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## Bringing Global Knowledge Home: How Organizational Support and Person-Job Fit Foster Repatriate Knowledge Transfer in Chinese SOEs

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Doctor of Management

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April, 2025



BUSINESS  
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Organizational Support and Person-Job Fit  
Foster Repatriate Knowledge Transfer in Chinese  
SOEs**

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## Declaration

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Date: 2025.9.17

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## 作者申明

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## Abstract

In the globalized business environment, repatriate knowledge transfer has become one of the key pathways for multinational enterprises to gain competitive advantage. However, despite the increasing attention to repatriate knowledge transfer in the literature, there is limited research focused on Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs). This study takes a sample of repatriates from Chinese multinational SOEs to explore the mechanism through which congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation influences repatriate knowledge transfer. It also examines the mediation effect of job embeddedness, and the moderation effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement therein.

Based on multi-time-point survey data of repatriates from a large multinational SOE in China, using polynomial regression and response surface analysis techniques, this study found that: 1) Congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation is positively associated with repatriate knowledge transfer, such that when perceived organizational support is high both during expatriation and after repatriation, there is greater repatriate knowledge transfer. 2) Job embeddedness mediates the influence of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer. 3) Perceived person-job fit accentuates the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer, such that the higher the perceived person-job fit, the more significant the positive relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

This study has practical significance for multinational enterprises to foster knowledge transfer of repatriates. It also enriched the literature on knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises by using the sample of repatriates from a Chinese SOE.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Support; Job Embeddedness; Person-Job Fit; Knowledge Transfer; Repatriation

**JEL:** M12, M16

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## Resumo

No ambiente empresarial globalizado, a transferência de conhecimento por repatriados tornou-se um dos principais meios para as empresas multinacionais obterem vantagem competitiva. No entanto, apesar da crescente atenção dedicada na literatura à transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados, a investigação especificamente direcionada para as empresas estatais (*state-owned enterprises*, SOEs) chinesas permanece limitada. Este estudo utiliza repatriados dos SOE chinesas como amostra para explorar o mecanismo pelo qual a congruência no suporte organizacional percebido antes e depois do repatriamento influencia a transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados, analisando também o efeito de mediação do enraizamento no trabalho e os efeitos de moderação do ajuste percebido entre a pessoa e o trabalho e do sentimento de direito psicológico.

Com base em dados de um inquérito realizado em múltiplas fases com repatriados de uma grande SOE multinacional na China, e utilizando técnicas de regressão polinomial e análise de superfície de resposta, este estudo relevou que: 1) a congruência no suporte organizacional percebido antes e depois do repatriamento está significativamente e positivamente associada à transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados, de forma que, quando tanto o suporte organizacional percebido antes como depois do repatriamento são elevados, há uma maior transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados. 2) O enraizamento no trabalho desempenha um papel mediador na influência da congruência no suporte organizacional percebido sobre a transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados. 3) O ajuste percebido entre a pessoa e o trabalho acentua a relação entre a congruência no suporte organizacional percebido e a transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados, sendo que, quanto maior o ajuste percebido entre a pessoa e o trabalho, mais significativa é a relação positiva entre a congruência no suporte organizacional percebido e a transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados.

Este estudo reveste-se de relevância prática para as empresas multinacionais no sentido de promover a transferência de conhecimento dos repatriados. Além disso, enriquece a literatura sobre a transferência de conhecimento em empresas multinacionais, ao utilizar uma amostra de repatriados provenientes de uma SOE chinesa.

**Palavras-chave:** Suporte Organizacional Percebido; Enraizamento no Trabalho; Ajuste entre a

Pessoa e o Trabalho; Transferência de Conhecimento; Repatriação

**JEL:** M12, M16

## 摘 要

外派回任人员知识转移已成为跨国公司获取竞争优势的关键途径之一。近年来外派人员回任后的知识转移日益受到学术界和实践者的关注，但鲜有针对中国国有跨国企业外派回任人员的研究。本研究以中国国有跨国企业的外派回任人员为样本，旨在探讨回任前感知组织支持和回任后感知组织支持的一致性对外派回任人员知识转移的影响机制，检验工作嵌入度在其中扮演的中介作用，以及人-工作匹配感和心理特权感的调节作用。

基于一家中国国有大型跨国企业外派回任人员的多阶段调查数据，本研究采用了多项式回归和响应面分析技术进行数据分析。研究发现：1) 回任前和回任后的感知组织支持一致性与回任人员知识转移正相关，并且当回任前和回任后的感知组织支持都高的时候，回任人员知识转移更多。2) 工作嵌入度在回任前和回任后感知组织支持一致性对回任人员知识转移的影响过程中起到中介作用。3) 人-工作匹配感在回任前和回任后的感知组织支持一致性与回任人员知识转移的关系中具有正向调节作用，即回任人员的人-工作匹配感越高，回任前和回任后感知组织支持一致性对回任人员知识转移的正向关系越强。

本研究对跨国企业如何促进回任人员的知识转移具有一定的现实指导意义。此外，本研究并以中国国有企业外派回任人员的样本和研究发现丰富了跨国企业知识转移方面的文献。

**关键词：**组织支持感；工作嵌入；工作匹配；知识转移；外派回任

**JEL:** M12, M16

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CFA = Confirmatory factor analysis  
CFI = Comparative fit index  
CMV = Common method variance  
D-A fit = Demands-abilities fit  
HPWS = High-performance work system  
JE = Job embeddedness  
KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer  
LMX = Leader-member exchange  
NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory  
N-S fit = Needs-supplies fit  
OST = Organizational support theory  
PE = Psychological Entitlement  
P-E fit = Person-environment fit  
P-J fit = Person-job fit  
P-O fit = Person-organization fit  
P-S fit = Person-supervisor fit  
POS = Perceived organizational support  
POSE = Perceived organizational support during expatriation  
POSR = Perceived organizational support after repatriation  
RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation  
SC-J fit = Self-concept-job fit  
SOE = State-owned enterprises  
TLI = Tucker-Lewis index

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter primarily introduces the research background, the current state of research both in China and internationally, the proposed research questions, the theoretical and practical significance of this study, and the main content and structure of this thesis.

### 1.1 Research background

Since the implementation of China's "Going Global" strategy in 2000, large numbers of Chinese enterprises have steadily expanded into international markets in search of greater development opportunities (M. Peng, 2005). In particular, following the introduction of the One Belt and One Road Initiative in 2013 (Aoyama, 2016), infrastructure connectivity has been prioritized as a key development area. Many Chinese infrastructure enterprises have seized great opportunities for growth, leading to the rapid expansion of overseas engineering contracting businesses, making them evolve into internationalized enterprises with global influence. According to the *2020 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment* jointly issued by the Ministry of Commerce, the National Bureau of Statistics, and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, by the end of 2020, 28,000 Chinese investors had established 45,000 overseas direct investment enterprises across 189 countries (and regions) worldwide, with a total workforce exceeding 3.61 million employees, approximately 40% of whom were expatriates.

At present, China has accumulated considerable technological, managerial, and manufacturing advantages in the field of infrastructure construction (Zeng et al., 2015), and the internationalization of infrastructure enterprises has made significant progress. However, during the initial phase of the "Going Global" strategy, many Chinese enterprises were limited to operating in developing countries that were friendly toward China, where the infrastructure development was still in an early stage, with relatively low overall project requirements (Alon et al., 2014). These Chinese enterprises primarily engaged in infrastructure projects using technologies that were mature in China but with low technological complexity. As "latecomers" in this field, these Chinese enterprises underwent a learning and benchmarking process against early pioneers (Zhang, 2022). Due to the significant differences in operation and management, as well as the varying national conditions, legal frameworks, and business environments across

different countries, these enterprises were required to adopt country-specific strategies. Expatriates, as crucial bridges between the home country and foreign markets, play an essential role in this process (Rui et al., 2017). They not only can transfer advanced operational concepts and management practices from the home country to host-country enterprises but can also relay local customs and market knowledge back to the home country, providing valuable insights for the international operations of home-country enterprises. However, in actual operation and management practice, multinational enterprises still face many deficiencies in knowledge transfer of repatriates, such as the lack of effective incentives for repatriates to transfer knowledge and the absence of systematic knowledge management mechanisms and approaches (Ye et al., 2021). In addition, multinational enterprises tend to focus more on the knowledge transfer from the parent company to foreign subsidiaries by expatriates, while paying insufficient attention to the knowledge transfer of repatriates (Peltokorpi et al., 2022). As the final stage of expatriation, repatriation plays a crucial role in determining whether the objectives of expatriates and multinational enterprises are achieved (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). After completing their expatriate assignments and returning to the home country, repatriates have accumulated extensive experience in international operations and management, enhanced their personal capabilities, and become more familiar with the market characteristics, business and social environments, and cultural traits of the host country. This experience enables them to provide valuable strategic insights for multinational enterprises' internationalization efforts, making them an extremely important intangible asset for home-country enterprises (Sánchez Vidal et al., 2008). Therefore, stimulating knowledge transfer of repatriates is of significant importance to multinational enterprises.

However, repatriates face numerous challenges upon returning to their home country, including cultural adjustment, adaptation to the new work environment, and family resettlement (Chiang et al., 2018). Previous relevant studies have found that adjustment of repatriates is often more difficult than expatriation adjustment. Research has indicated that due to difficulties in adapting to the work environment and job requirements in the home-country enterprise, approximately 30% of repatriates leave their companies within the first year of returning (Cave et al., 2023), while the average turnover rate within two years of repatriation due to adjustment challenges is around 50% (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). There is a high turnover rate of repatriates in multinational enterprises, which poses significant losses for these enterprises. Part of the losses lies in the substantial human, material, and financial resources invested by these multinational enterprises in both the expatriation preparation phase and the expatriation period. Moreover, if repatriates leave the enterprise, the knowledge of the host country's market and

the experience they acquired while working and living overseas cannot be transferred to the parent company, which may hinder this multinational enterprise's market expansion in this country and the implementation of its globalization strategy (Burmeister & Deller, 2016; Peltokorpi et al., 2022). Therefore, finding out how to reduce repatriates' turnover and facilitate their knowledge transfer is a crucial component of repatriation management practices and a pressing issue in theoretical research, with significant practical and theoretical relevance.

Previous studies have found that organizational support measures significantly influence repatriates' adjustment, not only helping to reduce their turnover intention (Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017; Pattie et al., 2010) but also facilitating their knowledge transfer upon repatriation (Burmeister & Deller, 2016; Ye et al., 2021). However, previous studies have overlooked potential incongruence in perceived organizational support among repatriates. In the context of expatriation and repatriation, repatriates experience organizational support both during their expatriation and after their return. Since multinational enterprises typically place greater emphasis on expatriates' adaptation and knowledge transfer in the host country, it is likely that more organizational support is provided during expatriation than after repatriation. This discrepancy can lead repatriates to perceive an incongruence in organizational support before and after repatriation. Whether such congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support affects repatriate knowledge transfer, as well as the underlying mechanisms of this influence, has not been sufficiently explored in previous studies and requires further investigation.

## **1.2 Research status**

### **1.2.1 Repatriates**

Repatriation refers to the continuation process in which expatriates return to their home country after completing overseas work assignments (Ho et al., 2024). Currently, research on repatriates by Chinese and international scholars mainly focuses on three aspects: 1) the repatriation process, 2) repatriation adjustment, and 3) turnover after repatriation.

- Repatriation process

Martin and Anthony (2006) proposed that the repatriation process can generally be divided into four stages: pre-expatriation, during expatriation, prior to repatriation, and repatriation. Hyder and Lövblad (2007) suggested that the repatriation process primarily includes three stages: pre-repatriation stage, re-entry stage, and reintegration stage. Furuya et al. (2007)

divided the repatriation process into the stages of pre-repatriation, transition from expatriation, re-entry shock, reintegration, and repatriate adjustment. Caldwell et al. (2024) suggested that regarding the repatriation process, it is necessary to consider the case in which repatriates are reassigned overseas or remain in the host country (e.g., immigration or settlement).

- Repatriation adjustment

Black et al. (1992) proposed an integrated repatriation adjustment model, suggesting that repatriation adjustment is mainly influenced by four factors: organizational factors, work-related factors, individual factors, and other factors. Kulkarni et al. (2010) pointed out that social and family factors also impact expatriates' repatriation adjustment. In a study of repatriates in Spain, Vidal et al. (2007) found that the repatriates who perceived better personal social status, career development, job position, and job performance after repatriation tended to have smoother repatriation adjustment. Shen and Hall (2009) also found that repatriates' more met expectations in work and nonwork situations were associated with their higher levels of repatriation adjustment. Suutari and Välimaa (2002) suggested that the degree of internationalization of the home company, repatriation policy planning, and individual factors all affect repatriation adjustment outcomes. Sánchez Vidal et al. (2008) showed that factors such as repatriation preparation and training, career planning and development, job assignment and evaluation, salary, and job characteristics influenced repatriation adjustment. In addition, the duration of the international assignment and the purpose of expatriation jointly affect the adjustment process of repatriates (Haq et al., 2023).

- Turnover after repatriation

Previous relevant studies have indicated that expatriates returning to their home country are three times more likely to voluntarily resign within the first year compared to other employees (Cox et al., 2013). In some cases, the turnover rate for repatriates reaches as high as 40%, whereas the turnover rate for other employees is only 3% to 5% during the same period. This phenomenon, in which repatriates resign due to various reasons during the repatriation process, is known as repatriation failure (Vidal et al., 2007). Existing research has identified both individual and organizational factors contributing to poor repatriation (H. Lee & Liu, 2006). In particular, individual factors mainly include "reverse culture shock" leading to difficult adjustment, work-family conflicts, and psychological imbalance caused by unmet expectations; organizational factors include unreasonable expatriate compensation design, unsatisfactory repatriation arrangements, insufficient organizational support, and the lack of knowledge management as a strategic goal of expatriation. Ho et al. (2024) found that difficulties in work adaptation and life adjustment after repatriation reduced job satisfaction and life satisfaction,

thereby increasing turnover intentions after repatriation. Moreover, the greater the cultural distance between the host country and the home country, the higher the turnover intention of repatriates.

### **1.2.2 Knowledge transfer of repatriates**

Previous research on knowledge transfer has primarily focused on the transfer of knowledge from the parent company to the subsidiary (Chang et al., 2012; Noorderhaven & Harzing, 2009; S. Wang et al., 2009) or the transfer of knowledge from the subsidiary to the parent company during expatriation (Michailova & Mustaffa, 2012; Rabbiosi, 2011). However, relatively little research has been conducted on the transfer of knowledge from expatriates to the parent company after repatriation (Kraimer et al., 2016). In recent years, as an increasing number of multinational enterprises have recognized the importance of repatriate knowledge transfer, scholars have paid growing attention to reverse knowledge transfer after repatriation. Burmeister et al. (2018) explored how the knowledge dissemination ability of repatriates, the absorptive capacity of employees in the parent company, and their interaction opportunities influence repatriate knowledge transfer. They also revealed the moderating effect of repatriate knowledge characteristics and the characteristics of international assignments in these relationships. Ye et al. (2021) showed that repatriates' perceived person-organization fit, career support, and repatriation support significantly moderated the relationship between organizational knowledge governance and repatriates' intention to transfer knowledge. Froese et al. (2021) found that expatriates' job embeddedness in the parent company and their frequency of communication with the host country had a significant positive impact on repatriate knowledge transfer. Bucher et al. (2022) were the first to investigate the influence of leadership behavior on repatriate knowledge transfer and found that empowering leadership positively affected repatriate knowledge transfer. Peltokorpi et al. (2022) showed that the frequency of communication with the parent company before repatriation would increase repatriates' trust in parent company personnel, thereby facilitating their knowledge transfer; at the same time, perceived career support and expatriation support could enhance career satisfaction, thus facilitating repatriate knowledge transfer. Moreover, both communication frequency with the parent company and perceived career and expatriation support facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer through reintegration into the parent company (Peltokorpi et al., 2022).

In Chinese literature, some studies have explored the factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer. For instance, J. Wang (2014) identified knowledge transfer motivation,

knowledge transfer capability, and knowledge transfer opportunities as the main factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer. Luo and Wang (2017) revealed that repatriates' affective commitment significantly positively impacted their knowledge dissemination motivation, which in turn significantly positively affected knowledge transfer. J. Wang and Yang (2019), based on a paired sample study of 160 repatriates and their leaders from 20 multinational enterprises in China, found that job adaptation, interpersonal adaptation, and environmental adaptation significantly positively affected repatriate knowledge transfer; in addition, knowledge transfer partially mediated the relationship between repatriation adjustment and employee innovation behavior. Ye et al. (2020) found that organizations' career management tactics significantly positively influenced repatriates' intention to transfer knowledge, and perceived insider status partially mediated this relationship.

### **1.3 Research gap**

From the review of the literature above, we can see that existing studies on repatriate knowledge transfer primarily focus on its antecedents. Among them, perceived organizational support has garnered much attention in the literature (Burmeister & Deller, 2016; Ye et al., 2021). Scholars generally agree that organizational support practices facilitate the repatriation adjustment process of expatriates, thereby enhancing their intention and behavior in knowledge transfer upon repatriation. However, the organizational support perceived by expatriates during their international assignments and after repatriation may differ, as multinational enterprises often prioritize expatriates' adaptation and knowledge transfer in host countries (Anne Crowne, 2009), typically providing more organizational support during expatriation than after repatriation. Therefore, further exploration is needed regarding the impact of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer. Moreover, previous studies on the influence of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer have been predominantly based on social exchange theory, which presents certain limitations (Van der Laken et al., 2019), restricting both academic and practical understandings of the relationship between perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more in-depth and refined research on the influencing factors and influence mechanisms of repatriate knowledge transfer from multiple perspectives.



## 1.4 Research questions

Through a review and synthesis of existing literature, considering the author's expatriation and repatriation experience, this study proposes that expatriates may perceive congruence/incongruence in organizational support during their international assignments and after repatriation, and this congruence/incongruence may influence repatriate knowledge transfer.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the following research questions (RQs) in depth:

RQ1. How does the congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation influence repatriate knowledge transfer?

RQ2. When there is incongruence in perceived organizational support, which type of incongruence is more detrimental to repatriate knowledge transfer?

RQ3. What are the roles of job embeddedness, person-job fit, and psychological entitlement in the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer?

To address these questions, this study introduces job embeddedness as a mediator to explain the relationship between congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. Job embeddedness reflects the strength of the relational network between an individual and the organization and is a crucial factor in employees' retention in the organization (Kiazad et al., 2015). When repatriates exhibit a high level of job embeddedness, they are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (T. Lee et al., 2004), such as knowledge transfer to the organization.

In addition, previous research has shown that person-job fit after repatriation is a key factor influencing repatriation adjustment (Mello et al., 2024). In practice, many expatriates leave their organizations due to an unsatisfactory person-job fit after repatriation, highlighting the significant impact of person-job fit on job performance after repatriation. Therefore, this study incorporates person-job fit into the research framework to examine its moderating effect on the relationship between congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. Moreover, during their international assignments, expatriates accumulate extensive experience in international business operations and management, acquiring an identity as international employees. Upon repatriation, they may perceive themselves as distinct and deserving of special treatment from their organizations, leading to a sense of psychological entitlement (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Such psychological entitlement can also impact their job performance after repatriation (Schwarz et al., 2023). Therefore, this

study also attempts to examine the potential moderating effect of psychological entitlement on the relationship between congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

## 1.5 Research objectives

Based on the reality that expatriates often perceive incongruence in organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation, this study aims to examine the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support across these two stages and repatriate knowledge transfer. Furthermore, in addition to social exchange theory, this study incorporates psychological contract theory and relative deprivation theory to develop a hypothesis model, based on which, it attempts to explore the mediating effect of job embeddedness, and the moderating effect of person-job fit and psychological entitlement.

Specifically, this study takes the congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation as the core research topic, and is committed to achieving the following objectives:

- Overall objective

This study aims to systematically reveal how, under what conditions, and through what psychological-situational mechanisms, the congruent or incongruent organizational support perceived by expatriates throughout the entire “expatriation-repatriation” cycle affects repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby providing theoretical basis and quantitative tools for multinational enterprises to design precise support strategies.

- Specific objectives

Objective 1 (corresponding to RQ1): Examine the main effect of congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer. Polynomial regression and response surface analysis are employed to quantify this main effect.

Objective 2 (corresponding to RQ2): Identify the most detrimental types of incongruence in perceived organizational support and provide critical thresholds. Four typical scenarios (high-high, low-low, high-low, and low-high perceived organizational support) are projected on the response surface graph to compare their marginal effects on repatriate knowledge transfer.

Objective 3 (corresponding to RQ3): Elucidate the mediating effect of job embeddedness, as well as the moderating effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement. The Bootstrap method is employed to test the significance of these effects.

In general, by systematically reviewing and analyzing research on repatriate knowledge

transfer in multinational enterprises, this study identified existing research frameworks and key research topics, as well as the gaps in theoretical and empirical research on repatriate knowledge transfer, highlighting the significance of examining repatriate knowledge transfer from the perspective of congruence in perceived organizational support. A theoretical model was then constructed, incorporating congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support, job embeddedness, repatriate knowledge transfer, person-job fit, and psychological entitlement as key variables. Data were collected through both questionnaire surveys and interviews to empirically test the proposed theoretical model. Accordingly, conclusions are drawn, the theoretical and practical implications of this study are discussed, and managerial implications for multinational enterprises are provided.

## **1.6 Research significance**

### **1.6.1 Theoretical significance**

Research on the knowledge transfer of repatriates has become a new focal point in the field of human resource management in multinational enterprises. However, there are still certain gaps in the literature. First, previous studies have primarily focused on the impact of perceived organizational support after repatriation on expatriates' retention intention and knowledge transfer intention, while paying limited attention to its interaction with the perceived organizational support in the host country. Although the organizational support perceived after repatriation may have a more direct impact on repatriates, considering the effects of organizational support perceived in the host country on the repatriation adjustment process and knowledge transfer after repatriation would contribute to a more comprehensive theoretical and practical understanding of repatriates' job performance. Second, previous studies have mainly examined the mechanisms through which perceived organizational support affects repatriate knowledge transfer based on the social exchange theory, while paying little attention to other potential influencing mechanisms. Furthermore, the models proposed in previous research have overlooked critical boundary conditions, which may limit these models' explanatory power in certain contexts.

This study takes both employees' psychological characteristics and job characteristics into account in examining the impact of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the process of perceived organizational support influencing repatriate knowledge transfer and its

boundary conditions. Specifically, the theoretical significance of this study includes the following:

(1) By exploring the impact of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer, this study not only helps to deepen our understanding of the relationship between perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer but also enriches and expands the research on the antecedents of repatriate knowledge transfer.

(2) By examining the mediating effect of job embeddedness on the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, this study not only reveals the underlying mechanism through which congruence in perceived organizational support affects repatriate knowledge transfer but also extends the application of job embeddedness theory, providing a new theoretical perspective for understanding the intrinsic mechanism of repatriate knowledge transfer.

(3) By examining the moderating effect of perceived person-job fit on the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, this study not only reaffirms the critical role of perceived person-job fit in the repatriation adjustment process but also demonstrates its positive impact on repatriate knowledge transfer, thus enriching the literature on the relationship between perceived person-job fit and knowledge transfer.

### **1.6.2 Practical significance**

Repatriates are an underestimated strategic asset within multinational enterprises, and they play a rare and difficult-to-replicate role in establishing sustainable competitive advantages of these enterprises. The knowledge and experience accumulated by repatriated expatriates in the host country can facilitate knowledge integration and innovation between the parent company and its overseas subsidiaries. This will help the parent company better respond to changes in the international market and improve overall performance, thus enhancing the enterprise's core competitiveness. Fully exploring and utilizing the diverse knowledge they have acquired during their expatriation, including both explicit knowledge (e.g., technologies and processes) and tacit knowledge (e.g., management practices and cultural understanding), is of great significance for the operations of multinational enterprises in both host and home countries. Therefore, how to facilitate and stimulate expatriates' knowledge transfer after repatriation is an urgent issue to be addressed in the human resource management of multinational enterprises.

This study examines the impact of congruence in perceived organizational support during

expatriation and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer, and the findings provide insights into how multinational enterprises can better manage repatriates and enhance their knowledge transfer. First, by studying the factors influencing the knowledge transfer of repatriated expatriates, this study provides insights that can help enterprises formulate more effective and appropriate human resource management strategies, improve expatriate selection and training mechanisms, and facilitate repatriation adjustment and the efficiency of repatriate knowledge transfer. Second, the findings can contribute to enterprises by aiding them in designing more effective cross-cultural training and communication mechanisms, enabling repatriated employees to integrate their overseas experiences into the organizational culture so as to reduce cultural conflicts and enhance the organization's learning capability. Third, the insights obtained from this study can help enterprises provide better support to repatriates, improving their long-term job satisfaction and enhancing their retention, allowing them to become key drivers of the enterprise's internationalization strategy. Multinational enterprises should shift their expatriate management strategy from cross-cultural management to knowledge management, re-evaluate the value of repatriates, and recognize that the knowledge they transfer to the parent company is a valuable and difficult-to-replicate resource. By doing so, they can increase repatriates' intention to transfer knowledge and fully leverage their expertise and potential. In addition to knowledge transfer to the home country, multinational enterprises can also use the knowledge of repatriates to train future expatriates. The difficulties and setbacks encountered by repatriates during their international assignments, as well as the lessons they have learned in overcoming these challenges, can significantly help future expatriates reduce initial adaptation difficulties and shorten their adjustment period during expatriation, thereby enhancing their work efficiency during their expatriate assignments.

### **1.6.3 Innovations of this study**

This study introduces several key innovations:

(1) In the context of economic globalization, knowledge flow and transfer in multinational enterprises have always been the focus of academic and practical circles. Previous research on knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises has primarily focused on knowledge transfer between parent and subsidiary companies, regarding them as the main actors of knowledge transfer. These studies usually take the perspective of the organizational level and explore how to promote the dissemination and application of knowledge within multinational enterprises through strategic planning and organizational structure design. However, this macro perspective often ignores the role of individuals in the process of knowledge transfer, especially the key

group of repatriates. This study shifts the focus to the individual level by examining the knowledge transfer behavior of repatriates within multinational enterprises. As a bridge between multinational enterprises' parent companies and subsidiaries, repatriates not only possess valuable knowledge and experience of the host country market, but also hold a unique cross-cultural perspective. Their knowledge transfer behavior is of great significance to the global operation and competitiveness enhancement of multinational enterprises.

(2) The current research on repatriation in multinational enterprises has largely concentrated on repatriates' adaptation and adjustment, focusing on how to help repatriates reintegrate into the parent company's culture and work environment. However, limited attention has been paid to the critical role of repatriates in cross-border knowledge transfer. Repatriates not only need to adapt to the environment of the parent company, but also need to effectively transfer their knowledge and experience accumulated in the host country back to the parent company to promote the knowledge updating and innovation ability of the parent company. This study takes repatriates in multinational enterprises as the main research subject, focusing on the factors influencing their knowledge transfer behavior and the mechanisms underlying these effects. Through in-depth analysis of repatriates' psychological states and work behaviors after repatriation, this study constructs a comprehensive model of influencing factors of repatriate knowledge transfer. This multi-dimensional analysis enables a more comprehensive understanding of the key factors that affect repatriate knowledge transfer behavior.

(3) Unlike previous studies that adopt a macro perspective on knowledge transfer and repatriation adjustment in multinational enterprises, this study aims to explore the underlying causes of individual behavior by focusing on the micro-level psychological states of individual repatriates. Through an in-depth analysis of their psychological states and behavioral motivations, this study enables a more accurate understanding of the internal mechanism of their knowledge transfer behavior. Considering both the psychological states of repatriates and their job characteristics after repatriation, this study constructs a model of factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises and empirically validates the model.

(4) In constructing the model of factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer, this study introduces the concept of congruence in perceived organizational support, which refers to whether repatriates perceive congruent organizational support in the host country and the home company. This congruence has an important impact on the knowledge transfer behavior of repatriates. Repatriates are more likely to actively engage in knowledge transfer if they perceive a high level of organizational support in both the host country and the parent company. Conversely, if there is a large difference in their perceived organizational support in these two

environments, it may hinder their knowledge transfer behavior. Additionally, this study incorporates perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement as moderators to examine their moderation effects in the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

Through empirical analysis, this study validates the constructed model of influencing factors of repatriate knowledge transfer. These findings not only enrich the research on repatriate knowledge transfer, but also provide a new perspective and practical guidance for multinational enterprises' human resource management practice.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

This study consists of five chapters, and the details are as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter one presents the practical and theoretical background of the research topic, outlining the research questions, objectives, significance, research methods, and research framework.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Research Hypotheses**

Chapter two starts with reviewing the literature on repatriate knowledge transfer, summarizing the key findings and main conclusions from both Chinese and international studies. Then, it reviews existing research on perceived organizational support. That is followed by a review of the theories and studies related to job embeddedness, psychological entitlement, and perceived person-job fit, covering the definitions and connotations of the variables, the theoretical foundations and measurement methods, the influencing factors and outcome variables, and the primary research topics. Based on the literature review, this study draws on social exchange theory and psychological contract theory to analyze the relationships between congruence in perceived organizational support, job embeddedness, and repatriate knowledge transfer, leading to the proposal of corresponding research hypotheses and the development of a theoretical model. In this model, congruence in perceived organizational support is incorporated as the independent variable, job embeddedness as the mediator, psychological entitlement and perceived person-job fit as moderators, and repatriate knowledge transfer as the dependent variable. That results in a novel research framework.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

Chapter three details the empirical research design, scale development, data collection process, sampling method, descriptive statistical analysis, reliability and validity testing,

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and correlation analysis. In this study, data were collected through a questionnaire survey. Small-scale interviews and a pilot study were first conducted, and the questionnaire content was revised based on the results, leading to the development of the final questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed via the author's social network to expatriates working in a large multinational construction enterprise, aiming to collect relevant data and information for testing the research hypothesis and the theoretical model. The collected sample was then processed and screened to ensure data quality, laying the groundwork for subsequent hypothesis testing and statistical analysis.

#### Chapter 4: Results

Using statistical software such as SPSS, AMOS, and Mplus, chapter four conducts relevant statistical analyses on valid sample. Regression analysis, response surface analysis, mediation effect testing, and moderation effect testing are employed to examine the research hypotheses and validate the theoretical model. In addition, potential reasons for any unsupported hypotheses are analyzed, and key conclusions of the study are drawn.

#### Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter five discusses and analyzes the empirical research findings. By comparing the findings of this study and the literature, it analyzes the mechanisms through which congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support affects repatriation adjustment and repatriate knowledge transfer. Both common and unique issues observed in the research are analyzed. The chapter also presents this study's theoretical contributions and practical implications, points out its limitations, and suggests directions for future research. Finally, constructive recommendations are provided for multinational enterprises on improving repatriation management, followed by conclusions of this study.

This chapter first introduces the research background and practical significance of this study, highlighting the necessity of studying the factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Then, through a literature view, by analyzing the status quo of the current research on repatriate knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises both in China and internationally, this chapter identifies the research gaps in terms of theoretical construction, empirical research, and practical applicability, establishing the research focus of this study—namely, to explore the underlying causes of individual behavior by examining the psychological states of individuals at the micro level. This approach aims to provide more targeted theoretical support and managerial implications for repatriate knowledge transfer in multinational enterprises. Finally, based on the defined research content, an overall research design and framework was established, serving as a clear



guide for the in-depth exploration in the subsequent chapters, thereby ensuring the systematicity and coherence of the research.

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## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Research Hypotheses**

This chapter reviews relevant studies on the key variables involved in this research and introduces the main theories that this study draws on. It primarily covers the definitions and core connotations of repatriate knowledge transfer, perceived organizational support, job embeddedness, person-job fit, and psychological entitlement. Additionally, it reviews the literature on related antecedent and outcome variables, summarizes the measurement methods, and points out the limitations of existing research, highlighting the significance of this study.

### **2.1 Repatriate knowledge transfer**

#### **2.1.1 Concept and connotation of repatriate knowledge transfer**

In the context of expatriation, expatriates are often regarded as agents facilitating knowledge transfer from headquarters to overseas subsidiaries (Peltokorpi et al., 2022). However, during their expatriate assignments, they also acquire knowledge relevant to these subsidiaries, such as host-country market dynamics, local customs and traditions, and expertise in establishing local business connections (Chang et al., 2012). If expatriates transfer these valuable knowledge and experiences back to headquarters upon repatriation, it will enrich the enterprise's knowledge repository, significantly enhancing its multinational operations. Generally, repatriate knowledge transfer refers to the process through which repatriates transmit the knowledge, experiences, and skills accumulated while working and living in the host country back to the parent company (Froese et al., 2021).

According to Antal (2000), the knowledge expatriates acquire during their international assignments primarily includes the following types:

##### **(1) Host-country market knowledge**

Knowledge about the market in the host country is essential for an international enterprise to operate successfully in that specific market. During their assignment in the host country, expatriates have the opportunity to gain in-depth exposure to and understanding of the local market, thereby acquiring valuable market-specific knowledge (Johanson et al., 2020). They also need to become familiar with the local language to facilitate their communication with local clients, partners, and employees; understand local customs and traditions to avoid cultural

conflicts that may hinder business operations; and learn about local business practices so as to develop marketing strategies and management plans that align with the characteristics of that market. This type of knowledge is relatively easy to codify and transfer to colleagues (E. Smith, 2001). Once organized into documentation or shared through training sessions, it can help the entire team quickly become acquainted with the host country's market, laying a solid foundation for the long-term and stable development of the multinational enterprise in that market (Antal, 2000).

## (2) Managerial skills

Since expatriates often assume managerial roles in host-country subsidiaries, their job-related managerial competencies can be enhanced during expatriation. They need to communicate with team members from diverse cultural backgrounds, which continuously enhances their communication skills and helps them learn how to convey information clearly and accurately in cross-cultural settings, while also improving their ability to listen to and understand others' perspectives (D. Wang et al., 2017). Moreover, the uncertainty and complexity of the overseas work environment make them more composed and experienced in dealing with unexpected issues, enabling them to make prompt decisions and take effective actions to resolve problems (Toh & DeNisi, 2005). Upon repatriation, they can apply these skills to the daily management of the parent company, thus improving the enterprise's overall management efficiency. However, these knowledge and skills are difficult to transfer to colleagues. As they are often developed through hands-on experience and practical engagement in specific overseas work contexts, it is challenging for other employees to fully acquire them through simple training sessions or verbal explanations (Kane et al., 2005).

## (3) Social networks in the host country

As expatriates need to interact with numerous local stakeholders during the overseas assignment, it allows them to establish extensive social networks in that country. They need to build trust with local clients and understand their needs in order to increase market share; they also need to communicate and coordinate with suppliers to ensure the stability and quality of raw material supply. In addition, expatriates must maintain good communication with local government authorities, industry associations, and other relevant entities to better understand local policies, regulations, and industry trends (S. Li & Scullion, 2010). The established networks include not only local clients and suppliers but also employees from subsidiary units (Andersson et al., 2005). At the same time, expatriates have the opportunity to expand their networks within the home country, as they serve as a link between the headquarters of the home company and the subsidiaries. They regularly report work progress to the parent company,

provide feedback on local market conditions, and convey the strategic intentions of the parent company to the subsidiary. Such social capital can be partially transferred (Wei et al., 2011). For example, repatriated employees can incorporate colleagues into their own social networks to maintain ongoing communication and collaboration; alternatively, they can leverage these connections to explore new business opportunities and introduce high-quality resources from the host country into the home market, thereby promoting the business development of the parent company.

#### (4) General management knowledge

During overseas assignments, expatriates often hold senior management positions, which require them to navigate complex and dynamic business environments and handle various challenging issues. They are responsible for key tasks such as formulating strategic plans, coordinating resource allocation, and supervising project implementation—responsibilities that go well beyond their prior experience (Too & Weaver, 2014). At the same time, they need to collaborate with colleagues across different departments and understand the needs and challenges of each department, so as to ensure the smooth overall operation of the enterprise. These cross-departmental communication and coordination skills not only can broaden their managerial perspective but also provide them with a better understanding of the overall operations of the enterprise (Johanson et al., 2020). However, such in-depth insights and experiences, acquired through hands-on practice, are often difficult to transfer to other colleagues simply through training or verbal explanations (Q. Yang & Bai, 2017). These valuable experiences and skills make repatriates strong candidates for higher-level management positions, providing strong talent support for the enterprise's development.

#### (5) Personal soft skills

Expatriates have the opportunity to develop and enhance their soft skills while carrying out international assignments. These soft skills encompass a wide range of aspects, typically including: cross-cultural competence, which enables them to better understand ways of thinking and behavioral norms across different cultural backgrounds; openness of mind, which allows them to embrace new ideas and perspectives; behavioral flexibility, which helps them swiftly adjust their behavioral strategies in complex and dynamic environments; increased self-confidence, which empowers them to face various challenges with greater assurance; and enhanced inclusiveness, which fosters respect for the differences of others (Marin-Zapata et al., 2022). This knowledge is tacit and challenging to transfer, as it stems from personal experience. Repatriates with strong soft skills serve as intangible assets for multinational enterprises (Sanchez-Vidal et al., 2018). They can bring these valuable experiences back to the parent

company, promoting multicultural communication and integration within the organization, enhancing the enterprise's overall competitiveness, and providing strong support for its expansion and operations in the global market (Antal, 2000).

### **2.1.2 Antecedents of repatriate knowledge transfer**

A comprehensive and systematic review of previous relevant literature reveals that the factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer are multifaceted, encompassing social factors, organizational factors, work unit factors, and individual factors. In addition, the characteristics of the transferred knowledge itself, such as the degree of tacitness and complexity, can also significantly affect the behavior of repatriate knowledge transfer.

#### **(1) Social factors**

Repatriates acquire valuable knowledge in the host country, including professional skills and managerial experience, and subsequently transfer it upon returning to the home country. This process is often influenced by the social environments of both the host and home countries (Crowne, 2009). Some scholars have suggested that social factors significantly impact the success of repatriate knowledge transfer. They conceptualize “institutional distance” in three dimensions—regulatory, normative, and cognitive institutions—to describe institutional differences between countries. According to these scholars, the institutional distance between the knowledge-exporting and knowledge-receiving countries strongly influences the success of knowledge transfer (Knocke & Schuster, 2017).

#### **(2) Organizational factors**

Repatriate knowledge transfer is influenced not only by social factors on the macro level but also by organizational factors on the micro level. These organizational factors include organizational structure, culture, and policies, as well as the top management team.

- **Organizational structure and culture**

The influence of organizational culture on repatriate knowledge transfer is mainly reflected in two aspects. On the one hand, whether the organization accepts and fosters innovation plays a critical role; the strength of a learning-oriented organizational culture directly affects the extent to which the “not-invented-here” syndrome can be overcome (Teigland et al., 2000). On the other hand, the repatriate knowledge transfer process is also influenced by the implicit screening criteria determined by the alignment between employees' and the organization's values (Santosh & Muthiah, 2012). In addition, the organizational structure also plays a role in repatriate knowledge transfer. Bureaucratic structures may lead to delays in knowledge

identification and obstacles to cross-departmental dissemination (Canestrino & Magliocca, 2010).

- Organizational policies

Organizational policies related to repatriate knowledge transfer encompass various aspects, including human resource management policies (Minbaeva et al., 2014), knowledge management mechanisms (Huang et al., 2014; J. Li et al., 2015), and incentives and rewards mechanisms for knowledge sharing (S. Lin & Lo, 2015). They also encompass knowledge transfer methods for tacit knowledge (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Organizational policies influence repatriate knowledge transfer primarily by affecting the motivation and capability of both the knowledge transferor and the recipient (Minbaeva et al., 2014). Previous research has found that most organizations lack knowledge-transfer-related repatriation support policies and instead offer only administrative support. Effective internal communication mechanisms and knowledge-related reporting systems have been shown to significantly facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer (Burmeister & Deller, 2016).

- Top management team

As the main actor for the organization's decision-making, the top management team greatly impacts various stages of knowledge transfer. Previous studies have indicated the critical role of the top management team in promoting repatriate knowledge transfer. They not only create platforms for knowledge exchange by building cross-departmental social networks but, more importantly, foster an organizational environment conducive to knowledge sharing from a strategic perspective (Crowne, 2009). Oddou et al. (2013) highlighted that the attention and encouragement from the management toward repatriate knowledge transfer can facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer; conversely, managers who lack a global mindset and personal international experience may hinder the success of repatriate knowledge transfer.

### (3) Work unit factors in home company

When expatriates complete their international assignments and return to their home country, their entrance into a specific work unit within the home company marks the beginning of the knowledge transfer process (Oddou et al., 2009). At this stage, successful knowledge transfer depends on the work unit's capability to learn and integrate the acquired knowledge by expatriates. In addition, leaders of these work units also play a crucial role in facilitating this process.

- Knowledge integration capability

The knowledge integration capability within the work unit essentially reflects its ability to contextually reconstruct knowledge. This dynamic adaptation process depends on three key

factors.

First is the learning orientation of the work unit, which forms the foundational condition for knowledge transformation. It is manifested in various aspects, such as a continuous pursuit of professional excellence, an open and inclusive attitude toward new ideas, moderate autonomy in decision making, an innovation-friendly atmosphere that tolerates errors, and a behavioral tendency toward exploration and experimentation (Gold et al., 2001). The higher the learning orientation of the work unit members, the greater the likelihood of knowledge transfer by repatriates.

Second is the absorptive capacity of the work unit, which refers to its ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply new external knowledge (Lane et al., 2006). More specifically, the effectiveness of the team's knowledge absorption mechanism depends on the completeness of institutional design. It requires both standardized knowledge management processes to ensure systematic knowledge transfer and informal communication networks to facilitate the transmission of tacit experiences. When a team possesses a well-established dual-track knowledge absorption system, it can significantly enhance the localization and adaptation of multinational experience.

Third is the work unit's motivation to accept knowledge. The acceptance of repatriate knowledge transfer primarily depends on the extent to which the work unit recognizes the importance of the knowledge brought back by repatriates and the level of its global mindset. Perceived knowledge importance refers to the extent to which members of the work unit recognize the value of knowledge that repatriates bring back. Research has shown a significant relationship between a work unit's motivation to acquire knowledge and the recognition of that knowledge (Kogut & Zander, 1995). Therefore, the higher the perceived importance of repatriates' knowledge, the greater the likelihood of successful repatriate knowledge transfer.

- Global mindset

A global mindset refers to the ability to think beyond a single country, culture, or context and to reasonably apply business rules across different countries, cultures, and contexts (Pearce, 2004). The higher the level of global mindset, the more likely the work unit will facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer.

- Role of leaders

Work unit leaders play a crucial role in the process of repatriate knowledge transfer. They not only need to recognize the strategic value of repatriates' knowledge, but also should create an open learning environment where externally acquired knowledge is accepted and valued. In addition, they must set explicit expectations for knowledge transfer and acceptance within the



work unit to foster an overall appreciation for repatriate knowledge transfer (Oddou et al., 2013). When leaders consistently emphasize the importance of multinational experience, team members are more likely to actively engage in knowledge sharing and integration. Moreover, different leadership styles can have differentiated effects. Research has shown that cooperative leadership, characterized by collaborative management, has a positive and significant impact on information sharing among employees (Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000; Politis, 2001). Therefore, the more prominent the collaborative leadership of the work unit leader, the greater the possibility of knowledge transfer by repatriates. In addition, empowering leadership has also been shown to facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer (Bucher et al., 2022).

#### (4) Individual factors of repatriates

During their overseas assignments, expatriates acquire a significant amount of knowledge, including the market characteristics of the host country and international business rules. This knowledge is often tacit and embedded, making it difficult for others (e.g., competitors) to imitate. Thus, it has great value for multinational enterprises (Burmeister et al., 2018). The transfer of such knowledge to the home company relies solely on repatriates. Therefore, the repatriates' capability and motivation to transfer knowledge can significantly influence the outcomes of knowledge transfer. Although some studies have described both capability and motivation factors under the term "repatriates' knowledge disseminative capacity" (Sanchez-Vidal et al., 2018), we will analyze the influence of these two types of factors separately in the following, hoping to provide a more refined understanding of their connotations.

- Knowledge transfer capability

Repatriates' knowledge transfer capability depends not only on personal traits (e.g., expertise and social networking ability) but also on job-related characteristics (e.g., job responsibilities and positional power).

Personal traits can significantly affect repatriate knowledge transfer, with expertise and social networking ability being the crucial factors. Previous studies have shown that knowledge transferors often can use their power to attract colleagues' attention to specific knowledge, thereby fostering effective transfer of knowledge (Abrams et al., 2003). The effectiveness of knowledge transfer by repatriates is closely related to their professional authority status. When these individuals accumulate profound expertise in specific fields, they naturally gain an expertise-based influence. The establishment of this "expert power" can significantly enhance the effectiveness of knowledge transfer.

In addition, social networks can facilitate knowledge flow and knowledge acquisition. Through a longitudinal study of German repatriates, Reiche (2012) found that repatriates'

structural social capital with host-unit staff and their relational social capital with host-unit staff jointly influenced the outcomes of knowledge transfer. The trust-based social networks established by expatriates in the host country can directly affect the outcomes of their knowledge transfer after repatriation.

Moreover, the job characteristics of repatriates within the organization also influence knowledge transfer capability. Through in-depth interviews with repatriates, previous research revealed that the power embedded in their new organizational roles after repatriation was significantly associated with knowledge transfer outcomes (Antal, 2000). The power embedded in formal positions helps draw others' attention to knowledge (Abrams et al., 2003). Therefore, the higher the positional power of repatriates, the more likely their knowledge can break through departmental boundaries and gain cross-functional attention and adoption (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984).

Furthermore, the greater the alignment of repatriates' knowledge and expertise with their job responsibilities upon repatriation, the more likely knowledge transfer will occur (Burmeister et al., 2020). In particular, when the job role upon repatriation is related to their international experience, the tacit knowledge they have acquired during overseas assignments is more likely to be fully utilized (Oddou et al., 2009). Thus, the higher the similarity between repatriates' job responsibilities in the host and home countries, the greater the likelihood of their knowledge transfer.

- Knowledge transfer motivation

The success of repatriate knowledge transfer essentially depends on repatriates' knowledge transfer motivation (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). This motivation is influenced by various factors.

Previous studies have shown that repatriation adjustment is the primary condition for stimulating knowledge transfer motivation. When repatriates return to their home country, if they can successfully overcome reverse culture shock and reintegrate into the organizational environment, they tend to have stronger intention to share knowledge (James, 2021). Newton et al. (2007) also showed that repatriation adjustment positively influenced expatriates' knowledge sharing behavior. A study of Japanese repatriates found that repatriates' successful adjustment to the environment in the home country would lead to higher levels of organizational identification and psychological security, and such positive psychological states lay a foundation for their motivation to transfer the knowledge acquired overseas (Furuya et al., 2007).

Career development expectations also profoundly influence the motivation for knowledge

transfer. When repatriates perceive clear promotion pathways and career rewards, their efforts toward knowledge transfer will significantly increase. The study of Abrams et al. (2003) suggested that if repatriates receive recognition, promotions, or other rewards upon repatriation, it can enhance their perception of the importance of their knowledge, making them more motivated to transfer knowledge. In addition, Lazarova and Tarique (2005) showed that clear career development commitments could significantly enhance the efficiency of knowledge transfer.

Repatriates may transfer knowledge not only due to external incentives but also for altruistic reasons (Ye, 2016). Research has shown that repatriates with a higher commitment to the organization are more proactive in transferring knowledge. This internal motivation stems from their higher levels of identification with the organization's values and stronger intention to align their personal development with the organization's long-term goals. Previous studies have found that some repatriates regard knowledge transfer as an integral part of their work upon repatriation (Antal, 2000). They may even perceive knowledge transfer as a responsibility that comes with being an outstanding organizational citizen (Oddou et al., 2013). Therefore, the level of repatriates' commitment to their work unit is significantly positively associated with the likelihood of their knowledge transfer.

Moreover, research has found that people naturally tend to be reluctant to share what they perceive as important and valuable knowledge (Caimo & Lomi, 2015). This phenomenon is referred to as knowledge hoarding (Santosh & Muthiah, 2012). This psychological tendency often stems from competitive motivations, manifesting as knowledge transferors' reluctance to share knowledge due to the consideration of personal interests. It may hinder repatriates from transferring knowledge to the home company and colleagues in their home country. Thus, the lower the repatriates' tendency toward knowledge hoarding, the greater the likelihood of their knowledge transfer after repatriation.

#### (5) Repatriates' relationship with colleagues

The knowledge transfer by repatriates is essentially a socialized interactive process, and its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of the relationship between the knowledge transferor and the recipient within the organizational context. Due to the influence by international work experience, repatriates often experience a certain degree of socio-psychological distance from their colleagues in the work unit. This distance may manifest in differences in values, work philosophies, or behavioral styles, creating invisible barriers to knowledge flow (Osland, 2000). According to social identity theory, being recognized as an in-group member helps an individual be perceived by other members as trustworthy, honest, loyal,

and valuable (Kane et al., 2005). As a result, knowledge transfer is more likely to occur when the transferor is considered an “in-group member”. However, given their international experience and distinctive status, repatriates are less likely to be regarded as “in-group members” by other members (Oddou et al., 2009). It is worth noting that this trust-building process is bidirectional. Without mutual trust, repatriates will be reluctant to share core knowledge, and the members of the work unit will also be unwilling to accept new ideas.

#### (6) Characteristics of the transferred knowledge

Under the influence of social and organizational factors, both repatriates and members in the work unit, as key actors in the knowledge transfer process, impact the process of knowledge transfer. At the same time, the characteristics of the knowledge itself also influence this process. Specifically, when knowledge lacks a clear definition or well-structured form (i.e., knowledge ambiguity), it will be difficult for the recipient to accurately understand and effectively utilize it; in addition, the unprovenness of knowledge also poses a significant obstacle. If the knowledge has not been validated through successful practical application, its credibility and reliability may be questioned, thereby substantially increasing the difficulty of knowledge transfer (Szulanski, 1996). Furthermore, the degree of tacitness in knowledge is one of the most significant influencing dimensions, with extensive research suggesting that tacit knowledge is more challenging to transfer than explicit knowledge (Huang et al., 2014; Teece, 1989). In addition, from the perspective of information dissemination, the alignment between the richness of the information dissemination mechanism and the degree of knowledge tacitness affects the acquisition and transfer of tacit knowledge (Subramaniam & Venkatraman, 2001). Therefore, the likelihood of knowledge transfer is negatively associated with the ambiguity, unprovenness, and tacitness of the knowledge to a certain extent.

### 2.1.3 Outcomes of repatriate knowledge transfer

Current research on repatriate knowledge transfer is still in its early stages. The existing research primarily focuses on exploring the factors that influence repatriate knowledge transfer, with relatively few studies examining its outcomes (Burmeister et al., 2015). In general, previous research only broadly suggested that repatriate knowledge transfer would benefit enterprises in developing competitive advantages (Antal, 2000; Fink et al., 2005). The limited literature analyzing the outcomes of repatriate knowledge transfer primarily considers two dimensions: the individual level and the enterprise level.

#### (1) Career development of repatriates

From the individual perspective, using semi-structured interviews and qualitative research

methods, Martins (2016) analyzed repatriates' behavior of transferring knowledge from the host country to the home company in the context of Portuguese multinational enterprises, as well as the outcomes. The study concluded that while knowledge transfer behavior generally has a significant positive influence on the career development of these repatriates, their career progression outcomes are affected by various factors. In some cases, repatriates may even experience a downgrade in position compared to their pre-expatriation roles.

## (2) Enterprise innovation and performance

Research at the organizational level has yielded more systematic findings. An empirical study by Chinese scholar J. Wang (2014) indicated that different types of knowledge had varying impacts on a company's innovation modes. In particular, tacit knowledge had a more effective effect on exploratory innovation, while explicit knowledge had a more significant effect on exploitative innovation. In addition, this complementary effect on innovation modes ultimately translated into significant performance improvements, confirming the conclusions of Anne Crowne (2009) regarding the value of knowledge related to international operations. Subsequent studies further quantified this impact—Breitenmoser et al. (2018) demonstrated that effective knowledge transfer could directly improve an enterprise's financial indicators through means such as supply chain optimization.

### **2.1.4 Dimensions and measurement of repatriate knowledge transfer**

Froese et al. (2021) developed a two-dimensional scale for measuring repatriate knowledge transfer, which includes task-oriented knowledge transfer and relationship-oriented knowledge transfer. The dimension of task-oriented knowledge transfer consists of four items: knowledge of the customs and traditions in the host country (e.g., traditional culture and national holidays), knowledge of the market in the host country (e.g., market structure, products, and customer needs), knowledge of work practices in the host country, and knowledge of the organizational structure and processes of the host country. The dimension of relationship-oriented knowledge transfer also comprises four items: understanding behavioral patterns of individuals from different cultures, understanding different ways of thinking, understanding cross-cultural work relationships, and understanding the relationship between the enterprises in host countries and the headquarters.

In recent years, research on repatriate knowledge transfer has emerged as a new focal point in the studies of human resource management and repatriation in multinational enterprises. Scholars have explored the factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer from multiple perspectives, achieving certain research advancements (Q. Yang & Bai, 2017). However, this

field remains in its early stages, with relatively limited research perspectives and findings. There is an urgent need for more in-depth investigations from diverse perspectives to better understand the process of repatriate knowledge transfer. Such research would provide valuable insights for multinational enterprises to more effectively manage repatriates and facilitate their knowledge transfer upon repatriation.

## **2.2 Perceived organizational support**

### **2.2.1 Definition and connotation of perceived organizational support**

Perceived organizational support (POS) originates from the organizational support theory (OST) and refers to employees' general perception of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This theory posits that employees infer the organization's level of appreciation for their contributions and concern for their well-being through various policies and management practices of the organization (e.g., family support programs and job autonomy). When employees perceive that the organization expresses care and appreciation for them, they tend to reciprocate with higher commitment, loyalty, and performance (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

The organizational support theory provides a clear and easily testable theoretical framework regarding the antecedents and outcomes of perceived organizational support, facilitating empirical validation of these distinctive hypotheses. This theory emphasizes that the relationship between the organization and employees is not a one-sided contribution and commitment by employees toward the organization but rather a mutual commitment and contribution between both parties (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Organizational support not only reflects the organization's care and recognition of employees but also demonstrates the organization's acknowledgment of employees' value, serving as an important job resource (Riggle et al., 2009).

### **2.2.2 Antecedents of perceived organizational support**

Existing studies have identified numerous factors influencing employees' perceived organizational support, including human resource practices, relationships between members within the organization, benefits, job conditions, job characteristics, and individuals' psychological and affective states, among others (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

(1) Human resource management practices

An organization's human resource management policies affect employees' perceptions of the organization, which in turn influences their level of perceived organizational support (Tremblay et al., 2010). For instance, human-resource-related factors such as compensation and benefits, selection and promotion, training and development, employee participation, and family support are regarded by employees as resources provided by the organization. Employees determine whether to contribute to the organization by making efforts based on their perceptions of these resources (Chen et al., 2009). Allen and Shanock (2013) posit that the organization's human resource practices, such as organizational socialization tactics, are regarded by employees as signs conveying the organization's level of concern for their well-being and thus, are significantly associated with employees' perceived organizational support. In addition, the study of Tremblay et al. (2010) revealed that developmental human resource practices (e.g., career opportunities, training and development, and performance evaluation) could significantly enhance employees' perceived organizational support, thereby fostering employees' extra-role performance.

(2) Members within the organization

The positive attitudes employees receive from other members of the organization (e.g., supervisors and coworkers) can enhance employees' positive perception of organizational support. Employees often personify the organization and view the members of the organization as the organization's representatives, leading them to associate organization members' role-related actions with the organization itself (Shoss et al., 2013). Among the organization members, the support from supervisors is most closely related to employees' perceived organizational support. As supervisors are often regarded as representatives of the organization, members of the organization are likely to interpret supervisors' attitudes toward them as indicative of the organization's level of support (Eisenberger et al., 2014). Current studies have shown that supervisor support can significantly enhance employees' perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). In addition, coworker support also has been shown to have a positive effect, though its impact is less pronounced compared to supervisor support (Tucker et al., 2008).

(3) Organizational climate

According to the organizational support theory, the organization's genuine respect for employees' contributions, concern for employees' welfare, and fair resource distribution all contribute to employees' increased perceived organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Among these factors, organizational justice is one of the most

closely related variables to perceived organizational support. Empirical research has shown that procedural justice, distributive justice, and outcome justice can all enhance employees' perceived organizational support (DeConinck, 2010; Loi et al., 2006; Moorman et al., 1998). Conversely, organizational politics—such as favoritism, a lack of transparency, and the presence of internal groups or factions—can influence the organization's policies and management practices. Such a political organizational climate may convey a message to employees that the organization is less concerned about their welfare, thereby reducing their perceived organizational support (Bergeron & Thompson, 2020; Kiewitz et al., 2009).

#### (4) Psychological contract

Research has shown that the fulfillment of psychological contracts by the organization can effectively enhance employees' perceived organizational support. Conversely, breaches of psychological contracts by the organization would weaken employees' perception of the organization's appreciation toward them (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005), leading to lower level of perceived organizational support. Furthermore, a high level of perceived organizational support can further accentuate the negative relationship between psychological contract breaches and job performance (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). In addition, the value congruence between employees and the organization is conducive to a higher level of perceived organizational support, whereas employees whose values are not aligned with the organization's values may experience lower levels of perceived organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

#### (5) Job conditions and work environment

Favorable job conditions and work environments can enhance employees' perceived organizational support, leading to their better job performance (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2010; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Tremblay et al. (2010) found that high-performance work system (HPWS) could enhance employees' perceived organizational support, and this impact would be accentuated as procedural justice increased; however, role stress would reduce employees' perceived organizational support (Stamper & Johlke, 2003). The research by Shoss et al. (2013) showed that abusive leadership of supervisors would lead to employees' lower levels of perceived organizational support. In addition, employees might partially attribute this abusive supervision to the organization's negative evaluation of them, and consequently, they would behave negatively toward the organization (e.g., deviance) while withholding their positive contributions toward the organization (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior). Moreover, job security has been shown to enhance employees' perceived organizational support (Rockstuhl et al., 2020).



(6) Other factors

Studies have shown that transformational leadership has a stronger positive impact on perceived organizational support compared to transactional leadership. That is because transformational leaders can make employees feel cared for through inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, thus enhancing employees' subjective well-being. In contrast, transactional leaders primarily use rewards to motivate subordinates' performance and corrective actions to prevent errors, focusing more on short-term transactions while conveying less positive valuation of employees (Kurtessis et al., 2017). The study of Eisenberger et al. (2010) revealed that high-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) could provide subordinates with essential and suitable resources, thereby significantly increasing employees' perceived organizational support.

Moreover, scholars have also explored the impact of culture on perceived organizational support. For instance, Rockstuhl et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis on perceived organizational support across 54 countries. From a social exchange perspective, the results indicated that perceived organizational support had stronger effects in Western cultures (i.e., individualism). That is because employees in these cultures are more likely to view themselves as independent and thus interpret their relationship with the organization in terms of reciprocity. However, from the social identity perspective, the results suggested that perceived organizational support had stronger effects in Eastern cultures (i.e., collectivism), as employees in these cultures are more likely to see themselves as interdependent and thus more inclined to view organizational support as identity-related cue.

### **2.2.3 Outcomes of perceived organizational support**

Existing studies have indicated that perceived organizational support can predict a range of positive attitudes and behaviors of employees, including positive psychological and emotional states, job performance (including in-role and extra-role performance), and other work-related outcomes (Riggle et al., 2009).

(1) Psychological and emotional states

Previous research has found that perceived organizational support can motivate employees to exhibit greater effort in work, adopt a more positive work attitude, and reduce their withdrawal attitudes (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Chou et al. (2012) found that nurses who perceived higher levels of organizational support were more satisfied with their work and experienced lower levels of emotional exhaustion. While emotional dissonance may increase employees' fatigue and disengagement, a higher level of perceived organizational support can

buffer these negative effects, thus fostering more positive emotions (e.g., happiness and well-being) among employees, alleviating their work-related stress, and increasing their job engagement, eventually enhancing their job and career satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

## (2) Work attitudes and behavior

The meta-analysis by Kurtessis et al. (2017) showed that perceived organizational support positively predicted employees' work engagement, affective commitment, normative commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, altruistic behavior, innovative behavior, proactive change behavior, and voice behavior. In addition, it could also hinder negative behaviors such as counterproductive work behavior (Shoss et al., 2013), job burnout, and turnover intention (Allen & Shanock, 2013).

Furthermore, the study by M. Edwards and Peccei (2010) revealed that perceived organizational support positively influenced organizational identification by shaping employees' self-concept (e.g., perceived insider identity and organization-based self-esteem). In terms of performance, perceived organizational support has been found to significantly positively affect employees' task performance, relational performance, and innovative performance (Chen et al., 2009; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012).

## (3) Organizational performance

Existing research has suggested a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and various organizational performance indicators (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For instance, perceived organizational support can indirectly enhance organizational performance by reducing employee turnover rates (Connelly et al., 2007), increasing employee work engagement (Kinnunen et al., 2008), and improving employees' service quality (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

### **2.2.4 Dimensions and measurement of perceived organizational support**

There has been extensive research on whether perceived organizational support is a unidimensional or multidimensional construct, but no consensus has been reached. At present, the academic community primarily adopts the unidimensional scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (2001) to measure perceived organizational support.

Some scholars have developed more specific organizational support scales tailored to particular contexts, such as organizational safety support (Tucker et al., 2008) and organizational environmental support (Lamm et al., 2015). Kraimer and Wayne (2004) proposed a three-dimensional construct of perceived organizational support in the context of expatriation, which includes three dimensions: adjustment perceived organizational support,

career perceived organizational support, and financial perceived organizational support. Their findings indicated that perceived organizational support significantly positively influenced expatriates' task performance, contextual performance, and intention to complete the assignments. In particular, perceived organizational financial support was measured through four items: "(Company) has taken care of me financially", "The financial incentives and allowances provided to me by (Company) are good", "I have received generous financial support from (Company)", and "I cannot complain about the financial benefits associated with my expatriate assignment". Career perceived organizational support was measured through four items, including "(Company) takes an interest in my career", "(Company) considers my goals when making decisions about my career", "(Company) keeps me informed about career opportunities available within the company", and "I feel that (Company) cares about my career development". Adjustment perceived organizational support was measured through the following four items: "(Company) has shown an interest in my family's the well-being", "(Company) has provided my family with enough assistance to help them adjust to the foreign country", "(Company) has provided me with many opportunities to ease the transition to the foreign country", and "Help is available within (Company) whenever I have questions or concerns about living in the foreign country".

Since this study focuses on the congruence in perceived organizational support experienced by repatriates during their expatriation and after repatriation, it emphasizes employees' overall perception of the organization's recognition of their contributions and concern about their well-being. Therefore, this study adopts the unidimensional construct of perceived organizational support and utilizes the scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (2001) for its measurement. This scale has been widely used by researchers studying perceived organizational support (K. Kim et al., 2016; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009; Rhoades et al., 2001) and has been empirically demonstrated to have good reliability and validity. Some sample items in the scale include: "The company takes pride in my accomplishments at work", "The organization really cares about my well-being", "The organization values my contribution to its well-being", "The organization strongly considers my goals and values", "The organization shows very little concern for me" (reverse-scored item), and "Help is available from the organization when I have a problem".

Although previous studies have revealed that perceived organizational support is positively associated with expatriates' adaptation to the host country and expatriate work (Kraimer et al., 2001), organizational commitment (Guzzo et al., 1994), and intention to continue expatriate assignments (Shaffer et al., 2012), and that expatriates' perception of the enterprise's supportive

management practices is positively related to their adaptation to the host country (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), research on whether and how perceived organizational support influences repatriate knowledge transfer remains limited.

In addition, after completing their expatriate assignments and returning to their home company, repatriates will face new work and life environments, requiring a process of adjustment. Due to differences in job responsibilities and work nature, their perceived organizational support may also differ. For instance, they may experience a lower level of perceived organizational support after repatriation compared to the expatriation period. Whether the congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support affects repatriate knowledge transfer, as well as the underlying mechanisms of this influence, needs further exploration.

## **2.3 Job embeddedness**

### **2.3.1 Definition and connotation of job embeddedness**

The concept of job embeddedness was first proposed by American psychologists Mitchell et al. (2001) to explain and predict organization members' voluntary turnover intention. The concept of job embeddedness encompasses the key factors related to the organization and community that retain employees in their job positions. These factors contribute to employees' embeddedness or attachment within their current positions, making them more likely to remain in the organization even when they experience low job satisfaction or are provided with alternative job opportunities (T. Lee et al., 2014). The concept of job embeddedness effectively expands the range of antecedents in traditional turnover models (Jiang et al., 2012), enriching the research on employees' voluntary turnover.

According to Mitchell et al. (2001), job embeddedness encompasses two dimensions: on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness. It describes the different attachment relationships individuals have with their organizations and communities. Both organizational and community factors of job embeddedness include three dimensions: links, fit, and sacrifice (Marasi et al., 2016).

- **Links**

Links refer to the formal and informal ties an individual has with others in the organization and community, such as employees' relationships with their supervisors or coworkers in the organization and individuals' connections with relatives or friends in the community.

- Fit

Fit describes the degree of compatibility and similarity between an individual and the organization or community environment. When employees feel that their interests, values, and career plans align well with the culture and atmosphere of the organization or community, they experience a higher level of fit.

- Sacrifice

Sacrifice refers to the cost of material and psychological benefits that an individual would incur if he/she leaves the organization or community. These may include economic benefits such as salaries, benefits, bonuses, and career development opportunities, psychological benefits such as harmonious relationships and social recognition, and development-related benefits such as status in the industry and expertise acquisition.

In summary, this theoretical framework innovatively breaks through the boundaries of traditional organizational behavior research by integrating the dual perspectives of organizational embeddedness and community embeddedness, thereby providing a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding employee retention mechanisms. Empirical studies have shown that when all three dimensions of embeddedness are at a high level, the likelihood of voluntary employee turnover decreases significantly. This finding offers valuable theoretical support for modern human resource management practices.

### **2.3.2 Antecedents of job embeddedness**

Compared to the extensive research on the outcomes of job embeddedness, academic studies on its antecedents remain relatively limited. Previous research primarily focuses on two aspects: individual characteristics and organizational factors.

Regarding individual characteristics, Mallol et al. (2007) found that in US enterprises, Hispanic employees demonstrated higher levels of job embeddedness compared to Caucasian employees. Qin et al. (2019), using migrant workers in Chinese enterprises as a sample, found that the closer the connections among migrant workers, the higher their job embeddedness and the lower their turnover intention.

In terms of organizational factors, Allen (2006), using newcomer employees as a sample, analyzed the impact of different organizational socialization tactics on employees' job embeddedness. The findings indicated that collective, fixed, and investiture socialization tactics were positively associated with newcomer employees' on-the-job embeddedness. Moreover, the results showed that job embeddedness mediated the relationship between organizational

socialization tactics and newcomer employee turnover. Building on this, Allen and Shanock (2013) further revealed that organizational socialization tactics could enhance newcomer employees' perceived organizational support and job embeddedness, both of which were positively associated with newcomer employees' organizational commitment and negatively associated with turnover intention. B. Singh et al. (2018) explored the antecedents of organizational and community embeddedness and found that perceived organizational support and psychological safety significantly positively affected employees' job embeddedness.

### **2.3.3 Outcomes of job embeddedness**

Existing research on the outcomes of job embeddedness is relatively extensive but has primarily focused on turnover, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Yuan & Chen, 2008). Studies on other potential outcomes remain limited and require further exploration.

#### **(1) Job embeddedness and turnover**

The concept of job embeddedness was initially proposed to explain employees' voluntary turnover. Therefore, most studies on the outcome variables of job embeddedness have focused on employee turnover. For instance, Mitchell et al. (2001), using samples from supermarket and hospital employees, found that job embeddedness could predict employee turnover after controlling for organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job alternatives, and job search. Subsequent studies further confirmed the predictive power of job embeddedness on employees' turnover intention and actual turnover behavior. For example, Mallol et al. (2007) found that traditional attitudinal variables such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction, as well as demographic variables, were far less effective in predicting employee turnover intention than job embeddedness. Through an analysis of data from four European countries, Tanova and Holtom (2008) found that job embeddedness was a stronger predictor of turnover behavior than job attitudes, job opportunities, and demographic variables. Even when job attitudes and job opportunities were not considered, employees' level of embeddedness in their current jobs still had a significant negative impact on their turnover behavior. A meta-analysis on job embeddedness by Jiang et al. (2012) revealed that both on-the-job embeddedness and off-the-job embeddedness negatively influenced employee turnover. Moreover, this effect exceeded the explanatory power of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on turnover, further highlighting the significance of job embeddedness in explaining employee turnover.

Previous studies have also found that the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intention is influenced by collectivist cultures. In particular, off-the-job embeddedness demonstrated a stronger negative impact on employees' turnover intention in collectivistic

countries than in individualistic countries (Jiang et al., 2012), whereas on-the-job embeddedness showed no significant difference across these two different cultures. In addition, in organizations with a higher proportion of female employees, off-the-job embeddedness demonstrated a stronger negative effect on employee turnover behavior (C. Yang et al., 2011).

#### (2) Job embeddedness and turnover contagion

Felps et al. (2009) examined the contagion effect of coworkers' job embeddedness on employees' turnover intention. After controlling for a few factors (e.g., coworkers' organizational commitment, coworkers' job satisfaction, department size, local unemployment rate, and employees' gender, race, age, tenure, work status, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job embeddedness), they found that coworkers' job embeddedness influenced individual's turnover behavior. This influence persisted even when employees were unaware of their coworkers' level of job embeddedness. The authors suggested that this relationship might be mediated through coworkers' observable job search behaviors, creating a turnover contagion effect. More specifically, with a better organizational climate, a higher level of job embeddedness among coworkers, and less employee turnover, individuals are less likely to develop turnover intention or engage in actual turnover behavior.

#### (3) Job embeddedness and work-related shocks

Mitchell and Lee (2001) proposed that job embeddedness could serve as a buffer against the impact of negative work-related shocks on employee turnover. This perspective was further empirically confirmed by Burton et al. (2010). These scholars found that employees' interpretation of work-related shocks was influenced by the information available in their surroundings. Specifically, employees tend to interpret work-related shocks based on social contextual cues. A higher level of job embeddedness enables employees to obtain useful information from the people and events in their surroundings, helping them to rationally interpret shocks and respond appropriately, thereby buffering the impact of these shocks on their turnover intention, making them more likely to remain committed to their work.

#### (4) Job embeddedness, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior

In addition to its impact on turnover intention and actual turnover behavior, existing research has also found that job embeddedness significantly affects other important outcome variables (e.g., job performance and organizational citizenship behavior). Previous studies have shown that, after controlling for other relevant variables, employees with a higher level of job embeddedness tend to exhibit better job performance and engage in more organizational citizenship behavior (T. Lee et al., 2004). This is because a higher level of job embeddedness provides employees with more resources, allowing them to invest greater work effort, which in

turn enhances their job performance and organizational citizenship behavior.

(5) Job embeddedness and innovative behavior

Ng and Feldman (2010) found that job embeddedness positively predicted innovation-related behaviors, and this relationship was not influenced by demographic or attitudinal variables. Furthermore, job embeddedness was found to significantly positively affect the dissemination of innovation and the implementation of new ideas. These results suggest that a higher level of job embeddedness can enhance the dissemination of innovation knowledge and facilitate the ease of innovation implementation, thereby fostering innovative behaviors within the organization.

(6) Negative outcomes of job embeddedness

Ng and Feldman (2012) showed that both organizational embeddedness and community embeddedness significantly positively affected the occurrence of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, with this relationship being more pronounced among individuals with a stronger inclination toward individualism. Marasi et al. (2016) found that job embeddedness significantly moderated the negative relationship between organizational trust and workplace deviance. More specifically, employees with a low level of organizational trust and a high level of job embeddedness were more likely to engage in workplace deviance compared to those experiencing low organizational trust and low job embeddedness.

Previous studies on job embeddedness have primarily focused on its positive outcomes. However, research on its potential negative outcomes contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of job embeddedness. The finding suggest that organizations should carefully balance the level of job embeddedness among employees, as higher levels do not necessarily lead to better outcomes.

(7) Job embeddedness and repatriation

Some scholars have introduced job embeddedness into research on expatriates, yielding meaningful insights. For instance, Kraimer et al. (2012) found an effective explanatory power of job embeddedness on repatriate turnover and differentiated between job embeddedness during expatriation and job embeddedness after repatriation. Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) studied how and why expatriate professionals self-initiate repatriation. Based on a survey of 546 expatriates, they found that host-country “pull” (weak embeddedness), home-country “pull”, and shocks influenced host-country dissatisfaction, repatriation intention, job search behavior, and actual repatriation among employees. They further revealed that career embeddedness and community embeddedness significantly affected host-country dissatisfaction and repatriation intention. In addition, shocks significantly impacted employees’



host-country dissatisfaction, repatriation intention, job search behavior, and actual repatriation.

Kraimer et al. (2012), in a study of 112 repatriates from different countries, found that after controlling for factors such as time since repatriation, recruitment strategies, cultural distance between the home and host countries, the number of international assignments, and the duration of the most recent assignment, expatriates' community embeddedness was positively related to the strength of their identity as an international employee, whereas organizational embeddedness was not significantly related to their international employee identity. Furthermore, Froese et al. (2021) found that both host-country job embeddedness fit and home-country headquarters job embeddedness fit positively influenced repatriate knowledge transfer.

### **2.3.4 Dimensions and measurement of job embeddedness**

Currently, scholars primarily use two types of measurement scales for job embeddedness.

The first is a causal indicator model developed by Mitchell et al. (2001) based on the theoretical background of job embeddedness. This model measures an individual's various links, fits, and sacrifices (the difficulty of leaving the current job) within and outside the organization to reflect their level of embeddedness in different domains. For example, the item "I feel like I am a good match for this company" measures the fit dimension of organizational embeddedness; the item "How many coworkers do you interact with regularly" measures the links dimension of organizational embeddedness; and "The benefits are good on this job" measures the organization-related sacrifice. However, unlike traditional reflective measurement models, the causal indicator model has a limitation: the latent variable cannot determine all measurement items (Mallol et al., 2007). In other words, a high level of job embeddedness does not necessarily mean that an individual has more links within and outside the organization; rather, it is a reverse causal relationship, where the aggregation of links within and outside the organization determines an individual's level of job embeddedness. As a result, it is difficult to verify the reliability and validity of this measurement model using conventional psychological measurement methods, posing challenges for research applying this model.

The second is a seven-item scale developed by Crossley et al. (2007) based on the scale of Mitchell et al. (2001). It is a reflective measurement scale and can be tested using conventional psychological measurement methods. Examples of items include: "I feel attached to this organization", "I am too caught up in this organization to leave", "I feel tied to this organization", and "It would be difficult for me to leave this organization". With a significantly reduced number of measurement items, this scale is more concise and easier to use, allowing for a quick assessment and overall understanding of employees' job embeddedness. However,

its limitation lies in that it is not able to measure specific dimensions, such as links to the organization.

The measurement approach proposed by Mitchell et al. (2001) captures the impact of embeddedness in different domains on employee turnover and allows for appropriate adjustments to measurement items according to specific organizational contexts. Some scholars argued that the advantages and disadvantages of these two measurement methods require further validation and comparison in the future. However, researchers can select the appropriate method depending on the research focus (Reitz & Anderson, 2011).

Since the proposal of job embeddedness theory, scholars have conducted extensive and in-depth exploration on the topic both in China and internationally, yielding a substantial body of research findings. However, existing studies have primarily focused on job embeddedness in the context of employee turnover, with outcome variables predominantly centered on turnover intention and actual turnover behavior. The limited research on other outcome variables limits a thorough understanding of the connotation of job embeddedness. As a result, some scholars have called for further exploration of the impact of job embeddedness on other employee behaviors (T. Lee et al., 2014). In response to this research gap, this study aims to incorporate job embeddedness into the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer to examine its mediating effect. This not only contributes to expanding the research on job embeddedness by considering outcome variables beyond turnover but also provides a new perspective for future studies on the antecedents of job embeddedness.

## **2.4 Person-job fit**

### **2.4.1 Definition and connotation of person-job fit**

Person-job fit (P-J fit) is an important component of the person-environment fit (P-E fit) theory. Person-environment fit refers to the degree of congruence or adaptability between an employee's individual characteristics and their work environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). It encompasses various aspects, including person-organization fit (P-O fit), person-supervisor fit (P-S fit), and person-job fit (P-J fit), among which, person-job fit has received significant attention from scholars.

Person-job fit, also referred to as person-position fit, describes the alignment between an employee's knowledge, skills, and experience with job demands, as well as the extent to which

an employee's expectations align with the compensation, welfare, and benefits provided by the job position (Bui et al., 2017). When the conditions offered by a job align with an employee's personal preferences, it indicates that the job can fully meet the individual's needs; when an employee's capabilities match the job demands, it signifies that the individual is fully competent for the job (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

According to the literature, person-job fit can be classified into two types: complementary fit and supplementary fit. Supplementary fit reflects the degree of similarity between individuals and their environment, namely, the extent to which employees resemble their organizational context; in contrast, complementary fit highlights how an individual's characteristics supplement the job (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Complementary fit can be further divided into demands-abilities fit (D-A fit) and needs-supplies fit (N-S fit) (J. Edwards, 1996). Building on research related to complementary fit, some scholars have further explored person-job fit from the perspective of supplementary fit. Considering the alignment between employees' individual cognitions and their job tasks, some scholars have proposed the concept of self-concept-job fit (SC-J fit), suggesting that person-job fit consists of demands-abilities fit (D-A fit), needs-supplies fit (N-S fit), and self-concept-job fit (SC-J fit) (Scroggins, 2007). Self-concept-job fit refers to the degree of alignment between an employee's self-perception and the characteristics of their job, representing the congruence between an individual's perceived real self and their expected self.

Although these scholars emphasize different aspects of person-job fit, their perspectives are fundamentally consistent. This study adopts the definition of person-job fit in J. Edwards (1996), which refers to the degree of match between an individual's knowledge, skills, and experience with the characteristics of their job position.

#### **2.4.2 Antecedents of person-job fit**

At present, research on the antecedents of person-job fit remains insufficient, requiring further in-depth exploration.

##### **(1) Organizational factors**

- Organizational climate

Organizational climate has great influence on individuals' perception of person-job fit. A favorable organizational climate not only positively influences individuals' career choices, job satisfaction, and job performance (Downey et al., 1975), but also can improve work efficiency. Moreover, a favorable organizational climate can attract individuals who align with its

characteristics, while individuals also tend to choose workplaces with an organizational climate they prefer in order to achieve better person-job fit.

- Leadership style

Since managers within organizations exhibit different personalities, experiences, and behavioral preferences, leadership styles often vary significantly across organizations and even among different departments within the same organization. These differences can influence employees' perceptions of person-job fit. For example, autocratic leadership tends to reduce employees' perception of person-job fit (Boon & Biron, 2016), whereas supportive leadership helps employees align with their work, thereby promoting person-job fit (Chi & Pan, 2012). Moreover, the research by Choi et al. (2017) revealed that inclusive leadership positively influenced employees' perceived person-job fit.

- Human resource management practices

An organization's human resource management practices directly impact person-job fit (Boon et al., 2011). For instance, during job analysis, human resource departments must systematically assess the characteristics, work content, responsibilities, and environmental factors for each job position, along with the competencies required of employees, to determine the most suitable candidates for each position. In addition, organizations should also ensure fairness in compensation structures and provide appropriate job training to improve person-job fit. The study of Tseng and Yu (2016) revealed that employees' perceived organizational support could significantly enhance their perceived person-job fit.

## (2) Individual characteristics

Since person-job fit is a subjective perception, it is influenced by individual factors such as emotional experiences. Moreover, individuals' distinctive characteristics, such as personality, abilities, values, and work experience, can also affect their perception of person-job fit.

The study of Ehrhart (2006) revealed that employees' extraversion personality traits could effectively predict their perceived person-job fit. Saks and Ashforth (2002) found that employees' self-efficacy was significantly associated with their perception of person-job fit. In addition, employees' competencies—such as professional knowledge, industry experience, and personal skills—positively influenced their perceived person-job fit (Van Vianen, 2018). Furthermore, employees' personal experiences and work histories may also impact their perceived person-job fit. When employees have prior experience in a specific job position, they can adapt more quickly to job demands, leading to a higher level of perceived person-job fit.

### **2.4.3 Outcomes of person-job fit**

Current research on the outcomes of person-job fit primarily focuses on two aspects: work attitudes and work behaviors.

- Work attitudes

When individuals have a higher degree of fit with their jobs, their various needs tend to be met, making them more likely to be engaged in their work and develop a positive attitude toward their job. Previous studies have found that person-job fit has a significant positive impact on employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workplace well-being (Boon et al., 2011; Y. Peng & Mao, 2015). Conversely, when individuals have a lower level of person-job fit, they may experience negative emotions, which may lead to decreased motivation at work, thus increasing job burnout and eventually resulting in thoughts of leaving their current positions. The study of Covella et al. (2017) showed that person-job fit was conducive to reduced work stress and turnover intention among employees.

- Work behaviors

Current research has shown that person-job fit is significantly positively associated with a range of positive work behaviors (Yu & Davis, 2016). In particular, individuals who perceive a higher level of person-job fit tend to exhibit greater work efficiency and job performance. Qi et al. (2023) found that person-job fit also positively influenced employees' innovative behaviors. Research by Enwereuzor et al. (2016) showed that person-job fit could significantly enhance employees' work engagement. Additionally, Y. Lin et al. (2014) revealed a significant positive impact of person-job fit on job performance. However, some scholars argued that while person-job fit could influence employee turnover rates to some extent, it did not have a significant positive impact on job performance, suggesting further in-depth investigation on this topic (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

### **2.4.4 Dimensions and measurement of person-job fit**

The measurement of person-job fit primarily includes two approaches: direct measurement and indirect measurement. Direct measurement involves asking respondents about their perceived fit with their current job, while indirect measurement evaluates the actual level of person-job fit by using methods such as difference analysis and correlation analysis. Although indirect measurement may yield more objective results, its limitation lies in its inability to capture the subjective nature of person-job fit. Consequently, at present, scholars mainly rely on direct measurement methods for person-job fit.

The commonly used measurement scales in previous studies include the following three:

(1) The five-item scale developed by Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) based on the definition of person-job fit incorporates employees' personality traits and job characteristics. Example items include "My personality is a good match for this job" and "I am the right type of person for this type of work".

(2) This six-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) was based on the two dimensions of person-job fit: demands-abilities (D-A) fit and needs-supplies (N-S) fit. The scale includes three items for each dimension. Example items include "The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills" and "The job that I currently hold gives me just about everything that I want from a job".

(3) The three-item scale developed by R. Singh and Greenhaus (2004) was based on the definition of person-job fit by J. Edwards (1996). The scale assesses the degree of fit between individual employees' abilities, knowledge, and skills with job requirements. Example items include "I fit in well to my work environment" and "The requirements of my new job match my specific talents and skills".

The impact of person-job fit regarding on employees' work attitudes and behaviors has received extensive attention from scholars, leading to a wealth of relevant research findings. In recent years, person-job fit has primarily been treated as a moderator in exploring employee and organizational behaviors in person-job fit contexts. This study posits that, as expatriates tend to assume new job roles upon repatriation, due to the extensive international knowledge and management experience accumulated during their expatriation, they may experience a perception of a misfit in their new positions, which could subsequently influence their work attitudes and behaviors after repatriation. Therefore, this study will examine the moderating effect of person-job fit on the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

## **2.5 Psychological entitlement**

### **2.5.1 Definition and connotation of psychological entitlement**

Psychological entitlement was initially regarded as a characteristic of narcissistic personality rather than an independent psychological construct (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). However, with the expansion of research by Campbell et al. (2004), psychological entitlement gradually evolved into a well-defined, independent concept.

Specifically, psychological entitlement was defined as an individual's subjective belief that he or she deserves more and has the right to receive preferential treatment compared to others.

Naumann et al. (2002) were the first to define psychological entitlement in the workplace, describing it as employees' compensation expectations based on the employment relationship. These scholars emphasized that such expectations are rooted more in a psychological contract than in actual performance. Harvey and Martinko (2009) further advanced this perspective, believing that workplace psychological entitlement reflects an employee's inner desire for special treatment and rewards, without consideration of their actual performance.

In recent years, as research on psychological entitlement has advanced, scholars have begun to pay attention to context-specific psychological entitlement and have proposed related concepts in specific domains, such as academic entitlement, workplace entitlement, and consumer entitlement (Gao et al., 2019). Researchers across various disciplines have conducted targeted research on the phenomenon of entitlement, developing its distinct theoretical definitions within their respective fields. In the field of education, Barton and Hirsch (2016) proposed the concept of academic entitlement to describe two typical psychological tendencies among students: 1) an unreasonable expectation regarding academic performance and 2) excessively high demands on the quality of services provided by educational institutions. In the consumer behavior domain, Boyd III and Helms (2005) defined the concept of consumer entitlement, referring it as a psychological state in which consumers expect to receive special treatment beyond standard service during the consuming process and perceive themselves as privileged customers. In organizational management, Naumann et al. (2002) focused on the workplace and explicitly defined employees' psychological entitlement as an employee's special expectation regarding compensation and benefits, formed not on the basis of actual job performance, but rather stemming from the psychological contract within the employment relationship. Such entitlement perceptions are often rooted in the social environment and organizational culture and climate, rather than in objective assessments of ability or performance.

### **2.5.2 Antecedents of psychological entitlement**

Where does an individual's psychological entitlement originate? What causes and factors contribute to its emergence? These were among the earliest questions explored in the research on psychological entitlement (Lessard et al., 2011; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). Psychological entitlement, as an acquired form of an individual's subjective cognitive biases, is influenced by multiple factors (Sun et al., 2022). Current research has indicated that it may develop through

reinforcement during an individual's growth or be influenced by the roles they assume. Given the significant role of psychological entitlement in fostering undesirable behaviors, scholars generally believe that it is necessary to systematically explore its concept, formation mechanism, and influence paths so as to lay the theoretical groundwork for potential interventions that may help mitigate such behaviors when necessary (Bai et al., 2017).

(1) Situational factors

- Life experiences

Clinical psychologists have found a significant association between unpleasant life experiences and psychological entitlement. Freud (1916) was among the first to observe that individuals who experienced poverty during childhood were likely to believe they were entitled to avoid hardships later in life. Subsequently, it was found that unpleasant life experiences, such as single-parent households (Bishop & Lane, 2000) and disabilities (D. Li & Moore, 2001), can reinforce this psychological tendency. Moreover, when individuals perceive unfair treatment (e.g., they have not received the respect or rewards that they believe they deserve), they will develop a sense of grievance, leading to grievance-triggered psychological entitlement (Miller, 2001). This psychological mechanism often creates a vicious cycle: unmet expectations will increase individuals' sense of grievance, further reinforcing their psychological entitlement (Harvey & Martinko, 2009; Zitek et al., 2010).

- Parenting styles

Parenting styles can also influence individuals' psychological entitlement. Research has shown that unfavorable parenting environments such as parental discord, parental rejection, and overindulgence can all contribute to heightened psychological entitlement. From the perspective of attachment, individuals who fail to establish strong attachment bonds with their parents during infancy may develop higher levels of psychological entitlement in adulthood (Rothman & Steil, 2012).

- Socioeconomic status

Numerous empirical studies have found that higher socioeconomic status is associated with higher levels of psychological entitlement (Kraus et al., 2012; Piff et al., 2010). That is because individuals with advantageous socioeconomic status are more focused on their own interests (Piff, 2014) and are generally more narcissistic (Cai et al., 2012). Conversely, individuals with lower socioeconomic status tend to exhibit stronger interdependence, leading to reduced psychological entitlement (Piff et al., 2012). It is worth noting that subjective perceptions of wealth exert a more direct influence on psychological entitlement than objective economic status (Piff, 2014).



- Domain-specific situational factors

Researchers have also explored domain-specific situational factors affecting psychological entitlement. For instance, certain organizational environment characteristics can trigger employees' psychological entitlement. Newman et al. (2016) found that rank-based competitive compensation schemes, ability-based task design, and overly lenient performance evaluations can accentuate this psychological tendency (Newman et al., 2016).

In the education sector, authoritarian or permissive parenting styles (Barton & Hirsch, 2016) and educational evaluation systems that prioritize student feedback (Greenberger et al., 2008) may all lead to students' higher levels of psychological entitlement levels.

(2) Individual factors

Individual factors influencing psychological entitlement primarily include self-compassion, subjective construction, and egalitarian values.

- Self-compassion

The concept of self-compassion proposed by (Neff, 2003), which includes dimensions such as mindfulness and self-kindness, is intricately associated with psychological entitlement. Sahranc (2015), using a sample of 331 university students in Turkey, found that self-compassion explained 28% of the variance in psychological entitlement. In particular, dimensions such as over-identification were found to be positively associated with psychological entitlement, whereas dimensions such as mindfulness were negatively related to psychological entitlement.

- Subjective construction

Moreover, individuals' subjective construction of life experiences also affects their psychological entitlement levels. Previous research suggested that among individuals with comparable life experiences, those who subjectively perceived themselves as being wronged tended to exhibit higher levels of psychological entitlement (D. Li & Moore, 2001; Zitek et al., 2010).

- Egalitarian values

Moreover, reinforcing egalitarian values can effectively reduce individuals' psychological entitlement levels. An experimental study showed that activating egalitarian values could significantly lower individuals' levels of psychological entitlement (Piff, 2014).

### **2.5.3 Outcomes of psychological entitlement**

(1) Personality traits, individual behavior, and interpersonal relationships

Generally, the higher an individual's level of psychological entitlement, the greater their

expectations for resources, making them less likely to feel satisfied. Research has found that individuals with higher levels of psychological entitlement tend to believe their needs are more important than those of others (Lessard et al., 2011) and feel that they should receive more resources than others, regardless of their efforts (Zitek et al., 2010). These tendencies are associated with certain maladaptive personality traits in individuals and can trigger negative behaviors, leading to various interpersonal problems.

In previous studies, psychological entitlement, as a distorted form of self-perception, has been consistently found to be closely associated with various negative personality traits. Empirical evidence has shown that individuals with higher levels of psychological entitlement tend to exhibit distrust of others, low agreeableness (Pryor et al., 2008), a lack of self-control (Raskin & Terry, 1988), and a lack of empathy (Ackerman et al., 2011), among others. This combination of personality traits makes individuals more likely to engage in unethical behaviors (Laird et al., 2015), show selfishness (Zitek et al., 2010), and may even exhibit aggression (Campbell et al., 2004), and exploitativeness (Campbell, 1999).

The impact of psychological entitlement is even more pronounced in the field of organizational management. Research has found that corporate leaders with high levels of psychological entitlement tend to believe they deserve high salaries and bonuses, and this distorted self-perception may make them resort to inappropriate or even illegal means to obtain personal interests (Harvey & Martinko, 2009; Levine, 2005). In addition, they tend to attribute positive outcomes to their own capabilities and efforts, while attributing negative outcomes to external factors (Exline et al., 2004). This cognitive mode may lead to interpersonal difficulties as they are less inclined to forgive others or proactively repair broken personal relationships and are more likely to trigger conflicts with their supervisors (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011), thus negatively influencing organizational climate.

## (2) Subjective experiences

From the perspective of subjective experiences, psychological entitlement creates a paradoxical state of self-perception. Although individuals with high levels of psychological entitlement tend to possess a positive self-schema (Naumann et al., 2002) and exhibit self-confidence and optimism, yet these self-perceptions are often not grounded in reality (Brouer et al., 2011). At the same time, they are more likely to experience a sense of unfairness and have lower job satisfaction and income satisfaction, while experiencing higher levels of stress. The significant discrepancy between their self-perceptions and the reality often leads to intense feelings of frustration and negative emotions.

Workplace entitlement, namely, psychological entitlement in the context of workplace, has

attracted considerable attention from management practitioners (Harvey & Harris, 2010). Previous research has found that employees with high workplace entitlement often have unrealistic expectations of rewards and praise (Campbell et al., 2004; Naumann et al., 2002; Priesemuth & Taylor, 2016; Snow et al., 2001), may misinterpret their job responsibilities, and are more likely to be hostile to criticism from others (Campbell et al., 2004). These psychological states will lead to lower job satisfaction (Naumann et al., 2002), stronger turnover intentions, and a range of negative behaviors, such as blaming others when faced with setbacks, disrespecting their supervisors, and entering into conflicts with their supervisors (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). More importantly, this workplace entitlement, in combination with a diminished need for cognition, weakens employees' work motivation and leads to stronger self-serving attribution styles (Harvey & Harris, 2010). As a result, when faced with setbacks, they are also more prone to engaging in destructive behaviors such as humiliating colleagues (Harvey et al., 2014).

#### **2.5.4 Dimensions and measurement of psychological entitlement**

The measurement tools for psychological entitlement primarily include the Entitlement subscale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-Entitlement subscale), the Psychological Entitlement Scale, and the Me Versus Other Scale, as well as several domain-specific psychological entitlement scales (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

- Entitlement subscale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory

As an early measurement tool, the Entitlement subscale, along with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, has been widely used in initial studies of psychological entitlement (Pryor et al., 2008). However, scholars gradually recognized four major limitations of this subscale as an independent measure of psychological entitlement. First, the face validity of this subscale is relatively low. Some items, in fact, measure power-seeking or dominance rather than psychological entitlement alone. Second, the Entitlement subscale has a relatively limited number of items, and the use of binary scoring ("yes" or "no") results in a limited scale range. Third, the internal consistency of this subscale is low, with coefficients often far below 0.8. Lastly, previous factor analyses have failed to confirm its validity by identifying entitlement as a distinct dimension (Campbell et al., 2004).

- Psychological Entitlement Scale

Therefore, to address the limitations mentioned above, Campbell et al. (2004) developed the Psychological Entitlement Scale as a standalone measurement tool for psychological

entitlement. This scale consists of nine items scored on a seven-point Likert scale. The scale includes items such as “Things should go my way”. Various studies have demonstrated this scale’s good reliability and validity (Campbell et al., 2004; Pryor et al., 2008). However, the Psychological Entitlement Scale primarily emphasizes the narcissistic dimension of individual entitlement.

- Visual scale

In addition, Campbell et al. (2004) innovatively developed a visual scale to measure psychological entitlement. This tool consists of seven diagrams, each containing a set of circles with different sizes (representing the relative importance of the self compared to others) to visually assess the level of psychological entitlement. Research has shown that the results from this visual scale were consistent with those from the conventional scales of psychological entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004; Piff, 2014).

- Domain-specific scales

With the advancement of research, scholars have developed specialized psychological entitlement scales tailored to specific fields (e.g., organizational management and education). These tools typically exhibit greater contextual relevance and specificity.

In recent years, psychological entitlement has garnered significant attention across various fields, with numerous studies having analyzed its influencing mechanisms and outcomes in different contexts. Previous research has primarily focused on employees’ negative behaviors resulting from psychological entitlement in the workplace, such as workplace deviance and counterproductive work behavior. However, relatively little attention has been given to the influence of psychological entitlement on other employee behaviors. Particularly, research on the psychological entitlement of repatriates is limited. Therefore, to address this research gap, this study attempts to explore the impact of repatriates’ psychological entitlement on their knowledge transfer upon repatriation, with the aim of contributing to relevant theoretical frameworks.

## **2.6 Related theories**

### **2.6.1 Social exchange theory**

Social exchange theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century as a significant sociological framework, offers a novel perspective for explaining the essence of human social interactions. This theory was jointly established by scholars such as Blau (1956), Gouldner (1960), and

Homans (1958). Its core view is that people engage in social interactions with others on the premise of expecting to receive corresponding rewards. Different from economic exchange theory, social exchange theory extends the exchange content to a wider range of social resources, including non-material factors such as knowledge, emotions, and status (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In terms of its theoretical connotation, social exchange is characterized by bilateral, interactive, and reciprocal exchanges (Blau, 1964). This theory assumes that a self-interested party engages in an anticipated transaction with another party in order to achieve resources otherwise unattainable on their own. However, the sustainability of such an exchange relationship entirely depends on both parties' perception of the degree of reciprocity. If either party perceives that this exchange no longer yields the expected benefits, the relationship will naturally come to an end (Blau, 1964). Homans (1958) particularly emphasized that the ability to provide values recognized by the other party is the foundation for establishing and maintaining exchange relationships. This value exchange constitutes the fundamental driving force of human social behavior.

Compared with economic exchange, social exchange operates under a distinct set of mechanisms. While economic exchange theory emphasizes material profit maximization in a short term, social exchange theory emphasizes long-term investment in the relationship and the social norms governing exchanges (Molm, 1990). Specifically, they show the following differences: Economic exchange relies on formal written contracts for security and emphasizes immediate reciprocity; in contrast, social exchange is built on trust, allowing for short-term inequality with the expectation of long-term reciprocity (Holmes, 1981). In general, social exchange relationships exhibit greater uncertainty and risks (Blau, 1956).

The trust between parties is a crucial component of social exchange (DeConinck, 2010). Due to the lack of formal contracts, the trust between the parties typically develops gradually through progressive interactions, beginning with trials of exchanges of lower-risk and lower-value resources before progressing to exchanges of greater value and greater scale as higher levels of mutual trust are established (Blau, 1964).

Wu et al. (2006) further summarized the four mutually fundamental principles of social exchange: 1) the principle of value creation (i.e., promoting economic and social output), 2) the principle of comparative alternatives (i.e., evaluating alternative relationships), 3) the principle of trust accumulation (i.e., commitment increases over time), and 4) the principle of norm formation (i.e., establishing expectations of reciprocity). These principles jointly form a comprehensive framework through which social exchange theory explains human social

relationships.

Researchers generally consider both social and economic exchange as forms of choice-making behavior. Although they often do not rely on formal contracts, the parties tend to continuously evaluate the potential costs and benefits of such exchanges (Molm, 1990). These evaluations are often based on the immediate satisfaction of exchange parties, which constitutes a fundamental factor determining whether future exchanges will continue. However, it is worth noting that these evaluations are not carried out in isolation but are embedded within a broader social network context. For example, one party's failure to fulfill reciprocal obligations may lead to social sanctions from the other party, such as criticism. Yet, social exchange theory tends to view participant satisfaction as the primary factor in sustaining exchanges, with social sanctions being a secondary factor (Molm, 1994).

Social exchange theory has evolved from two different cultural perspectives: individualism and collectivism. The individualistic perspective emphasizes individuals' psychological and economic self-interest in exchanges (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), whereas the collectivist perspective emphasizes the importance of the group or society's needs (Befu, 1977). According to the collectivist view, society exists for its own sake, and individuals exist to serve the interests of society (Sahlins, 1965). Some scholars have suggested integrating these two perspectives in research (e.g., Shore et al., 2009).

The norm of reciprocity, or the obligation to repay others, is one of the most well-known exchange rules in social exchange theory, yet its definition remains ambiguous (Gouldner, 1960). For example, reciprocity may be defined as an interdependent exchange or a cultural expectation or norm. The reciprocity continuum theory proposed by Brady (1972) posits that reciprocity exists on a continuum ranging from "generalized" to "balanced". Generalized reciprocity is altruistic, with an indefinite repayment period, no explicit equivalency in returns, and low self-interest. It is commonly observed in close relationships or long-term stable social networks, with its core focus on establishing and maintaining social bonds. In contrast, negative reciprocity is characterized as self-interested, immediate, and equal resource exchanges. The exchange of equivalent resources is referred to as balanced reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In management research, the norm of reciprocity is considered a core feature of social exchange theory and has been widely applied in organizational behavior studies to explain perceived organizational support, leader-member exchange, and organizational citizenship behavior (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). Within social exchange theory, some studies have found that reciprocity orientation can influence individuals' decision-making behavior. For

instance, positive reciprocity manifests as returning kindness with kindness, whereas negative reciprocity may lead to retaliatory responses, namely, repaying harm with harm (Eisenberger et al., 2004).

Although social exchange theory is regarded as one of the most influential theories in organizational behavior research (Cropanzano et al., 2017), it has also received criticism from the academic community. Some scholars argue that while the reciprocity norm has been widely supported in empirical research and extensively applied in practice, social exchange theory may be overly self-serving and short-sighted. That is because when individuals encounter more profitable opportunities or relationships, they may act based on various motivations, ultimately making social relationships less reciprocal than the theory suggests.

### **2.6.2 Psychological contract theory**

When employees join an organization, they may not only enter into a legal contract in written form with the organization but also establish an unwritten psychological contract. Psychological contracts reflect employees' beliefs and expectations of gaining benefits from the organization in return for their job efforts or contributions to the organization (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). This contract is essentially employees' subject perceptions based on the implicit or explicit commitments of the organization, such as the enterprise's commitment of offering a job opportunity to the employee. Although it does not have legal binding force, it significantly influences employees' attitudes and behaviors. In addition, these beliefs also include the agreed-upon conditions in exchange for commitments (e.g., accepting a job position or foregoing other job opportunities), which perceptually bind the employee to the organization (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998).

Psychological contracts are continuous in nature. Once formed, they will persist and evolve over time. Psychological contracts are based on individuals' perceptions of commitments (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). These commitments can be conveyed through various forms of communication, including written documents, oral discussions, organizational policies, and organizational practices. Psychological contracts may vary in scope and intensity; some may be simple and short-term, while others can be complex and long-term.

The formation and development of employees' psychological contracts is a dynamic and complex process shaped by multiple levels of factors. At the individual level, employees' initial motivation, values, and career expectations constitute the cognitive foundation of the psychological contracts; at the organizational level, on-the-job experiences such as onboarding, socialization, and career development continually reshape the contract's content; meanwhile, at

the macro level, social and cultural norms and national values have a underlying contextual influence (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). It is worth noting that psychological contracts are heterogeneous, meaning that each individual within an organization has a unique set of terms governing their exchange relationship with the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Due to communication barriers, differences in understanding, and the complexity and ambiguity of obligations, exchange expectations may vary among the individuals. Even employees working under the same manager within the same enterprise may hold different beliefs regarding the obligations within the psychological contracts (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998).

Ideally, psychological contracts are viewed as reciprocal agreements (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Their reciprocity manifests in that individuals and organizations act based on their perceptions of whether commitments between them are being fulfilled (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Both parties agree that commitments and contributions made by one party create an obligation for the other party to fulfill its promises and responsibilities. For example, employees may work diligently for the organization for many years with the expectation that the organization will provide them with corresponding rewards for their hard work. Furthermore, while psychological contracts are often used to describe perceived relationships between organizations and their employees, they also apply to temporary workers, middle managers, and even the relationships between employees and customers. Recent studies have made efforts to examine the interplay of obligations in employer-employee psychological contracts (Wu et al., 2006).

As an informal system of mutual expectations between employees and organizations, psychological contracts are typically categorized into four types: transactional, relational, balanced, and transitional (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003).

(1) Transactional psychological contracts focus greatly on clearly defined economic exchanges. This type of psychological contract is typically characterized by a limited duration, explicitly defined performance requirements, and transactions centered on monetary compensation. For example, employees complete previously agreed work tasks in exchange for appropriate salaries, benefits, and security (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003).

(2) Relational psychological contracts are established based on long-term mutual trust, and the terms are often not fully defined and show ambiguity. These psychological contracts, typically existing between the organization and its core employees, emphasizes exchanges of socio-emotional factors such as affective commitment and loyalty.

(3) Balanced psychological contracts integrate characteristics of both transactional and



relational psychological contracts. They involve long-term and open-ended relationships while also having clearly defined performance terms that evolve over time.

(4) Transitional psychological contracts manifest as temporary and insecure employment relationships with little or no explicit performance expectations or incentives.

Psychological contract theory is built on the fundamental premise of voluntary exchange (Rousseau, 2001). Neither party is coerced or forced into compliance with the exchange agreement. Each party retains the freedom to exit the exchange relationship if desired.

Employees can acquire the terms of their psychological contracts through three primary means (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998): 1) Interpersonal communications, such as interacting with colleagues in the same department, supervisors, and members of other departments; 2) learning through observation, namely, inferring the content of the contract by observing the experiences of other members within the organization; 3) institutional cues, such as compensation and benefits systems, performance evaluation system, and formal human resource policies. These channels of information collectively shape employees' perceptions and understanding of their obligations to the organization.

### **2.6.3 Relative deprivation theory**

In their study on the psychological state of American soldiers during World War II, Stouffer et al. (1949) found that soldiers in the Air forces of the US Army experienced more feelings of frustration than those in the Military Police, despite having greater and faster promotion opportunities. The study pointed out that satisfaction with promotion opportunities among the soldiers in the Air Forces was influenced by comparisons with their reference group (e.g., the Military Police). In comparing themselves to others, they perceived that their fundamental entitlements had been compromised. Thus, Stouffer et al. (1949) introduced the concept of “relative deprivation” to explain this psychological phenomenon.

Subsequently, scholars have defined the conditions under which relative deprivation develops. Davis (1959) proposed that three conditions must be met for the emergence of relative deprivation: 1) the individual sees that similar others possess X; 2) this individual wants X; and 3) this individual feels entitled to possess X. Building on that, Runciman (1966) further expanded and refined the theory by proposing a four-factor model, adding the condition that “the individual does not possess X”, while emphasizing the reasonable judgment of individual's expectations. Crosby (1976) further integrated the previous theoretical perspectives and developed a five-element theoretical framework for relative deprivation. In addition to the core conditions proposed by previous scholars, another two key elements were proposed: 1) the

assessment of the likelihood of obtaining the desired outcome (i.e., perceived feasibility) and 2) the external attribution for not obtaining it (i.e., attributing the failure to factors beyond oneself). This theoretical advancement reveals the cognitive complexity involved in the formation of relative deprivation, indicating that it not only involves simple social comparison but also includes attribution analysis of one's situation.

Moreover, based on the hierarchical nature of reference groups in social comparisons, Runciman (1966) categorized relative deprivation into the following two types: individual relative deprivation and collective relative deprivation. Individual relative deprivation arises from comparisons between oneself and other individuals or between an individual's states at different periods of time. Collective relative deprivation, on the other hand, results from comparisons between one's group and other groups or between the group's states at different periods of time.

Furthermore, relative deprivation can also emerge from the discrepancy between an individual's value expectations and his/her actual capabilities. Value expectations refer to the value status that individuals believe they should or desire to attain, whereas value capabilities refer to the value status individuals believe they are able to obtain or maintain in reality (H. Kim et al., 2017). Thus, the relativity of relative deprivation stems from social comparisons, which include comparisons between individuals or groups and their reference counterparts, between an individual's or a group's current state and their past or future states, and between an individual's value expectations and value capabilities. In short, relative deprivation is the subjective perception of one's disadvantaged status relative to a reference group (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984).

From a compositional perspective, the subjective perception of one's disadvantaged status derives from social comparisons and thus, constitutes a cognitive component of relative deprivation (Tougas & Beaton, 2008). In addition, some scholars have argued that such subjective perception can further trigger emotional reactions such as anger, dissatisfaction, and resentment. Therefore, relative deprivation also encompasses an affective component (E. Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, relative deprivation can be defined as an individual's or a group's subjective perception of being in a disadvantaged position relative to a reference counterpart, as well as the resulting negative emotions such as anger and dissatisfaction. This definition indicates that the formation of relative deprivation requires four conditions: 1) cognitive comparison; 2) judgment regarding whether the individual or the group is in a disadvantaged position; 3) the belief that this disadvantaged status is unfair; and 4) the development of resistance or resentment.

Existing research has revealed factors on multi levels influencing the formation of relative deprivation. Among them, individual characteristics and social-environmental factors have been shown to have a critical role (H. Smith et al., 2012). In terms of individual characteristics, scholars have found a systematic relationship between personality traits and relative deprivation; an internal locus of control negatively affects relative deprivation, whereas an external locus of control has a positive effect. This difference is due to different attribution styles: individuals with an internal locus of control tend to attribute adverse situations to internal factors, whereas those with an external locus of control are more likely to adopt external attributions, which leads to significantly higher levels of relative deprivation.

Regarding social-environmental factors, scholars have primarily explored the effects of socioeconomic status, social justice, and characteristics of reference groups on relative deprivation. Previous studies have shown that socioeconomic status significantly positively affects both individual and collective relative deprivation, such that those with lower social status and weaker political influence tend to experience stronger relative deprivation (Pettigrew et al., 2008). Moreover, social justice negatively affects relative deprivation. Existing research has examined the impact of procedural justice on relative deprivation (Folger et al., 1983). The findings suggest that when there is insufficient procedural justice (e.g., procedural changes are unreasonable or lack sufficient justification), individuals tend to experience higher levels of relative deprivation, leading to emotions such as dissatisfaction, anger, resentment, and frustration. In addition, the characteristics of the reference groups chosen in social comparisons also influence the levels of relative deprivation (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). For example, the higher the reference group's status, the stronger the individual's relative deprivation (Crosby, 1979).

Due to their different levels of occurrence, individual relative deprivation and collective relative deprivation may lead to different outcomes. The outcomes of individual relative deprivation mainly include individuals' mental health and behaviors.

Existing research showed that individuals' relative deprivation could significantly increase the incidence of mental health disorders, with negative emotions (e.g., sadness, fear, and anger) mediating the relationship between the two (H. Smith et al., 2012). Moreover, an individual's identification with his or her group can buffer the negative impact of relative deprivation on mental health. Furthermore, relative deprivation has also been shown to be associated to other health problems such as hypertension, heart disease, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, suicide, and mortality.

Regarding relative deprivation's impact on individual behavior, extensive research has

explored the influence of relative deprivation on individuals' deviant behaviors (e.g., aggression, violence, theft, and counterproductive work behavior) and avoidance behaviors (e.g., smoking, alcohol abuse, drug use, gambling, and social withdrawal) (H. Smith et al., 2012). Furthermore, since relative deprivation can stimulate individuals' competitive awareness and participation motivation, it can also drive individuals to actively engage in positive behaviors such as participating in self-improvement activities, part-time jobs, and academic efforts.

In contrast, collective relative deprivation not only influences individual-level outcomes (e.g., subjective well-being, mental health, and self-esteem) but also group-level outcomes (e.g., intergroup attitudes and collective behavior). Intergroup attitudes generally refer to evaluative tendencies toward the same group and its members, as well as external groups and their members. Previous studies have shown that with higher levels of collective relative deprivation, the disadvantaged group's identification with and sense of belonging to the in-group will significantly increase, while the group's hostility and prejudice toward out-groups become more pronounced. At the same time, they will have stronger perceptions of intergroup injustice (Grant & Brown, 1995).

Collective behavior refers to actions taken by group members to improve their group's status. It is characterized by two features: 1) it manifests as group behavior; 2) the purpose of this behavior is to enhance the interests of the group. Existing research has shown that collective relative deprivation may lead the group to engage in collective behaviors such as intensive protests and can even result in aggression among groups (H. Smith et al., 2012). In addition, negative emotions such as collective anger and dissatisfaction, as well as beliefs in social change, have been shown to mediate the relationship between collective relative deprivation and collective behavior, while group identification moderated this relationship.

In recent years, researchers in the organizational management field have paid extensive attention to relative deprivation in the workplace by carrying out in-depth analysis of its antecedents and outcomes. For instance, Bolino and Turnley (2009) showed that when comparing themselves to co-workers and realizing they had a lower-quality leader-member exchange, employees tended to feel frustrated, further leading to relative deprivation, and this relative deprivation as more pronounced in concern contexts,. For example, when employees perceive themselves as disadvantaged in leader-member exchange despite significant effort in maintaining this relationship, while most co-workers enjoy better leader-member exchange mainly through impression management, or when employees have no opportunity to improve their leader-member exchange or experienced higher levels of leader-member exchange with their previous leaders, the negative relationship between leader-member exchange and relative

deprivation would be more pronounced. Cho et al. (2014) examined the impact of relative deprivation on employee turnover intention in the context of job changes due to corporate mergers and restructuring. They found that employees' relative deprivation significantly reduced their identification with and sense of belonging to the post-merger enterprise, thereby leading to turnover intention.

Furthermore, many organizational management researchers have applied relative deprivation theory to explain workplace phenomena such as compensation satisfaction, employee overqualification, and underemployment. For instance, Hu et al. (2015) used relative deprivation theory to study the impact of perceived overqualification on employees' in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior. The results suggested that the prevalence of overqualification among other employees in the organization served as a situational factor influencing whether an individual's perception of overqualification triggers relative deprivation. When employees observe that overqualification is common among their colleagues in the organization, they are less likely to experience a high level of relative deprivation. In this case, they may perceive that the organization needs a large number of overqualified employees due to the high importance of tasks. At the same time, they may view overqualification as an indication of a high level of fit between themselves and the organization, which in turn motivates them to invest more effort in their work.

## **2.7 Research hypotheses**

### **2.7.1 Congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer**

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' psychological perception of whether the organization cares about their interests and recognizes their values and contributions (Eisenberger et al., 2002). In simple terms, it represents the degree to which employees feel cared and supported by their organization. Previous studies have found that perceived organizational support is positively associated with various positive work behaviors, such as higher job engagement (Riggle et al., 2009), affective commitment (Kurtessis et al., 2017), increased organizational citizenship behavior (Tremblay, 2019), altruistic behavior (Nair, 2020), and innovative behavior (Choi et al., 2016). Froese et al. (2021) found that organizational support from the headquarters of multinational enterprises significantly promoted expatriates' knowledge transfer upon repatriation. In the context of expatriation and repatriation, expatriates

experience organizational support in two different phases—before and after repatriation. Although both types of organizational support originate from the multinational enterprise’s headquarters, expatriates may perceive them differently, leading to either congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation.

According to the congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, this study proposes four possible scenarios, as illustrated in Figure 2.1: (1) low perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation; (2) high perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation; (3) low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation; and (4) high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation. The first two scenarios represent congruence in perceived organizational support, while the latter two indicate incongruence.

		POS after repatriation	
		Low	High
POS during expatriation	Low	Low-Low Congruence	Low-High Incongruence
	High	High-Low Incongruence	High-High Congruence

Figure 2.1 Congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support

Psychological contract theory suggests that an informal and implicit set of expectations and obligations exists between employees and organizations (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Although these expectations and obligations are not explicitly stated in formal employment contracts, they significantly influence employees’ behaviors and attitudes. When an organization fails to meet employees’ psychological expectations, it may lead to dissatisfaction, decreased trust, and even turnover or retaliatory behavior (Eisenberger et al., 2010). The concept of psychological contract is based on social exchange theory, which posits that all social relationships are inherently exchanges, including unspecified obligations (Eisenberger et al., 2014). Organizational support is a critical component of the psychological contract between employees and organizations. When organizations consistently value employees’ contributions and care about their well-being, employees’ psychological contracts are fulfilled. Based on the principles of social exchange, employees are then more willing to engage in behaviors beneficial to the organization (Moorman et al., 1998). However, when an organization fails to fulfill or cannot

adequately fulfill its obligations under the psychological contract, employees may perceive the psychological contract as breached, leading them to engage in behaviors that are detrimental to the organization.

This study posits that the congruence or incongruence in expatriates' perceived organizational support before and after repatriation influences the fulfillment of their psychological contract, which, in turn, further affects their knowledge transfer upon repatriation. Specifically, the congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation reflects different levels of psychological contract fulfillment. In the scenario of "high perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation", expatriates experience strong organizational support both during their overseas assignment and after repatriation. This congruence in organizational support indicates that the organization has effectively fulfilled the psychological contract and met employees' expectations. According to the reciprocity norm in social exchange theory, when employees perceive strong support and care from the organization, they tend to reciprocate by engaging more in behaviors beneficial to the organization (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), such as demonstrating their loyalty and contributing to the organization through greater repatriate knowledge transfer.

Conversely, in the scenario of "low perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation", expatriates perceive weak organizational support both during their overseas assignment and after repatriation. Although these perceptions remain congruent over time, keeping employees' psychological contracts in a stable state, employees' expectations may not be sufficiently met. They may feel disappointed and frustrated due to the gap between their expectations and the level of support provided by the organization. This dissatisfaction may lead to a decline in employees' trust in the organization, reducing their intention to engage in repatriate knowledge transfer and the actual knowledge transfer behavior.

Based on that, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1.1 (H1.1): *In case of congruence, compared to the scenario of "low perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation", repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer when they experience "high perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation".*

In addition to the two scenarios of congruent perceived organizational support, two scenarios of incongruent perceived organizational support also exist: "high perceived

organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation” and “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”. In cases of incongruence in perceived organizational support, expatriates’ psychological contract fulfillment may be more significantly affected. For instance, in the scenario of “high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”, repatriated employees may feel betrayed by the organization because they received strong organizational support during their overseas assignments, but such support diminished upon repatriation (Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). This disparity may lead repatriates to feel that the organization provides strong support only when it needs them to work abroad but reduces its support once they are no longer needed after repatriation. The decline in perceived organizational support may result in a breach in employees’ psychological contracts (Bankins, 2015), triggering their negative emotions toward the organization (Bordia et al., 2008), which in turn reduces their knowledge transfer behaviors.

Conversely, in the scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”, expatriates may experience surprise and satisfaction as the organization offers greater support after their repatriation than during their overseas assignment. This increase in perceived organizational support may enhance or restore employees’ psychological contract fulfillment, thereby motivating them to engage in more knowledge transfer.

Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1.2 (H1.2): *In case of incongruence, compared to the scenario of “high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”, repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer in the scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”.*

As discussed above, upon returning to the headquarters of their home company, expatriates tend to compare the organizational support they perceive after repatriation with what they experienced during their overseas assignment, leading to four different scenarios of congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support. Notably, in the scenario of “high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”, the level of repatriate knowledge transfer is the lowest. In other words, repatriates engage in less knowledge transfer in this incongruence scenario than in scenarios of congruent organizational support.

In contrast, in the other incongruence scenario, namely, “low perceived organizational



support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”, repatriated employees may experience a positive psychological spillover effect, making them more willing to reciprocate the organization’s support. This reciprocal motivation may, to some extent, enhance repatriate knowledge transfer (Bresman et al., 1999; Caimo & Lomi, 2015). However, this study argues that the buffering effect of increased perceived organizational support after repatriation is relatively limited. If expatriates perceive low organizational support during expatriation, it likely indicates that the organization does not highly value them or care about their contributions and well-being (Cao et al., 2014). Consequently, even after repatriation, the organization is unlikely to provide significantly more support. Even if the organization does offer unexpectedly high support, repatriates may attribute the increased support to the organization’s strategic intent to exploit them or gain benefits from them rather than a genuine appreciation of their contributions or concern about their well-being (Pattie et al., 2010). As a result, such unexpectedly high organizational support may instead increase repatriates’ skepticism and suspicion toward the organization, thereby reducing repatriate knowledge transfer.

Therefore, this study argues that while the incongruence scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation” may produce a positive spillover effect, its effect of fostering repatriate knowledge transfer is relatively limited. In other words, the level of repatriate knowledge transfer in the incongruence scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation” is similar to that in the congruence scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”. Therefore, overall, compared to scenarios where perceived organizational support is incongruent, repatriates tend to engage more in knowledge transfer when they perceive congruent organizational support.

Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1.3 (H1.3): *Compared to scenarios of incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer when they perceive congruent organizational support.*

### **2.7.2 Mediation of job embeddedness after repatriation**

Job embeddedness refers to the degree of connection an individual has with all work-related circumstances both within and outside the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). This includes an employee’s links with co-workers, customers, suppliers, and other external stakeholders, as well

as internal organizational members. It also encompasses the fit between employees' values, skills, and career goals with organizational culture and their job roles, and the sacrifice (including material and psychological costs) associated with leaving their current job. Job embeddedness is considered a critical factor influencing employee retention and turnover intention, as it explains why employees choose to remain in their current positions (Felps et al., 2009). The stronger connections employees have with the organization, the more difficult it is for them to leave.

This study posits that job embeddedness after repatriation mediates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.

On the one hand, previous research demonstrated that perceived organizational support significantly enhanced employees' job embeddedness (Jiang et al., 2012). That is, when employees perceive strong organizational support, they tend to develop a higher level of job embeddedness. That is because organizational support can fulfill employees' psychological contracts, thus increasing their intention to establish stronger ties with the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005), resulting in strengthened links with the organization (the links dimension of job embeddedness). In addition, organizational support can enhance employees' job satisfaction, making them more likely to identify with the organization's values and goals, thus fulfilling the fit dimension of job embeddedness. Furthermore, when employees feel supported and cared for by the organization, their commitment to the organization will be enhanced, making them more willing to remain in the organization, thus increasing the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness.

In the context of repatriation, repatriates tend to compare their perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, and the congruence or incongruence in this perception will affect their job embeddedness. When there is congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, repatriates' psychological contracts are fulfilled. In particular, in the scenario of "high perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation", repatriates tend to exhibit higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which, in turn, strengthens their job embeddedness (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018). Conversely, when there is incongruence in perceived organizational support, repatriates may develop suspicion and dissatisfaction toward the organization. In particular, in the scenario of "high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation", repatriates may experience a breach in their psychological contracts (Suazo & Turnley, 2010), leading to reduced job satisfaction and

organizational commitment, which, in turn, weakens their job embeddedness. Therefore, the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation positively influences repatriates' job embeddedness after repatriation.

Furthermore, job embeddedness positively affects repatriate knowledge transfer as strong job embeddedness can enhance their organizational commitment and sense of belonging to the organization (Kiazad et al., 2015). When employees feel closely connected to the organization, they are more likely to transfer the knowledge and experience gained during their international assignments to their colleagues in the organization, thereby facilitating repatriate knowledge sharing and transfer. This knowledge transfer includes not only explicit knowledge, such as reports and data, but also tacit knowledge, such as skills and work methods (Balogun & Adetula, 2015). In addition, employees with higher levels of job embeddedness are generally more willing to engage in organizational activities and make efforts to contribute to organizational goals, including transforming their expatriate experiences into the knowledge capital of the organization.

For expatriates, enhanced job embeddedness signifies a stronger connection with the organization and a stronger sense of belonging to it, which, in turn, encourages them to share the knowledge and experience gained from their international assignments with the organization upon the conclusion of their assignments (Froese et al., 2021). That is because a high level of job embeddedness can foster employees' organizational commitment, making them more inclined to maintain and develop their relationships with the organization. As a result, they become more actively engaged in knowledge-sharing and transfer activities. When employees feel valued and supported by the organization, they are more likely to align their personal development with organizational goals, making them more proactive in engaging in repatriate knowledge transfer. Therefore, job embeddedness after repatriation positively influences repatriate knowledge transfer.

Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *Job embeddedness after repatriation mediates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.*

### **2.7.3 Moderation of perceived person-job fit**

Perceived person-job fit refers to an employee's perception and evaluation of the alignment between themselves and their job. This alignment may include the fit between personal abilities and job demands, between personal values and organizational culture, and between personal

career goals and organizational goals (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). Perceived person-job fit is crucial for employees' performance, as it influences their job satisfaction, work engagement, job performance, and turnover intention (Tims et al., 2016). After repatriation, repatriates are assigned new positions by the headquarters of their home-country enterprise. In this context, their perceived person-job fit after repatriation can have a significant impact on their psychological state and behavior. In particular, when repatriates perceive a misalignment between themselves and their new job, it can lead to negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intention.

When expatriates perceive that their job aligns with their skills, values, and goals, they are more likely to transfer the knowledge and experience gained abroad to the organization. First, expatriates with a high level of perceived person-job fit are more willing to share their knowledge and experience (Foss et al., 2015) because they believe it is valuable to the organization and aligns with their personal goals. Second, expatriates with a higher level of perceived person-job fit are more likely to be fully engaged in their work (Rayton et al., 2019), including knowledge transfer activities, as they perceive that their personal traits align with work goals. Third, when expatriates' abilities are aligned with job demands, they are more capable of efficiently completing tasks (Werbel & DeMarie, 2005), including applying the knowledge gained during their expatriation to the organization. Moreover, expatriates with a high level of perceived person-job fit tend to have a stronger sense of belonging to the organization, which enhances their organizational commitment, making them more actively engaged in knowledge transfer.

This study posits that repatriates' perceived person-job fit moderates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. Specifically, when repatriates perceive a high level of person-job fit, they will feel that their job aligns with their skills, values, and goals, thereby strengthening their commitment to the organization (Farzaneh et al., 2014). Therefore, congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation can effectively fulfill repatriates' psychological contracts and enhance their job embeddedness (Chen & Shaffer, 2017), ultimately fostering greater repatriate knowledge transfer to the organization. In other words, when repatriates perceive a high level of person-job fit, the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer is accentuated. Conversely, when repatriates perceive a low level of person-job fit, their job satisfaction decreases, making it difficult for them to fully engage in their work (Rayton et al., 2019). In this case, congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation

fails to enhance their sense of belonging to the organization or increase their job embeddedness, thereby hindering their intention to engage more in repatriate knowledge transfer. Thus, when repatriates perceive a low level of person-job fit, the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer is weakened.

Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *Perceived person-job fit accentuates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, such that when repatriates perceive a higher level of person-job fit, the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer is accentuated.*

#### **2.7.4 Moderation of psychological entitlement**

Psychological entitlement refers to an individual's subjective belief or perception that they are entitled to special treatment and exempt from social responsibilities (Priesemuth & Taylor, 2016). Psychological entitlement may lead individuals to develop narcissistic tendencies, triggering negative behaviors such as interpersonal conflicts, selfish behavior, and aggression. Individuals with a high level of psychological entitlement tend to believe they deserve more or better treatment regardless of their actual behavior or contributions. This perception may stem from egocentrism, narcissistic traits, or an inflated self-evaluation of individuals (Pryor et al., 2008). Due to their expatriate work experience, repatriates may develop a relatively high level of psychological entitlement. On the one hand, expatriates often have greater autonomy and managerial authority during their overseas assignments, which raises their expectations of power upon repatriation. They may feel that they deserve a higher status and greater influence within the organization, thus fostering psychological entitlement (Jayasingam et al., 2021). This entitlement is further reinforced when they perceive that they have made significant contributions to the enterprise during their international assignments or that their overseas work experience has endowed them with unique skills and capabilities (Ren et al., 2013). On the other hand, during international assignments, expatriates make significant sacrifices being away from their familiar work and life environments for the enterprise's benefit. Upon repatriation, they tend to believe that they deserve career advancement or better compensation, thus leading to psychological entitlement.

Psychological entitlement can influence repatriates' interactions with other employees within the organization. First, repatriates with a high level of psychological entitlement may

expect greater personal benefits and be less willing to share their knowledge selflessly (Khalid et al., 2020), as they believe the organization should first fulfill their expectations. Furthermore, a high level of psychological entitlement may cause employees to excessively focus on personal interests while neglecting the importance of teamwork (Neville & Fisk, 2019), which can undermine the collaboration atmosphere within the team, hindering effective knowledge transfer. Moreover, if repatriates believe they deserve better treatment but the organization fails to meet these expectations, they may feel disappointed and dissatisfied, leading to a sense of relative deprivation (Lapointe et al., 2022), which, in turn, reduces their motivation for knowledge transfer (Alnaimi & Rjoub, 2021). According to relative deprivation theory, when repatriates perceive that the organization has not provided them with the support they deserve, they may develop a suspicious attitude toward the organization (Schwarz et al., 2023), thereby weakening their trust relationship with the organization and reducing their intention to share knowledge.

This study posits that repatriates' psychological entitlement moderates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. Specifically, when repatriates have a high level of psychological entitlement, they tend to believe that they deserve preferential treatment and that key roles within the organization should be assigned to them (Priesemuth & Taylor, 2016). As a result, even if the organization provides congruent support before and after their repatriation, it may still fail to meet their entitlement expectations, thereby weakening the positive effect of the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. Conversely, when repatriates have a low level of psychological entitlement, they tend to be less self-centered and are unlikely to develop relative deprivation due to unmet psychological expectations (Brummel & Parker, 2015). In this case, the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation can effectively fulfill their psychological contract and enhance their job embeddedness, making them more likely to engage in transfer knowledge. Thus, when repatriates have a low level of psychological entitlement, the positive effect of the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer is accentuated.

Based on that, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *Psychological entitlement weakens the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, such that when repatriates have a higher level of psychological entitlement, the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge*

*transfer is weakened.*

The theoretical model of this study is shown in Figure 2.2.

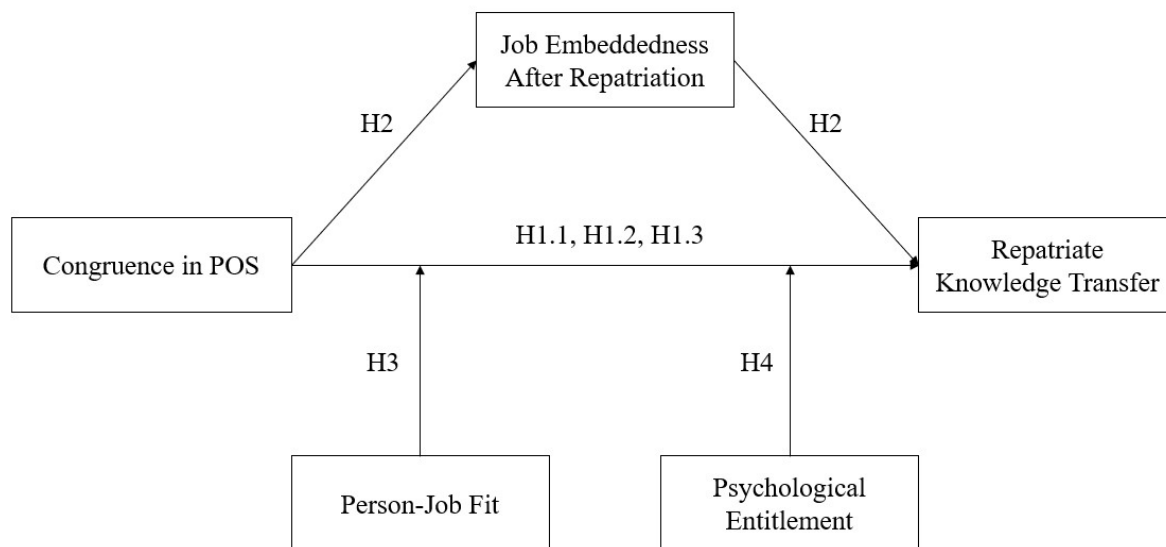


Figure 2.2 Theoretical model

This chapter primarily introduced the research hypotheses and theoretical model of this study. Based on social exchange theory and psychological contract theory, we proposed the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer, as well as the mediating effect of job embeddedness and the moderating effect of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement. The next chapter will present the research design and the research methods employed in this study.

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## **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methods employed in this study, including the design of the research process, the selection of measurement scales, and the development of the questionnaire. In addition, the chapter outlines the sources and applicability of the sample, the data collection process, sample characteristics, and the statistical analyses used in the study.

### **3.1 Research design**

To empirically test the theoretical model and hypotheses proposed in this study, we employed a questionnaire survey to collect data for subsequent statistical analysis. First, the author reviewed the well-established measurement scales frequently used in previous studies and invited three experts to revise the scale items. This revision ensured that the questionnaire items aligned with the Chinese context, making them easier for respondents to understand and respond to. Then, a pilot-test was conducted using the preliminary questionnaire to test the validity of the measurement items, ensuring the questionnaire's effectiveness for the formal survey. Subsequently, the author selected employees from a large state-owned multinational enterprise as the survey participants and distributed the questionnaire to collect data. To minimize the impact of common method bias on the research results, this study employed a three-wave time-lagged survey approach, measuring the independent variable, mediator and moderators, and dependent variable at three different time points, with an interval of two weeks between each round.

After completing the data collection at three different time points, we employed statistical methods such as reliability analysis, validity analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the effectiveness of the measurement tools and methods, laying a solid foundation for subsequent empirical testing.

### **3.2 Questionnaire design**

The questionnaire survey is one of the most widely used research methods in social sciences (Bourque et al., 2004). The scientific rigor of questionnaire design can directly impact the

response rate and the authenticity, practicality, and validity of the collected data, as well as the overall quality of the survey. Considering the specific needs of this study, the questionnaire was designed to be of moderate length and difficulty to ensure effective data collection. The number of variables and items was kept as small as possible while ensuring that they could accurately reflect the actual situation. Moreover, the questionnaire was distributed and collected using the most efficient methods to minimize survey costs. Following the recommendations of Kost and da Rosa (2018), the completion time of the questionnaire should not be too long to ensure the quality and efficiency of questionnaire completion. In this study, we controlled the completion time so that a respondent who carefully filled out the questionnaire could complete it within ten minutes, aiming to ensure the efficiency of data collection.

### **3.2.1 Questionnaire structure**

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two main sections. The first section is the questionnaire introduction, which explains the purpose and practical value of this research and key instructions for the survey. It also assures respondents that their participation in this survey is anonymous and voluntary, that they may withdraw from the survey at any time, and that all collected information and data will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic research, with no disclosure to any third party. The second section comprises the main body of the survey, which includes measurement items for each variable, as well as an introduction. The survey was conducted in three phases:

(1) At the first survey phase, the questionnaire included items measuring perceived organizational support during expatriation and perceived organizational support after repatriation, information about control variables such as demographic characteristics, and information related to expatriate assignments.

(2) At the second survey phase, the questionnaire measured job embeddedness after repatriation, psychological entitlement, and perceived person-job fit.

(3) At the third survey phase, the questionnaire included items measuring repatriate knowledge transfer.

To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the collected data, we assessed the respondents' attentiveness by including an attention-check item: "To demonstrate that you are completing this questionnaire carefully, please select 'strongly agree' for this question." In addition, at the end of each survey phase, respondents were asked to provide the last four digits of their mobile phone numbers to facilitate matching their responses across the three survey phases.

The complete questionnaire used in this study is provided in Annexes A, B, and C.

### **3.2.2 Questionnaire content**

This study's questionnaire was designed strictly following the standardized questionnaire survey process. First, all measurement items for the variables were from well-established scales used in previous research. For the scales that were developed originally in English, the "translation-back translation" method was adopted. A professional translator first translated the English scales into Chinese and then back-translated them into English to ensure that the meaning of the original items remained intact (Brislin, 1980). In addition, without altering the meaning conveyed by the original well-established scales, minor adjustments were made to the translated Chinese scales to align with Chinese language conventions and industry-specific expressions, as well as the specific context of this study, thereby finalizing the measurement scales used in this research.

## **3.3 Measurement**

The theoretical model of this study includes six constructs: perceived organizational support during expatriation, perceived organizational support after repatriation, job embeddedness after repatriation, psychological entitlement, perceived person-job fit, and repatriate knowledge transfer. All constructs were measured using well-established scales used in previous studies, which have been demonstrated to have high reliability and validity. For the measurement of each variable, this study adopted the widely used five-point Likert scale (Maurer & Pierce, 1998), where respondents indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement using numerical values: "1" = "strongly disagree", "2" = "disagree", "3" = "neutral", "4" = "agree", and "5" = "strongly agree".

The following sections introduce the operational definition and measurement of each variable.

### **3.3.1 Perceived organizational support during expatriation**

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' overall perception of whether the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Drawing on this definition, this study defines perceived organizational support during expatriation as repatriated employees' overall perception of the organization's recognition of their contributions and concern for their well-being during their overseas assignment. The measurement items for this variable were adapted from the perceived organizational support

scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1997), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this study. The scale includes eight measurement items, which are detailed as follows:

- 1) *During my expatriation, my company cared about my opinions;*
- 2) *During my expatriation, my company really cared about my well-being;*
- 3) *During my expatriation, my company strongly considered my goals and values;*
- 4) *During my expatriation, help was available from my company when I had a problem;*
- 5) *During my expatriation, my company would forgive an honest mistake on my part;*
- 6) *During my expatriation, if given the opportunity, my company would take advantage of me (R);*
- 7) *During my expatriation, my company showed very little concern for me (R);*
- 8) *During my expatriation, my company was willing to help me if I needed a special favor.*

The reliability analysis of the eight items measuring perceived organizational support during expatriation showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.839, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### **3.3.2 Perceived organizational support after repatriation**

Following the same approach as for perceived organizational support during expatriation, this study drew on Eisenberger et al. (1986) definition of perceived organizational support. In this study, perceived organizational support after repatriation is defined as repatriated employees' overall perception of the organization's recognition of their contributions and concern for their well-being after returning from their overseas assignment. The measurement items for this variable were adapted from the perceived organizational support scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1997), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this study. The scale includes eight measurement items as follows:

- 1) *After repatriation, my company cares about my opinions;*
- 2) *After repatriation, my company really cares about my well-being;*
- 3) *After repatriation, my company strongly considers my goals and values;*
- 4) *After repatriation, help is available from my company when I have a problem;*
- 5) *After repatriation, my company would forgive an honest mistake on my part;*
- 6) *After repatriation, if given the opportunity, my company would take advantage of me (R);*
- 7) *After repatriation, my company shows very little concern for me (R);*
- 8) *After repatriation, my company is willing to help me if I need a special favor.*

The reliability analysis of the eight items measuring perceived organizational support after

repatriation showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.875, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### 3.3.3 Job embeddedness after repatriation

Job embeddedness is defined as the overall set of forces that prevent employees from leaving an organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). This study adopted the global job embeddedness scale developed by Crossley et al. (2007), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this study, forming the measurement items for job embeddedness after repatriation.

The scale includes seven measurement items as follows:

- 1) *I feel attached to this company;*
- 2) *It would be difficult for me to leave this company;*
- 3) *I'm too caught up in this company to leave;*
- 4) *I feel tied to this company;*
- 5) *I simply could not leave the company that I work for;*
- 6) *I am tightly connected to this company;*
- 7) *It would not be easy for me to leave this company.*

The reliability analysis of the seven items measuring job embeddedness after repatriation showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.878, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### 3.3.4 Psychological entitlement

Psychological entitlement refers to an individual's intrinsic perception or belief that they deserve privileges, advantages, or special treatment that others do not receive (Campbell et al., 2004). This study adopted the psychological entitlement scale developed by Campbell et al. (2004), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this study, forming the measurement items for psychological entitlement. The scale includes eight measurement items as follows:

- 1) *In this company, I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others;*
- 2) *In this company, great things should come to me;*
- 3) *In this company, I demand the best because I'm worth it;*
- 4) *In this company, I deserve special treatment;*
- 5) *I deserve more things in this company;*
- 6) *In this company, people like me deserve an extra break now and then;*

7) *In this company, things should go my way;*

8) *In this company, I feel entitled to more of everything.*

The reliability analysis of the eight items measuring psychological entitlement showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.769, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### 3.3.5 Perceived person-job fit

This study adopted the scale developed by Kraimer et al. (2012), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this research, forming the measurement items for perceived person-job fit. The scale includes six measurement items as follows:

1) *I like the members of my work group;*

2) *My job utilizes my skills and talents well;*

3) *I feel like I am a good match for this company;*

4) *I fit with the company's culture;*

5) *I like the authority and responsibility I have at this company;*

6) *I can reach my professional goals working for this company.*

The reliability analysis of the six items measuring perceived person-job fit showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.865, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### 3.3.6 Repatriate knowledge transfer

Repatriate knowledge transfer refers to the process by which repatriated employees transfer the knowledge acquired in the host country to employees of the enterprise in the home country (Froese et al., 2021). This study adopted the scale developed by Froese et al. (2021), which was translated and modified to fit the specific context of this research, forming the measurement items for repatriate knowledge transfer. The scale includes eight measurement items, covering two dimensions: task-oriented knowledge transfer and relationship-oriented knowledge transfer. The specific items are as follows:

1) *I share with my colleagues knowledge of the host country's customs (such as traditions, national holidays);*

2) *I share with my colleagues market knowledge (such as structures, products, customer needs);*

3) *I share with my colleagues knowledge of working style in the host country;*

- 4) *I share with my colleagues knowledge of structures and processes in the host unit;*
- 5) *I share with my colleagues the understanding of the behavioral patterns of people in the host country;*
- 6) *I share with my colleagues the understanding of different ways of thinking in the host country;*
- 7) *I share with my colleagues cross-cultural understanding of work relationships;*
- 8) *I share with my colleagues the understanding of relationship between host unit and headquarters.*

The reliability analysis of the eight items measuring repatriate knowledge transfer showed that the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.885, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale.

### 3.3.7 Control variables

In addition to the four main research variables included in the hypothesized model—perceived organizational support during expatriation, perceived organizational support after repatriation, perceived person-job fit, psychological entitlement, job embeddedness, and repatriate knowledge transfer—this study also considered several control variables, including common demographic characteristics. Based on previous research findings regarding factors that may influence repatriate knowledge transfer (Froese et al., 2021), this study selected characteristics such as gender, age, education level, marital status, and job position as control variables, which are detailed as follows.

Gender: A categorical variable coded as “0” for female and “1” for male.

Age: Participants reported their actual age in years.

Education level: A continuous variable coded from 1 to 5, where higher values indicate a higher education level. “1” represents middle school or lower, “2” represents high school/vocational school, “3” represents junior college, “4” represents undergraduate, and “5” represents graduate or above.

Marital status: A categorical variable coded from 1 to 4, where “1” represents single, “2” represents married without children, “3” represents married with children, and “4” represents others. To further control the potential impact of marital status on repatriates, we coded the unmarried as “0” and married as “1” in subsequent analysis.

Job position: A continuous variable coded from 1 to 4, where higher values indicate a higher title. “1” represents general employees, “2” represents frontline managers, “3” represents middle managers, and “4” represents senior managers.

The following section will introduce the sampling and data collection process of this study, as well as the descriptive statistical analysis, reliability analysis, and CFA of the sample.

### **3.4 Sampling and data collection**

#### **3.4.1 Sampling**

- **Sample population**

This study aims to explore how and when incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation influences repatriate knowledge transfer. For that purpose, participants must have prior expatriation experience and have already been repatriated. Thus, this study invited participants who have expatriation experience from a large state-owned multinational enterprise where the author is employed, and distributed survey questionnaires to those who have completed overseas assignment and been repatriated.

This enterprise operates in the construction and engineering sector across 100 countries and regions globally, with ongoing contract commitments exceeding 35 billion USD. It is dedicated to becoming a world-class engineering contractor, industrial investment operator, and urban comprehensive developer. The enterprise possesses a full-industry-chain advantage (encompassing investment, construction, and operation) in areas such as ports, railways, roads, bridges, ecological and environmental protection, and clean energy, enabling it to provide comprehensive implementation solutions for its clients and continuously create value for various stakeholders. Notably, 83% of its employees have expatriation experience, with expatriates primarily responsible for project management and market expansion in host countries. The main destinations include countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America.

- **Sample size**

To ensure the validity of the research findings, considering the difficulty of data collection and practical constraints, the author invited 400 colleagues from the enterprise where he works to participate in the study, which accounts for approximately 80% of all employees with overseas assignment experience who have returned to home country. These participants all have expatriate work experience and have been repatriated, making them well-suited to respond to the questions involved in this study. Each participant who completed the questionnaire received a monetary reward of 5 RMB.



### 3.4.2 Data collection

- Pilot-test

To validate the survey questionnaire, this study invited five human resource management professionals to provide feedback for the questionnaire's revision and adjustment. Since the measurement scales used in this study have been widely applied in previous research and have demonstrated good reliability and validity, all five experts approved the measurement items and deemed them suitable for distribution to participants.

- Formal questionnaire distribution and collection

With the assistance and support of the enterprise's human resource management department, the author distributed the survey questionnaire to participants via online form. To minimize the impact of common method variance (CMV) on the research results, the questionnaire was distributed in three waves with an interval of two weeks between each wave, aiming to measure the independent variable, the mediator and moderators, and the dependent variable, respectively. In each survey round, participants were required to provide the last four digits of their mobile phone numbers, enabling us to match their responses across the three surveys.

In the first round, the author distributed the questionnaire via WeChat messages to 400 employees who had prior expatriate experience and had already repatriated. This first questionnaire measured perceived organizational support during expatriation, perceived organizational support after repatriation, and the participants' demographic characteristics. A total of 340 employees responded, resulting in an effective response rate of 85%.

The second round of survey started two weeks later. The second questionnaire was distributed to the 340 participants who had completed the first questionnaire, aiming to measure job embeddedness after repatriation, perceived person-job fit, and psychological entitlement. A total of 267 participants completed the second questionnaire, resulting in an effective response rate of 78.5%.

After another two weeks, the third round of survey was conducted. The third questionnaire was distributed to the 267 participants who had completed the second questionnaire. This final questionnaire measured repatriate knowledge transfer. A total of 205 participants completed the survey, with an effective response rate of 76.8%. These 205 valid responses constituted the final sample for this study.

The data collection process, along with the variables measured and the sample sizes at each round, is summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Data collection details

Survey round	Measured variables	Distributed questionnaires	Returned questionnaires	Effective response rate
Time 1	Perceived organizational support during expatriation, perceived organizational support after repatriation, and demographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, marital status, and job position)	400	340	85%
Time 2 (after two weeks)	Job embeddedness after repatriation, perceived person-job fit, psychological entitlement	340	267	78.5%
Time 3 (after another two weeks)	Knowledge transfer after repatriation	267	205	76.8%

### 3.5 Reliability analysis

Reliability refers to the consistency and reliability of measurement results. A well-constructed scale should produce stable and consistent results, meaning that repeated measurements should yield similar outcomes.

There are various methods for calculating reliability coefficients. In particular, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  has been widely used in academic research to assess the reliability of measurement scales. The threshold for Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is set at 0.7 (Christmann & Van Aelst, 2006), meaning that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for all scales must exceed this critical value. As indicated in the previous sections, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for all variables in this study were above this conventional threshold, indicating that the scales were suitable for subsequent analysis.

### 3.6 Validity analysis

Validity analysis assesses the validity of a measurement, primarily including convergent validity and discriminant validity. Since this study employed well-established scales that have been widely used in previous research and have demonstrated good convergent validity, in this study, we only conducted CFA to assess discriminant validity (Xia & Yang, 2019), and AMOS 25.0 was used for that purpose.

To ensure the rigor of the model data, several fit indices are selected to evaluate the CFA results, including the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The key model fit indices and their evaluation criteria are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Criteria for CFA indices

Indicator	Criteria
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	The closer to 0, the better
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	Threshold set at less than 0.08; below 0.06 is considered excellent
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	Threshold set at greater than 0.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)	Threshold set at greater than 0.90
Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ )	Threshold set at below 5; between 1 and 3 is considered good

The CFA results are shown in Table 3.3. The six-factor model (the hypothesized model) demonstrated a good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 1.832$ , CFI = 0.938, TLI = 0.927, RMSEA = 0.064). More specifically, the  $\chi^2/df$  value was below 2, the values of CFI and TLI were both above 0.9, and RMSEA was below 0.08, making this model significantly superior to the other five alternative models. The results indicated that the hypothesized six-factor model had the best fit, with good discriminant validity among the variables.

Table 3.3 CFA results

Models	Factors	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
	6 factors:						
Model 1	POSE, POSR, Fit, PE, JE, KT	393.908	215	1.832	.938	.927	.064
	5 factors:						
Model 2	POSE+POSR, Fit, PE, JE, KT	679.709	220	3.090	.840	.816	.101
	4 factors:						
Model 3	POSE+POSR+Fit, PE, JE, KT	782.045	224	3.491	.805	.780	.110
	3 factors:						
Model 4	POSE+POSR+Fit+PE, JE, KT	967.020	227	4.260	.742	.712	.126
	2 factors:						
Model 5	POSE+POSR+Fit+PE+JE, KT	1005.310	229	4.390	.729	.701	.129
	1 factor:						
Model 6	POSE+POSR+Fit+PE+JE+KT	1140.519	230	4.959	.683	.651	.139

Note: POSE = Perceived organizational support during expatriation, POSR = Perceived organizational support after repatriation, Fit = Perceived person-job fit, PE = Psychological Entitlement, JE = Job embeddedness, KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer; “+” indicates the merging of two factors into one.

In the five-factor model, the perceived organizational support during expatriation and the perceived organizational support after repatriation were merged into one factor (Model 2,  $\chi^2/df = 3.090$ , CFI = 0.840, TLI = 0.816, RMSEA = 0.101). In the four-factor model, the perceived person-job fit was merged with the perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation into one factor (Model 3,  $\chi^2/df = 3.491$ , CFI = 0.805, TLI = 0.780, RMSEA = 0.110). The three-factor model further merged psychological entitlement with perceived person-job fit and the perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation (Model 4,  $\chi^2/df = 4.260$ , CFI = 0.742, TLI = 0.712, RMSEA = 0.126). In the two-factor model,

job embeddedness was merged with psychological entitlement, perceived person-job fit, and the perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation into a single factor (Model 5,  $\chi^2/df = 4.390$ , CFI = 0.729, TLI = 0.701, RMSEA = 0.129). Lastly, the one-factor model merged all the above-mentioned variables into a single factor (Model 6,  $\chi^2/df = 4.959$ , CFI = 0.683, TLI = 0.651, RMSEA = 0.139).

In general, this study confirmed that the measurement model has good overall fitting, strong factor loading, sufficient reliability and convergence/discriminant validity, laying a reliable foundation for the subsequent hypothesis testing.

This chapter provides a detailed introduction to the research methods used in this study, including the research design, questionnaire design and content, the employed measurement scales, sample sources, data collection process, and basic sample characteristics. Additionally, reliability and validity analyses, as well as CFA, were conducted. The results validated the collected data and the measurement, indicating that the data were suitable for subsequent empirical analysis.

In the next chapter, we will focus on the data analysis process and results, including the statistical methods used and the analysis procedures.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter introduces the statistical methods used in this study, reports the data analysis results, and provides interpretations and explanations of the findings. The data analyses mainly include correlation analysis, response surface analysis, mediation effect testing, and moderation effect testing.

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of the sample are shown in Table 4.1. Among the sample in this study, there were 169 male participants, accounting for 82.4%, and 36 female participants, representing 17.6%. The mean age of the participants was 33.5 years old ( $SD = 0.43$ ).

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics

	Characteristic	n	Percentage
Gender	Male	169	82.4%
	Female	36	17.6%
Education level	High school or below	1	0.5%
	Junior college	45	22%
	Undergraduate	116	56.6%
	Graduate or above	43	21%
Marital status	Single	28	13.7%
	Married without children	58	28.3%
	Married with children	118	57.6%
	Others	1	0.5%
Job position	General employee	72	35.1%
	Frontline manager	103	50.2%
	Middle manager	30	14.6%

Note: N = 205.

In terms of education level, 45 participants had a junior college education, accounting for 22%; 116 had an undergraduate education, making up 56.6%, and 43 had a graduate education or higher, representing 21%.

Regarding marital status, 28 participants were single, accounting for 13.7%, while 176 were married, making up 85.9%. Among the married participants, 58 were married without children, accounting for 28.3% of the total sample, and 118 were married with children, representing 57.6%.

In terms of job position, 72 participants were general employees, accounting for 35.1%, 103 were frontline managers, making up 50.2%, and 30 were middle managers, representing

14.6%.

On average, participants had been expatriated 2.6 times ( $SD = 0.11$ ), with a mean expatriation duration of 22.8 months ( $SD = 0.74$ ). The mean time since their repatriation was 7.8 months ( $SD = 0.16$ ).

## 4.2 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to examine the relationships between two or more variables, allowing for a preliminary assessment of the linear associations among research variables. Management research primarily employs Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of the linear associations between variables. To preliminarily examine whether there are interactions among the variables in the hypothesized model, this study conducted a correlation analysis using SPSS 23.0.

The means, standard deviations ( $SD$ ), and correlation coefficients of the variables are reported in Table 4.2, where the reliability coefficients of each variable are shown in the brackets on the diagonal. As shown in Table 4.2, perceived organizational support during expatriation was significantly negatively associated with both job embeddedness after repatriation ( $r = -0.45, p < 0.001$ ) and repatriate knowledge transfer ( $r = -0.49, p < 0.001$ ). Perceived organizational support after repatriation was significantly positively associated with both job embeddedness after repatriation ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.001$ ) and repatriate knowledge transfer ( $r = 0.71, p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, job embeddedness after repatriation was significantly positively associated with repatriate knowledge transfer ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.001$ ). The results also showed that perceived person-job fit was significantly positively related to both job embeddedness ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.001$ ) and repatriate knowledge transfer ( $r = 0.63, p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, psychological entitlement was significantly negatively associated with both job embeddedness ( $r = -0.36, p < 0.001$ ) and repatriate knowledge transfer ( $r = -0.30, p < 0.001$ ).

Table 4.2 Mean, SD, and correlation coefficients of variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	.82	.38	1										
2. Age	33.46	6.11	.30**	1									
3. Education	3.98	.67	-.13	.07	1								
4. Marriage	.86	.35	.07	.40**	-.01	1							
5. Position	1.80	.68	.24**	.47**	.43**	.29**	1						
6. POSE	3.69	.38	.04	-.06	.03	-.02	-.01	(.839)					
7. POSR	2.31	.43	.01	.16*	.01	-.05	.19**	-.32**	(.875)				
8. Fit	2.12	.47	.07	.14*	.15*	-.10	.23**	-.31**	.68**	(.865)			
9. PE	4.19	.33	.15*	.01	-.27**	.04	-.12	.14	-.22**	-.35**	(.769)		
10. JE	2.21	.57	.08	.22**	.13	-.01	.24**	-.45**	.67**	.67**	-.36**	(.878)	
11. KT	2.03	.51	.01	.11	.13	-.13	.15*	-.49**	.71**	.63**	-.30**	.68**	(.885)

Note: N = 205, \*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*  $p < 0.01$ . Gender: “0” for female and “1” for male; Age: actual age in years; Education: “1” represents middle school or lower, “2” represents high school/vocational school, “3” represents junior college, “4” represents undergraduate, and “5” represents graduate or above; Marriage: “0” for unmarried and “1” for married; Position: “1” represents general employees, “2” represents frontline managers, “3” represents middle managers, and “4” represents senior managers. POSE = Perceived organizational support during expatriation, POSR = Perceived organizational support after repatriation, Fit = Perceived person-job fit, PE = Psychological Entitlement, JE = Job embeddedness, KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer. The reliability coefficients of each variable are shown in the brackets.

These results provide preliminary statistical support for the hypothesized model in this study, laying a foundation for subsequent regression analysis.

### 4.3 Response surface analysis

Response surface analysis is primarily used to explore congruence hypotheses and the effects of incongruence between variables, examining how the dependent variable changes when two variables simultaneously change in a congruent or incongruent manner (Shanock et al., 2010). The advantage of response surface analysis is that it allows the results of polynomial regression to be visually represented, making it easier to observe how the dependent variable changes with the change in different combinations of independent variables (e.g., both high, both low, one high and one low). Additionally, through the variations in polynomial coefficients, it can help validate corresponding hypotheses.

This study proposes that the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation has a positive impact on repatriate knowledge transfer. That is, compared to the scenario where there is incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, repatriates carry out more knowledge transfer when perceived organizational support before and after repatriation is congruent. In particular, when perceived organizational support during expatriation is high and perceived organizational support after repatriation is low, repatriate knowledge transfer is significantly lower. Therefore, this study employed polynomial regression and response surface analysis to test the research hypotheses (Qiu et al., 2020). Compared to directly calculating the difference between perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation to determine its impact on repatriate knowledge transfer, response surface analysis better retains the specific values of perceived organizational support at the two stages (i.e., both high, both low, or one high and one low) and facilitates to identify whether high perceived organizational support during expatriation or high perceived organizational support after repatriation is more conducive to repatriate knowledge transfer.

Following the approach of J. Edwards and Parry (1993), this study first constructed the polynomial regression equation:

$$Z = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4X*Y + b_5Y^2 + e \quad (4.1)$$

where “Z” represents repatriate knowledge transfer, “Y” represents perceived organizational support after repatriation, “X” represents perceived organizational support during expatriation,  $b_0$ ,  $b_1$ ,  $b_2$ ,  $b_3$ ,  $b_4$ , and  $b_5$  are the constant term and regression coefficients



for  $X$ ,  $Y$ ,  $X^2$ ,  $X*Y$ , and  $Y^2$ , respectively, and “ $e$ ” is the error term.

Then, we calculated the coefficients of the polynomial regression equation and examined the slope and curvature of the response surface along the congruence line ( $X = Y$ ) and the incongruence line ( $X = -Y$ ). Specifically, the slope of the cross-section of the response surface along the congruence line ( $b_1 + b_2$ ) was used to test Hypothesis 1 (H1), the slope along the incongruence line ( $b_1 - b_2$ ) was used to test Hypothesis 2 (H2), and the curvature ( $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ ) was used to test Hypothesis 3 (H3). For testing Hypothesis 4 (H4), Hypothesis 5 (H5), and Hypothesis 6 (H6), the original values of  $X$ ,  $Y$ ,  $X^2$ ,  $Y^2$ , and  $X*Y$  were multiplied by their respective regression coefficients in the polynomial regression model and summed to create a block variable. This block variable was then analyzed using hierarchical regression and the Bootstrapping method (J. Edwards & Cable, 2009).

The analysis results are shown in Table 4.3. We found that the slope of the cross-section of the response surface along the congruence line was significantly positive (Slope = 0.79,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that in the case of congruence in organizational support, compared to the scenario of “low organizational support during expatriation – low organizational support after repatriation”, repatriate knowledge transfer was higher under “high organizational support during expatriation – high organizational support after repatriation”. Moreover, the curvature of the cross-section of the response surface along the incongruence line was significantly negative (Curvature = -0.12,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the more congruent perceived organizational support before and after repatriation is, the greater the repatriate knowledge transfer. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 4.3 Polynomial regression and response surface analysis results

Variables	Model 1	KT Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	4.06***	4.09***	4.15***
Control variables			
Gender	0.03	0.07	0.08
Age	0.07	0.07	0.10*
Education level	0.08	0.09	0.12*
Marital status	0.02	0.02	0.03
Job position	0.03	0.06	0.07
Independent variables			
POSE		0.06*	0.09
POSR		0.64***	0.68***
POSE <sup>2</sup>			0.12*
POSE * POSR			0.19**
POSR <sup>2</sup>			0.08
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.68	0.72
$\Delta R^2$		0.67***	0.08*
Congruence line			
Slope ( $b_1 + b_2$ )			0.79***

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Variables	Model 1	KT Model 2	Model 3
Curvature ( $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$ )			0.24***
Incongruence line			
Slope ( $b_1 - b_2$ )			-0.65***
Curvature ( $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ )			-0.12*

Note: POSE = Perceived organizational support during expatriation, POSR = Perceived organizational support after repatriation, Fit = Perceived person-job fit, PE = Psychological Entitlement, JE = Job embeddedness, KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer; N = 205, \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

Furthermore, the slope of the cross-section of the response surface along the incongruence line was significantly negative (Slope = -0.65,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that in the case of incongruence in organizational support, compared to the scenario of “high organizational support during expatriation – low organizational support after repatriation”, repatriate knowledge transfer was higher under “low organizational support during expatriation – high organizational support after repatriation”, thereby supporting H2.

Moreover, the curvature along the incongruence line was significantly positive (Curvature = 0.12,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that as the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation increased, repatriate knowledge transfer also increased. Therefore, H3 was supported.

To present the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer more intuitively, this study plotted a three-dimensional response surface based on the data from the polynomial regression analysis results, as shown in Figure 4.1. It can be observed that high levels of repatriate knowledge transfer were located in the rear corner of the three-dimensional graph, indicating that when perceived organizational support levels during expatriation and after repatriation were both high, repatriate knowledge transfer was also greater. Conversely, low levels of repatriate knowledge transfer were located in the front corner of the three-dimensional graph, suggesting that when perceived organizational support levels during expatriation and after repatriation were both low, repatriate knowledge transfer was also lower.

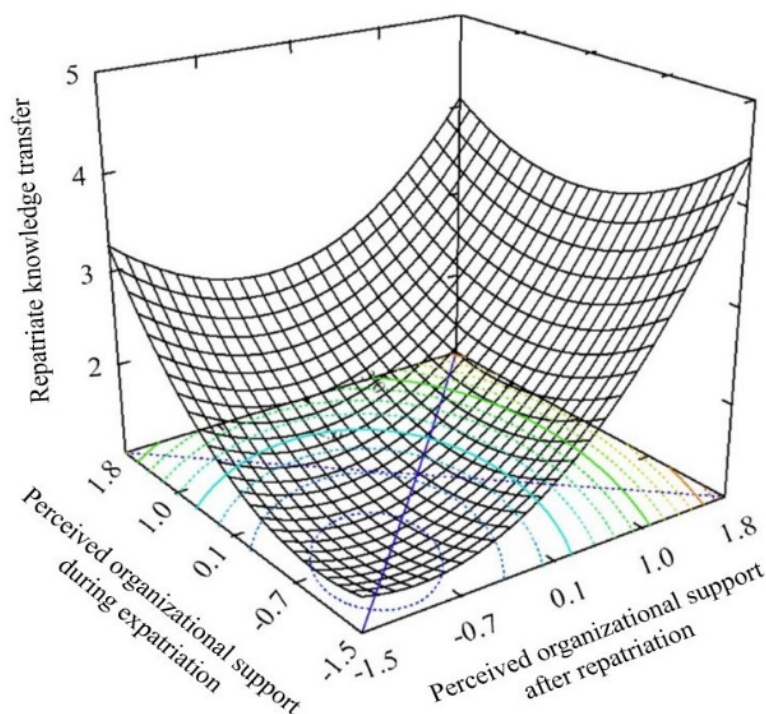


Figure 4.1 Three-dimensional response surface analysis graph

#### 4.4 Mediation effect test

This study hypothesizes that job embeddedness mediates the effect of the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. To test the mediation effect of job embeddedness, this study first applied the mediation effect testing method proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986).

As shown by the results in Table 4.4, the block variable had a significant positive effect on job embeddedness (Model 2,  $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); the block variable significantly positively affected repatriate knowledge transfer (Model 4,  $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); job embeddedness had a significant positive effect on repatriate knowledge transfer (Model 5,  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); and when both the block variable and job embeddedness were included in the regression equation, the block variable still had a significant positive effect on job embeddedness (Model 6,  $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results indicate that job embeddedness partially mediated the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.

Table 4.4 Hierarchical regression results

Variable	JE				KT	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	2.58***	1.82***	3.93***	5.16***	4.96***	5.73***
Control variables						
Gender	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
Age	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.09
Education level	0.23*	0.21*	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.08
Marital status	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.06
Job position	0.10	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.12	0.14
Independent variable						
Block variable		0.28***		0.32***		0.24***
Mediator						
JE					0.42***	0.33***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.12	0.02	0.26	0.22	0.36
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		0.08***		0.24***	0.20***	0.10***

Note: JE = Job embeddedness, KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer; N=205, \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

To further test the mediation effect of job embeddedness, this study employed the Bootstrapping method (M. Edwards & Peccei, 2010; Wen et al., 2010). Compared to conventional mediation effect analysis methods, the advantage of the Bootstrapping method is that it does not require the assumption that the sample follows a normal distribution. Instead, it repeatedly resamples with replacement from the given sample (Wen et al., 2010) to generate multiple Bootstrap samples. In other words, the indirect effect was estimated through repeated sampling.

This study adopted the confidence interval estimation method of the Bootstrapping approach for mediation effect analysis, with 5,000 repeated resamples and a confidence interval set at 95%. That means if the total effect does not include 0 within the 95% confidence interval, it indicates that the product of the coefficients is significant, confirming the existence of a mediation effect.

As shown in Table 4.5, the indirect effect of the block variable on repatriate knowledge transfer through job embeddedness was estimated at 0.25, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.09, 0.43], which does not include 0. This result indicated that the mediation effect of job embeddedness was significant, thus supporting H2.

Table 4.5 Indirect effect analysis of job embeddedness

	Effect	se	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect	0.55	0.07	0.41	0.70
Indirect effect	0.25	0.09	0.09	0.43

## 4.5 Moderation effect test

This study hypothesizes that perceived person-job fit after repatriation moderates the

relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, such that compared to lower perceived person-job fit after repatriation, higher perceived person-job fit after repatriation accentuates the positive impact of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer.

In addition, this study hypothesizes that the psychological entitlement after repatriation moderates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. Specifically, compared to low psychological entitlement, high psychological entitlement after repatriation weakens the positive impact of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer.

This study employed hierarchical regression analysis to test the moderation effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement. The results are presented in Table 4.6. We found that the interaction term between perceived person-job fit after repatriation and the block variable had a significant positive effect on repatriate knowledge transfer ( $\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that perceived person-job fit after repatriation enhanced the positive impact of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. That is, when perceived person-job fit after repatriation was high, the positive impact of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer was stronger. Thus, H3 was supported. However, the interaction term between psychological entitlement after repatriation and the block variable did not show a significant effect on repatriate knowledge transfer ( $\beta = 0.16, ns$ ), indicating that the moderation effect of psychological entitlement was not significant. Therefore, H4 was not supported.

Table 4.6 Moderation effect analysis results

Variable	KT			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	3.93***	5.16***	4.96***	4.73***
Control variables				
Gender	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
Age	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.09
Education level	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.08
Marital status	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.06
Job position	0.10	0.09	0.12	0.14
Independent variables				
Block variable		0.26**	0.48***	0.32***
Fit		0.45***		
PE		0.19		
Product term				

Variable	KT			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Block variable * Fit			0.39***	
Block variable * PE				0.16
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.12	0.02	0.26

Note: Fit = Perceived person-job fit, PE = Psychological Entitlement, KT = Repatriate knowledge transfer; N=205, \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

To more intuitively illustrate the moderation effect of perceived person-job fit after repatriation on the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, this study followed the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991) and plotted the corresponding moderation effect graph. The graph demonstrates the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer when the moderator, perceived person-job fit, is one standard deviation above (+1 SD) and below (-1 SD) the mean level.

As shown in Figure 4.2, when perceived person-job fit was high (+1 SD), the effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer was stronger compared to when perceived person-job fit was low (-1 SD). This indicates that high perceived person-job fit significantly moderated the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. Specifically, this relationship was accentuated by a high level of perceived person-job fit. Thus, H3 was supported.

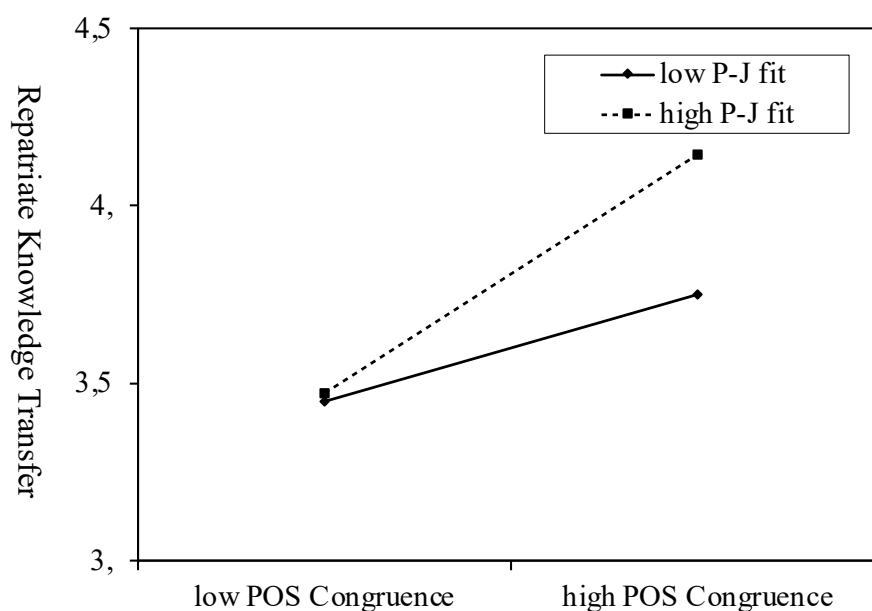


Figure 4.2 Interaction effect of congruence in perceived organizational support and perceived person-job fit on repatriate knowledge transfer

The hypothesis testing results of this study are summarized in Table 4.7. Except for H4, which was not supported, the remaining five hypotheses were confirmed.

Table 4.7 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses	Results
H1.1: <i>In case of congruence, compared to the scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”, repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer when they experience “high perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”.</i>	Supported
H1.2: <i>In case of incongruence, compared to the scenario of “high perceived organizational support during expatriation and low perceived organizational support after repatriation”, repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer in the scenario of “low perceived organizational support during expatriation and high perceived organizational support after repatriation”.</i>	Supported
H1.3: <i>Compared to scenarios of incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, repatriates engage in greater knowledge transfer when they perceive congruent organizational support.</i>	Supported
H2: <i>Job embeddedness after repatriation mediates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.</i>	Supported
H3: <i>Perceived person-job fit accentuates the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.</i>	Supported
H4: <i>Psychological entitlement weakens the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer.</i>	Not supported

The path coefficients of the research model are presented in Figure 4.3. As shown in Figure 4.3, congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation positively impacted repatriate knowledge transfer, while job embeddedness mediated this positive relationship. Person-job fit moderated the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer; however, the moderating effect of psychological entitlement was not significant.

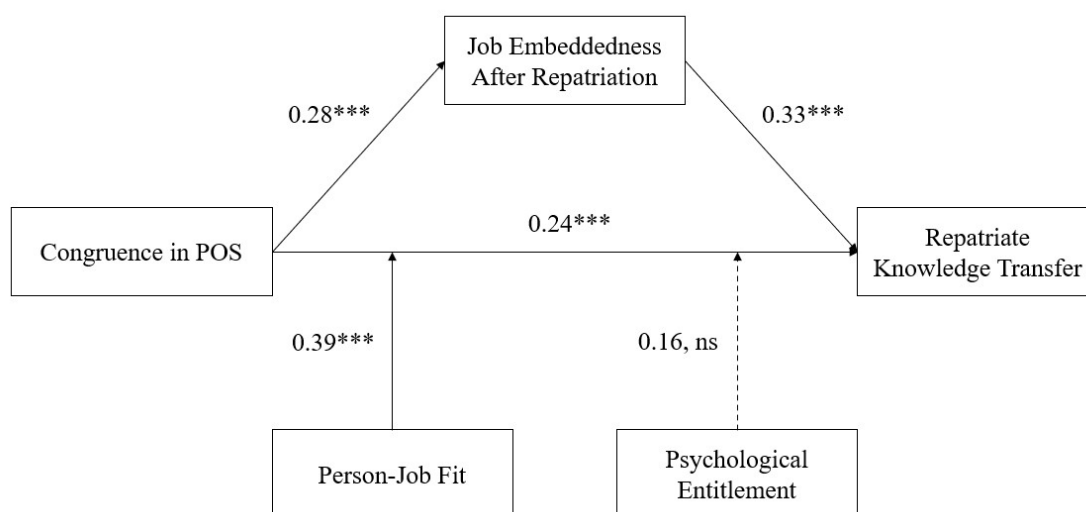


Figure 4.3 Path coefficients of the research model

This chapter presents the main statistical analyses conducted in this study and reports the corresponding results. The performed analyses include correlation analysis, response surface

analysis, mediation effect test, and moderation effect test. In addition, we also plotted a moderation effect graph. The results supported the proposed theoretical model and most of the research hypotheses.

The next chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the findings, present the theoretical and practical implications of this study, and point out its limitations and directions for future research.



## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents the main conclusions of this study and provides an in-depth discussion of the findings. It also introduces this study's theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and limitations, as well as suggestions for improvement. Based on that, future research directions are proposed.

### 5.1 Overview

In today's increasingly globalized world, multinational enterprises are relying more on expatriates to expand their business, acquire resources, and gain knowledge about overseas markets. After accumulating extensive experience and expertise abroad, repatriated employees need to readjust to the work and life in their home country. How to manage repatriates efficiently to facilitate their rapid adjustment to the new job positions and enable them to effectively transfer their acquired experience and knowledge during expatriate assignments to other employees upon repatriation has become a critical issue in multinational enterprises' human resource management practices.

This study focuses on the factors influencing repatriate knowledge transfer. Grounded in social exchange theory and psychological contract theory, it explored the influence mechanism of congruence in perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. In addition, based on job embeddedness theory, it examined the mediation effect of job embeddedness after repatriation and the moderation effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement.

Through statistical analysis of survey data collected at multiple time points from 205 repatriates in a large Chinese state-owned multinational enterprise, this study found that higher congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation led to greater knowledge transfer by repatriates. Furthermore, job embeddedness after repatriation partially mediated the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. This study also revealed that when repatriates perceived a higher level of person-job fit after repatriation, the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on knowledge transfer was stronger. However, the moderation effect of psychological entitlement on this relationship was not significant.

## 5.2 Discussion of results

The sample for this study was repatriates from a large Chinese state-owned multinational enterprise, a population that has received relatively little attention in previous research. As key players in China's multinational business landscape, Chinese state-owned enterprises play an important role in the global economy. Research on this population helps fill gaps in the existing literature and contributes to further deepening our understanding of the work behaviors of repatriates.

In the research sample, 82.4% of the participants were male, while 17.6% were female. This distribution aligns with the general characteristics of expatriates, where male employees typically dominate. This gender ratio is also consistent with the results of previous studies. For example, in the study by Kraimer et al. (2012), male participants accounted for over 70%; in Froese et al. (2021), 88.4% of the sample were male; and in Schuster et al. (2022), the percentage of male participants was 77%. Across these studies, males have been found to take a higher percentage of expatriate employees. These findings confirm that male employees constitute the majority in international expatriate assignments, while female employees remain a minority in this context.

Moreover, on average, the number of expatriate assignments taken by the participants was 2.6 ( $SD = 0.11$ ), with a mean expatriation duration of 22.8 months ( $SD = 0.74$ ), indicating that the sample had substantial international work experience. The survey results also showed that the mean perceived organizational support during expatriation was 3.69 ( $SD = 0.38$ ), while the mean perceived organizational support after repatriation decreased to 2.31 ( $SD = 0.43$ ), which was significantly lower than the former. This finding suggests that there is a great incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation. More specifically, the perceived organizational support levels declined after repatriation. This result aligns with the study's expectations, demonstrating a high degree of consistency between the research hypotheses and the real-world situation.

Furthermore, the mean psychological entitlement reported by the participants was 4.19 ( $SD = 0.33$ ), indicating that repatriates generally exhibit high levels of psychological entitlement. This result also aligns with this study's hypothesis that expatriation experience contributes to increased psychological entitlement among repatriates, leading them to expect special treatment from the organization. Such a psychological state is likely to influence repatriates' work attitudes and behaviors, making it a crucial issue for corporate managers to be concerned about and address.

In Froese et al. (2021), the reported mean score of repatriate knowledge transfer was 5.20/7 (SD = 1.52). In contrast, in this study, the reported mean score of repatriate knowledge transfer was 2.03/5 (SD = 0.51), which is significantly lower than the knowledge transfer levels observed in Froese et al. (2021). This finding suggests that repatriate knowledge transfer in the sample of this study was generally lower. One possible explanation is that Chinese employees, compared to their Western counterparts, tend to be more reserved in knowledge sharing. Another possibility is that the investigated enterprise in this study lacked effective incentive mechanisms to facilitate knowledge transfer.

In addition, the mean scores of perceived person-job fit (2.12/5, SD = 0.47) and job embeddedness (2.21/5, SD = 0.57) reported by the participants in this study were also relatively low. These results indicate that the repatriates in the sample enterprise generally perceived low levels of fit with their current job roles and had low levels of embeddedness in their organization. These factors could also have contributed to their lower levels of knowledge transfer after repatriation. As low levels of perceived person-job fit and low job embeddedness are detrimental to expatriates' knowledge transfer after repatriation, it is an issue that the sample enterprise should take seriously.

The findings of this study indicate that the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation significantly positively predicted the knowledge transfer of repatriates. Specifically, in the case of congruence in perceived organizational support, that is, when perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation is either consistently high or consistently low, repatriates tend to engage in more knowledge transfer. This finding suggests that organizations should maintain a consistent level of support for expatriates rather than making the support level fluctuate or unpredictable. Even in the scenario where perceived organizational support after repatriation is higher than during expatriation, the level of repatriate knowledge transfer remains lower than when perceived organizational support is consistently low at both stages. This indicates that it is not necessarily a decline in perceived organizational support that reduces knowledge transfer, but rather, if there is incongruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation, it would lead to reduced knowledge transfer.

While previous research has also found the positive impact of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer (Froese et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2021), Ye et al. (2021) primarily treated perceived organizational support as a moderator and did not explore its direct effect on repatriate knowledge transfer, whereas Froese et al. (2021) examined perceived organizational support only from a linear relationship perspective, arguing that higher levels of

perceived organizational support lead to greater knowledge transfer. This study extended this stream of research by conducting a more refined analysis of the relationship between perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer, particularly from the perspective of congruence versus incongruence in perceived organizational support. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the potential effects of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer.

This study found that the most favorable condition for repatriate knowledge transfer is the scenario when perceived organizational support is consistently high during expatriation and after repatriation. The second-best scenario is when perceived organizational support is consistently low at both stages. The third scenario, where perceived organizational support is low during expatriation but high after repatriation, is less effective, while the least favorable condition is the scenario where perceived organizational support is high during expatriation but low after repatriation. This finding underscores that maintaining congruence in organizational support is more important than simply increasing support at one stage or the other (i.e., during expatriation and after repatriation). Even when perceived organizational support is consistently low, repatriate knowledge transfer is greater than when perceived organizational support levels fluctuate. This finding carries significant implications for human resource management and knowledge management practices of multinational enterprises.

Moreover, this study revealed that higher levels of job embeddedness after repatriation were associated with greater repatriate knowledge transfer. Although Froese et al. (2021) also confirmed the positive effect of job embeddedness on repatriate knowledge transfer, their study only examined one dimension of job embeddedness—fit—without incorporating the other two dimensions, links and sacrifice. This study, however, examined the overall construct of job embeddedness by considering all dimensions and found its significant positive effect on repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby enriching and further advancing the research on the relationship between job embeddedness and repatriate knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the study also confirmed the mediation effect of job embeddedness in the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. This finding not only provides a new pathway for explaining how perceived organizational support influences repatriate knowledge transfer (Burmeister et al., 2015) but also expands the application of job embeddedness theory.

This study also explored the moderation effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement on the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. The results revealed that

when perceived person-job fit after repatriation was higher, the effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer was stronger. Although Froese et al. (2021) examined the mediating mechanisms in the relationship between perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer, they did not explore potential moderating mechanisms in this relationship. By testing the moderation effects, this study identified the boundary conditions for the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer, thus addressing the gaps in existing theories that lack explanatory power in certain contexts.

While this study confirmed the moderation effect of perceived person-job fit, it did not find significant evidence for the moderation effect of psychological entitlement. The author posits that the possible reasons mainly include the following.

First, Chinese state-owned enterprises have long emphasized the “company as home” culture, and employees may generally regard organizational support as a “deserved benefit” rather than an “extra favor”. When perceived organizational support before and after repatriation is congruent, regardless of the level of psychological entitlement, employees will transfer their knowledge based on the logic of “rewarding the family”. On the contrary, when perceived organizational support before and after repatriation is incongruent, both types of incongruence will make repatriates reduce knowledge transfer due to the belief that “the organization owes me”. Thus, the difference in the POS congruence–repatriate knowledge transfer slope between the high and low psychological entitlement groups is diminished. Besides, in the state-owned enterprises, salaries, promotions, and training are rigidly allocated based on “seniority and hierarchy”. Even individuals with a high psychological entitlement find it difficult to demand special treatment “beyond the system”. Without room for negotiation, psychological entitlement loses the situational conditions to accentuate or weaken the main effect.

Second, state-owned enterprises often enforce knowledge sharing through mechanisms such as formal meetings and document archiving, making knowledge transfer highly “institutionalized” rather than “voluntary reciprocal”, which diminishes the individual motivation differences among employees. Therefore, the moderating effect of high or low psychological entitlement on the “voluntary transfer” elastic range cannot be manifested. Besides, state-owned enterprises usually have standardized repatriation and resettlement process, leaving little room for personal negotiation. Thus, employees with high psychological entitlement cannot obtain additional resources through “knowledge retention”, thus losing the instrumental motivation to moderate the main effect.

Third, since psychological entitlement, perceived organizational support, and repatriate knowledge transfer were all self-reported in this study, individuals with high psychological entitlement may have overestimated their knowledge transfer due to socially desirable responding, thereby compressing the interaction effect. In addition, given the research sample of this study is concentrated in the same state-owned enterprise, the actual variance of the psychological entitlement may be limited by the ceiling effect, resulting in insufficient statistical power. Thus, future studies can consider collecting data from multiple sources and non-state-owned enterprises to further test the moderating effect of psychological entitlement.

### **5.3 Theoretical contributions**

This study explored the mechanism by which perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation influences repatriate knowledge transfer from the perspective of congruence or incongruence in perceived organizational support. The primary theoretical contributions of this study are as follows:

First, previous research on the impact of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer has primarily focused on the role of perceived organizational support after repatriation in promoting repatriate knowledge transfer (Froese et al., 2021). Very few studies have examined the impact of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer from the perspective of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation. This study comprehensively investigated perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and explored how the congruence or incongruence of these two perceptions affects repatriate knowledge transfer. For the first time, a two-dimensional configuration of “organizational support before repatriation and organizational support after repatriation” was constructed to explore the influence of the congruence/incongruence of the two types of perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer. Moreover, the concept of “congruence in perceived organizational support” was transformed into a new dimension of organizational support theory, expanding the vertical explanatory power of the classic model of organizational support theory by Eisenberger et al. (1997). This approach not only deepens our understanding of the relationship between perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer but also enriches and expands the research on the antecedents of repatriate knowledge transfer, providing a new perspective for exploring the influencing factors of repatriate knowledge transfer.

Second, this study examined the mediation effect of job embeddedness in the relationship

between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby revealing the underlying mechanism of this relationship and expanding the application scope of job embeddedness theory. The findings indicated that when expatriates perceived greater congruence in organizational support before and after repatriation, their job embeddedness also increased. Repatriates' higher levels of job embeddedness facilitate their greater participation in knowledge transfer activities upon repatriation, as they feel closely tied to the organization and trust that it will continue to support their career development. In other words, when expatriates perceive high levels of organizational support during their overseas assignments and continue to receive high levels of organizational support upon repatriation, they are more likely to transfer the knowledge and experience gained overseas to the home company. This congruence in perceived organizational support can enhance employees' sense of trust and belonging, thereby fostering their intention and behavior of sharing knowledge. Traditional job embeddedness theory primarily focuses on employees' motivation to remain in their current workplace (T. Lee et al., 2014) and the role of job embeddedness in reducing employees' turnover intention. However, this study links job embeddedness to repatriate knowledge transfer, offering a new theoretical perspective for understanding the role of expatriates in internal knowledge flows within multinational enterprises. This not only enriches the research content of job embeddedness theory but also provides valuable guidance for multinational enterprises' human resource management practices, helping them improve human resource management strategies and improve knowledge transfer efficiency in the context of global competition.

Third, this study identified the moderating role of perceived person-job fit in the relationship between the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. The findings revealed that when repatriated employees perceived a high level of person-job fit after returning, the impact of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer was accentuated. This finding not only aligns with the conclusions of previous research, which suggests that perceived person-job fit significantly influences repatriation adjustment (Shen & Hall, 2009), but also demonstrates that perceived person-job fit plays a positive role in promoting repatriate knowledge transfer. Repatriates who perceive a higher level of person-job fit are more likely to transfer the valuable knowledge and experience gained overseas to the home company because they feel a strong alignment between their job and their personal values, career goals, and professional skills. This high level of person-job fit enhances their sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization, making them more willing to contribute to the

enterprise.

Fourth, this study employed polynomial regression and response surface analysis (Shanock et al., 2010) to examine the impact of the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer. This methodological approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms by which different scenarios of congruence/incongruence in perceived organizational support affect repatriate knowledge transfer, making us recognize the importance of maintaining organizational support congruence for repatriates. The findings suggest that any scenario of incongruence in perceived organizational support is detrimental to repatriate knowledge transfer. When employees perceive incongruent organizational support during their expatriate assignments and after repatriation, they may feel confused and disappointed with the organization, leading to reduced intention to transfer knowledge and knowledge transfer efficiency. Therefore, maintaining congruence in organizational support is crucial for facilitating repatriate knowledge transfer. In addition, this research approach offers new perspectives and methodological innovations for future studies on repatriation.

## **5.4 Managerial implications**

This study provides valuable insights for multinational enterprises regarding the management of repatriated employees and expatriate knowledge management practices.

First, the study found that incongruence in perceived organizational support during expatriation and after repatriation had a significant negative impact on repatriate knowledge transfer. Therefore, multinational enterprises should recognize the importance of maintaining congruence in perceived organizational support throughout the expatriation and repatriation stages and ensure consistent organizational support in their management practices. Since multinational enterprises generally focus more on expatriates' adaptation in the host country, they often provide high levels of organizational support during the expatriation phase but reduce their support when expatriates have completed their international assignments and returned to their home country. The survey data in this study confirmed this, as the reported mean score of perceived organizational support during expatriation was significantly higher than that after repatriation. This decline (incongruence) in perceived organizational support may cause repatriates to feel that the enterprise no longer values their contributions or cares about their well-being, leading to a breach of psychological contracts, thus reducing their job embeddedness in the current organization. A low level of job embeddedness, in turn, will reduce



employees' knowledge transfer after repatriation. Therefore, multinational enterprises should ensure congruent organizational support before and after repatriation. Specifically, during the expatriation period, enterprises should provide continuous organizational support to the expatriates, including regular communication, career development guidance, material rewards, special promotion channels, and necessary psychological and living support. These measures can help expatriates adapt better to the local environment while feeling cared and supported by the enterprise, allowing them to engage more enthusiastically in their work and even consider the expatriate assignments as an important component of their career. After their repatriation, enterprises should maintain their support for them by regularly carrying out communication to understand their career development needs and expectations and providing adaptive training and assistance to facilitate their adjustment to the new work environment. Additionally, since repatriates may experience "reverse culture shock" and career adaptation pressure, enterprises should offer psychological counseling services to help them manage stress and enhance their psychological resilience.

Second, the study found that the effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer was mediated by job embeddedness. Therefore, multinational enterprises should adopt management measures that can enhance repatriates' job embeddedness. For example, enterprises can provide family support services for repatriates and their families, such as organizing community activities or employee family gatherings and assisting with children's schooling and spouses' employment. These measures not only allow repatriates to be more engaged and embedded into their work but also help to strengthen their sense of belonging to the organization. In addition, enterprises should develop a clear repatriation management plan to do early planning for repatriates' work and life upon repatriation, including assessment of employees' skills and experience, designing multiple career development paths for them, offering them with flexible career choices, and assisting with family-related affairs, thereby improving their satisfaction and job embeddedness after repatriation.

Third, this study revealed the moderation effect of perceived person-job fit in the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. When repatriates perceive a higher level of person-job fit, the effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer is stronger. Therefore, multinational enterprises should pay attention to improving repatriates' perceived person-job fit. For instance, they can do early planning for expatriates' positions after repatriation. During expatriation, enterprises should start discussing career development plans with expatriates to

understand their career goals and expectations, so as to ensure that the experience and skills they have accumulated overseas can be effectively utilized in their positions upon repatriation, giving full play to the expatriation experience. Before repatriation, enterprises should provide expatriates with detailed previews of their positions after repatriation, including job responsibilities, work environment, and expected outcomes, to help them be better prepared for their new roles. After repatriation, enterprises should provide them with skill development training tailored to their overseas work experiences and new job requirements to enhance their professional competitiveness. In addition, enterprises should provide career development guidance to repatriates, such as opportunities for internal promotion and cross-departmental job rotations, to support them in achieving their career goals. Moreover, enterprises can also flexibly adjust job responsibilities or tasks based on repatriates' performance and feedback to ensure a high level of fit perception between the job position and repatriates' capabilities and expectations.

Fourth, this study found that the majority of expatriates were male, accounting for approximately 80% of the sample. This may be because female employees tend to bear greater family and household responsibilities than males, making them face more challenges and obstacles when considering expatriation. Consequently, females may be more reluctant when deciding to take on expatriate assignments. However, another possible explanation is that enterprises may tend to favor male employees when selecting expatriates. On one hand, given the high work pressure associated with expatriate assignments, enterprises often assume that male employees are better choices as they are more suited to high-intensity assignments. On the other hand, enterprises may worry that female employees' family responsibilities could affect their job performance during expatriation, leading to a reduced proportion of female expatriates. However, in practice, female employees are not necessarily less adaptable to expatriation than their male counterparts, and in some cases, they may even perform better. Therefore, with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) receiving increasing attention in international organizations, multinational enterprises should eliminate gender stereotypes and consider increasing the proportion of females among expatriates, ensuring equal expatriation opportunities for female employees. This is not only in line with global trends but also a way to fully leverage the distinctive value that female employees bring to expatriate assignments. Moreover, this study calls on policymakers to consider the rights and interests of female employees in expatriate work and to introduce policies that reduce enterprises' gender biases, creating more favorable environments and conditions for females to participate in expatriate assignments.

Fifth, regarding knowledge management in multinational enterprises, particularly repatriate knowledge transfer, this study also offers several recommendations. First, multinational enterprises must recognize that repatriated employees are valuable assets to the enterprise. The knowledge and experience they have acquired during expatriate assignments contribute not only to their personal growth but also serve as a critical resource for the enterprise's global strategy. By implementing effective repatriation management and knowledge management strategies, Chinese multinational enterprises can maximize the utilization of these intellectual resources, thus ensuring and enhancing their competitive advantage in the global market and driving their sustainable development and success. To achieve this, multinational enterprises should establish mechanisms to transform the knowledge brought back by expatriates into strategic competitiveness of the enterprise. This may involve organizational structural adjustments, management process improvement, and the development of new products or new services. For example, enterprises can create a platform for knowledge sharing, such as internal websites, forums, and regular seminars, where expatriates are encouraged to share the knowledge, skills, and experiences they have acquired in host countries. Additionally, enterprises should encourage exchanges and collaboration across departments, especially those related to the expatriates' overseas tasks, to facilitate horizontal knowledge flow and integration, ultimately enhancing the organization's overall innovation capabilities.

Finally, multinational enterprises should cultivate an open and inclusive knowledge-sharing culture, encouraging employees to proactively share knowledge and experiences. For example, incentive mechanisms, such as reward systems and knowledge-sharing activities, can be established to increase employees' motivation to share knowledge. Enterprises are also suggested to develop evaluation mechanisms for knowledge transfer effectiveness, regularly gathering feedback from repatriates and other team members and adjusting knowledge transfer strategies accordingly to ensure the effectiveness and adaptiveness of knowledge transfer. In terms of knowledge integration, multinational enterprises should adapt the knowledge brought back by repatriates to the corporate culture of the home company, thus increasing the applicability and relevance of the transferred knowledge. By localizing the transferred knowledge, multinational enterprises can mitigate the resistance caused by cultural differences, thereby enhancing the acceptance of this knowledge within the organization, as well as its application effectiveness.

In summary, this study not only deepens our understanding of the relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer but also provides significant practical guidance for Chinese multinational

enterprises in managing repatriated employees. By ensuring congruent organizational support and enhancing person-job fit, multinational enterprises can more effectively facilitate repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby enhancing the entire organization's learning capacity, innovation capabilities, and global strategic competitiveness.

## **5.5 Research limitations and prospects**

Although this study strives for rigor and standardization in research design and statistical methods, it inevitably has certain limitations, like other similar studies. These limitations should be acknowledged to provide ideas and directions for further improvement in future research. The following section will elaborate on the limitations of this study and offer targeted suggestions for future research.

### **(1) Limitations of research design and data sources**

While this study employed a three-wave time-lagged survey design to collect data on the dependent variable, mediator, and independent variable separately, which helps reduce the impact of common method variance to some extent, the fact that all variables in this study were self-reported by the participants may limit its ability to fully establish the causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Self-reported data are susceptible to influences of factors such as subjective perceptions, memory biases, and social desirability, which may compromise the accuracy and reliability of the research findings. To overcome this limitation, future research could adopt more rigorous longitudinal research designs. For example, data could be collected once during the expatriate's overseas assignment, measuring perceived organizational support, work attitudes, and behavior during expatriation. Then, after the expatriate completes the overseas assignment and returns to the home country, another round of data collection could be conducted to measure their perceived organizational support, work attitudes, and behavior (e.g., knowledge transfer behavior) after repatriation. This type of cross-time-point data collection method allows researchers to more clearly track the dynamic changes among the variables, providing a more accurate understanding of their causal relationships.

In addition, future studies could reduce the impact of common-source bias by collecting data from multiple groups. For example, the dependent variable, repatriate knowledge transfer, could be evaluated by the repatriates' colleagues or immediate supervisors, rather than relying solely on self-reported responses. This multi-source data collection approach can effectively minimize the biases associated with single-source data, thereby enhancing the reliability of

research findings.

Beyond longitudinal design and multi-source data collection, experimental research methods could also be employed in future studies to further explore the causal logic between congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation and repatriate knowledge transfer. Experimental studies, by manipulating the independent variable and randomly assigning participants, can more precisely test the causal relationships between variables. For example, a scenario-based experiment could be designed in which expatriates are randomly assigned to groups with different organizational support conditions (e.g., high organizational support during expatriation and low organization support after repatriation), and subsequently, their knowledge transfer behaviors upon repatriation are observed. This method would allow for a more direct examination of the mechanism through which congruence in perceived organizational support influences repatriate knowledge transfer.

#### (2) Limitation of mediation effect analysis

When examining the mechanism by which congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation influences repatriate knowledge transfer, this study only considered job embeddedness as a mediator. However, individuals' knowledge transfer is a complex psychological and behavioral process, where other potential mediators, such as organization-based self-esteem and psychological contract fulfillment/breach, may also play a role. Future research could adopt alternative theoretical perspectives to further examine the mechanisms through which congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation influences repatriate knowledge transfer, as well as other potential mediating pathways. For example, psychological empowerment theory suggests that individuals with a higher level of psychological empowerment are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors. Whether the congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation enhances repatriates' psychological empowerment and subsequently facilitates repatriate knowledge transfer is a topic that warrants further exploration in future studies.

In addition, future research could consider other potential mediators, such as job satisfaction, professional identification, and organizational commitment. Examining multi-dimensional mediation effects enables researchers to more comprehensively uncover the mechanisms through which congruence in perceived organizational support influences repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby enriching related theoretical studies.

#### (3) Limitation of moderation effect analysis

In exploring the boundary conditions for the effect of congruence in perceived organizational support before and after repatriation on repatriate knowledge transfer, this study

only considered the moderation effects of perceived person-job fit and psychological entitlement, without exploring other potential moderators. Moreover, the moderation effect of psychological entitlement was not supported by the statistical data in this study. This indicates that other potential moderators may play a role. For example, supervisor support is an important organizational factor and may influence the behavior of repatriated employees. When supervisor support after repatriation is high, does the congruence in perceived organizational support become more likely to promote repatriate knowledge transfer? It is a topic that is worth further exploration. In addition, repatriates' organizational identification may be an important moderator. Employees with a high level of organizational identification are likely to be more willing to share their knowledge and experiences for the benefit of the organization. Future studies could examine whether repatriates' organizational identification also accentuates the positive effect of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer.

#### (4) Limitations of the research sample

The entire sample in this study was drawn from a large state-owned enterprise in China. Due to cultural differences across countries and the specificities of management systems in state-owned enterprises, the generalizability and applicability of the findings require further validation in different cultural contexts and different types of organizations. Further validation is needed in different cultural contexts and business types. State-owned enterprises exhibit significant differences in organizational culture, management style, and employee behavior patterns compared to other types of enterprises (e.g., private or foreign-invested enterprises). In addition, employees from different cultural backgrounds may demonstrate varying characteristics in terms of perceived organizational support and knowledge transfer behavior. To overcome the limitations of the research sample, future studies could expand the sample scope by collecting data from repatriates across different countries and different types of enterprises. For example, research could collect data from repatriates in China, the US, Japan, and other countries to carry out a comparison and see whether the findings are consistent across different cultural contexts. By conducting cross-cultural research, researchers can gain a better understanding of whether the impact of congruence in perceived organizational support on repatriate knowledge transfer is universal.

In addition, future studies could compare whether congruence in perceived organizational support has varying effects on repatriate knowledge transfer across different cultural settings. For example, in collectivist cultures, are repatriates more likely to engage in knowledge transfer for the collective benefit of the organization? Similarly, in organizations with high power

distance, are repatriates more inclined to comply with superiors' instructions while being less likely to proactively share their knowledge and experiences, resulting in lower levels of knowledge transfer? Through these comparative studies, the role of cultural factors can be unveiled, providing theoretical support for cross-cultural management.

In summary, while this study strives to be rigorous and methodologically sound in its design, it still has some limitations. These limitations mainly lie in areas such as the research design, data sources, mediation effect analysis, moderation effect analysis, and sample representativeness. Future research can further expand and deepen the understanding of this topic in the following ways: First, future research could adopt a longitudinal research design and multi-source data collection method to more accurately reveal the causal relationship between congruence in perceived organizational support and repatriate knowledge transfer. Second, by examining other potential mediating mechanisms from multiple theoretical perspectives, such as psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, future studies can more comprehensively reveal the influence mechanisms at play. Third, future research could explore the effect of other moderators, such as supervisor support and organizational identification, to gain a deeper understanding of the boundary conditions affecting repatriate knowledge transfer. Fourth, future studies could expand the sample scope by conducting cross-cultural research to verify the generalizability and applicability of the research findings.

Through further exploration in these research directions, a richer theoretical foundation can be provided for the research on the knowledge transfer by repatriated employees, and more insightful practical guidance can be offered to multinational enterprises, enabling them to improve repatriate management and facilitate effective repatriate knowledge transfer, thereby promoting their international development.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

In today's highly globalized economy, the global economic landscape is undergoing profound changes. As the world's second-largest economy, China's multinational enterprises are increasingly important in the global market. An increasing number of Chinese enterprises are expanding their international presence, exploring overseas markets, and seeking new opportunities for growth and gaining competitive advantages. This trend not only reflects the rapid development of China's economy but also embodies the proactive spirit of Chinese enterprises in the wave of globalization. However, opportunities and challenges always coexist.

In the globalized business environment, Chinese multinational enterprises face unprecedented competitive pressures, while also needing to address challenges such as cultural differences, varied legal environments, and market uncertainties.

Expatriate employees play a crucial role in the internationalization of multinational enterprises. As bridges between the parent company and its overseas subsidiaries, expatriates' contributions extend far beyond their conventional job responsibilities. They bear the critical responsibility of transferring knowledge and technology from their home country to subsidiaries in host countries. This includes, but is not limited to, advanced management concepts, innovative product designs, and efficient production processes. Such transfer of knowledge and technology enables the subsidiaries in host countries to grow rapidly, enhance their competitiveness, and better adapt to local market demands. For example, by sending employees overseas, a Chinese manufacturing enterprise introduced its advanced automated production equipment and production management technology to its subsidiary in Southeast Asia. This significantly improved the subsidiary's production efficiency and enhanced product quality, making it stand out in the fierce competition. Moreover, knowledge and technology transfer also help the parent company optimize resource allocation on a global scale and improve its overall operational efficiency. Through the bridging role of expatriates, the parent company can better understand the operations of its overseas subsidiaries, make timely adjustments to strategic plans accordingly, and ensure appropriate allocation and efficient utilization of its resources.

In addition, the knowledge and experience expatriates accumulate through their work and life in host countries are of immense strategic value for multinational enterprises. These may include an in-depth understanding of the local market, knowledge about local cultures, and familiarity with local laws and regulations in the host country. When expatriates return to the parent company, they can transfer this valuable knowledge and experience to the parent company, enriching the enterprise's knowledge base and fostering cultural integration.

This reverse knowledge transfer is of great significance in enhancing the parent company's international competitiveness. Through reverse knowledge transfer, the parent company of a multinational enterprise can gain a better understanding of the dynamics and demands of overseas markets in a timely manner, enabling it to adjust product and service strategies, thereby improving its internationalized management capabilities. For example, through expatriates' research and practice in the European and American markets, a Chinese internet enterprise learned that local users in those markets place high importance on privacy protection and user experience. As a result, the enterprise adjusted and improved its products, enhancing their



competitiveness in the global market. In addition, reverse knowledge transfer is also conducive to knowledge inheritance within multinational enterprises, promoting internal knowledge flow within the organization and reducing costs in employee training. For instance, multinational enterprises can have repatriated employees serve as internal mentors or training experts to provide guidance to the employees who are about to undertake expatriate assignments. They can help these colleagues learn about the customs, culture, and taboos of the host country, allowing them to better adapt to life in the host country and successfully complete their overseas assignments.

In order to fully leverage the potential of expatriates and ensure efficient knowledge transfer, Chinese multinational enterprises should implement a series of comprehensive management measures. These measures not only involve the selection and training of expatriates but also include support and guidance during their expatriate assignment, as well as their reintegration and development after repatriation.

First, enterprises should establish a comprehensive system for expatriate employee selection and training to ensure that expatriates possess the necessary skills and competencies. When selecting expatriates, enterprises should not only consider employees' professional skills and work experience but also assess their cross-cultural adaptability and communication skills. Through a rigorous selection process, enterprises can identify the most suitable employees for expatriate assignments. In terms of training, enterprises should provide comprehensive training programs for expatriates. These programs should include elements such as language skills, cross-cultural understanding and communication, and the laws and regulations of the host country. These trainings can help expatriate employees better adapt to the host country's environment, reducing cultural conflicts and legal risks. For example, when sending employees to the Middle East, a Chinese construction enterprise provided them with training of Arabic language and Islamic culture, helping these employees integrate more smoothly into the local society.

Second, enterprises should provide sustained support and guidance to expatriate employees during their overseas assignments, such as necessary living assurances, psychological counseling services, and career development guidance, enabling them to fully leverage their agency and successfully fulfill their expatriate tasks. For example, enterprises can offer expatriates benefits such as family visit leave and educational support for their children, helping them address concerns in their personal lives. In addition, enterprises can establish regular communication and feedback mechanisms to follow up on expatriates' work progress and mental well-being and provide necessary support and assistance when needed. Moreover,

enterprises can establish a mentorship system, pairing expatriates with experienced mentors to help them better navigate the challenges they face at work.

Moreover, enterprises should establish effective communication mechanisms to encourage expatriate employees to maintain close contact with the parent company, enabling them to share their observations and insights in a timely manner. Through effective communication, enterprises can know about the operations of their overseas subsidiaries and adjust their strategic plans accordingly. At the same time, expatriate employees can leverage these communication mechanisms to provide timely feedback to the parent company on market trends and customer demands, facilitating knowledge sharing. For example, enterprises can create online knowledge-sharing platforms, where expatriates can post their experiences and lessons learned from their overseas work, as well as analyses of the local market, and parent company employees can then learn from these experiences and use them as references. This communication mechanism can strengthen internal cohesion within the enterprise and foster collaboration among employees.

When expatriates return to the parent company, enterprises should provide them with sustained support to make them perceive continued care and recognition from the organization rather than fluctuating levels of attention, as it may lead to disappointment and disengagement. Multinational enterprises should establish detailed policies and measures, including supports to repatriates and assistance with their families' settlement. More specifically, enterprises should provide necessary psychological support and career development guidance for repatriated employees to help them navigate challenges such as re-adaptation to the culture and psychological stress. Enterprises can also organize counseling sessions and career development training to help repatriates smoothly transition into the work environment in the parent company. In addition, enterprises should offer necessary support to the families of repatriated employees, including employment assistance to the family members and educational support for their children, helping them solve practical issues in their daily lives, thereby enhancing repatriated employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization.

Furthermore, enterprises should offer repatriated employees appropriate job placements and career development opportunities to give full play to the knowledge and experience they have acquired overseas, which has significant value to the parent company's international strategy. Enterprises can leverage internal job mobility and promotion mechanisms to place repatriates in positions that are suitable to them. For instance, enterprises can establish a dedicated international business department and assign repatriated employees to this department, where they can take charge of the expansion and management of overseas markets.

Moreover, enterprises can establish an internal trainer system, allowing repatriates to share their knowledge and experiences with other employees, facilitating internal knowledge sharing and cultural exchange within the organization.

In addition, enterprises should establish a dedicated knowledge management system to systematically collect, organize, and store the knowledge and experiences repatriated employees bring back, enabling the entire workforce to learn from and reference these valuable insights. A knowledge management system can include various formats, such as knowledge repositories, case libraries, and training courses. Through a knowledge management system, enterprises can manage the knowledge and experiences of expatriate employees in a systematic and standardized manner, ensuring knowledge transfer and sharing. For example, enterprises can establish an online knowledge repository to categorize and store market research reports, project experience summaries, legal and regulatory interpretations, and other content accumulated by expatriates while working abroad. Through this knowledge repository, employees can access and learn from this knowledge at any time, thereby enhancing their professional capabilities. Moreover, enterprises can organize regular case-sharing sessions, where repatriated employees are invited to share their successful experiences and lessons learned during their overseas assignments. This encourages internal learning and allows the enterprise to benefit from the experiences of its employees.

In conclusion, in the context of economic globalization, expatriate employees are playing an increasingly vital role in Chinese multinational enterprises. They are not only executors of corporate internationalization strategies but also key contributors to corporate knowledge accumulation and competitive advantage. Effectively managing and leveraging expatriate employees' knowledge and experience is conducive to Chinese multinational enterprises gaining a competitive edge in the global competition and achieving sustainable development. In the international business environment, the transfer of knowledge and experience is a crucial means for enterprises to enhance their competitiveness. Expatriates play a key role in the transfer of knowledge and technology within the organization, and their importance cannot be overlooked. Enterprises should provide expatriates with comprehensive support and assurance through well-developed management measures, enabling them to give full play to their strengths and facilitating effective knowledge transfer. By doing so, Chinese multinational enterprises can navigate the challenges of globalization and achieve their international strategic goals. In the future, Chinese multinational enterprises must continuously innovate and improve their expatriate management strategies to adapt to the new opportunities and challenges brought about by globalization. Through ongoing improvements and innovative management measures,

multinational enterprises can better harness the knowledge and experience of expatriates, so as to enhance their core capacity and competitiveness, laying a solid foundation for their sustainable development.

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the main conclusions of this study and compares them with previous research findings. It also presents the theoretical contributions and managerial implications of this study, highlights its limitations, provides suggestions for improvement, and offers perspectives on future research directions.

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## Annex A: Repatriation Questionnaire I

Dear sir/madam,

Hello! Thank you for taking the time to participate in our survey despite your busy schedule. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the job performance of repatriates. It does not involve any company secrets or personal privacy concerns. The questionnaire is conducted anonymously, and all collected data and information will be used solely for academic research. No data will be disclosed to any organization or individual, so please feel assured when filling it out.

To ensure the validity of our research, we will conduct the survey in three phases, with one month between each two. You will receive the second questionnaire one month after completing this one, and we kindly ask for your continued participation. We sincerely appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

This is Questionnaire I of the survey. It will take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond based on your actual experiences and genuine feelings. Your honest responses are crucial to this study. Thank you again for your participation and support!

### Section I

The following questions relate to your experiences during your expatriation. Please read each question carefully and tick the option that best represents your feelings. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	During my expatriation, my company cared about my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
2	During my expatriation, my company really cared about my well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
3	During my expatriation, my company strongly considered my goals and values.	1	2	3	4	5
4	During my expatriation, help was available from my company when I had a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
5	During my expatriation, my company would forgive an honest mistake on my part.	1	2	3	4	5
6	During my expatriation, if given the opportunity, my company would take advantage of me.	1	2	3	4	5

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No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	During my expatriation, my company showed very little concern for me.	1	2	3	4	5
8	During my expatriation, my company was willing to help me if I needed a special favor.	1	2	3	4	5

## Section II

The following questions relate to your experiences and feelings after returning from your expatriation assignment. Please read each question carefully and mark the option that best represents your feelings. (1—Strongly Disagree, 2—Disagree, 3—Neutral, 4—Agree, 5—Strongly Agree)

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	After repatriation, my company cares about my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
2	After repatriation, my company really cares about my well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
3	After repatriation, my company strongly considers my goals and values.	1	2	3	4	5
4	After repatriation, help is available from my company when I have a problem	1	2	3	4	5
5	After repatriation, my company would forgive an honest mistake on my part.	1	2	3	4	5
6	After repatriation, if given the opportunity, my company would take advantage of me	1	2	3	4	5
7	After repatriation, my company shows very little concern for me.	1	2	3	4	5
8	After repatriation, my company is willing to help me if I need a special favor.	1	2	3	4	5

## Section III: Basic Information

1. Your Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old
3. Your highest education level:
  - ☐ Middle school or below ☐ High school/vocational school ☐ Junior college
  - ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Graduate or above
4. Your marital status:
  - ☐ Single ☐ Married without children ☐ Married with children ☐ Other
5. Your current job position:
  - ☐ General employee ☐ Frontline manager ☐ Middle manager ☐ Senior manager

## Section IV

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing the questionnaire! We sincerely appreciate your support and participation.

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## Annex B: Repatriation Questionnaire II

Dear sir/madam,

Hello! Thank you once again for taking the time to participate in our survey. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the job performance of repatriates. It does not involve any company secrets or personal privacy concerns. The questionnaire is conducted anonymously, and all collected data and information will be used solely for academic research. No data will be disclosed to any organization or individual, so please feel assured when filling it out.

You have previously completed Questionnaire I, and this is Questionnaire II of the survey. It will take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond based on your actual experiences and genuine feelings. Your honest responses are crucial to this study. Thank you again for your participation and support!

### Section I

Considering both work-related factors (e.g., interpersonal relationships, person-job fit, benefits) and non-work-related factors (e.g., neighbors, hobbies, community welfare), please score the following statements and tick the appropriate answer. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I feel attached to this company.	1	2	3	4	5
2	It would be difficult for me to leave this company.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I'm too caught up in this company to leave.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I feel tied to this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I simply could not leave the company that I work for.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am tightly connected to this company.	1	2	3	4	5
7	It would not be easy for me to leave this company.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section II

The following statements relate to your work experiences after repatriation. Please respond based on your genuine feelings and experiences by ticking the appropriate answer. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

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No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	In this company, I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.	1	2	3	4	5
2	In this company, great things should come to me.	1	2	3	4	5
3	In this company, I demand the best because I'm worth it.	1	2	3	4	5
4	In this company, I deserve special treatment.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I deserve more things in this company.	1	2	3	4	5
6	In this company, people like me deserve an extra break now and then.	1	2	3	4	5
7	In this company, things should go my way.	1	2	3	4	5
8	In this company, I feel entitled to more of everything.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section III

The following statements relate to your thoughts about your work after repatriation. Please respond based on your genuine feelings and experiences by ticking the appropriate answer. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I like the members of my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My job utilizes my skills and talents well.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel like I am a good match for this company.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I fit with the company's culture.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I like the authority and responsibility I have at this company.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I can reach my professional goals working for this company.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section IV

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing the questionnaire! We sincerely appreciate your support and participation.

## Annex C: Repatriation Questionnaire III

Dear sir/madam,

Hello! Thank you once again for taking the time to participate in our survey. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the job performance of repatriates. It does not involve any company secrets or your personal privacy concerns. The questionnaire is conducted anonymously, and all collected data and information will be used solely for academic research. No data will be disclosed to any organization or individual, so please feel assured when filling it out.

You have previously completed Questionnaire I and II, and this is Questionnaire III of the survey. It will take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond based on your actual experiences and genuine feelings. Your honest responses are crucial to this study. Thank you again for your participation and support!

### Section I

The following statements relate to your knowledge sharing with supervisors or colleagues after repatriation regarding the host country. Please respond based on your actual practices or thoughts by ticking the appropriate answer. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I share with my colleagues knowledge of the host country's customs (such as traditions, national holidays).	1	2	3	4	5
2	I share with my colleagues market knowledge (such as structures, products, customer needs)	1	2	3	4	5
3	I share with my colleagues knowledge of working style in the host country.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I share with my colleagues knowledge of structures and processes in the host unit.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I share with my colleagues the understanding of the behavioral patterns of people in the host country.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I share with my colleagues the understanding of different ways of thinking in the host country.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I share with my colleagues cross-cultural understanding of work relationships.	1	2	3	4	5

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No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	I share with my colleagues the understanding of relationship between host unit and headquarters.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section II**

Last four digits of your mobile phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing the questionnaire! We sincerely appreciate your support and participation.