build soccer pitches, basketball courts, and areas for

playing table tennis with ping pong tables. All the sports fields can be used by both the Chinese and local employees. We often play soccer together. These are the efforts that our company has done with the consideration of Chinese expatriate employees' needs, demands, and habits. There is no need to worry about living in host countries too much.

But I think we should pay more attention to working and intercultural adjustment in host countries. Chinese expatriate employees should increase interaction and communication chances with local employees to help them learn more about local culture, customs, traditions, and to establish mutual trust with each other. As we have hired a large number of local employees, we provide them a training program with contents of techniques, skills, and knowledge learning called "传帮带" (to impart, give support, and to tutor as a mentor). Local employees who are working in our company are friendly to us. I think they are generally satisfied, otherwise, they would not choose to work with us, or simply leave our company.

I believe that local employees play a significant role as intermediaries who help connect Chinese employees with local communities and local society. We rely on and trust them heavily on many tasks and works that are needed to negotiate and communicate with local residents, local communities, and local business partners.

Still, we often come across language barriers, which sometimes create difficulties for us to operate the business in host countries. Although many of the Chinese employees that are very talented with sophisticated skills have high English, or French, Portuguese language proficiency, indigenous languages spoken by local residents become the main obstacle for achieving effective communication. For example, about the Hausa and Swahili languages, in China, there is still a lack of talents who can speak Hausa, Swahili, and other African languages.

As for the recruitment of local legal management personnel, we also check their educational backgrounds to see if they had the experience of learning jurisprudence before. The certification of the legal profession is also required. Some of them were promoted as middle managerial personnel. They are very talented, with excellent educational backgrounds. They are willing to work with us, as people doing jobs in the legal profession have very high social status and often can receive higher payments in the local society. Providing long-term and regular training programs and career development plans are good suggestions that we are also considering presently. In China, we have the saying of "授人以鱼不如授人以渔" (give a man a fish, he eats it, but teach him fishing, he will be able to eat fish every day). Right now, we select outstanding local employees to come to the headquarters to attend a short-term training course, and also to learn about the operation circumstances of the headquarters in Beijing, China. Also, we sponsored local high school graduates to come and study in Chinese universities. After graduation, they will be employed in our overseas branches in Africa. Some of them can even have the opportunities to do some internship works at the headquarters for a short period. Most of them will return to their country and work for our overseas branches in the future.

As for the promotion of local employees becoming senior managerial personnel, there are still exist difficulties due to lack of independent legal management departments in our overseas branches. But for local employees who are working in other departments like engineering, marketing, or comprehensive administrative departments, may have more chances to be promoted as deputy directors and so on. In some Joint-Venture companies, local senior managerial personnel are CEOs or work as general managers, deputy general managers.

D: I haven't received any specific intercultural training program before I was sent to Africa. I only attended the orientation meetings with an introduction about overseas assignments. I did some learning by myself about the host countries. Although we are continuously providing other forms of training programs or courses, like foreign language training courses for Chinese expatriate employees. I have to say that our company's specific intercultural training practices are inadequate. Furthermore, to attend foreign language training courses, one has to come back to China and stay for 3 months. Some project managers in the subsidiaries, who are truly in need of attending

those courses, cannot put aside work on hand. Thus, sometimes other Chinese employees will attend the courses instead. It is ineffectual and may let the relative practices become "Chicken ribs". The original consideration from the company side was good, but it is difficult to achieve effectiveness in actual experiences. Online training/ learning program? This is a good suggestion, but in some host countries, internet services are not steady. So currently, we will not provide any online training program or courses. Some Chinese employees begin to study in on-job postgraduate programs for getting an MBA certification or a Master's degree in International Business. Therefore, our company is now providing them financial support for paying the tuition fees. This is also a weakness, and now we are putting efforts into the improvement of it. Our company (the headquarters) is now providing an employee career development plan called "the Rainbow Plan". This plan is designed specifically for young generation employees. There are now more than 60 % of the employees are under 35 years old. To achieve sustainable development, it is of great necessity to design and conduct effective policies and practices for employee career development. Another practice we are continuously using is to organize orientation meetings for newly recruited employees. We collect their thoughts and demands for career development and pair them with mentors accordingly. The mentor tutoring program will last for one year. After that, depending on the closeness of the relationships between them, some mentors will continue to tutor the young employees.

G: Regarding training programs, we provide employees with two forms of programs. One is a short-term but concentrated training program with technological skills, safety and security knowledge, and organizational culture learning. Another type of training is daily regular training and practices. Our technicians and engineers act as mentors and local employees as apprentices. It is an invisible and formative influence.

| 2. | HRM system architecture/ practice and policies/ cultural-crossvergence | **A:** I used to work in a joint-venture company established by collaboration with local governments as shareholders. In this joint-venture company, we take an amalgamated and integrated HRM system. This is like a marriage or fusion process. When we framed this integrated HRM system and its policies and practices, the priority is to fully consider and be respectful of the local culture. Therefore, the cardinal principle is Localization. We cannot simply implement the HRM system that is mainly used to manage Chinese employees in the headquarters of this joint-venture company in Nigeria. First of all, we adhere to local laws, regulations, and standards when drawing up our (the joint-venture company) own HRM policies and practices to manage local employees. On the other hand, we take a slightly different bond of policies and practices in managing Chinese expatriate employees. So it is also a compatible administrative (management) system. For example, we provide both Nigerian and Chinese social or commercial insurance to Chinese expatriate employees and Nigerian social or commercial insurance to local employees. Within the joint-venture company, local employees and Chinese employees enjoy equal pay for equal work, and we use the same vacation arrangement method scheduled according to local regulations. But Chinese expatriate employees can receive extra allowances from the headquarters. Generally speaking, Chinese expatriate employees are managed under the HRM system of the Joint-Venture company, at the same time, partially under the HRM system of the headquarters. Because we are a joint-venture company, it is not simple cooperation that each side minds its own business. We've become a united incorporated company. So consequently, the integrated HRM system becomes necessary. But, right now, this kind of joint-venture mode is still small in number within the overseas branches we are operating. Only some branches in charge of investment projects are taking this mode. Others, which are acting as contractors doing engineering or construction projects, are wholly-owned overseas subsidiaries or offices. Nonetheless, Localization is what we should keep in mind all the time.

B: Overseas subsidiaries in different countries have different management systems. At the subsidiary in Nigeria, we have a dual-track HRM system. One system is for managing Chinese expatriate employees. Another system is designed according to local laws and regulations to manage local employees. The HRM system for managing |

Chinese expatriate employees is relatively refined. For example, there are practices and policies of the extra allowances, vacation arrangement, living conditions, household settlement, and content about the mandatory Nigerian social insurances. As for managing local employees, there are contents about employee payment and welfare package, recruitment, career development. For example, for the local employees to be formally employed, one should pass a 3-months of probation period. The HRM practices and policies toward local white and blue-collar employees are also different.

C: Our company (the headquarters as well as the branches) is operated with the vertical integrative administration system. And the overseas subsidiaries are managed by the dual HRM system. As for the vertical integrative administration system, for example, the headquarters assigned legal management personnel from our department to Nigeria or Tanzania. The history of our department becoming independent is quite short. Needless to say, most of our overseas branches don't have a legal management department. There are only two subsidiaries that have their legal management departments. One of them is an independent department. Another one is the sub-office of the administrative department. That is to say that, most of the Chinese expatriate legal management employees are work in other departments without legal management directors. Therefore, within the dual HRM system, the Chinese legal management employees that I mentioned receive professional guidance and supervision from the legal management department in the headquarters. At the same time, they also receive instructions from the general managers or other managerial personnel in the subsidiaries.

On the whole, it seems that the legal management system of our company becomes more systematic than before, as the connections and the two-way communication channels have been established between the headquarters and the overseas branches. Regularly, the overseas branches have to submit and report working information or documents to the headquarters. A considerable degree of authority is given to the overseas branches. When they encounter situations that are exceeding their allowed discretions, they need to report to the headquarters. Years ago, there were not so many intersections before, but now we are actively and closely connected.

As our company does a lot of overseas business, we would like to employ legal management talents who firstly have perfect foreign languages abilities, especially the languages of English, French, Arabic, Portuguese and Spanish. They should be fluent in speaking. Good reading and writing skills are also needed. Because we will have to deal with very complicated issues, like contract making, disputes resolution, after we are assigned to foreign countries. Our company provides us some language training courses, for example, French or Spanish courses, to help us excel in our language abilities.

Besides, we also have requirements for their educational background. They should at least have a Master's degree and major in jurisprudence either when they studied in undergraduate or graduate program. We also check whether they have a solid theoretical foundation in jurisprudence to arrange them for different job positions. When they come to work with our department, they will be first assigned to overseas branches for at least 2 years. I went to work in the subsidiary in Ethiopia for 2 years a few years ago. Overseas working experiences are good for improving multiple skills, accumulating new knowledge, and broadening our visions, therefore, we can have better future career development.

D: I used to be in charge of HRM in overseas subsidiaries. During that time, I wrote an HRM manual to guide how to manage local employees, including items of management principles, how to make and sign contracts with local employees, and the contract samples). Our company (the headquarters and overseas branches) has three HRM systems. A system that is operated in the headquarters, a vertical HRM system operated for managing Chinese expatriate employees, and the dual HRM system operated for managing local employees and Chinese expatriate employees.

What we should pay intensive attention to comply with the local laws and regulations in managing local employees. Especially, the payment standard, vacation

length should be made correspondingly. Also, we should have flexibility and humanistic care in daily management. For example, I used to design a performance appraisal system for local employees. It has some similar indicators to the KPI but is less complicated. Employees need to evaluate each other, also receive an evaluation from their leaders. The annual bonus will be calculated according to the results. If some local employees demand to have a higher payment, we will also decide the percentage of the raise according to the results of their evaluation forms about their daily working performance. We also select annual outstanding employees and provide them rewards at the time we have the Year-end gatherings of our company.

We employed several local employees as HR assistants. We rely on them for managing local employees' profiles and receiving feedbacks from local employees. Also, they help us communicate with local employees, listen to their needs and demands, and solve conflicts.

As for labor union relations, I've learned that there are differences among the power of labor unions in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. The reason might be the different histories of colonial times. Ethiopia has no historical period of being colonialized. Therefore, labor unions are not as powerful as in Nigeria. In Nigeria, we had experiences of encountering strikes that were organized by local labor unions several times at first. We put a lot of effort into establishing and maintaining good relationships with local monarchs and local chiefs, who have a very high social status among local communities. They helped us solve the problems smoothly, and we are grateful for their kind helps.

As for the criteria of domestic employee recruitment, most of our employees graduated from "211, 985" Universities with academic excellence. All of them should at least have high English proficiency. Some of them have French, Portuguese, and Spanish language abilities. But we are lack talents who can speak Hausa or Swahili, as in our company there are only a handful of employees who can speak Hausa or Swahili. Many of them have overseas study experiences of post-graduation programs. Although young generation employees often think and act differently, most of them have good self-control ability to avoid doing undesirable actions and behaviors. Human resources with high qualities are crucial for firms in achieving sustainable development.

E: We use an integrated HRM system to manage both Chinese and local employees at the joint venture company in Nigeria. There are only slight differences, for instance, we provide Chinese employees with China's and Nigeria's social and health insurance, and also with the allowances for long-period overseas assignments. Furthermore, we provide local employees with specific incentives and payments for working overtime, special training programs, and opportunities to come to the HQ in China for study trips.

In Nigeria, we go to the local universities and colleges to organize in-campus job fairs for the recruitment of local young talents, which is similar to what we would do in China. For the recruitment of middle management members, we insert job advertisements on online websites and local newspapers. We hire local construction workers on-demand anytime when we need to start a new project. Most of the blue collars are periodic employees with fixed-time contracts and managed by local HRM managers complying with local laws and regulations. In Africa, as job mobility and the rate of unemployment of blue collars are high, they are often employed periodically and move from one project to another. Some of the local workers who have real talents will be chosen and mentored by Chinese engineers to improve their skills. And the chosen workers can become formal employees of our company, with further training opportunities.

I have been working in the company for a long time and had been worked in the subsidiaries in different African countries for many years as well. We have different HRM systems in the HQ and overseas subsidiaries. About two decades ago, in the subsidiaries and overseas offices, almost all of the office staff were Chinese. Therefore, at that time the Chinese expatriates were managed under the HRM system that was transferred from the HQ. But in the year 2000, we started a mega construction

| | | project in Nigeria. Since then, we have begun and been continually employing local employees (both white and blue collars), and so has the localization management started.

At the very first stage of localization management, most of the local employees we hired were the junior staff. Nowadays, our subsidiaries in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania provide more opportunities to local talents and employ them as middle and senior managerial persons. For example, our Nigerian subsidiaries hired more than ten thousand local employees (office staff). In the HR, Construction, and Project Management Departments, there are some Nigerian directors, senior engineers, and managers. In the joint venture company, we have several Nigerian board members and a Nigerian Chairman.

As for the HRM system, practices, and policies, we are now operating a dualistic HRM system in African countries. Apart from some specific HRM practices and policies that are designed and transferred from the HQ to manage Chinese expatriates, we manage Chinese and local employees with another HRM system designed by ourselves in daily work. In this localized HRM system, we designed the practices and policies that comply with the local labor laws. For example, local and Chinese employees are managed by the same work attendance checking system. But there are slight differences. As for managing Chinese expatriates, we need to obey the Chinese labor laws and local labor laws. Therefore, we provide them with both Chinese and local social insurances. Also, the Chinese expatriates can receive allowances from the HQ for doing overseas assignments. Meanwhile, we also provide local employees with different incentives, allowances, and training programs. For example, additional overtime payment, short-term training program, and study trip at the HQ in China for local employees. To sum up, we design HRM practices and policies depending on different circumstances and try to make these suitable for managing Chinese and local employees respectively. This kind of dualistic HRM system is gradually developing and maturing in overseas offices in Nigeria and Ethiopia, especially the joint venture company in Lagos, Nigeria.

H: Many local talents are now holding the posts of deputy directors and managers of different departments. At the construction sites, the numbers of local workers are far more exceeding Chinese workers. In the offices, the ratio of local staff and Chinese staff is about 4:1 or 5:1. We have long been emphasizing the significance of legal management. In the host countries, there should be at least one Chinese HR manager who knows very well about local laws and regulations in each subsidiary. He or she will cooperate with local law firms and lawyers to solve problems. |
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| 3. | Organizational performance/ comparison with Western/ Asian/ Local MNEs | **A:** I must say that about 10 years ago, Western firms performed much better than us, and there is a lot of know-how that we can learn from them. At present, I feel that we are doing better and better, and might have excelled in some business fields. But still, some of them are paragons for us. For example, Julius Berger Company is doing well in Localization. As a state-owned enterprise, our (the headquarters and overseas branches) business behaviors sometimes have duality, which means that these behaviors are marketing behaviors that should obey market regulations and competitive principles. Simultaneously, we ought to consider the background of international relations, for example, China-Africa cooperation and Belt and Road Initiatives. We should consider the impacts and the diplomatic implications to us.

After two decades' development in Africa, our company has deepened its intercultural understanding and realized the significance of taking root and growing with the merge and fusion of different cultures. Especially, we should observe the new things and the newly created synergy effects from this process, carry on self-examination and incorporate the knowledge in achieving business success. Otherwise, we will be driven from pillar to post in host countries. In Nigeria, a leading construction company is called Julius Berger Company. The German company, Bilfinger Berger used to be its parent company and now is the largest shareholder. So it also becomes a Joint-Venture company. Additionally, the Korean company, Samsung, and some other Japanese firms also have similar Joint-Venture companies in Nigeria. Likewise, we are all facing the same problem of how to deal with cultural adjustment, and how to make appropriate |

management policies and practices in the host country. This is the premise for MNEs managing overseas branches.

B: When I used to work in Nigeria, our firm had about 1,000 Chinese employees, and approximately 15,000 to 20,000 Nigerian employees. At that time, we signed a lot of big contracts with the Nigerian government. But nowadays, due to the receding economy around the world, some infrastructure contracts were canceled by the Nigerian government. So right now, in Abuja, we have about 700 to 800 Chinese employees, and about 15,000 Nigerian employees. I feel that we have not performed as well as so Western firms in Nigeria. For example, the German company, Julius Berger, they are good at Localization Management. Our firm does employ many local employees for managerial and engineering project management positions. But still, there are only a few local senior managerial personnel. Objectively speaking, the reason is that we are a wholly-owned subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned enterprise. We are leading most of the projects' development by ourselves. Furthermore, because our specialty is engineering and construction projects, there are more blue collars than white collars among the local employees. The number of white-collar employees is only about 1,000. In my opinion, recruiting more local managerial employees or employers might not be suitable for us. Right now, it is not urgently necessary. The construction industry is labor-intensive. The key to the overseas operation is that the Chinese expatriate employees should play an important part in the process.

At Julius Berger Company, you can hardly find German employees, even from the senior management team. Their management has high procedural efficiency. No matter the nationalities. Employees work under the same procedural management policies. As for us, we still rely heavenly on manual people to manage people, which costs more time, and thus, decreases the management efficiency Of course, we cannot simply copy or indiscriminately imitate their system and policies. Every firm has its management circumstance. They have a longer history than us doing business in Nigeria. We are not at the same overseas development phase. There is still a lot of room for improvement and transformation for us. We now increasingly focus on organizational development, change and transformation, and innovation. Therefore, the senior management team is now having more discussions on strategic and scientific management themes. Depending on different ownerships and development phases, Chinese firms' performance is an intermixture of the good and the bad. Large-scale state-owned enterprises that have more overseas experience may perform better than average. But there are skies beyond skies, mountains beyond mountains. We should overcome our weaknesses by acquiring others' strong points to spark the spirit of enterprise and the desire to advance. For instance, some private-owned Chinese firms are doing well in Africa. Huawei has a high level of management efficiency and effectiveness. Smartphones produced by a Chinese firm called Tecno Mobile Limited are very popular among African consumers. In Nigeria, local people like motorcycles produced by Lifan Company very much.

D: In Nigeria, Julius Berger Company is doing well in Localization. Only some members of the senior management team are from Germany. Other managerial personnel and employees are all Nigerian. They are an example of success for us to learn from.

Our company is conducting Localization management as well. But we are will at a starting phase, which indicates that more effort should be put into improvement. For example, our company should pay more attention to raising the importance of the HRM department, to incorporating the HRM department into the decision-making process. And for employee retention issues, we should think of what kinds of treatment are more attractive to Chinese and local employees respectively.

I: We employed many local talents for commercial and marketing managerial positions because they are more familiar with the local marketing environment and able to connect with local customers more smoothly. We should continuously implement localization management to improve efficiency and effectiveness. In Nigeria, there are

		some famous local firms, like Dangote and Dantata, which are doing very well in Africa countries. They have a high level of managerial and administrative expertise that we should also learn from.
4.	Organizational culture/ values	**B:** Our firm is one of the best MNEs in Nigeria, on a large scale. Staff and officers of the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria visit us regularly. And we have contact with the President of Nigeria. We have widespread social impacts in Nigeria. Local employees feel proud to work in our company. We provide good accommodations and well-suited living conditions for Chinese expatriate employees. The employee payment, well-being, and welfare package that we provide to Local and Chinese employees are also very reasonable, even much better than the average. The organizational culture of our company values humanity, and we are carrying out relatively humanistic management and aiming at providing humanistic care to employees. Chinese and Nigerian employees formed a big family, and we are linked together with common joys and sorrows, we share weal and woe in the same boat. Besides, our company considers the fulfillment of Corporate Social Responsibility and doing contributions to the local society as one of the prior tasks. Some Chinese managers are conferred with chieftaincy titles by local monarchs as recognition for their contributions to local communities in Nigeria. **E:** We need to realize that when you establish the organizational culture with profound consideration of local culture, it will help new employees to fit in with the organization more quickly. There are three fundamental values that we should remember. One is "All men are created equal" (人生而平等), the second one is "Observing the relevant code of conduct and the law and honestly"（遵纪守法，廉洁奉公）, the last but not least is "Take a long-term perspective and look with a broadened horizon" （风物长宜放眼量）. If we establish our organizational culture with these three values, at least we will help keep IHRM from crossing the baseline. Of course, we will encounter little problems, but with continuous learning and practicing, we can accumulate knowledge for us to improve and transform our organization step by step. **G:** One should convey their meanings to local employees clearly, or misunderstandings and troubles might occur. Our firm is like a big family. We should see local employees as members of the big family as well. Therefore, providing humanistic care to local employees becomes necessary. **H:** It is necessary to have different policies to fit in with distinct markets. … Our organizational culture emphasizes cultural tolerance and mutual integration. We should see local employees also as family members of our company. We should put effort into letting local employees feel a sense of belonging to the company. Moreover, we ought to respect their culture, values, religious beliefs, etc. Chinese organizational culture has flexibility. There should be regulations, but also humanistic care and flexibility. After all, we are all human beings, not machines and robots.
5.	National culture/ values/ history/ philosophy/ ethos	**A:** I think my knowledge about sub-Saharan African Cultures and Ubuntu philosophy is limited. That is because I have only worked and lived in Nigeria. But I do have a basic understanding of sub-Saharan African Cultures. I read about the history of Africa. During colonial times, they received a lot of influences from foreign cultures, religions, ideologies, languages, and management concepts. In post-colonial times, they fought for freedom and became independent. It is the time of the Africa Renaissance for them to reform self-identification, and to advocate the great and unique values of their indigenous cultures, their original ideologies, philosophies, and traditional values. The whole process can also be seen as merging foreign cultures while keeping the significance of their own cultures. In Nigeria, I've learned about Yoruba culture. Alike with Chinese people, Yoruba people are also family-oriented. Also, they value social networking, accept the existence of hierarchy relationships, and the importance of maintaining mutual-beneficial social ties. Furthermore, similar to us, they also keep long-term relationships. **B:** I don't know much about the Ubuntu philosophy, but I know that it was advocated

and preached by President Mandela, whom I admire very much. Also, I learned that the southern part of Africa has a very different culture compared with the northern part of Africa. African people may not have much money, and they may not have a lot of pursuits or be very goal-oriented as Chinese people, but they have a stronger sense of well-being and emotional happiness than us. In Chinese culture, people endeavor to hoard money, to let their children receive better education, and will leave their fortune and properties to their children. We, Chinese people, have the saying of "望子成龙，望女成凤" (English translation: "Hopes for the son to grow up into a dragon, hopes for the daughter to grow up into a phoenix", which means that hoping children to have a bright future). In Chinese culture, there is the traditional philosophy of family wealth inheritance, and Chinese people all put this thinking in their minds more or less. Chinese people are aiming to let their children have a head start over others all the time, and that's why life has become a burden to us. In contrast, African people seem to be untroubled with these sorts of thoughts. They have the living attitude of 'Carpe Diem'. Just simply to live in the present and enjoy in time. Favor exchange via social networking to deepen emotional connection with each other is common among human beings' social networks. No matter the Western cultures or the Oriental cultures, technological development doesn't mean everything, and high-technological MNEs still need to construct and make use of their social networks. In my opinion, effective social networking is more than giving gifts to each other. Building mutual trust and maintaining long-term relationships is of more significance. Chances and opportunities will come to you through social ties.

China is a traditional Guanxi society. Similar to sub-Saharan Africa, or other places around the world, wherever we humanities exist, social ties and networks exist. Chinese people do have some know-how on how to maintain long-term relationships with each other. In a society that valued social networks, Chinese people may feel like fish in the water. Chinese expatriate managers often show modest, honest, and sincere attitudes when they are building new social ties in host countries, which will help give good impressions to local people and eventually will help them form good friendships with local people in private. I don't know much about the discourse of "Weak Ties", but I think that Nigerian people have received quite a lot of influences from the Western culture because of the colonial history while keeping their traditions. In China, family kinships are very close and will remain to be a lifetime relationship. Parents will keep on caring for the children, even after they growing into adults. But in Nigeria, as far as I've noticed that Nigerian parents may not do so as Chinese people, even though they also valued family kinships. In Nigeria, people are willing to help their relatives or neighbors. We Chinese people also have a similar way of thinking.

D: African people have a similar patriotic mind, which is valuable for Chinese people to learn from. For the differences, my perspective that came from my own experiences is that Ethiopians are smart, talented, and diligent. Nigerian people pursuit a cozy life and they enjoy the pleasure of the here and now without too many unnecessary worries about the future. For example, they don't have the habit of saving money. Some local employees that have received their payment will not come to work the next day. They just ask for a few days' leave and spend all of their wages in a very short-term time. When they come back to work, some of them have to ask for the payment in advance, since they don't have enough money for daily expenses. At first, I was astonished by this phenomenon, as Chinese people often have long-term plans for how to spend their money. But gradually, I understood that this is their way and their culture. Our company would accept their demands and provide them the payment in advance. I don't know much about Ubuntu philosophy. But I think that African people are friendly to strangers. They are very warmhearted and willing to greet and help strangers. They are more of being natural socializers ("自来熟") than Chinese people. Chinese people may not help strangers that they meet on the street. African people and Chinese people both value family kinships. We both emphasize building mutually beneficial relationships with communism and collectivist mindsets. But I feel that the range or the size of the social circle of family kinships is different. Chinese people may focus on the relationship with the core members of one's family.

		E: I have not been to South Africa. Therefore, I am not so familiar with the Ubuntu culture. I feel that African cultural values are unique with many traditional features. Ubuntu cannot represent the whole African culture from a pluralistic perspective. Each country, each ethnic group has its own culture. If there existed one unitary culture among African people, then the whole continent would have become a united country. Looking at the map, you will find that the borders of each nation are usually square and unnatural, which reveals the bitter and gloomy colonial history of the Africa continent. Sometimes I feel sympathy with African people, as we Chinese also have a similar history that we do not want to recall. The spirit of helping each other and brotherhood is a little bit similar to primitive communism. During the trip to the industrial park in Ethiopia, I met an Ethiopian line manager and we had a pleasant chat. He told me that it is very common that Ethiopian people providing pecuniary aid to their family members and relatives when they receive their monthly salaries. Ethiopian culture has collectivist features. But different from Chinese people, Ethiopian people enjoy instant gratification. We Chinese people often save money for a rainy day or spend a great amount of money on educating our children. I have lived in Africa for many years, and I found that the problem of education inequity exists. Only the children from elite families can have the opportunities to receive better education or study abroad. At first, I saw many young workers spent their wages quickly and recklessly, and then asked us to give the next month's salary to them in advance. Perhaps they were lack of the mindset of how to financially sustain their family with a long-term perspective. The most important thing is that, while respecting the host country's culture, we should also elaborate on the influence of our organizational culture on local employees. Nowadays, many Ethiopian employees have become willing to work overtime and start to save money for children's education with long-term plans. African people value social relationships as well. For example, they would like to introduce their relatives and friends or acquaintances from the same tribe or community to work with our company. I feel that African people are more affectionate than Chinese people. Because even I am now back in China, my local colleagues and friends still regularly contact me to keep our friendships. African countries lack highly skillful talents. Therefore, providing appropriate long-term training programs for local employees is very important. **J:** Nigerian culture has some similar features to us, for example, they also value humane feelings and social relationships. Like us, Nigerian people are family-oriented. But they are more willing to help strangers than us. I have seen that people on the street helping someone injured from a traffic accident spontaneously, and the scene makes me feel that local people are warmhearted and compassionate. Colonial history still influences them more or less. I have been to some underdeveloped places in Nigeria. In those places, poor people are still afraid of seeing Western people and calling them "Master", which gives me a complicated feeling. Therefore, our company has always been stressing the importance of respecting local people. Racial discrimination is strictly forbidden within our company. We should enhance communication and mutual understandings with local employees.
6.	Intercultural collaboration/ communication and employee relations/ workplace atmosphere	**A:** Conflicts and contradictions inevitably exist in daily works. As being senior management personnel, the most important thing that I should consider is how to negotiate and communicate through policies and the decision-making process. This is an intercultural management process that encounters merge and collision of culture. And there are two layers of the process, one is the board meeting, another is the communication among managerial personnel. The basic fundamental point is to use institutionalized, standardized, and law-based management. We should keep in mind that within the marketing economics environment, firms must obey market rules and principles. Under this prerequisite, we should also consider social and cultural factors to show humanistic care and solitude in the process. Hence, it is important to add flesh and bones to building a holistic and systematic administration system with flexibility. When solving conflicts from an oriental culture or Asian perspective, tortuous discussions may be more preferred and more acceptable. By improving the mutual

understanding and awareness of each other's similarities and differences, and emphasizing similarities and benefits to reach common ground, these kinds of mindsets are valued as more wise choices. If one has to figure out solutions for the problems that have already happened, then that would be seen as firing belated shots. Always remember that prevention is better than cure. In the Joint-Venture company, the chairman of the board of directors is Nigerian. We have six Chinese board members and four Nigerian Board members, including the Nigerian chairman and me. This is distributed and arranged by the shareholding ratio.

I will give you an example of our decision-making process. Once we had a board meeting about a real estate project in the Free Trade Zone, the Nigerian board members suggested that to offer a property to each senior management personnel with a preferential price. In Nigeria, it seems that this suggestion is acceptable and has no problems at all. In China, 15 or 20 years ago, the housing allotment provided by firms was not a problematic issue as the laws and regulations were still rudimentary and incomplete, also there were not so many anti-corruption approaches at that time. Nowadays, in China, you can see a completely different picture, housing allotment, or providing preferential prices for buying properties is not allowed in China. If Chinese board members accept this suggestion, then this is the behavior of gaining benefits illegitimately and breaks the law. Also as being a communist party member, this is not acceptable according to my belief in communist ethics and morality. The Nigerian members and Chinese members were insisting on opposite opinions. I tried to avoid the worst situation of voting since the Chinese members would win as the majority, and then it would create a serious emotional crack among the relationships of Chinese and Nigerian board members. To solve this dilemma, we reached a compromise to put this suggestion on the shelf. As the General Manager, I have to take responsibility for organizing a meeting among Chinese board members before the next boarding meeting and to have a discussion on how to euphemistically reject the suggestion and save the Mianzi (face) of Nigerian members at the same time. After this meeting with Chinese members, I visited the Nigerian chairman in his office. We had a pleasant conversation while drinking Chinese tea and having some Chinese refreshments that I brought with me. He expressed the expectations of the Nigerian members to me at first. Then I explained the reasons why Chinese members could not accept this suggestion with a sincere attitude. Finally, he kindly showed understanding. At the next board meeting, all the members reach the agreement of not accepting this suggestion without having to vote formally.   This example indicates that management should not be done with dichotomous thinking.   Things are not always black or white. There is no true or false question, but a multiple-choice that needs to be made with a high level of emotional quotient (EQ). As a senior managerial member, dogmatic and narrow thoughts, as well as stiff approaches are what I should avoid doing so.

E: Generally speaking, with a long time of mutual adjustment and the management practice of localization, we now have a cordial and harmonious working atmosphere in our workplace, among Chinese and local employees. In the first few years, some problems occurred because of cross-cultural collisions, misunderstandings, and even prejudices. Cultural synergy and crossvergence: Therefore, we must establish a new organizational culture in overseas subsidiaries with cross-cultural fusion or integration, to help new employees adjust to the workplace and create synergy effects in cross-cultural teamwork. Nowadays I feel that our local employees show a similar level of loyalty and commitment to our company as Chinese employees do with subtle influences of daily cross-cultural communications and interactions among local and Chinese employees during these years of operation in Nigeria.

Talking about workplace conflicts, I remembered that there were very few cases and not so serious. For example, in the engineering department, we have several local middle management personnel. They have experience of studying in western countries and are quite outstanding talents. But perhaps, because of the discrepancies of ideology issues and different educational backgrounds，they first wanted to choose some western firms as successful bidders, as they did not know much and could not trust other Chinese firms at that time. So they disagreed with Chinese colleagues. They

exchanged different opinions, and Chinese colleagues introduced the information of the Chinese firms bidding for our project in detail to them. They finally agreed to have a try in choosing a Chinese firm as a successful bidder. So other than this case, I seldom heard of cases of conflicts in our workplace. As for the relationships with local labor unions in sub-Saharan Africa, we meet different situations in different countries.

I think that in the manufacturing industry, these kinds of problems might be more noticeable, not only Chinese firms are having conflicts with the local labor unions, but also some South Korean firms and western firms are facing similar problems. Our firm got involved in small conflicts with labor unions several times in the beginning, and we learned the lessons and put effort into seeking solutions. There are some precautions and instructions that I would like to share with you. First of all, foreign firms should be familiar with and comply with local laws and regulations. Although local labor unions are not that flawless as western labor unions, foreign firms should always remember the importance of communication and the establishment of mutual trust and mutual understanding with local employees. For example, in the year 2003, we were constructing accommodation buildings for athletes. We hired 1500 local employees at that time. Because of lacking experience, we forgot to provide labor protection appliances (protection gloves and so on) to local employees inadvertently and failed to give a detailed explanation to them. Therefore, local employees started a strike to deliver their demands to us. We immediately reacted to the strike by appeasing their feelings. We admitted it was our fault and quickly supplied the required protection appliances to local employees. The problem was solved.

G: We should pay attention to high context and low context culture, but first of all, we should guarantee high quality and complete the project in time. Trust is crucial to winning the customer's heart. Western management stresses more on rational working relationships, not so emotional like us. But I think that maintain good relationships with western partners is also an effective way. For example, our firm once cooperated with an Italian consultancy firm. We built up friendly and pleasant relationships with them.

| 7. | Internal and external stakeholder engagement/ Guanxi/ social network | **A:** We have the workers' council within the Joint-Venture company. We flexibly use multi-methods to operate the consultative mechanism. For the management level, we bring the management team together and hold operations meetings to discuss local employees' demands. We issue an approval or partial approval to the demands depending on the degree of rationality. I think that as for human nature, we share a commonality, but also have a particularity. Specifically speaking, when managing local employees, we should be respectful to the local cultures, religious beliefs, customs, and traditions. For example, we have local employees, who are Islamic believers. We provide them with places or special rooms for Islamic worship ceremonies. And during the celebration time of the Eid Al-Fitr and the Corban Festival, apart from the vacations, we provide them cereals, oils, foodstuffs, and daily life commodities as important practices in the employee well-being and welfare plans. Regarding the employee benefits package, like the policies and practices of payments, bonuses, incentives, and vacations, and so on, we provide equal treatment for equal work. But some slight differences exist, for example, the board meeting determined that Chinese expatriate employees receive an extra allowance given by the headquarters. Also, vacations length is decided according to how long the person has been worked for the company. Chinese expatriate employees can plan their annual leave with different schedules. They just have to notice that don't flock to take the annual leave.

The influence of Guanxi is twofold, considering the special characteristics in the local culture, there are positive, as well as negative effects on the development of our company. There is an old proverb in China, which is 'without the compass and square, one cannot form squares and circles' (无规矩不成方圆). No matter in China, or Africa, a modernized MNE should be on an internationalized and commercialized development path. As a formal Joint-Venture company of a Chinese state-owned large enterprise, we are not a big butter-and-egg man or a landlord from the village in old times, nor like the private-owned firms. We should adhere to laws and regulations, and conduct modernized corporation management policies and practices. We should be |

aware of the negative influences of Guanxi, and think of effective constraints.

But as being a natural person, living and working in the host country, Guanxi, or building a social network can be a very effective way for increasing understanding about local culture, and intercultural adjustment. Learning how to interact and communicate with local colleagues, local business partners, and local communities, maintaining a long-term friendship with local people benefit in improving living security and safeness, also in enriching my personal life experience. As being a member of senior management, I must adhere to Chinese and Nigerian laws and regulations. Besides, if I want to be a more successful senior manager, I must think of how to merge the original organizational culture with the local culture. It is important to incorporate the particularities of local culture, while maintaining institutionalization, to achieve administrative effectiveness. As for my networking practices in Nigeria, we humans are social beings, wherever we go and try to settle in, we need to make friends. The social network is a necessity for everyone. In Nigeria, I built relationships with business partners, and also with government officers. My Guanxi in Nigeria has four categories:

• Relationships with governmental settings:
As the Federal Government and the State Government are the shareholders of our Joint-Venture company, I have established cooperative relationships with some ministers and officers from their urban planning, infrastructure construction, legal services, and human resource management departments. I also have relationships with the Customs Agency in the Free Trade Zone. I kept regular contact with the Chinese Embassy and Consulate, also the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. These are legalized and normal relationships at work.
• Relationships with business partners:
When operating the Free Trade Zone, I need to attract investors. Also, I need to find contractors for different construction projects. Therefore, I have built business partnerships with their senior managers and some technological engineers. The relationship is twofold, I keep in contact with some of them in private times, and these people have become my friends. Some friendships turned into a close and long-term connection.
• Relationships with local colleagues:
It is also twofold, at the workplace, and in private times. We went for a walk and had chitchats together. We played table tennis or chess games together, just to name a few.
Relationships with local people outside our firm:
I had some daily interactions with the local communities, local police officers, and local merchants selling souvenirs, and so on.

B: To handle the employee relations and employee voice issues, we've hired the local HR manager and HRM assistants to help us. We believe that this method will receive more acceptance from local employees and be more trustworthy. The local HR managers that we've recruited usually have a high social status and are highly respected by local communities. For example, some of them are family members of the local chief or the local squires. As being influenced by suzerain countries in colonial times, the local labor union is very powerful. Also, we understand the importance of obeying the local labor laws. Local HR managers and assistants can also help us coordinate and negotiate with the local labor union. One of the local HR managers, who married the daughter of a local chief, is a talented person. I appreciate his help in dealing with local employee management affairs, solving conflicts, and legal affairs. One of the effective ways is to ask for local lawyers and law services and consultancy firms to help us solve the problems because they are more familiar with local laws and regulations. If we try to solve the problems on our own, then I'm afraid we don't have the ability and knowledge to handle the problems shrewdly, and thus, may create bad social impacts and negative impressions among local people. Therefore, we keep a long-term and profound cooperative relationship with local lawyers and law firms.

C: When we first entered the African markets, due to a lack of professional legal management personnel, we could only ask local lawyers and law firms to help us. Although now we have more legal management personnel, we are still keeping cooperative and friendly relationships with the local lawyers and law firms.

That is because the national judicial system often relates closely to national politics. Different countries or even states have different requirements regarding the certification of the legal profession. Chinese expatriate legal management employees may be able to deal with contracts related issues for other Chinese employees. But only the local lawyers and law firms are qualified to handle disputes and conflicts with local employees. Even in the headquarters, we have external legal advisers and lawyers, who provide legal services to us regularly. So the whole system has internal and external parts, which are playing different roles in our company's legal management.

We should create and maintain a harmonious and friendly workplace atmosphere. Hence, we make some requirements for attention to Chinese employees about how to interact with local employees. We organize entertainment and sports activities regularly for our employees. For example, Chinese employees play a soccer game with local employees together, and we have New Year gatherings together. We also organize trips for employees. During the time of the traditional festival, we also provide local employees with a bonus. We arrange vacations concerning their religious beliefs, living habits. We are initiative in building a better brand image. In an overseas subsidiary, we have a relatively flat management structure. Local employees can directly communicate with the senior management team or with the director of the HRM department upon their reasonable demands. Additionally, we have local HR assistants to help us deal with local employees' needs and demands as well.

We hired quite a lot of female employees for the job positions of administrative and secretaries, as well as cooking assistants, and cleaning staff, depending on their different educational backgrounds.

Our firm does care about the rights of female employees. Furthermore, African countries have the traditions of respecting and caring for female employees. We pay attention to adhere to these traditions. No matter the blue collars or the white collars, we would never fire them only because they are pregnant. We provide them with allowances and vacations according to local laws and regulations.

Also, we often receive letters of thanks from Nigerian employees, as our company and Chinese colleagues give them "红包" (means a red envelope containing some amount of money as a gift) when they get married, give birth to a child, or at the time they have family members who are hospitalized for the treatment of very serious disease

In my perspective, absolute fairness or absolute distinguish can all make people think of discrimination and feel uncomfortable. Diversity management and intercultural management are delicate and complicated. Thus, we should think of the nuances, and provide treatment with flexibility.

Sometimes we have to keep the confidentiality about some information to our local employees. It does not represent that we are not respectful of them. Risks of information leaks do exist. Unexpected things happened before. There were a few local employees who sold our information to other competitors for a big amount of money and therefore brought about a financial loss to our firm. To sum up, thorough psychological, social, and economic context analyses are vital in dealing with this issue.

Nowadays, we live in the information age of marketization. Talent flow, job motility, and dual-way selection increased rapidly. In the recruitment phase, we deliberately check an applicant's background and interview him or her to see whether the person wants to work for a long term or a short term.

As for employee retention, I think that improving treatments, payments, and incentives may be a practical method. But still, the young generation has different mindsets. Some young employees left our company after worked for about two or three years and went to study abroad. Some of them went back to their hometown cities. The living expenses in Beijing are too high for them. It is hard for young people to buy

properties and settle in here.

Nevertheless, our company remains to be attractive to job applicants as being a state-owned enterprise, which can provide relatively stable jobs with high payments in China. Many new graduates of "211 and 985" (excellent universities in China) are in favor of us and come to apply for jobs every year, as well as many young people with overseas studying experiences.

D: The local employees who have been working with us for a long time will be more acceptable to Chinese Guanxi culture. When they want to report some problems or propose their needs to me, as they are familiar with Chinese culture, they will first ask the Chinese colleague who is my good friend for help. This colleague will then come to me and communicate with me about this issue. During the local festival times, we exchange gifts and presents with each other. In private, we have developed many friendships with each other. Local employees also use SNS apps like WeChat. We receive the influence of each other's culture at the same time.

I think Guanxi and Ubuntu philosophy has positive influences on teamwork management. Employees live and work together inside of our overseas subsidiaries. We are a big family. Just like students live in the same dormitory in a college. It is a collective way of living, and we formed an integrated community that consists of Chinese and local employees. For example, in Nigeria, we provide buffets made by Chinese and local cooks in our canteens. We enjoy meals together. Every Saturday, we have a dinner gathering together, drinking wines, Baijiu, chatting, and singing together happily, to be more emotionally connected.

As for the relationships outside our firm, I think local people are also good at maintaining social relationships with each other. The neighboring company, local chiefs, and residents, governmental officers will also give us small presents at festival times. And we will give presents to them as well.

Generally speaking, we are all human beings after all and everyone has sympathy. We cannot live without social networks. Local employees are very outgoing and like to interact with us. When we become friends, some local employees will invite us to visit their homes and meet their families. They will tell us the information about where we can find restaurants with tasty cuisines, or where we can buy traditional wooden handcrafts. Now, although I've been back to the headquarters, I still keep in touch with some local colleagues and friends.

L: We should be familiar with local labor laws and regulations and built trustworthy business relationships with partners and customers with a good reputation and quality. Bribery may bring about short-term benefits, but it will surely damage your reputation and thus will not give you long-term benefits. We seldom have problems with local trade unions. There was only one tiny incident that happened. Once there was a local worker who was drunk, but he insisted to work at the construction site. We dissuaded him from doing so, as it is too dangerous and he might get himself injured. But he was losing his mind with the power of alcohol and acting aggressively. We had to call the police and shut down the construction site for several hours to solve the problem.

8.	Self-assessment of performance/ cultural adjustment/ cultural intelligence	**A:** In the early stage of my overseas assignment, I did feel strange about the work. I used to be insisted on angular principles with limited flexibility in dealing with work affairs. After some time, I realized that an active and positive attitude is essential. My English language ability, understanding of local culture, working performance, negotiation ability, and anticipation of potential business partners have improved a lot. There is an old proverb in China, which is: "路遥知马力，日久见人心". (The English translation is: "As distance may know a horse's strength, so time reveals a person's heart.") With the deepening of cooperative relationships and mutual understanding between me and my local colleagues and co-workers, the degree of mutual trust and the ability to solve problems from the workplace increased a lot. Therefore, I feel that my self-belief and self-affirmation are enhanced by building trustworthy relationships with local employees and business partners. Regarding the Western and Chinese cultural similarities and differences, actually, in my opinion, the similarities far more exceed the differences amongst humanity at large. I met some managers from Western

countries in Nigeria. At first, I noticed that we do have different ways of communication. But after some time, I felt that we share similar in-situ experiences and cognition that we all should be more active in getting in touch with local people and maintaining contact with them. There are two different attitudes of the acceptance of different cultures that can be found from expatriates working in the host countries. One is initiative, another is passive. I prefer to take the first one.

D: The negotiation skill is improved. Language ability is also improved a lot. Communication and coordination abilities are improved. Overseas working experiences brought about a comprehensive and sophisticated improvement to me. I like to learn about new things. I have an active and positive attitude on cultural adjustment in host countries, although, the process requires a lot of effort. For example, when communicating with local employees, I should think of how to improve work efficiency and choose a culturally smart way to convey my thoughts to them. The contexts vary, and the cultural environment is changing all the time. Therefore, the process of cultural adjustment has a structure of spiral rising. Besides, the emotional quotient (EQ) is also important.

J: Our firm provides accommodations for Chinese expatriate employees. We have Chinese cooks and chefs. We have sports and entertainment facilities. Our company help solves the food, housing, and transportation problems for us. I feel convenient and comfortable living there. My family members can visit me and live in the dormitory for free as well.
Some local employees are not so efficient and do not have a responsible attitude. There are still many corruption and bribery problems. Local trade unions sometimes take hostile actions toward Chinese firms. But local employees of our organization are generally friendly to us

L: I have been working in Botswana for more than 15 years. At first, we won the bids by cost advantages, but to achieve sustainable development, we should focus more on localization management and quality management. As a company with 40 years of overseas business experience, we are one of the pioneers. As early as the year 2002, our expatriate employees could speak English fluently and had driving licenses, which help cut the costs of hiring translators and drivers. Other firms seldom had such kinds of talents at that time. We have always been competitive with a good reputation among Chinese MNEs in Botswana and helped the local government build many projects.
When I was working in Botswana, my wife and child came and lived with me together. My company provided allowances and free accommodation for them to accompany me. I am very grateful.
Botswana has a relatively clean and efficient government and we cooperated with them and built many livelihoods infrastructure projects. We encourage local architecture students to come to our firm to do internship works. We have good relationships with local people and communities.
I used to enjoy going to local restaurants and bars. I made many local friends as well. In the year 1998, I went to one of my local friends' homes to watch the FIFA World Cup game because we did not have televisions on our construction site. Local people are very passionate and friendly. Once our car got a flat tire, the local people helped us to move the car. We donated stationaries and computers to local primary schools and uniforms to local soccer teams. It feels great to help others as one's capacity allows.

| 9. | CSR/ sustainable development/ reputation/ public relations | **A:** This is a very tender and sensitive topic, and it is hardly touched in the conversations at work. But I did hear some local voices saying that some Western employers have a condescending attitude toward local people. These perceptions come from the chitchats between me and my local friends who have a good fellowship with me in private. This is due to colonial history in Africa. As for their views about Chinese people, they said that at first, they were not familiar with China, there was a sophisticated process. After the Chinese economic reform, and the two decades of friendly and equal cooperation between Africa and China, they felt that Chinese firms |

helped them sincerely by providing financial aids, creating large numbers of job opportunities, improving local infrastructure development and living standards. Meanwhile, they knew that it is beneficial for Chinese firms' business growth as well. This is a Win-Win situation. I believe that comparison is the prerequisite for distinguishing the good from the bad, and most importantly, African people have the final say. They compared their observation about the different attitudes and behaviors of suzerain countries in colonial times and China nowadays. They thought that during the colonial ages, the suzerain countries helped them with the institutionalization. The suzerain countries occupied sovereignty and ruled them by appropriating the natural resources, giving limited human rights to the local people. Regarding China, they thought that China never interferes with the internal affairs of their countries. Chinese firms will not have a hand in political issues and invade the dominion of the local people. It is a normal relationship of international communication and cooperation. On the other hand, in colonial times, they did not have independence and much freedom. Facts speak louder than words. From a national perspective, many African countries are not willing to accept the World Bank loan projects or the financial loan projects provided by some Western foundations. Some of them prefer to accept financial aids from China and keep long-term cooperation relationships with China. China never proposes mandatory requirements for repayment or demands them to concert the repayment into a certain kind of natural resources. Moreover, China does not have the interest to interfere in internal affairs or to gain political influence. China never manipulates governmental election events for political ends. China prefers multilateralism and seeks mutual development.

From the ordinary people's perspectives, they noticed that Chinese firms establish relations with them on an equal footing. They witnessed the improvement of industrialization and modernization, and the shortage of industrial value chains has been covered to some extent.

From a geopolitical perspective, African people achieved independence and they are experiencing a new era of industrialization, with rapid social and economic development. This is the new era for the African Renaissance. Only African countries and African people can give authoritative discourses on this question. They chose independence which led to the great national liberation movements. Only they can give the final judgments. Extreme cases and negative media reports exist objectively and inevitably. I would say that there is an old Chinese poem: "千磨万击还坚劲， 任尔东西南北风". （The English translation is "From whichever direction the winds leap, I remain strong, though dealt many a blow". Similar to "What does not kill you, makes you stronger".)

First of all, we will carry on persevering in the fulfillment of social responsibilities. Our behaviors must comply more strictly with local laws and regulations, as well as safety, health, and environmental standards. At the same time, on reflection, we have to collate and promote the related information in a more formal and standardized way. After we became a listed company, we must report to the public and society empirically and regularly, to strengthen transparency and publicity.

As an investor in host countries, we should be cognizant of the significance of contributing to local communities, education, and so on, with the best of our capabilities. For example, because in some areas near the Free Trade Zone, local residents are suffered from the lack of money and techniques for drilling deep well, so we helped the local communities drill about 50 wells this year, and we provide scholarships continuously for local college students who are studying in universities located in Lagos as a sponsor.

Furthermore, every year, our company invites local employees, including the middle and senior managerial personnel to visit and study in China with financial supports. Another employee engagement approach that we are doing is the annual selection of outstanding employees through public appraisal and election. We reward and provide financial support to the voted outstanding employees with a trip to Beijing, where they can visit the headquarters. At the headquarters, they attend the year-end gatherings. During the gatherings, the top executives will reward them with prizes and certificates of merit.

C: In my opinion, we are doing okay in fulfilling social responsibilities. First of all, there are some important principles that we should keep in mind. The fundamental principle is that one should not destroy or damage the local natural environment and resources. Second, one should keep a good and friendly relationship with residents and local communities. Third, one should contribute to social and economic development and benefit people's livelihood significantly. These three principles help make CSR works improve gradually and steadily.

Regarding how to make more contributions in the future, presently, we are focusing on coming up with diversified and sophisticated ways. Providing financial aids and manual supports are the basics. For instance, we helped build schools and hospitals for local communities. Our firm makes a special budget plan annually for carrying out CSR activities in the host country. The senior management team thinks highly of focusing on the discussion about related issues within the decision-making processes. We should not wait until local people come to us for help. We ought to think of what kind of problems they may be worried about and think of the possible benefits and contributions we can bring to them.

Sometimes, an emergent situation will happen, for instance, once the President informed us suddenly that he would like to ask us for help in giving financial supports to him to build a building a philanthropic foundation. We discussed this in the board meeting and decided to help him with our budget for CSR activities. We also provided cars to local communities as a donation, and help them constructed parks for free.
But the CSR management and affairs are not systematically done as some Western firms. We are not so good at publicity or advocating what we have done before to the public. There is a lack of empirical reports. It is probably having something to do with Chinese people's characteristics and traditions of being modest. There is a saying in China: "做好事不留名" (do good deeds without leaving a name). Chinese people prefer to keep a low profile. We are afraid of too much advocating may lead to unexpected negative social estimation in host countries.

These reports exist. But I don't quite understand why there are so many misunderstandings and misapprehensions about Chinese firms in Africa. One reason may be that other than the state-owned MNEs like us, there are also many private-owned Chinese firms, Chinese restaurants, and Chinese merchants in Africa. They came to Africa much earlier than us, and I did hear about some negative anecdotes of what they have done before. Also, it is probably having something to do with a lack of transparency and publicity of ourselves. In my opinion, we just want to be steady and surefooted in what we are doing right now. We don't want to arise too much attention. I'm not so sure what attitudes we will take in the future.

D: Our firm is carrying on fulfilling CSR and you can find the annual CSR reports from our official website. For example, digging wells for local residents, constructing roads for local communities for free. But it is also true that we have ignored publicity issues and we do not want too much exposure.

In Tanzania, we built a road for the local community. After finishing the construction, local residents expressed thanks to us. Later, a Japanese firm came to invest in that area. They built a primary school for the local communities and painted the national flags of Japan and Ethiopia. They know how to advocate for themselves. We just provided a simple steamed bun to the local community, whilst they provided a well-made croissant with butter to the local community. We should learn from them how to build a better social image.

We sponsored more than 20 Nigerian students and several Ethiopian students to come and study in China last year. They will firstly study Chinese, and then spend 4 years to get a Bachelor's degree. After graduation, they will work for our overseas subsidiaries in Nigeria and Ethiopia.

E: I have read some news articles and academic journals written by Western presses and scholars and found that many of the negative reports are revealing problems and illegal behaviors of some Chinese POEs and small self-employed business persons.

		Indeed, some of them are not doing well in establishing a proper organizational culture and management system, let alone lack foreign language abilities and low educational level. For example, recently, I visited one of the industrial parks that are constructed and managed by some Chinese POEs in Ethiopia to have an observation trip. During the trip, I learned that in the year 2018, several strikes happened because of the troubles between the local trade union and Chinese POEs. It is not wise that those Chinese POEs drove the local trade union into opposition by ineffective communication and negotiation. I know that some employers of Chinese POEs often snapping at other Chinese employees with an arrogant attitude. How on earth will these employers have better solutions to deal with cross-cultural conflicts? Other problems like destroying the environment, overexploitation of natural and labor resources also happen because some Chinese POEs viewing profits as more important than fulfilling social responsibilities. On one hand, our government should pay more attention to these problems and think of better prevention solutions, for example, providing guidance and improving laws and regulations to supervise Chinese MNEs. On the other hand, we Chinese SOEs should learn from the lessons and avoid these kinds of conflicts happening. China is still a developing country. Chinese MNEs are still on the learning and developing path. It takes time to solve the problems.
10. BRI/ strategic management	**A:** In general, the impacts are positive and beneficial, and Belt and Road Initiatives bring us challenges as well as opportunities. It is a juncture for us to furtherance the rationalization of business operations and to improve management effectiveness, not only within China but also in overseas markets. It is the right time for us to implement new strategies, reconsider the organizational structure planning, and achieve organizational innovation and transformation.

Firstly, under the thorough and adequate understanding and acknowledgment of our development history, own characteristics, and future potential, the headquarters has proposed a new strategy focusing on the "Grand Vision and Abiding Goal of Overseas Development". To give a specific explanation, it can be called the "1+N" strategy, which means to reform and become more diversified structured, we will keep enhancing our specialties of constructing and operating railways, real estates, roads, bridges, city planning projects, airports, water conservancy projects as a contractor, whilst expanding our business investment into Trade and Logistics industries, Industrial investment, property management, and Free Trade Zones' development as an investor. This is a role upgrading in a new stage of development.

Secondly, to improve organizational flexibility and maneuverability, we will keep embedding Localization and Humanistic Care into our management philosophy. For example, the subsidiary in Abuja (Nigeria) has already hired more than 15,000 local employees who come from different regions of Nigeria, whereas the number of Chinese employees is about 1,000. We will put more effort into helping Chinese and African employees to realize and learn about the cultural similarities and differences among African and Chinese cultures, thinking of more effective training methods and programs, and providing more attractive employee career advancement plans to improve intercultural management effectiveness in those overseas branches.

Thirdly, we will continually endeavor to fulfill social responsibilities in host countries. For instance, providing donations for education, helping local people deal with emergencies and disasters, and providing relief, with these real actions we expect to shape and promote a better brand image, to receive higher social satisfaction, to create more innovative values, and most importantly, to enhance employee engagement capability, to achieve sustainable development in the future.

B: As a state-owned large enterprise with 40 years of overseas development, our company is one of the active forerunners of Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). The BRI has strategic importance to us. I think Western countries and their political powers are being calculating. At first, they used to be in support of the BRI. But now they start to be worried about the increasing influences from China to Europe, or to Africa, including the growing numbers of Confucius Institutes established around the world. Therefore, China's movement has been denounced as "Neocolonialism" by them recently. I don't agree with the accusation of "Neocolonialism". At least by looking at |

the history of our company, we have never done such things. In the early 1980s, we helped African countries construct several railways with the financial aid provided by the Chinese government. Nowadays, Chinese firms develop by cooperating with African countries and thus solve the domestic problem of excess production capacity. Meanwhile, by helping African people in infrastructure construction, they can enjoy a more industrialized, and modernized living environment with higher living standards. We truly and sincerely want to help and bring about benefits to African people. We do not require them to exchange natural resources like oil. We provide them with financial loan projects, but we gradually release them from the debt. We have made a lot of contributions to local societies in a down-to-earth manner.

Still, this is a comprehensive question. When we implemented BRI into our actions, we met many difficulties. We have other subsidiaries, which built railways in Ethiopia and Kenya. After the railways were put into formal operations, they found that there were not so many passengers as they expected in the planning stage, and they had to put large amounts of expenses and efforts into maintenance.

In Ethiopia, a car is a necessity. Many people also buy second-handed cars as well. Therefore, road utilization is currently much higher than railways utilization. I've heard an anecdote about some Japanese firms. They were constructing roads in Ethiopia. In the planning and designing phase, they realized that Ethiopian people are good at running, and running is a popular hobby and sport in Ethiopia. So, the Japanese firms added special running tracks as additional parts of the roads. I think what they have done for the local people shows humanistic care. The local communities also give them high public estimation for their efforts. I think we should learn from them in the future. It is necessary for us to learn about local people's needs and interests, to listen to local people's demands carefully before starting to do the projects. Otherwise, local people will not be satisfied, and we will not achieve any acceptance and good estimation from them. In conclusion, we should put in more effort and keep on incorporating the philosophy of humanistic care into our organizational culture.

D: Cannot copy and paste Western style? Sure. Flexibilities are necessary. And also, we should adjust to the changing situations. As for building organizational culture and values, when doing intercultural management, mutual respect is vital. We are all human beings, and we are equal. Secondly, we should comply with local laws and regulations. Thirdly, we should be familiar with and adhere to local traditions, customs, and indigenous cultures. BRI provides our company policies back-up. In the fields of civil engineering and mega-construction, I don't think any private-owned Chinese firms can compete with us. In the overseas markets, we often have to compete with other large scales state-owned Chinese MNEs.

Most of the overseas markets that we are doing business in are located in developing and emerging countries, for instance, African countries and South East Asia countries. The local legal systems of these countries are not developed well enough to be transparent and have many problems like corruption and bribery. Therefore, we should also be cautious about the negative influences of Guanxi culture. What we can do to win the competition is to comply with Chinese and local laws and regulations, and to compete with others with our specialties and strengths, improvement of systematic management effectiveness, contributing to local societies, good brand image, and social reputation.

E: As far as I know, BRI is a suggestion. It is beneficial to people around the world. BRI is like a bridge that connecting people from different nations together and helping us understand and appreciate each other's culture. BRI has positive influences on the peaceful development of the Global Village. If we know each other better, then there might be fewer misunderstandings and conflicts. Our company has expertise in infrastructure construction projects. We, Chinese people, have the saying of "if you want to get rich, build roads first" (要想富先修路). Building roads and railways to connect each nation will facilitate economic development and improve living standards. African countries used to receive colonial oppressions, even though they succeeded in pursuing independence, they are still weak in infrastructure development.

	M: We are now organizing seminars to learn about BRI. The concept of establishing infrastructural and emotional ties with other nations requires Chinese MNEs to pay more attention to cross-cultural communication and management issues. I believe it is helpful to redesign our internationalization strategies and organizational transformation to become a real Global Company.
	When I was working in Kenya, I met a Japanese businessman from a Japanese bank. He complained that African employees generally have worse work performance and lack of efficiencies. I have living and working experiences in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Ethiopia. What I have learned is that Africa nations have diversified cultures. However, social polarization is still a severe problem. Education inequality makes things worse. Some social elites receive better education and therefore performance better than others. Other young people from ordinary or poor families are not that lucky. To nurture more local talents, our firm is supporting some local college students to study architecture and civil engineering knowledge in Chinese universities. They are receiving scholarships and financial aids from us and Chinese universities. After graduation, they will also be given internship opportunities with us, and we will hire them as formal employees according to their aspirations.

4. The questionnaire survey item

Part 1 Control variables
(1) Gender (Female 0/ Male 1)
(2) How long have you worked in sub-Saharan Africa countries (Yes 1/ No 2)?
(3) What kind of firm are you working for (SOE, POE, SOE joint venture with host country shareholders, POE joint venture with host country shareholders)?
(4) Foreign language ability (multiple choice: English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, African languages)
(5) Job position (employee, middle management personnel, senior management personnel)
(6) Having experience of studying abroad or not (Yes 1/ No 2)
(7) Education (Bachelor degree, Master degree, Ph.D. degree)
(8) Having experience of attending a cross-cultural training program or not (Yes 1/ No 2)
(9) Which African country are you working in?
(10) Do you familiar with UBUNTU culture (No, have heard of it but not familiar, know and familiar)

Part 2 Cultural intelligence scale (20 items, 1-7 Likert scale)
Metacognitive CQ:
(1) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.
(2) I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
(3) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.
(4) I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.
Cognitive CQ:
(1) I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
(2) I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.
(3) I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
(4) I know the marriage systems of other cultures.
(5) I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.
(6) I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.

Motivational CQ:

(1) I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
(2) I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
(3) I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.
(4) I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.
(5) I am confident that I can get accustomed to shopping conditions in a different culture.

Behavioral CQ:

(1) I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
(2) I use to pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.
(3) I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
(4) I change my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
(5) I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

Part 3 Open-ended questions

(1) A simple description of sub-Saharan African cultures, and the differences/similarities with Chinese culture. (open-ended questions, typing in)
(2) A simple description of the people management problem encountered when managing local staff. (open-ended questions, typing in)
(3) A simple description of how to solve the problem you mentioned. (open-ended questions, typing in)

博士论文访谈及问卷调查内容利用知情同意书

1. 论文题目：

《中国央企及其海外分支机构在撒哈拉以南非洲国家的国际人力资源管理------文化汇通，"嵌入"与交叉融合》

2. 概要：

　　近年来，中国企业在非洲各国的经营活动已成为国际商务研究领域中最热门的课题之一，但在近期复杂多变的地政与国际关系大背景下，其所带来的影响却在媒体圈和学术界中引起了长期的争议。中国政府推出的一系列政策，以及近年来"一带一路"的倡议等，不断促进中国企业的海外投资活动，因此中国对非洲的对外直接投资量一直在稳步增长。作为中国跨国企业在海外拓展业务的先驱，其中最有影响力的当属中国的国有企业。然而，之前关于中国企业在非洲的研究大部分集中与以民营和个体公司为研究对象，有少数则是以地方国有企业为研究对象。关于在撒哈拉以南非洲营商的中央企业的人力资源管理和组织行为活动的研究仍十分缺乏。此外，本研究对于丰富新兴国家和发展中国家跨国公司的国际人力资源管理（IHRM）和跨文化管理模式的研究也具有重要的意义。作者希望通过观察中国跨国企业在撒哈拉以南非洲国家的国际人力资源管理中的文化汇通，社交网络"嵌入"与管理制度的交叉融合现象，并研究跨文化管理以及企业社会责任履行方面遇到的困难和积累的经验，来阐明中国国有企业在组织变革，拓展海外市场和长期可持续发展方面所面临的机遇与挑战。

3. 研究方法：

　　本研究采用的是定性与定量方法相结合的混合式嵌入型单案例研究方法。

a. 定性部分采取面对面访谈（半结构性访谈问题）及网络问卷调查（开放式问题）来收集信息。使用 VennMaker 软件来分析社交网络数据，绘制企业利益相关者地图（Stakeholders Map）。

b. 定量部分采取网络问卷调查（腾讯网络问卷）来收集信息（跨文化培训与交流经验，跨文化智商，跨文化沟通有效性等）。使用 SPSS 软件进行定量数据分析。

4. 研究对象：

　　诚邀中国央企所属的外派到撒哈拉以南非洲国家的管理人员及员工自愿参与访谈及填写问卷调查。

5. 个人隐私信息保护说明：

　　本研究及论文中将对受访人员及问卷填写人员的个人隐私信息进行严格保密。访谈的录音文件仅供研究者本人整理成文字稿并分析摘录至论文中。研究者需妥善保管录音文件，避免外流，论文完成后，需销毁录音文件，不再做他用。摘录受访者访谈以及问卷调查开放式问题回答片段或内容时，研究者需保证使用匿名信息，或使用编号，不得使用受访者及问卷回答者真名。

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    本公司受访及回答问卷人员自愿参与本次研究活动，对以上所有信息已经知情，已了解个人隐私信息是保密且受保护的，在研究过程中可以随时退出该项目。在研究结束及论文撰写结束后，将得到研究成果作为回馈。

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