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# Expatriate Competencies as Antecedents of Knowledge Transfer and Their Impacts on Staff Localisation

AL HAMAR AL KATHIRI, NASSER

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

## **EXPATRIATE COMPETENCIES AS ANTECEDENTS OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND THEIR IMPACTS ON STAFF LOCALISATION**

by

**NASSER AL HAMAR AL KATHIRI**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
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### **Author's declaration**

*'At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.*

*Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment. '*

### **Publications**

- How ability, motivation and opportunity influence travel agents performance: the moderating role of absorptive capacity (2018). *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 22 (1), 119-141. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-07-2017-0308>. **(IMF: 4.8)**.
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### **Conference Papers**

- Estimating Localisation-Performance Reciprocal Relationship in the Sultanate of Oman Aviation Industry, *College of Banking and Financial Services in association with Oman's Research Council*, Sultanate of Oman, (2018).

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- I won the second prize in a research competition at a national level for my paper "Estimating Localisation-Performance Reciprocal Relationship in the Aviation Sector", the Sultanate of Oman in 2018.

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- I currently have 4 peer reviewed publications, **39 citations** & have a **H-Index of 2** (<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=kY7EYl0AAAAJ&hl=en>). In addition, I have a **ResearchGate score of 6.13**, **10119 Reads** and **255 Recommendations** (<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nasser-Alhamar-Alkathiri>).

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# **Expatriate Competencies as Antecedents of Knowledge Transfer and Their Impacts on Staff Localisation**

Nasser Al-Hamar Al-Kathiri

## **Abstract**

Many countries and organisations around the world put forward important plans to source new knowledge that would help to accelerate their economic growth and competitive advantage. Within these plans, recruiting expatriate staff has been seen as an important means to acquire external knowledge. However, it has also been argued that overreliance on expatriate staffing may not be healthy for economic development, especially when local staff are left with very limited positions. In recognition of this issue governments, particularly those located in the Middle East, have established so-called “localisation”, which refers to the replacement of expatriate staff by a local workforce.

In this regard, since the 1970s the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries including Oman have set several plans to achieve localisation, but clearly these plans have not been entirely successful in terms of the targeted percentage of localisation. Scholars who have investigated this issue argue that the lack of skills and professionalism in the local workforce is one of the main obstacles for addressing this challenge. Therefore, based on the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity Seeking (AMO) theory, this thesis contributes to the localisation and knowledge transfer literatures by developing a conceptual framework that aims to explore the extent to which



transferring knowledge from expatriate managers to local staff in manufacturing companies, through certain mechanisms, helps to achieve successful localisation.

Based on a positivist research philosophy and a quantitative approach, the current thesis has employed a self-administered, face-to-face questionnaire to collect data. The 327 completed questionnaires have been analysed to examine the hypotheses of the present study using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via Warp PLS V 6.0. The results have identified the essential factors for achieving successful localisation. First, the study has identified three essential competences for expatriate managers to transfer knowledge, namely: expatriate ability to transfer knowledge; expatriate motivation to transfer knowledge; and expatriate opportunity to transfer knowledge. Second, the study has shown that to achieve effective knowledge transfer and successful localisation, locals must have high absorptive capacity. Third, to enhance expatriate manager competences, the study has identified two essential sets of features to consider, the organisation characteristics and the knowledge characteristics. These findings thus provide several insights to the manufacturing companies seeking to achieve successful localisation.

In terms of the practical implications, the current thesis has identified the key factors for achieving successful localisation. The first competence is that expatriate managers should have the ability to transfer knowledge. The second competence is related to expatriate manager motivation to transfer knowledge. The third competence is opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. It has been proposed that in order to accomplish optimal performance of knowledge transfer, it is vital for expatriate to seek the opportunity to interact with the local staff. In this regard, opportunity seeking by expatriate managers would help knowledge seekers to get constant feedback as well as opportunities to clarify any ambiguity.

In addition, it is critical for companies to acknowledge the absorptive capacity of local staff as an important factor for achieving successful localisation. In this vein, the findings of the current study have demonstrated that low absorptive capacity has adverse impacts on achieving successful localisation.

Apart from the importance of knowledge-sender and knowledge-receiver competences, it is crucial to recognise the impact of organisational characteristics and knowledge characteristics on the competences of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. With respect to the former, expatriate manager competences in transferring knowledge are influenced by organisational commitments to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. As far knowledge characteristics, it has been concluded that in order to have effective knowledge transfer, companies are advised to provide important knowledge in explicit forms, such as blueprints and manuals, and to make them available and easily accessible to knowledge providers and seekers alike.

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## List of Abbreviation

Abbreviation	Full Term
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Countries
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
CAS	College of Applied Sciences
AMO	Ability, Motivation and Opportunity Seeking
R&D	Research and Development
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
NCSI	National Center for Statistics and Information
AEs	Assigned Expatriates
SIEs	Self-Initiated Expatriates
PLS	Partial Least Squares
SEM	Structural equation modelling
SEM-PLS	Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling
CB	Covariance-Based
LV	Latent Variable
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
IT	Information Technology
VIF	Variance Inflation Factors
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
R <sup>2</sup>	Explained Variance
f <sup>2</sup>	Effect Size

Q <sup>2</sup>	Predictive Relevance
APC	Average Path Coefficient
ARS	Average R-squared
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
OCH	Organisation Characteristics
KCH	Knowledge Characteristics
AB	Ability to Transferring Knowledge
MT	Motivation to Transferring Knowledge
OP	Opportunity Seeking to Transferring Knowledge
KR	Knowledge Received
LOC	Localisation Success
ABC	Absorptive Capacity

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# **1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **Introduction**

The importance of knowledge transfer from multinational corporations (MNCs) to their foreign affiliates has drawn the attention of many studies (Zander & Kogut, 1995; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Tallman & Phene, 2007; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Gaur et al., 2019). In this regard, several studies have argued that knowledge transfer has the potential to enhance the competitive advantages of MNCs (Nonaka, 1994; Szulanski, 1996; Ruggles, 1998; Blalock & Simon, 2009; Segarra-Cipres et al., 2014; Oyemomi et al., 2019; Acharya et al., 2020; Shao & Ariss, 2020). This is because knowledge transfer facilitates learning between a given headquarters and its foreign subsidiaries (Kogut & Zander, 1992; Hansen et al., 2005; Szulanski & Lee, 2020). Chang et al. (2012) have pointed out that the competences of expatriates in knowledge transfer have a positive, indirect impact on the firm's performances through the knowledge received by the subsidiary. Moreover, previous studies have addressed knowledge transfer by investigating more than 90 of its determinants (Minbaeva, 2007). Examples of these factors are: knowledge sources, absorptive capacity, individual's effort to transfer knowledge, organizational context, organizational and technological barriers, existence and richness of transmission channels, motivational disposition of the source unit, nature of knowledge (tacit or explicit), national culture, the three dimensions of social capital (spatial, cultural, economic and educational distance), socialization mechanisms, motivational mechanisms, motivation and ability of knowledge senders and receivers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Lekhawipat, et al., 2018;

Elbaz et al., 2018; Gaur et al., 2019). However, According to Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014), these determinants can be organised into four categories: knowledge attributes; knowledge-sender attributes; knowledge-receiver attributes; and the attributes of interaction between knowledge sender and receiver. For example, the study by Minbaeva (2007) has found that knowledge transfer success is not only dependent on the nature of the knowledge but also on the attributes of the knowledge sender and the knowledge receiver.

Chang et al. (2012) and Elbaz et al., (2018) have investigated the impact of the three characteristics of AMO theory on knowledge received. The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Theory (AMO) was developed by Blumberg and Pringle in 1982 to measure the overall performance of individuals. Based on this theory, it is assumed that the performance of individuals is based on the joint interaction of ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform a particular given task. The three elements of this theory have been applied in the context of knowledge transfer as indicators of knowledge transfer performance (Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017). Furthermore, Law et al. (2009) have argued that expatriate competences, such as abilities and motivations, are considered significant antecedents for achieving successful localisation. However, while Naithani and Jha (2009) and Belwal et al. (2017) refer to the lack of skills and professionalism in the local workforce as one of the main causes for lack of success, the integrative role of expatriate manager competences in transferring knowledge to local staff has received limited attention (Li et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2018). In this regard, a recent study by Shao & Ariss (2020) has investigated the factors that determine the process of knowledge transfer between self - initiated - expatriates and their

local staff colleagues. It calls for investigation of the outcomes of knowledge transfer on the performance of local staff. Practically, the comprehensive literature review by Van Bakel (2019) has indicated that literature pertaining to expatriate-role impacts on localisation remains unexplored. This means without a perfect understanding of this, company efforts to achieve successful localisation through expatriate knowledge transfer will remain unfulfilled (Law et al., 2009; Van Bakel, 2019). In this regard, since the early 1970s GCC countries including Oman have set several plans to achieve localisation. However, clearly these plans have not been entirely successful in terms of the targeted percentage of localisation (Moideenkutty, et al., 2016; NCSI, 2019; Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020). For example, the Omani government has included staff localisation as a main agenda of Oman's Third National Development Plan 1980-1985, which had emphasised the importance of replacing expatriate labor by Omani nationals (Donn et al., 2007). However, expatriates in Oman still make up more than 83% of the employees in the private sector in 2019 (NCSI, 2020).

Therefore, in response to the practical need of organisations to achieve successful localisation and to researcher calls, the current thesis aims to employ the AMO theory to investigate the influence of expatriate competences (AMO) on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received. In this thesis localisation success refers to the practice of replacing expatriate employees by local staff who have the right skills and knowledge to perform at a similar level (Law et al., 2009). In addition, this thesis takes into account the direct and indirect impact of knowledge received (through absorptive capacity) on localisation success. Furthermore, the current study takes into consideration the factors that may affect expatriate competences in knowledge transfer.

This is to address the fact that little attention has been paid to the roles of knowledge characteristics and organisation characteristics in the process of knowledge transfer, despite their importance (Paul, 2007; Vlajcic et al., 2019; Shao & Ariss, 2020). Research by Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) and Vlajcic et al. (2019) has recommended that future studies include the nature and culture of the investigated entity. This is because various characteristics such as the organisational leadership style, organisational culture and organisational learning may influence the competence of expatriates in knowledge transfer. Organisational leadership style refers to the management style that sets organisational goals and motivates its staff to meet these goals successfully (Castrogiovanni et al., 2016). Organisational culture refers to the fundamental beliefs, values, norms that affect the attitudes of an organisation to encourage knowledge transfer (Yao et al., 2015; Wang & Wang, 2016). Organisational learning intention refers to the willingness of an organisation to learn and apply knowledge (Liu, 2018). For example, if the organizational culture promotes knowledge transfer, it will provide assistance to its employees such as offering training to improve their competencies in receiving and sharing knowledge. Similarly, supportive organisational leadership would help its staff to improve their skills and encourage knowledge sharing among its employees.

Based on the prior studies, the current thesis proposes a conceptual framework (see Figure 3.1 in chapter 3) that suggests expatriate competences in transferring knowledge enhance knowledge received by local employees, which in turn helps with successful localisation (Law et al., 2009; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2019; Fee & Gray, 2020). This study has advanced current research in the field by investigating the following three relationships.

First, the impact of expatriate manager competences (AMO) on the amount of knowledge received from them by local staff (Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2019). Second, the impact of knowledge received by local staff on localisation success (Law et al., 2009; Van Bakel, 2019; Shao & Ariss, 2020). This relationship is moderated by the characteristics of the knowledge receiver (absorptive capacity). Third, the impact of knowledge characteristics and organisation characteristics on the expatriate competences (Szulanski, 1996; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva, 2007; Chang et al., 2012; Vljacic et al., 2019).

The rest of this chapter is divided into seven subsections. First, the problem background is discussed. Then, the research aims and objectives are presented, followed by the research questions. Next, research context and significance are given. Subsequently, the contribution of this thesis is discussed. A summary of the research methodology is then given. Finally, the proposed structure of future research is presented.

### **Research Background**

Rapid demographic changes, fluctuation in oil prices (Husain et al., 2015), ineffective government policies for adequate education systems, and the requirement to employ vast numbers of foreign staff are creating major human resource challenges for GCC countries (Muysken & Nour, 2006; Harry, 2007; Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020). For example, the availability of a large number of unskilled expatriate staff creates serious challenges, which might lead to poor training and lack of knowledge transfer. Moreover, according to the Omani National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2020), about 43% of the population in Oman is expatriates and, more surprisingly, expatriates make up more than 83% of the employees in the private sector in Oman. Further, although expatriates occupy a high number of jobs, the latest data shows that the unemployment rate

in Oman is more than 8% (NCSI, 2020). Although the government in Oman is trying to replace expatriates with national forces, its success has been limited (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Goby & xAlhadhrami, 2020; NCSI, 2020). It has been claimed that the lack of skills and professionalism in the national forces is one of the main obstacles in achieving successful localisation in the GCC countries (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Goby et al., 2017; Jabeen et al., 2018). On the other hand, previous investigations have suggested that knowledge flow from expatriates to local staff can have a great influence on achieving successful localisation (Wong & Law, 1999; Law et al., 2009; Fee & Gray, 2020).

As shown in Table 1.1, previous studies have investigated the area of knowledge transfer between MNCs and their subsidiaries from different angles, including the determinants of knowledge flow and the influence of knowledge transfer on subsidiary performance (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Gaur et al., 2019). Moreover, these studies have used different variables to investigate knowledge transfer, also shown in Table 1.1. For instance, Minbaeva et al. (2003) have used employees' ability and employees' motivation as proxy for knowledge transfer. Song (2014) has extended the work of Minbaeva et al. (2003) by using motivation as a moderating factor. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) have used existence and richness of transmission channels and motivational disposition of the source unit to evaluate knowledge transfer. Gooderham (2007) has examined knowledge transfer by including external environment (economic, cultural, educational distance) and three dynamic capabilities: motivation, socialization, and transmission channels. Moreover, Perervus (2013) has employed two variables: nature of knowledge (tacit or explicit) and national culture. Additionally, a recent investigation by Gaur et al. (2019) found that the



effectiveness of knowledge transfer in MNEs is affected by three dimensions. These dimensions are national level determinates (such as: formal and informal institution and cultural differences, company level determinates (such as: company strategy, structure and staffing and individual level determinates (such as: ability, willingness, motivation and experience of individuals).

**Table 1.1 Determinates of Knowledge Transfer**

Variables	Author(s)	Notes/limitations
- Existence and richness of transmission channels	Gupta & Govindarajan (2000)	Characteristics of the firm and knowledge received neglected
- Motivational disposition of the source unit		
- Nature of knowledge (tacit or explicit)	Perervus (2013)	Human competencies not considered
- National culture		
- The three dimensions of social capital: spatial, cultural, economic and educational distance-	Gooderham (2007)	Both headquarters and subsidiary considered, but knowledge characteristics not considered
- The dynamic capabilities: transmission channels, socialization mechanisms and motivational mechanisms.		
- Motivation of knowledge senders	Minbaeva et al. (2003)	Absorptive capacity of knowledge receivers not considered
- Ability of knowledge senders		
- Ability	Song (2014)	Motivation used as mediator, unlike Minbaeva et al. (2003) study
- Motivation as a mediator		
- Ability	Chang et al. (2012)	Opportunity seeking and absorptive capacity added, but nature of knowledge and the firm's characteristics not considered
- Motivation		
- Opportunity seeking	Elbaz et al. (2018)	
- Absorptive capacity as a meditating factor		
- National level determinates	Gaur et al., (2019)	Reviewing the factors effecting knowledge flow at MNC
- Company level determinates		
- Individual level determinates		

Chang et al. (2012) have claimed that their study is the first to investigate knowledge transfer by including the competencies of both the headquarters and the

subsidiary. In other words, they used expatriate competencies (AMO) as a proxy for knowledge transfer and its impact on a subsidiary's performance by using subsidiary absorptive capacity as a moderator. However, their study failed to consider an important antecedent of knowledge transfer, which is nature of knowledge (Zander & Kogut, 1995; Perervus, 2013; Gaur et al., 2019). Authors such as Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) have highlighted that the nature of knowledge (tacit or explicit) has a remarkable influence on the process of knowledge transfer. Moreover, their study would have been more useful if it had specified the role of the subsidiary in the knowledge transfer process. This is as subsidiary support toward knowledge transfer was found to have an impact on the performance of knowledge transfer (Fang et al., 2010). Thus, the present thesis includes the characteristics of the transferred knowledge and the characteristics of the organisation as predictors of expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge and employs the characteristics of the knowledge receiver (absorptive capacity) as a moderating variable. Moreover, the present study examines the influence of expatriate competencies (AMO) in knowledge transfer on localisation. In other words, the extent to which expatriate competencies lead to achieve successful localisation.

### **Research Aims and Objectives**

Given the shortcomings revealed in the literature review, the present study aims to investigate the process of knowledge transfer that leads to successful localisation. For example, little attention has been paid to the effect of expatriate competences on the transfer of knowledge and the success of staff localisation (Law et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018). In addition, it was reported that investigating the outcomes of expatriates and local staff interactions is a promising area for future studies, as it was neglected in the extant literature

(Van Bakel, 2019). Hence, three main aims and six related objectives have been established to fulfil the overall purpose of the current thesis, as follows:

**A- To investigate the factors that influence expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge in manufacturing companies in Oman.**

- 1- To examine the extent to which organisation characteristics enhance expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.
- 2- To examine the extent to which knowledge characteristic have a positive impact on the expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.

**B- To explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers can lead to successful localisation in manufacturing companies in Oman.**

- 1- To examine the impact of expatriate manager competencies (AMO) on knowledge received by local staff.
- 2- To highlight the impact of knowledge received by local employees on achieving successful localisation.
- 3- To investigate the influence of expatriate manager competencies AMO in transferring knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role knowledge received. That is, it is expected that the actual knowledge received by local staff from their expatriate managers would help to achieve successful localisation. In other words, this aim seeks to investigate whether acquiring new knowledge would to help local employees to innovate and develop new methods, which consequently can enhance their performance.

- 4- To test the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the relationship between the knowledge received and localisation success. This thesis employs absorptive capacity as a moderator variable to see whether high absorptive capacity will cause a stronger relationship between knowledge received and localisation success. In other words, this study aims to investigate whether local staff who are able to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge transferred by expatriate managers would help to accomplish successful localisation.

**C- To propose and validate a model that can enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees with the aim of achieving staff localisation in the manufacturing sector in Oman.**

GCC countries, including Oman, are trying to generate sufficient employment opportunities for their citizens. One way to do that is through replacing expatriate staff by local staff (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Goby & xAlhadhrami, 2020). However, this strategy has not been successful so far, as expatriates still make up more than 83% of the total workforce at private sector in Oman (Goby et al., 2017; Jabeen et al., 2018). Previous studies argued that lack of skills and professionalism in the local workforce is one of the main hinders for achieving successful localisation. Thus, this thesis puts this aim forward to provide a model that can help to achieve a successful staff localisation in the manufacturing sector in Oman.

### **Research Questions**

Several authors have emphasised the role of research aims and objectives in writing the research questions (Bryman, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Tashakkori et al., 2007). This means it is crucial to shape the questions of the research based on the research aims

and objectives. Therefore, in order to achieve the aims and the objectives of this thesis the following questions need to be answered, which are related to the manufacturing companies in Oman:

1. What is the impact of organisation characteristics on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge?
2. What is the impact of knowledge characteristic on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge?
3. What is the influence of expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge to local employees (knowledge received) in manufacturing companies in Oman?
4. What is the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation?
5. What is the mediating role of the knowledge received between expatriate competencies and successful localisation?
6. What is the moderating role of the absorptive capacity between knowledge received and successful localisation?

### **Research Context and Significance**

Two main reasons have motivated the choice of research topic. First, the concern of the Omani government about the increasing number of expatriates in Oman; expatriates make up more than 83% of staff in the private sector in Oman (NCSI, 2019). Here, researchers such as Muysken & Nour (2006), Harry (2007), Goby et al (2017), Goby & Alhadhrami (2020) argued that this over reliance on expatriates may not be healthy for economic development. In addition, the extensive presence of expatriate staff makes it worthwhile to test its role in knowledge transfer and successful localisation (Al-lamky, 2016; Moideenkutty et al., 2016; Belwal et al., 2017). Second, the lack of skills and

professionalism in the local workforce has been reported as one of the main obstacles to the success of localisation in the GCC countries (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Belwal et al., 2017). In this regard, scholars of knowledge transfers and expatriate studies highlighted the potential role of knowledge transfer from expatriates to their local coworkers as an effective means for solving this obstacle (Van Bakel, 2019; Fee & Gray, 2020; Shao & Ariss, 2020). Thus, knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to their local staff can be a viable solution to prepare Omani staff with the required knowledge and skills to replace expatriate staff (Moideenkutty et al., 2016). Moreover, based on the literature review, the idea of applying AMO theory in Oman to tackle these issues has been seen as worthwhile and exciting. This study predicts that the increase of knowledge received by local staff in the Omani private sector will lead to enhanced localisation. Thus, the current study identifies the main determinates of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local staff that would lead to successful localisation. These determinants are related to expatriate competencies, local staff absorptive capacity, knowledge characteristics, and organisational characteristics.

This means that this thesis holds several significances to the manufacturing companies seeking to achieve successful localisation. It has identified the key factors for achieving successful localisation. Three of these factors are competencies related to knowledge holders, in this case expatriate managers. These factors would enable them to successfully transfer knowledge to their subordinate local staff. Moreover, this study has acknowledged absorptive capacity of local staff as an important factor for achieving successful localisation. This is very important, as the knowledge transfer may not be successful if the local staff are not able to understand or apply new knowledge and hence

may inhibit the success of localisation. Thus, to ensure successful localisation, particular focus should be given to the ability of local staff to understand the importance of the new knowledge gained, how to incorporate this knowledge into their systems of work and how to effectively implement it. To sum up the importance of this thesis, this thesis has identified the critical factors for achieving successful localisation and more importantly it emphasized that all these enablers should be present to tackle this issue.

### **Research Contributions**

A large number of published knowledge transfer studies have focused on the process of knowledge transfers or its influence on an organisation's performance and innovation (see Zander & Kogut, 1995; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Tallman & Phene, 2007; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Susanty et al., 2012; Castrogiovanni et al., 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Vlajcic et al., 2018). However, as mentioned, little attention has been paid to the effect of expatriate competences on the transfer of knowledge and the success of staff localisation (Law et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2019). In this regard, a recent study by Fee and Gray (2020) calls for future studies to evaluate the consequences of knowledge transfer to local staff from expatriates on the performance of local staff. Going forward, this would fill a current gap by helping with evaluation of the extent to which expatriate competences in knowledge transfer help local staff be ready to replace expatriate staff. Without a perfect understanding of this, company efforts to achieve successful localisation, especially through expatriate competences to transfer knowledge, would remain unfulfilled (Van Bakel, 2019). In response to this practical need and to researcher calls, the current thesis aims to advance the field by implementing the AMO theory in the process of knowledge transfer (Elbaz et al., 2018) to investigate the role of



expatriate competences (AMO) on achieving successful localisation. In this regard, this thesis enriches the existing literature through exploring the influence of expatriate manager competences to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation. In sum, this study extends knowledge transfer literature by identifying the following theoretical implications. First, through the aforementioned integration, the current study identifies three competences of expatriate managers (AMO) to transfer knowledge successfully, which in turn lead to successful localisation. This means, unlike prior research that has focused extensively on the number (proportion) of expatriates or their technical skills as indicators of their knowledge transfer abilities (Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Gaur et al., 2007; Peng, 2011), this study highlights the importance of expatriate characteristics as predictors of effective knowledge transfer. Thus, to uncover the role of the knowledge holders (in this case, expatriate managers) in knowledge transfer, the current study emphasises the significance of measuring their attributes such as their ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge (Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017). The point is to stress that whatever technical skills and knowledge expatriate managers have, transferring knowledge to their subordinates would be a challenge if they lack the aforementioned competences (Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz et al., 2018).

Second, although knowledge received has been measured extensively as a dependent variable in previous studies, little attention has been paid to its mediation effect in the process of knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz et al., 2018). Therefore, this study contributes to the current body of knowledge by investigating the mediating role of knowledge received by local staff in the relationship between expatriate manager

competences and localisation success. In this vein, this study considers both the transmission of knowledge by expatriate managers and the reception of knowledge by local staff in the process of achieving successful localisation. Through this empirical examination, it has been found that the impact of expatriate competences in knowledge transfer on successful localisation takes place through the knowledge received by local staff. In other words, this thesis advances the process of knowledge transfer through testing knowledge received by local staff as a mediating factor between expatriate competences and localisation success.

This study has introduced absorptive capacity of local staff as a moderating variable to determine localisation success. Through this, it has been demonstrated that in order to attain a true appreciation of the impact of knowledge received by local staff on achieving successful localisation, local staff absorptive capacity has to be high. That is, when the local staff have high absorptive capacity, knowledge transfer is more effective resulting in more achievement of successful localisation. In other words, the findings suggest local staff absorptive capacity is a critical predictor of localisation. Specifically, local staff should have the capability to understand, absorb, and apply new knowledge received from expatriate managers. Therefore, it should be noted that, receiving knowledge from expatriate managers may not be sufficient to achieve localisation success; rather local staff need to be able to absorb, incorporate, and the implement any external knowledge received.

In addition, the current knowledge transfer literature has extensively focused on the impact of organisational characteristics and knowledge characteristics on the performance of knowledge transfer (Szulanski, 1996; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat, et al., 2018; Liu, 2018; Gaur et al., 2019). However, little attention has

been given to the impact of knowledge and organisational characteristics on knowledge-holder competences to transfer knowledge (Paul, 2007; Kang, et al., 2010; Shao & Ariss, 2020). Thus, this study provides two contributions in this regard. First, it examines knowledge characteristics as a predictor of expatriate competences to transfer knowledge, and the results have confirmed its critical role. Second, it investigates the role of knowledge characteristics on expatriate competences to transfer knowledge and finds a positive correlation between them. This would be interesting to extend the AMO framework into knowledge transfer literature through highlighting its predictors of success such as organisational commitments towards knowledge transfer and knowledge characteristics, that is, to explore the extent to which knowledge could be classified as easy to codify, complex, specific, and reachable. For example, the ability to transfer knowledge (by expatriate managers in this case) as a factor within the AMO framework would be subject to organisational characteristics such as the top management support for knowledge transfer, and organisational culture (Riege, 2005; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Wang & Wang, 2016; Liu, 2018).

To sum up, the research contributions of this thesis on major areas can be summarised as follows:

- 1- The present study integrates AMO theory with knowledge transfer in order to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer (based on the proposed framework) enables successful localisation in the manufacturing companies on Oman.

- 2- The present study examines the impact of expatriate competencies (AMO) to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received.
- 3- The present study examines the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation through the moderating role of absorptive capacity.
- 4- Unlike the previous studies that investigate the outcomes of the AMO framework on knowledge transfer performance, the current study investigates the predictors of AMO by examining the impact of organisation characteristics and knowledge characteristics on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.
- 5- Unlike the previous studies which have focused mainly on AEs (Kang et al., 2010; Shao & Ariss, 2020), the current study takes a different direction by focusing on SIEs.

### **Brief on Research Methodology**

Based on a positivistic paradigm, the current thesis has employed a cross sectional survey methodology for conducting this research. The population of this research is all middle to top managers working at manufacturing companies in Oman. Since the total number of this target population is not known, the current study collected 327 of the surveys that have been distributed to manufacturing companies. The rationale for selecting this sector is that the number of expatriate employees in it is much higher than other sectors such as the financial or services sectors (Muscat Security Market, 2019). Second, the ninth five-year development plan of Oman vision 2040 has included this as a promising sector. Thus, the current study could contribute to this sector by investigating the role of expatriate managers in enhancing successful staff localisation. In addition, the results of the current study could provide some insight to the Oman vision 2040 that aims to increase the

localisation in the private sector to 42% by 2040. The structural equation modelling (SEM) are adopted with a partial least squares (PLS) by using WarpPLS V 6.0 (Kock, 2020) to examine the hypothesis of the present thesis.

### **Research Outline**

This research includes seven chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction; this is followed by the literature review in the second chapter. Knowledge transfer, AMO framework, localisation, expatriate competencies, mediating role of knowledge received and the moderating role of absorptive capacity are discussed extensively in this chapter. The third chapter explains the conceptual framework of the study. The fourth chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. Data analysis and discussion are presented in the fifth and sixth chapters respectively, followed by the implication, future studies and conclusion.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

In order to achieve the aims and answer the questions proposed in chapter one, this chapter seeks to review literature relevant to the impact of expatriate competencies on knowledge transfer and achieving successful localisation. This chapter is structured as follows: first, background about knowledge and knowledge transfer are discussed followed by a discussion on the importance of knowledge. Subsequently, determinants of knowledge transfer are reviewed. After that a detailed discussion in regards to the (AMO) theory is presented. Next, knowledge transfers and successful localisation is discussed followed by a review of the role of expatriates in knowledge transfers. Finally, gaps in the literature are identified, followed by a summary of this chapter.

### **Background of Knowledge and Knowledge Transfer**

Prior to defining knowledge, it is appropriate to distinguish the term “knowledge” from “data” and “information” as some authors have been criticised for using the terms interchangeably (Al-Salti, 2011). In fact, authors such as Cooper (2017) and Boisot and Canals (2004) have stressed the necessity to differentiate between data, information, and knowledge as they are different from each other. Hilbert (2016) has provided a clear explanation regarding the differences between these three terms by implying that data is used as the basis for information which in turn becomes knowledge. Whereas data consists of discrete numbers and raw facts about a particular thing, information refers to a set of data, facts, and an objective entity that provides meaning (Jashapara, 2004; Cooper, 2017).

Knowledge on the other hand can be categorised as a set of factors such as experience, values, and accumulated practical skills built over time which influences individual attitudes, performance, and decision making (Kostova et al., 2004; Broudy,

2017). Examples of that are, knowledge related to marketing strategies, knowledge related to product manufacturing and knowledge related to corporate culture. These knowledge can be classified into two different dimensions: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is easier to transfer as it refers to knowledge that can be easily written down such as working manuals, rules, procedures, and codes (Smith, 2001; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014). In contrast, tacit knowledge is difficult to transfer as it is complex and often impossible to be written down (Nelson & Winter, 2009). However, Lin (2011) has pointed out that one of the main challenges in knowledge transfer is the ability to codify explicit and tacit knowledge.

In the context of business, knowledge can be defined as the relevant knowledge that enables an individual to perform their respective work more effectively (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Al-Salti, 2011). Knowledge attributes have been treated as barriers towards knowledge transfer (Li & Hsieh, 2009; Blackman & Benson, 2012; Szulanski et al., 2016; Szulanski & Lee, 2020). Thus, these attributes been represented by different factors in previous studies. For example, Kang et al. (2010) divided knowledge characteristics into three categories: tacitness, difficulty, and knowledge importance. Moreover, Riusala and Smale (2007) classified knowledge attributes by codifiability (difficulty in writing the knowledge gained), teachability (difficulty in teaching the knowledge), and complexity. Furthermore, other authors have used knowledge complexity only as a proxy for the characteristics of knowledge (Silveira et al., 2017). The later source has proposed that knowledge is considered complex when more resources, individuals, and techniques are required to transfer that particular knowledge. Since the current study focusses on transferring knowledge from expatriate managers to local employees, it is therefore

essential to consider the influence of knowledge attributes on the process of knowledge transfer.

Although Liyanage et al. (2009) stated that there has been no agreement on the definition of knowledge, the current study follows one of the very old definitions. That definition has been cited in a number of papers such as Jasimuddin et al. (2015) and Brumana (2017), where it was defined as “accumulated practical skill or expertise that allows one to do something smoothly and efficiently” (Kogut & Zander, 1992, p. 386). This definition is used particularly because the current study focusses on examining the expatriate competencies, including their skills and expertise, to transfer knowledge that would subsequently assist local employees to perform their work smoothly and effectively. Now after obtaining a precise definition of knowledge, its importance is discussed in the next section.

### **2.1.1 The Importance of Knowledge**

Previous literature has highlighted the importance of knowledge in sustaining competitive advantages (Garud & Kumaraswamy, 2005; Wang & Noe, 2010; Kuo, 2011; Park, 2011; Burmeister et al., 2016; Oyemomi et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2020). These studies have concluded that knowledge is a powerful source for the growth of countries, economies, companies, and even individuals. Recently an increasing number of journal articles have investigated the significance of knowledge for multinational companies. An example of these studies is reflected by the work done by Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) which stresses the importance of new knowledge for the headquarters as well as its subsidiaries. Moreover, knowledge has been considered a key source for the competitive advantages of firms (Hussain et al., 2004; Murray & Peyrefitte, 2007; Tallman & Phene,



2007; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Yusof & Bakar, 2012; Nguyen, 2020). This implies that it is vital for companies to continuously update their knowledge to gain a better standing on the market (He & Wei, 2009; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Shao & Ariss, 2020).

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that knowledge has become a key motivator not only for the country's economic growth and a company's growth, but also for essential development of individuals. For this reason, countries, companies, and individuals are actively seeking new knowledge to reach the desired performance (He & Wei, 2009). In order to gain a better understanding of why and how these entities are obtaining new knowledge, the following section discusses knowledge transfer alongside its importance and processes.

### **2.1.2 Knowledge Transfer Definition**

Knowledge transfer is one of the main aspects of knowledge management (Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Fee & Gray, 2020) that has been used in different contexts throughout the literature (Lee & Ahn, 2007; Oshri et al., 2008; Renzl, 2008; Rehman, 2018; Szulanski & Lee, 2020). This term has also been used interchangeably with knowledge sharing in some studies (Welch & Welch, 2008; Vlajcic et al., 2019). Therefore, before discussing the definition and importance of knowledge transfer, the differences between these two terms must be appropriately discussed.

Clearly from literature related to knowledge management, some authors have used knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing synonymously (Jonsson, 2008; Welch & Welch, 2008). However, others such Paulin and Suneson (2015) have emphasised that these two terms should be used according to their actual meaning and based on relevant

contexts. For example, in the context of when two individuals are having a reciprocal conversation, the term knowledge sharing is more suitable (Renzl, 2008). Similarly, Paulin and Suneson (2012) logically distinguish between these terms and have concluded that knowledge sharing is used when knowledge flows in two directions. Alternatively, they also assert that if knowledge is flowing in one direction, the term knowledge transfer is more appropriate. In addition, Ridder (2004) uses “donating” and “collecting” as proxies for knowledge sharing whereas knowledge transfer is limited to donating knowledge (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). Following this logical argument, the current study uses the term “knowledge transfer” to focus on the flow of knowledge from expatriate managers to local employees (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). With this, the following section discusses the definition of knowledge transfer.

Knowledge transfer refers to the process of transferring or disseminating knowledge between two or more people (Slaughter & Kirsch, 2006). Welch and Welch (2008) extended this definition by adding that the process of knowledge transfer can be intentional or unintentional as a result of interaction, activities, meeting, dialog or speech. Adding to that, Paulin and Suneson (2015) outlined that the term knowledge transfer refers to the case when the flow of knowledge is initiated to inform the recipient without seeking their opinion. However, the present study defines knowledge transfer as the flow of knowledge from the knowledge holder (expatriate managers) to another individual (local employees) depending on the ability and motivation of the knowledge holder to transfer it (Faems et al., 2007).

The existing literature has investigated knowledge learning and knowledge transfer at both an individual level (Zoogah & Peng, 2011; Chou et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2017;

Fee & Gray, 2020) and an organisational level (Van Wijk et al., 2008). Moreover, the current literature on knowledge transfer has been studied in various contexts which include intra-firm knowledge transfer (Lee & Ahn, 2007; Oshri et al., 2008; Renzl, 2008) and inter-firm knowledge transfer (Vaara et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014). An example of the former can be found in a recent study by Rehman (2018), which examines knowledge transfer between employees in the public sector. Furthermore, Song (2014) points out that due to the significance of knowledge transfer, an extensive body of literature investigating knowledge transfer between the headquarters of MNCs and their overseas subsidiaries in relation to the enhancement of their overall performance exists. Thus, the next section discusses the importance of knowledge transfer.

### **2.1.3 Importance of Knowledge Transfer**

The importance of knowledge transfer can be investigated from different angles, such as national level, firm level and individual level (Chang et al., 2012; Susanty, 2012; Segarra-Cipres et al., 2014; Nguyen, 2020). For example, it has been argued that the utilization of knowledge transfer at a national level is considered to be one of the vital steps for economic development (Spencer, 2008; Alcacer & Oxley, 2014). This is because gaining new external knowledge would help to improve the educational system, economic system, and health system, and many other sectors, which in turn would accelerate the economic progress of the nation (Alcacer & Oxley, 2014).

Similarly, Blalock and Simon (2009) and Segarra-Cipres et al. (2014) have pointed out that multinational enterprises (MNEs) are increasingly seeking to capture new knowledge in order to enhance their competitive advantages. Here, previous studies report that knowledge transfer has a positive influence on firm market share and profit (Susanty,

2012). For instance, companies that can get new knowledge such as marketing strategies knowledge, product manufacturing knowledge, staff management knowledge would be able to gain a better standing on the market (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Shao & Ariss, 2020). For that reason, MNEs around the world pay great attention to transferring their valuable knowledge to their foreign subsidiaries. This helps them to ensure their ability and readiness to compete not only with local firms but also with their international competitors (Mudambi, 2008; Mudambi & Swift, 2012; Gaur et al., 2020). In addition, knowledge transfer has been considered as a powerful source for the individual growth (Palacios-Marqués, et al., 2013; Elbaz et al., 2018). For example, employees who always seek new and important knowledge related to their work would be able to improve not only the productivity and efficiency, but more importantly their satisfaction as well (Li & Hsieh, 2009; Turner & Pennington, 2015). However, the process of knowledge transfer can be difficult as it is subjected to a number of challenges (Chang et al., 2012; Silveira et al., 2017; Fee & Gray, 2020). Therefore, the next section will focus on the barriers of knowledge transfer with special attention on the target industry in this research.

#### **2.1.4 Barriers of Knowledge Transfer**

The majority of knowledge management studies have focused on high tech industries and only a few empirical studies have been performed in relation to labor intensive industries such as manufacturing industry (Perera, 2008). However, the literature of knowledge transfer has identified a number of challenges that may hinder the efficiency or the speed of knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, 2007; Vlajcic et al., 2019; Szulanski & Lee, 2020). These challenges can be summarised in the following categories: characteristics of the transferred knowledge; characteristics of the knowledge receiver

(absorptive capacity); characteristics of the knowledge sender; and characteristics of the organisation (Minbaeva, 2007; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Liu, 2018). For example, Nelson and Winter (2009) have pointed out that tacit knowledge is hard to transfer as it is complex and often difficult to write down, unlike explicit knowledge which can be written down easily as in working manuals, rules, procedures, and codes (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014). This may imply that written knowledge would help both knowledge source and receiver to transfer, understand, and store knowledge.

Moreover, the absorptive capacity of the receiving entity may impede knowledge transfer. For instance, Elbaz et al. (2018) and Liu (2018) have mentioned that the efficiency of knowledge transfer would be low if the knowledge receiver does not have sufficient competencies to understand the transferred knowledge. Furthermore, lack of ability and motivation to transfer the knowledge is another critical challenge for knowledge transfer (Chang et. al, 2012). In other words, the amount and the quality of knowledge transfer is influenced by the sender's capabilities, skills, experiences, and aptitudes (Siemens et al., 2008; Hair Awang et al., 2013; Kang & Kim, 2017; Fee & Gray, 2020).

Perera (2008) has concluded that only about 22% of manufacturing firms were aware of the importance of transferring tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. Moreover, none of the companies investigated in this study had a formal system to transfer tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. This issue could be explained by a number of reasons. For example, organisations that apply hierarchical management, which strongly believe that knowledge should go through one direction only would hinder the follow of knowledge between the employees. This means, in such management style only leaders should have the right to transfer their knowledge to their subordinate and not vice versa. This in fact

limits the importance of applying formal knowledge management system. In addition, this issues could be due to organisational culture that believes that applying formal knowledge sharing system is extra task and time consuming. Finally, individual behaviors could be another reason. In other words, expert staff may intentionally withhold important knowledge especially the tacit knowledge to maintain their authoritative power and make others always in need of them. Therefore, in order to investigate this challenge, the current study includes the characteristics of knowledge and the characteristics of organisation to explore their roles in the process of knowledge transfer. Another key challenge in knowledge management for the manufacturing industry (e.g. textile firms) is the lack of organisational memory (Solomon, 2005), which is defined as the database of any firm that includes information, data, and knowledge that have been accumulated over time (Dunham & Burt, 2011). This means that the impact of knowledge transferred into the firm is imperfect if the firm does not have proper policies to store and retain the received knowledge. Thus, the current research has an aim to explore the role of organisational characteristics in the manufacturing industry in the process of knowledge transfer.

Based on the above discussion of knowledge transfer challenges, two of the critical questions that have yet to be answered are: What competencies do expatriates need to transfer the knowledge successfully? And, what other factors hinder or even enhance the process of knowledge transfer? Current literature on knowledge transfer and expatriates has divided the determinants of knowledge transfer into four groups: knowledge sender related factors; knowledge receiver related factors (absorptive capacity); transferred knowledge related factors; and the context in which the knowledge is transferred

(Minbaeva, 2007; Chang et al., 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014). Therefore, the following section will discuss the determinants of knowledge transfer.

### **Determinants of Knowledge Transfer**

It was reported that previous studies used around 90 variables to investigate the process of knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, 2007). However, these variables can be classified into four categories which include: knowledge attributes; knowledge sender attributes; knowledge receiver attributes (absorptive capacity); and the attributes of interaction between knowledge sender and receiver (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014). The following sections discuss the role of these determinants in knowledge transfer. It shall be noted here that knowledge characteristics will not be discussed in the following as it has already been discussed previously (see section 2.2).

#### **2.1.5 Knowledge Sender Characteristics**

Several studies have addressed knowledge transfer by investigating its different determinants. For example, Minbaeva (2007) and Elbaz et al. (2018) have questioned the impact of sender and receiver characteristics on successful knowledge transfer processes by considering them as independent variables. However, the study of Minbaeva (2007) would have been more relevant if it had explored the influence of knowledge transfer on the subsidiary's performance (Chang et al., 2012). Likewise, Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) have found in their study that knowledge transfer is affected by the ability of both the knowledge sender and the knowledge receiver. This study on the other hand would have been more useful if it had considered the stickiness knowledge, as Huang et al. (2017) found a positive association between knowledge stickiness and the ability to transfer knowledge. In terms of knowledge stickiness, the study of Huang et al. (2017) has explored the factors that can enhance the performance of knowledge transfer based on Knowledge

Based View (KBV). Through their empirical study that was based on data collected from face to face interview, it was revealed that knowledge transfer can be enhanced by improving the ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge and by providing a suitable environment (Huang et al., 2017). A weakness with this finding, however, is that factors such as trust and experience were neglected despite previous studies already having stressed their significant impact on knowledge stickiness (Schulze & Brojerdi, 2012; Sankowska, 2013). In addition, the generalisability of their findings is doubtful as the data were collected from one research and development (R&D) department only (Tipton, 2017).

Another interesting, relevant study found that absorptive capacity (i.e. ability and motivation to receive new knowledge) and disseminative capacity (i.e. ability and motivation to transfer knowledge) of expatriate managers affect transfer stickiness (Chang & Smale, 2013). The findings of this study may be more applicable if they had included the perspective of host country managers in having a holistic understanding of individual roles (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011).

Despite the given importance of the role of knowledge sender in knowledge transfer, recent studies have shown that knowledge transfer processes may not be successful if the knowledge receiver fails to recognise and understand the new transferred knowledge (Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz et al., 2018). With this in mind, the role of knowledge recipient is discussed in the following section in order to gain a deeper understanding of its involvement in the process of knowledge transfer.



### **2.1.6 Knowledge Receiver Characteristics (Absorptive Capacity)**

Absorptive capacity can be defined as the ability of the receiver to understand the importance of new knowledge gained, incorporate this knowledge into their systems, and execute and implement this new knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002; Khan et al. 2015; Liu, 2018). These previous studies have identified four essential components of absorptive capacity which are recognition, understanding, incorporation, and the implementation of external knowledge (Hair Awang et al., 2013; Forés & Camisón, 2016; Peltokorpi, 2017). The current study follows the definition of Chang et al. (2012) that have defined absorptive capacity as the ability of the knowledge receiver to recognise, understand, and implement the transferred knowledge. Hence, particular focus is on the ability of local employees to recognise, understand, and implement the knowledge transferred from their respective expatriate managers.

The results of the Liu (2018) study, which analysed about 400 questionnaires, have revealed that organisational ability (e.g. the ability to seek new external knowledge) has a significant positive impact on the performance of knowledge transfer especially when the absorptive capacity of the firm is high. Since a common method variance (CMV) obtained from the data was gathered from only a single source, Harman's one-factor test was done and has shown that none of the factors exceeds 30% of the total variance which is acceptable (Schilke, 2014). Likewise, both studies performed by Elbaz et al. (2018) and Liu (2018) have used absorptive capacity as a moderator. However, the latter related absorptive capacity to the ability of individuals, unlike Liu who used the ability of firms to exploit new external knowledge as a measure of absorptive capacity. Generally, both studies have found that absorptive capacity plays a positive moderating role. This confirms

the vital role of absorptive capacity for a firm in general as well as for individuals (Awang et al., 2013).

To sum up this section, it may be said that in order to have successful knowledge transfer, the attribution of the knowledge receiver (absorptive capacity) is an essential condition (Liu, 2018; Thuan, 2020). However, prior studies by Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) and Vlajcic et al. (2019) argued that organisational characteristics (e.g. nature and culture) may have an affect on the process of knowledge transfer. Thus, the following section discusses the role of organisational attributes in knowledge transfer processes.

### **2.1.7 Organisational Characteristics**

Organisational characteristics could be defined as a set of organisational factors such as structure, culture, and strategy that represent the nature of an organisation (Magnier-Watanabe & Senoo, 2008). Moreover, Donate and Guadamillas (2011) have integrated organisational attributes with knowledge management defining it as the management leadership, human resource practises and organisational culture that facilitate the recognition and utilisation of knowledge.

The current study follows the work of Lekhawipat et al. (2018) where the characteristics of an organisation refer to the organisational factors that influence the success of knowledge transfer. These factors are “task structure, organisational structure, top management support, time and interaction and environmental factors” (Lekhawipat et al., 2018, p 875). Thus, research on the determinants of knowledge transfer has progressed from examining individual level factors to include organisational level factors such as organisational structure (Susanty et al., 2012), organisational leadership style (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Castrogiovanni et al., 2016), organisational

culture (Yao et al., 2015; Wang & Wang, 2016) and organisational learning intention (Reus et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2011; Reus et al., 2016; Liu, 2018). For example, Castrogiovanni et al. (2016) have tested the impact of three different leadership styles, namely, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Accordingly, the study found that democratic leadership enables a better level of knowledge transfer. This implies that the performance of knowledge transfer is better where the leader gives their employees the opportunity to debate and make decisions collectively rather than where the autocratic leader makes decisions themselves without enabling others to share their knowledge.

In contrast, a recent study by Yen et al. (2017) has reported that organisational leadership has no impact on the motivation of employees to transfer knowledge to their colleagues. This discrepancy in findings could be due to the context considered in the different studies. For instance, the study of Yen et al. (2017) focused on Merger and Acquisition (M&A) which indicates that the managers involved in a particular M&A may be unable to use the correct communication channels to motivate their new employees. In addition to that reason, Yildiz and Fey (2016) have pointed out that the reputation and the status of companies involved in M&A have an affect on the motivation of employees to exchange their knowledge with others. Thus, the effects from lack of leadership on motivation to transfer knowledge could be due the reputation of the firm or the recent changes of M&A that adversely disconnects leaders from their new employees. The inconsistency of results obtained requires additional studies in this regard (Vlajcic et al., 2018).

A questionnaire survey analysed with PLS-SEM has found that organisational culture and organisational structure are two of the key determinants for the success of knowledge

transfer (Susanty et al., 2012). Factors such as “trust, learning culture, and collaboration” have been found in this study to be key drivers for knowledge transfer whereas factors such as centralisation prevent it. In addition, this study has revealed that frequent communication should be promoted to allow for effective knowledge transfer and in doing so, Chen et al (2014) recommended decision makers to allow their employees to actively participate in decision making processes. Although the study of Susanty et al. (2012) has broadened our understanding regarding the organisational role in the process of knowledge transfer, it was based on a small sample of 74 participants which may affect its credibility (Tipton, 2017). Despite this, little is known about the role of an organisation in enhancing the effectiveness of knowledge transfer (Vlajcic et al., 2018). For example, the extent to which the organisation can apply an effective system to encourage knowledge transfer (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014) such as its impact on the expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer. In order to obtain a clear understanding of the effects of organisational characteristics, the current study will take this into account. It is defined as the commitment of an organisation to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination including factors such as organisational culture and structure, and organisational incentives and regulations for knowledge sharing (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). This definition is used as the organisational culture and structure have been proven to be among the key drivers for knowledge transfer (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Yao et al., 2015; Lekhawipat et al., 2018) An important question to ask here is, which theory can be used to explore the impact of the competency of expatriates in knowledge transfer on achieving successful localisation? Thus, next section will discuss the potential theories in this regard.

### **Related Theories**

Previous studies have implemented different theories such as Knowledge Based View (KBV) (Wang & Zhao, 2017), Social Capital Theory (Al-Salti, 2011; Kang & Kim, 2017), Resources Based View (RBV) (Huang et al., 2017) and Organisational Learning Theory (Al-Salti, 2011). Among these, there is another well-known theory called Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Seeking Theory (AMO) that can assist in investigating the impact of expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge to local staff on the performance of knowledge transfer (Elbaz, et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020). This theory is seen more relevant to the aims of the current study as it enables the identification of individual competencies and their influence on local staff performance (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017) as well as on the knowledge transfer process (Chang et al., 2012). Therefore, the next section discusses this theory in more detail to overview its suitability in the context of the current study.

### **Background of AMO Theory**

The (AMO) was developed by Blumberg and Pringle in 1982 to measure the performance of individuals. According to AMO theory, it is believed that the performance of individuals is based on the joint interaction of ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform a particular given task. This theory however has been used in different fields such as consumer preference and attitude (Hu & Benttler, 1998), marketing (Binney et al., 2006) and management (Dahlin et al., 2018). More recently, AMO theory has been applied in the context of knowledge transfer (Siemsen et al., 2008; Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018). A comprehensive and systematic review has been conducted, as shown in Table 2.1, to overview how previous studies have used the three elements of AMO theory. Even though

only a few studies have employed all the three elements of AMO theory, the majority have given particular focus to ability and motivation.

Prior studies have emphasised the complementary roles among the constructs of AMO. It can be implied here that in order to have successful knowledge transfer, all three components of AMO must be presented (Chang et al., 2012; Kang & Kim, 2017). For example, having the ability to transfer knowledge may not necessarily lead to highly effective knowledge transfer if there is a lack in motivation (Huang et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of the ability to transfer knowledge may reduce the motivation to transfer knowledge for different reasons such as the fear of failure or negative emotional responses in regards to the reaction of knowledge receivers (Chang et al., 2012).

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that AMO theory is suitable for this study due to the following reasons. First, AMO theory has three elements that can be considered as drivers for expatriate competency to transfer knowledge (Elbaz et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020). In addition, these three elements of this theory have been used as predictors for knowledge transfer in recent literatures of knowledge transfer (Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018). Here, the current thesis aims to investigate the factors that influence expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge. For example, ability (A) would be used as the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge, motivation (M) as the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge and finally, opportunity (O) as the opportunity of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. In the following sections, the three factors of AMO theory are discussed.

**Table 2. 1 Knowledge Transfer Determinants (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity)**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Ability</b>
Cabrera & Cabrera (2002)	Payoff, group identity, personal responsibility	-	Self-efficacy
Borgatti & Cross (2003)	Perceived cost	Accessibility	Perceived expertise
Kankanhalli et al. (2005)	Reward, reciprocity, enjoyment, codification cost	-	Self-efficacy
Bock et al. (2005)	Reward, reciprocity	-	Self-efficacy
Ko et al. (2005)	Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation	-	Perceived expertise Absorptive capacity Decoding/encoding
Minbaeva (2007)	Motivation to transfer	-	Ability to transfer and Absorb
Jeon et al. (2011)	Image, reciprocity, enjoyment in helping, need for affiliation	Facilitating conditions	Perceived behavioural control
Chang et al. (2012)	Motivation to transfer	Opportunity seeking	Ability to transfer
Huang et al. (2013)	Knowledge sharing motivation	Knowledge sharing Opportunity	-
Connelly et al. (2014)	Perceived competition	Perceived time pressure	Self-efficacy
Teo & Bhattacharjee (2014)	Client motivation, vendor willingness	-	-
Minbaeva et al. (2014)	Motivation to transfer	-	Ability to transfer
Chou et al. (2014)	Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation	-	Self-efficacy
Kim et al. (2015)	Supplier's trust and innovativeness	Buyer-driven knowledge Transfer activity	Supplier's knowledge and cognitive congruence
Huang et al. (2017)	Motivation to transfer/motivation to receive	-	Ability to transfer /ability to receive
Kang & Kim (2017)	Motivation to transfer	Opportunity to socialize	Ability to transfer
Elbaz et al. (2018)	Motivation to transfer	Opportunity seeking	Ability to transfer

Adopted with amendment from Kang and Kim (2017) except last three studies were added by the author

### **2.1.8 Ability to Transfer Knowledge**

The ability to transfer knowledge has been defined differently in previous studies. For example, Huang et al. (2017) have identified three types of abilities in relation to knowledge transfer which include the ability to clarify the main aim of transferred knowledge, the ability to anticipate the needs of the knowledge receiver, and the ability to adopt and apply the knowledge. In addition to these factors, the term “ability” was used in literature relevant to knowledge transfer with differing perspectives such as the ability to manage cross-cultural issues during knowledge transfer (Bengoa & Kaufmann, 2014), the ability to resolve conflicts in communication (Zoogah & Peng, 2011) and the ability to create positive social connections that enable a better chance for knowledge transfer (Ismail, 2015). For example, Elbaz et al. (2018) investigated the ability of managers in travel agencies to transfer their knowledge to their subordinates where a significant relationship between the ability to transfer the knowledge and knowledge transfer outcomes was found. From an international perspective, the current study follows Chang et al. (2012) by defining the ability of expatriates as the “knowledge, skills, and experience needed to solve difficulties in transferring knowledge.” This definition was selected because it comprehensively covers most of the prior definitions and it also fits with the aim of this study that focusses on identifying the competency of expatriates in overcoming the challenges of knowledge transfer. Here, it should be metioned that the effect of the psychological factors such as personality and intellect is not under the scope of this thesis.

The ability of an individual to transfer knowledge is influenced by factors such as resources, skills, time availability, and workers’ discretion (Morris et al., 2011; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2020). For instance, Lekhawipat et al. (2018) pointed



out that the ability of the knowledge source will lessen when they are occupied with too many tasks and are left with no time for knowledge transfer. Moreover, it has been proposed that the ability to transfer knowledge is based on experience, talents, and know-how exhibited by the knowledge sender (Chang et al., 2012). An example considering the role of experience can be found in the work of Awang et al. (2013) who found a reverse relationship between work experience and knowledge transfer. This implies that the performance of knowledge transfer might be high with new employees who have less experience and vice versa. This could be due to the keenness of new employees in learning or actively sharing their new knowledge compared to senior employees who may have more sufficient knowledge and lesser motivation to share or learn new knowledge. Nevertheless, even if there is a strong ability to transfer knowledge, the transfer process may not take place if the knowledge holder lacks the motivation to do so (Chang et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017). Thus, the following point discusses the influence of the motivation of the knowledge holder on the process of knowledge transfer.

#### **2.1.9 Motivation to Transfer Knowledge**

Motivation refers to the willingness of an individual to act (Chang et al., 2012). Based on literature in regards to knowledge transfer, motivation has been considered in two different directional contexts, one with the knowledge holder transferring the knowledge and the other with the knowledge receiver in acquiring the knowledge. For example, Tange et al. (2008) used individual motivation in learning new knowledge as a condition for knowledge transfer to take place. This means when the knowledge receiver is motivated to acquire external knowledge, knowledge transfer will thus be enhanced (Chang & Smale, 2013). Other researchers have tested the motivation of the knowledge

sender to transfer their knowledge as a key determinant for knowledge transfer. For instance, Chen et al (2010) have pointed out that the lack of motivation in expatriates hinders knowledge from being transferred to other staff. The current study defines motivation as the willingness of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to their employees (Elbaz et al., 2018).

A study conducted by Chou et al (2014) has identified two types of motivation; intrinsic (e.g. respect and praise) and extrinsic (e.g. financial rewards). However, one of the findings in this study was not in line with those found in previous studies (Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Minbaeva, 2007) where extrinsic motivation (e.g. financial rewards) was determined to have a negative, though insignificant, impact on the process of knowledge transfer. The inconsistency of these findings could be due to the sharing of knowledge culture in the organisation investigated by Chou et al. (2014), where workers habitually share knowledge with each other on a daily basis without considering any physical rewards (Boudreau, 2003). This thus implies that intrinsic motivations such as respect and recognition could be more important for the performance of knowledge transfer unlike extrinsic motivations such as the monetary compensation which has a negative impact (Chou et al., 2014). Despite the study determining important empirical findings based on individual factors, it has failed to address organisational level factors such as organisational learning intention (Liu, 2018) or organisational absorptive capacity (Schreiber et al., 2011). Furthermore, it has been found that the inability to achieve the desired performance gives the individual more motivation to seek external knowledge to achieve the target (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). This may potentially suggest that the process of knowledge transfer could be more common with employees who seek to enhance their performance.

Another important matter that needs to be taken into account is the issue of knowledge hiding (an intention to withhold the knowledge) as it may have a negative impact on the motivation of the knowledge holder to transfer knowledge to anyone who requires it (Connelly et al., 2012; Yao et al., 2020). Knowledge hiding has recently been challenged by Connelly and Zweig (2015) by demonstrating the importance of tackling this issue to create an environment for effective knowledge transfer. One possible reason behind knowledge hiding could be fear of a loss in position or an authoritative power (Selmer, 2004). However, this issue can be overcome by providing financial rewards or even verbal recognition to the knowledge holders (Chou et al., 2014). Interestingly Michailova and Minbaeva, (2012) have named the behaviour of knowledge hiding as “knowledge-hoarding behavior” which results from two causes that may not be addressed by the aforementioned solutions. The first is related to the intentions of the manager in hiding knowledge from employees to sustain and control their authority. The second is due to the inequality among members of an organisation where employees deliberately hide their knowledge to create an impression that their knowledge is less than that of top management. These behaviours are caused by values held by the organisation which in turn would impair knowledge transfer (Hong et al., 2009).

Knowledge transfer is highly impacted by the motivation of the knowledge holder to do so. In this regard, previous studies have pointed out that various factors may adversely impact knowledge hiding (an intention to withhold the knowledge) (Connelly et al., 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). For example, expatriates fear of losing a position or job security may hinder knowledge transfer (Selmer, 2004). In other

words, if knowledge holders perceive that knowledge transfer may threaten their position or job security, they might be reluctant to transfer their knowledge to their subordinates.

Another factor that may impact the performance of knowledge transfer is cultural differences. In this vein, Wijk et al (2008) mentioned that cultural differences between the knowledge holders and the knowledge seekers would challenge the flow of knowledge between them. For example, failing to adopt and adjust well to the host culture could reduce expatriate motivation to interact with locals. Here, it was found that expatriate managers who are willing to cope with cultural differences in order to transfer knowledge to their subordinates are more successful in knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012).

In addition, it is expected that expatriates who are willing to devote time and to make persistent efforts to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge to their subordinates would lead to more knowledge transfer from expatriate to their subordinates (Elbaz et al., 2018). Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge the critical role of these factors in order to have a successful transfer of knowledge.

Motivation without the ability to transfer knowledge may not lead to transfer success (Bonache & Za'rraga, 2008). This could be taken one step further by implying that as the level of interaction between the motivation to transfer knowledge and the ability to transfer knowledge increases, the level of knowledge transfer also increases, and vice versa (Chang et al, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to take into consideration both the ability and motivation to reach fruitful knowledge transfer. However, although these elements are vital for the success of knowledge transfer, it has been proposed that in order to achieve an optimal level of knowledge transfer, it is necessary for the knowledge holder to seek the opportunity to interact with whoever needs their knowledge (Minbaeva, 2007; Ikyanyon &

Ode, 2017). This leads to a discussion of the role of opportunity seeking in the following section.

#### **2.1.10 Opportunity Seeking to Transfer Knowledge**

Opportunity seeking is one of the three factors in AMO theory (Elbaz et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020). This factor has been used in various studies as an antecedent for knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017; Fee & Gray, 2020). However, among the three factors of AMO theory, opportunity seeking has received the least attention (Kang & Kim, 2017). This lack of attention by no means reduces its importance in knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the limited consideration of this factor in previous studies could be due to its integration with ability and motivation particularly when it is investigated within the context of the ability to act or interact (Minbaeva et al., 2014).

Turner and Pennington (2015) defined opportunity as a favourable environment that enables a satisfactory level of interaction. Moreover, opportunity seeking can be defined as formal (such as meetings) and informal (such as social activities) interactions between employees that provide an environment for knowledge transfer due to the initiative of the knowledge holder (Burmeister et al., 2016; Malik et al., 2020). This was confirmed by Kang and Kim (2017) who have reported that in order to have successful knowledge transfer, decision makers should give a high priority to formal interactions. This include holding frequent meetings among different departments and gathering employees of similar expertise, and informal interactions which include social gatherings and sports clubs. Correspondingly Szulanski et al. (2016) have questioned previous studies regarding the influence of the duration of interactions on the outcomes of knowledge transfer due to

the potential of insufficient time for the transfer to take place. Thus, it is suggested that knowledge source and recipient both schedule a suitable time and mode for the knowledge transfer.

Since the focus of the current study is to identify the expatriate competencies that facilitate the flow of knowledge from expatriate managers to local staff, the current study defines the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers as the search and utilisation of means and chances to transfer knowledge (Chang et al., 2012). This particular definition was selected as it was proven by previous studies that interaction between the knowledge holder and knowledge seeker can enhance the trust between them which in turn facilitates the transfer of knowledge (Chen et al., 2014; Fee & Gray, 2020). Kang and Kim (2017) provide a practical example to understand the effective role of opportunity seeking in AMO theory. In their study, they have pointed out that ability and motivation of a student to learn might be very high but they obtain lower level of results in terms of examinations due to negative interactions with their surrounding external environment such as family. With this in mind, it can be implied that in order to have successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees, fruitful interaction among the employees is a critical condition, along with ability and motivation to transfer and receive that knowledge (Chang et al., 2012; Burmeister et al., 2016). This is further exemplified in a study by Ikyanyon and Ode (2017) that has stated that a high performance of knowledge transfer is found when employees seek an opportunity to interact with their respective organisational members.

Other scholars have investigated the role of social capital in knowledge transfer and found that a better level of social capital subsequently promotes a better level of knowledge

transfer (Liu, 2018). Interestingly, it was reported that frequent interactions between employees accelerates access to new knowledge (Wilkesmann et al., 2009), which in turn may create a competitive advantage for the firm. These positive outcomes could be due to the possibility of obtaining constant feedback as well as more opportunities to clarify any ambiguity in regards to the transferred knowledge (Tortoriello & Krackhardt, 2010; Tortoriello et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that it is very crucial for individuals to seek opportunities to transfer their knowledge not only to enhance the process of knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012) but also to improve the performance of their firms (Susanty et al., 2012).

In discussing AMO theory, it could be implied that previous studies have paid little attention to investigating the theory along with the characteristics mentioned above, such knowledge receiver and organisational characteristics (Chang et al., 2012). Therefore, this study focusses on knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees of subsidiaries by integrating AMO theory with the following three determinants of knowledge transfer: the characteristics of the organisation; the characteristics of the knowledge receiver (absorptive capacity of local employees); and the characteristics of the transferred knowledge. Moreover, based on the above discussion on the determinants of knowledge transfer, it can be concluded that the integration of these factors is essential for the success of knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, 2007; Song, 2014). Furthermore, the success of knowledge transfer enhances the ability, understanding, and skills of local employees which in turn may improve the performance of the firm (Thuan, 2020). Despite this, researchers investigating localisation have pointed out that the lack of knowledge and skills attributed to local employees is one of the key obstacles towards achieving successful localisation

(Naithani & Jha, 2009; Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010; Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020). Here, an important and interesting question arises: Can the competency of expatriates in knowledge transfer fill this gap and lead to the achievement of successful localisation? Thus, the next subsection discusses the impact of knowledge transfer on the success of localisation.

### **Successful Localisation**

Previous investigations have tested the influence of localisation on knowledge transfer effectiveness and organisation performance (Trong Tuan, 2012). However, it was mentioned that only a limited number of papers have attempted to address the impact of expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer on the success of localisation (Law et al., 2009; Trong Tuan, 2012; Van Bakel, 2019; Fee & Gray, 2020). The following sections discuss the antecedents of localisation along, its definition, and the relationship between knowledge transfer and successful localisation.

#### **2.1.11 Localisation Background**

Staff localisation generally refers to the process of recruiting or employing local individuals to replace expatriates in an organisation (Lam & Yeung, 2010; Al-lamky, 2016; Ge et al., 2020). However, this study will consider successful localisation with the addition of further conditions to be in accordance with the determined aims. In the context of this thesis, successful localisation will therefore be referred to as the process of substituting expatriate employees by local staff who have the ability to perform at a similar performance (Law et al., 2009). For several reasons, many MNCs attempt to localise expatriate positions (Fayol-Song, 2011; Law, Wong & Wang, 2004; Ge et al., 2020), especially in the GCC countries (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2014; Al-Asfour & Khan, 2014) where expatriates make up the majority of the labour market (Forstenlechner, 2009; Goby & Alhadhrami,



2020). The drawbacks of employing expatriates include high failure and turnover rates along with high employment costs due to annual leaves and compensation for living costs (Fayol-Song, 2011).

Theoretically, this implies that by reducing these costs, companies would be able to reduce expenditure and subsequently enhance their financial performance. From another perspective, it could be argued that localisation potentially enhances firm performance. That is due to the good level of understanding that local employees have in regards to the local market and their ability to establish effective relationships with local customers and suppliers (Law et al., 2009; Ge et al., 2020). Furthermore, Forstenlechner (2009) points out that localisation may indirectly enhance the competitive advantages of MNCs that have effective localisation systems due to their prioritisation for governmental tenders.

From an empirical perspective, Moideenkutty et al. (2016) have demonstrated in a correlation design report that staff localisation is positively associated with a company's financial performance. Despite this, the finding does not necessarily imply that localisation leads to better firm performance as the correlation design they adopted is unable to predict the causality on that relationship. To avoid the limitations of the aforementioned study, Law et al. (2009) adopted a longitudinal study to investigate the impact of staff localisation on organisational performance. Through subjective measurements, their study supports the argument that successful localisation positively impacts the performance of a firm. However, the study would be more valid if it adopted an objective rating approach rather than a subjective approach despite it being accepted (Geringer et al., 2002). Yet, it is vital to review the key drivers of localisation. Thus, the next section discusses the localisation antecedents.

### **2.1.12 Localisation Antecedents**

The current literature on localisation has investigated its reasons for being, its challenges, and its antecedents (Selmer, 2004; Fryxell et al., 2004; Law, Wong, & Wang 2004; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007; Budhwar et al., 2002; Law et al., 2009; Chan et al., 2016; Ge et al., 2020). For instance, Fayol-Song (2011) has investigated the rationale behind replacing expatriates by local staff and concluded that cost reduction, local staff retention, and maintaining healthy connection with the local government are the main reasons for localisation. Likewise, Chan et al. (2016) has pointed out that the high expenses and payments to expatriate staff are among the main reasons for localisation. In addition, other scholarly work has investigated the challenges of localisation such as the willingness of expatriate managers to control important knowledge (Tan & Mahoney 2006; Gaur et al., 2007) and the unavailability of a qualified and experienced local workforce (Selmer, 2004; Naithani & Jha, 2009; Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010; Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020).

When it comes to the determinants of localisation, the majority of prior investigations have focused on HR related factors (Forstenlechner, 2009; Law et al., 2009; Li, et al., 2018). For example, Bhanugopan and Fish (2008) have examined recruitment and selection, lack of training and development, and compensation as determinants of localisation. Similarly, Forstenlechner (2009) investigated the impact of non-HR practices such as a rewards system, career management, and requirements on staff localisation. Besides the overall scarcity of empirical studies on localisation in the Middle East (Rees et al., 2007; Mellahi, 2007; Li, et al., 2018), there is very limited effort on investigating the role of knowledge transfer process on achieving successful localisation (Selmer, 2004; Law et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2019). In addition, as discussed earlier, the majority

of knowledge transfer studies have focused extensively on the process of knowledge transfer or its impact on the company's performance and innovation (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Tallman & Phene, 2007; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Susanty et al., 2012; Castrogiovanni et al., 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Vljacic et al., 2018; Thuan, 2020), with limited attention given to the role of knowledge transfer determinates on achieving successful localisation (Selmer; 2004; Law et al., 2009; Van Bakel, 2019). Thus, the integration of the knowledge transfer process and localisation would be an interesting topic to investigate. Consequently, the following section discusses the relationship between knowledge transfer and staff localisation.

### **2.1.13 Knowledge Transfer and Successful Localisation**

Research on localisation has mainly focused either on the challenges and importance of localisation (Gomez & Sanchez, 2005; Al-Lamky et al., 2016), or on the antecedents of localisation (Fryxell et al., 2004; Selmer, 2004; Law et al., 2009). The majority of studies have focused on the methodologies in achieving successful localisation based on human resource management (HRM) practices which include selection, recruitment, and rotation (Al-lamky, 2016). However, little is known about the effect of non-HRM practices on achieving successful localisation (Moideenkutty et al., 2016; Li et al., 2018). In fact, Li et al. (2018) have claimed that their recent study was the first study to actually examine non-HRM practices. They investigated the role of knowledge holder competencies and organisational characteristics, as a determinant of successful staff localisation. Moreover, they have indicated that it was a new direction of study regarding literature relevant to localisation. With this, the determinants of expatriate, such as the

ability and motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to local staff as a driver for achieving localisation, would be an interesting topic to fill such gap. Not only that, this driver might also be an effective solution for the persuasive arguments that propose that the lack of skills and capabilities in the local workforce is the main obstacle towards achieving successful localisation especially in Arabian gulf countries (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Goby et al., 2017; Jabeen et al., 2018). This suggests that transferring knowledge from knowledge holders (in this case expatriate managers) to knowledge seekers (in this case local staff) may contribute to the improvement of the skills, knowledge and capabilities of the local staff which in turn would subsequently lead to successful localisation. Therefore, the following section discusses the role of expatriates in knowledge transfer.

### **Knowledge Transfer and Expatriates**

Expatriates are seen as an effective means for transferring knowledge from headquarters to their respective subsidiaries (Horak & Yang, 2016; Arsawan et al., 2018; Wang & Varma, 2020). In order to explore the importance of expatriates in knowledge transfer, the next section reviews the previous literature in this regard.

#### **2.1.14 Expatriates Definition**

The term expatriate simply refers to any individuals who live outside their home country (Rehman, 2018). These individuals have been classified into two different categories, assigned expatriate (AE) and self-initiated expatriate (SIE) (Tang et al., 2017). The former refers to international workers who were assigned by their organisations to work in their respective subsidiaries located overseas, whereas the latter refers to international workers who have made their own decision to work overseas independently (Selmer & Luring, 2012; Nolan & Michael. 2014).

The overwhelming majority of literature related to expatriates has focussed on AE (Chang et al., 2012; Selmer & Luring, 2012; Vlajcic et al., 2019). In fact, several studies such as those performed by Selmer and Luring (2012), Doherty et al. (2013), and Tang et al. (2017), have pointed out that little work has been done in regards to SIEs in general, and more particularly their role in knowledge transfer. In this regard, they have recommended future studies to expand this particular, essential type of expatriates.

Previous research on the differences between SIE and AE indicates that AE may have better attributes in terms of knowledge, experience, and corporate culture background due to their contact with the parent company (Tharenou, 2010 Luring & Selmer, 2018). This potentially suggests that SIE may have less ability to transfer knowledge to local employees as compared to AE as it has been found that prior experience might influence the performance of knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012; Awang et al., 2013). Moreover, the intention of SIEs to stay for longer periods of time in the host country than AEs (Doherty et al., 2011; Tharenou, 2010) might have an adverse impact on their willingness to transfer their knowledge to local employees in order to ensure they can stay longer. This implies that if local employees could acquire sufficient knowledge from SIEs, there might be no need for the SIEs. It has also been reported that SIEs, in contrast to AEs, have more experience in regards to their relationship with the environment of the host country and better relationships and trust with the local employees (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013; Suutari et al., 2018; Ikyanyon & Ode, 2017). By associating this finding with those of Liu (2018), Wilkesmann, et al. (2009), and Chen et al. (2014) who determined that effective relationships, trust, and better understanding of the local culture has a significant positive effect on the performance of knowledge transfer, it could be argued that SIEs will have

better chances and ability to transfer knowledge than AEs who have less relationship and local experience.

However as discussed above, the direct performance of SIEs on knowledge transfer is still not explicit. In particular, little research addresses the factors that influence the competencies of SIE in knowledge transfer rather, the majority of SIEs studies focuses on their career experiences, career anchors, turnover intention and career development and adjustment (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014; Vaiman et al., 2015; Dickmann et al., 2016; Suutari et al., 2018; Hussain & Deery 2018). Therefore, future studies need to empirically investigate the competencies of SIEs in knowledge transfer. Before identifying these competencies, the following section discusses the importance and role of expatriates in knowledge transfer.

#### **2.1.15 The Role of Expatriates in Knowledge Transfer**

Previous studies have measured the performance of expatriates based on several factors (Horak & Yang, 2016), which can be classified by three aspects: relational performance - such as interpersonal skills (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014); job performance (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2014); and, interestingly, knowledge transfer (Choi & Johanson, 2012). The last factor is the focus of the present study. With this, prior studies have reported that expatriates have been used as a successful means of transferring knowledge, whether it be from the headquarters to overseas affiliates (Chang et al., 2012; Arsawan et al., 2018; Wang & Varma, 2020) or the other way around, from local subsidiaries to the home country (Horak & Yang, 2016; Gau et al., 2019). Consideration of the direction of knowledge transfer from subsidiaries to headquarters is excluded from

this study as the aim is to examine the flow of knowledge from expatriate managers to local employees.

From the resource-based view, Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) have constructed a conceptual framework that focusses on the role of expatriates in transferring knowledge to host subsidiaries with particular focus on their characteristics (e.g. willingness of expatriates to transfer knowledge and work-related skills). Their study has concluded that expatriates are not only a source of competitive advantages, but also a vital conduit for knowledge transfer. However, their study did not consider either the nature of knowledge or the nature of industry, which have been found to be key determinants for knowledge transfer (Fang et al., 2010; Perervus, 2013).

Based on expatriation literature, expatriates have been viewed as knowledge transformers due to two main rationales (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Fee & Gray, 2020). The first is related to the assumption that expatriates are seen as a warehouse of expertise which thus enables them to be effective conduits for knowledge transfer (Brock et al., 2008; Shao & Ariss, 2020). The second is the ability of expatriates to enhance the performance of subsidiaries (Cho, 2018), which has encouraged MNCs to transfer their knowledge via expatriates (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Although other studies have claimed that the international experience of expatriates could be the third reason (Hair Awang et al., 2013), recent literature has revealed that this factor has no significant role (Vlajicic et al., 2019). The disparity in findings could be due to the fact that knowledge transfer is dependent not only on the technical skills of the knowledge holder but also that it requires certain soft competencies from the individual transferring knowledge to overcome barriers (Chang et al., 2012).

### **Gaps and Contributions**

Prior researches have extensively focused on examining the processes of knowledge transfer, including its causes and determinants, or the impact of knowledge transfer on an organisation's performance and innovation (Zander & Kogut, 1995; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Minbaeva et al., 2003; Tallman & Phene, 2007; Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Susanty et al., 2012; Castrogiovanni et al., 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Vlajcic et al., 2018; Rese et al., 2020; Shao & Ariss, 2020). However, based on the literature review, it was found that limited attention has been paid to investigating the integrative role of expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge to local staff for the purpose of achieving successful localisation (Law et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018; Van Bakel, 2019). In this vein, recent study by Fee & Gray (2020) calls for examining the outcomes of knowledge transfer on the performance of local staff. In their study, they reported that "the learning outcomes (of expatriates and local staff interaction) reported by respondents may have been additional or surplus outcomes that may not be fully recognized (or planned) by organizations, and which are yet to be addressed directly in literature pertaining to expatriates' roles in organizational development and/or localization" (Fee & Gray, 2020, p. 19). In addition, through the comprehensive literature review conducted by Van Bakel (2019) on the empirical research on expatriate-local interactions, it was reported that investigating the outcomes of expatriates and local staff interactions is a promising area for future studies, as it was neglected on the extant literature. For example, this study calls for more research into this area, by exploring the effect of expatriates on the performance of local employees to facilitate the efforts of organisations that aim to achieve successful localisation. Without a perfect understanding of this, companies' efforts to achieve



successful localisation especially through expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge will remain unfulfilled (Van Bakel, 2019). Hence, in response to the practical need of organisations toward achieving successful localisation and to researchers' calls, the current thesis has integrated AMO theory into localisation studies to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers can lead to successful localisation. By this, the current thesis contributes to the current body of knowledge through proposing and validating a model that can enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees with the aim of achieving successful staff localisation.

Moreover, the current literature related to knowledge transfer has extensively examined the impact of organisation characteristics and knowledge characteristics on the performance and speed of knowledge transfer (Szulanski, 1996; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat, et al., 2018; Liu, 2018). However, previous studies have neglected the impact of knowledge and organisation characteristics on knowledge holder competencies to transfer knowledge (Paul, 2007; Kang, et al., 2010; Shao & Ariss, 2020). For example, Michailova and Mustaffa (2012) reported, in their comprehensive review on the related knowledge transfer literatures, that about 94 % of literatures has neglected the role of individual characteristics in the process of knowledge flow, which has been considered as a key factor for the success of knowledge transfer (Andersson et al., 2015; Burmeister et al., 2018; Gaur et al., 2019).

In this regard, two recent research studies done by Gonzalez and Chakraborty (2014) and Vlajcic et al. (2019) have recommended future studies to investigate the effect of the investigated organisation characteristics on the process of knowledge transfer. This

could be due to the fact that organisational characteristics such as organisational leadership style (Castrogiovanni et al., 2016), organisational culture (Wang & Wang, 2016), and organisational learning intention (Liu, 2018) may impact the causal relationship between the competency of expatriates in knowledge transfer and the knowledge received (Vlajcic et al., 2019). In this vein, extant literature suggests that poor organisational characteristics toward knowledge transfer would inhibit knowledge holder to transfer important and valuable knowledge and practices (Reus et al. 2015; Castrogiovanni et al., 2016). Example of this would be the influence of organisational culture and structure, and organisational incentives and regulations on the success of knowledge transfer (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). Thus, the current thesis aims to fill the gap by employing the knowledge characteristics and organisational characteristics as predictor of expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge.

In addition, the current study aims to contribute to knowledge transfer and localisation literature by testing the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the association between the knowledge received and localisation success. Thus, this would lead to a more holistic understating, that includes the role of expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer with the aim to achieve successful localisation and other related factors such as local staff absorptive capacity (Minbaeva et al., 2014; Forés & Camisón, 2016; Peltokorpi, 2017; Liu, 2018), the characteristics of organization (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018) and the characteristics of knowledge (Szulanski et al., 2016; Silveira et al., 2017; Gaur et al., 2019). In other words, another rationale for including the local staff absorptive capacity, organisation characteristics, and knowledge characteristics apart from the limitations of previous studies, is to respond to researchers who have argued

that in order to fully recognise the process of knowledge transfer, it is crucial to consider the determinants that are related to knowledge sources and receivers, and knowledge characteristics (Szulanski, 1996; Minbaeva, 2007; Chang et al., 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Vljacic et al., 2019).

In addition, unlike previous studies which have focused mainly on the role of AEs in knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012; Choi & Johanson, 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Horak & Yang, 2016; Arsawan et al., 2018), the current study takes the other direction by focusing on SIEs. Three key rationales motivate this selection apart from the fact that SIE in knowledge transfer literature is still largely unknown (Fee & Gray, 2020). The first is related to the fact that a majority of workers in the private sector in Oman are considered SIEs (Omani National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2017). In relation to the first rationale, the Omani government has made attempts in the last three decades to replace SIEs with locals as a strategy to create more job opportunities for the locals. Nevertheless, this strategy has not yet succeeded (NCSI, 2019). Therefore, it can be proposed that exploring the process of knowledge transfer from SIEs to the local employees may facilitate the process of localisation (Selmer, 2004; Law et al., 2009). Considering the second rationale, as stated previously in the literature review, SIEs may have different characteristics from AEs which may have an impact on the performance of the knowledge transfer (Ikyanyon & Ode, 2017; Luring & Selmer, 2018; Shao & Ariss, 2020). For example, it reported that the intention of SIEs to stay for longer periods of time in the host country than AEs (Doherty et al., 2011; Tharenou, 2013) might have an adverse impact on their willingness to transfer their knowledge to local employees in order to ensure they can stay longer. The third rationale is related to the fact that the number of worldwide SIEs has

raised in recent years and importantly they become an increasingly effective solution for the global shortage of skilled worker (Hussain & Deery 2018; Fee & Gray, 2020). This is an important alternative requirement option especially when sending AE overseas is difficult or costly. Thus, this study aims to investigate this area.

### **Summary of Contributions**

In highlighting the gap in terms of research based on previous studies, this study identifies major outstanding contributions to fill these gaps. Therefore, the contribution of this research focusses on the following major areas for future research:

1. The present study integrates the AMO theory with knowledge transfer in order to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer (based on the proposed framework) enables successful knowledge transfer at manufacturing companies in Oman.
2. The present thesis investigates the impact of the competency of expatriates (AMO) to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received.
3. The present study examines the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation through the moderating role of the knowledge receiver's characteristics (absorptive capacity).
4. Unlike previous studies that employ the organisation characteristics and knowledge characteristics as predictors of knowledge transfer performance and speed, this thesis examines the effect of them on expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge.
5. Unlike the previous studies which have focused mainly on AEs, the current study takes a different direction by focusing on SIEs for the reasons stated above.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides a summary of literature related to knowledge transfer and its role in achieving successful localisation. The main reasons behind reviewing previous studies is not only to gain an overview of what has been done in this field and how, but more importantly to contribute to the body of knowledge after identifying gaps in the research. The stated gaps above are conceptualised in the following chapter in order to map the entire structure of this study with reference to its questions, objectives and aims.

### **3 CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Introduction**

The current chapter discusses the conceptualised framework based on the literature review discussed in the previous chapter. The variables implemented in regards to the conceptual framework are discussed before making clarifications concerning the relationship among the three different competencies of expatriates in transferring knowledge to local staff and successful localisation.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, an overview of the theoretical background is presented. Next, the impact of knowledge characteristics and organisation characteristics on the expatriate competencies is discussed. Then, a discussion on the association between the ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge and knowledge received is provided. Subsequently, the association between the motivation of expatriates to transfer knowledge and the knowledge received is explained. Following that, the association between opportunity-seeking of expatriates to transfer knowledge and knowledge received is outlined. After that, a discussion on the relationship between knowledge received and successful localisation is provided, followed by a section on the mediating role of knowledge received in the relationships among the three competencies of expatriates in transferring knowledge and successful localisation. Finally, the moderating role of absorptive capacity is discussed and the entire chapter is summarised.

#### **Theoretical Background**

Based on the literature review and research gaps that have been discussed in chapter two, the current thesis develops a conceptual framework that aims to examine the impact of the competency of expatriates to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation

(see Figure 3.1 below) through the mediating role of the knowledge received and the moderating role of the absorptive capacity. Finally, this research aims to examine the effect of knowledge characteristics and organisation characteristics on the competency of expatriates to transfer knowledge.

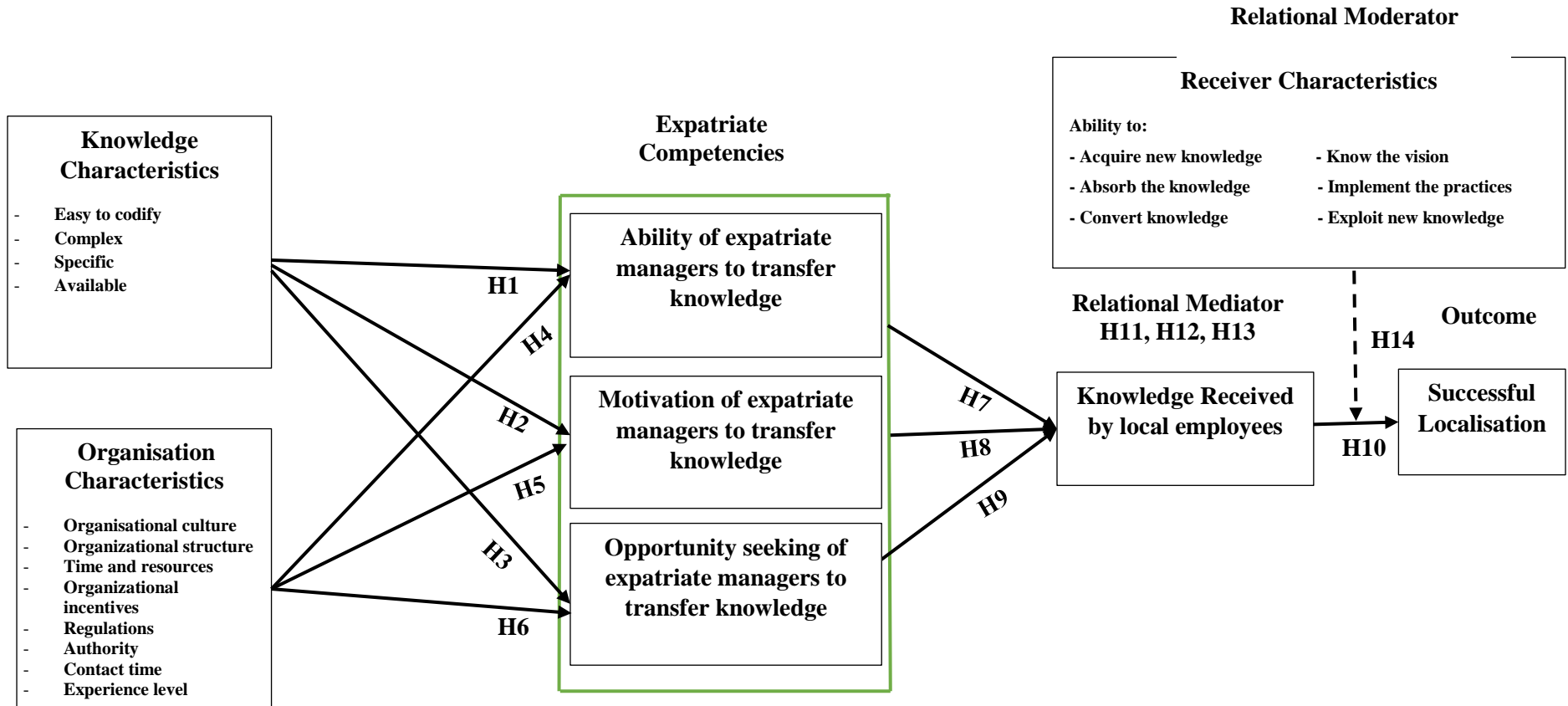


Figure 3. 1 The Research Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development Based on AMO Theory



### **The Relationship between Knowledge Characteristics and Expatriate Competencies to Transfer Knowledge**

It has been argued that knowledge is embedded in people with its own characteristics (Blackman & Benson, 2012; Liao et al., 2010). This potentially suggests that while knowledge transfer is highly conceptualised in terms of competency by both the transference of knowledge by expatriates and the absorption of the transferred knowledge by local staff (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Okoroafor, 2014), knowledge characteristic may impact the success of knowledge transfer (Szulanski et al., 2016). In this regard, previous papers have investigated the impact of knowledge characteristics on the success of knowledge transfer with mixed results (Silveira et al., 2017; Li & Hsieh, 2009). For example, knowledge features such as knowledge difficulty may increase knowledge stickiness that would in turn make its transfer costlier and subsequently diminish the success of knowledge transfer (Blackman & Benson, 2012). However, the majority of the prior investigations have focused on the effect of knowledge characteristics on the success of knowledge transfer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Blackman & Benson, 2012; Okoroafor, 2014; Szulanski et al., 2016; Silveira et al., 2017), rather than its effect on the individual competencies to transfer knowledge (Kang et al., 2010). In this regard, from the resource-based view, Kang, et al. (2010) have categorised knowledge characteristics into three different factors: tacitness, difficulty, and importance. These factors are used to investigate their influence on the required organisational effort to transfer knowledge. Accordingly, they have found that all these features have a positive effect on the organisational effort to transfer knowledge. In other words, more effort is required by an organisation to transfer knowledge that is more difficult, tacit, and otherwise important. This would, thus, potentially imply that the competencies of expatriates in transferring knowledge would be influenced by the knowledge characteristics (Chang et al., 2012; Gaur et al., 2019).

In contrast, Silveira et al. (2017) utilised web surveys and implemented SEM using PLS (SEM-PLS) to investigate the influence of knowledge complexity on the rate of knowledge transfer. Surprisingly, their study has revealed that knowledge transfer occurs at a higher rate with more complex knowledge. This finding can be justified by the fact that companies are trying to transfer and acquire the most complex and unique knowledge that would enhance their competitive advantage (Redd, 2011). Moreover, a study performed by Riusala and Smale (2007) has quantitatively evidenced that some features of knowledge are negatively correlated with success in terms of knowledge transfer, while other features show a positive impact. For instance, a high degree of knowledge “codifiability” (difficulty in writing the knowledge down) and knowledge “teachability” (difficulty in teaching the knowledge) were negatively correlated with successful transfer of knowledge, whereas the complexity of knowledge had a positive impact on the rate of knowledge transfer, which is in line with Silveira et al. (2017).

In a self-administrated questionnaire analysed using the multiple regression technique, Li and Hsieh (2009) have provided empirical evidence that knowledge features such as knowledge stickiness should be treated in terms of a monotonic relationship rather than viewed simply as a positive or negative relationship. This conclusion is based on their findings that knowledge stickiness has a positive effect on knowledge transfer only up to a certain threshold, after which the impact becomes negative. The current study focuses on both categories of knowledge, managerial (such as managerial expertise and marketing expertise) and technological (such as manufacturing processes expertise and product development expertise) (Wang et al., 2004). In addition, this study follows the work of Minbaeva (2008) who has classified the characteristics of knowledge as “easy to codify, provided in blueprints, complex, specific, and reachable.”

Based on the above discussion, it could therefore be expected that knowledge features may impact three competencies of expatriates to transfer knowledge to their subordinates. Firstly, knowledge characteristics is expected to have a positive impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge. Secondly, it is expected that knowledge characteristics would have a positive impact the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge. Thirdly, the current study proposes that knowledge characteristics is expected to have a positive impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge. With this, the following is considered:

Hypothesis (1): Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.

Hypothesis (2): Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.

Hypothesis (3): Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.

### **The Relationship between Organisation Characteristics and Expatriate Competencies to Transfer Knowledge**

Although knowledge transfer has the potential to enhance organisation and staff performance, organisation characteristics could lead to resistance to knowledge transfer activities (Riege, 2005; Rahman et al., 2018). In keeping with Lekhawipat et al. (2018), in the current study organisation characteristics refers to an “organisation’s culture, organisational structure, provided time and resources, organisational incentives, and regulations regarding knowledge transfer.” Prior studies have highlighted the role of organisation characteristics in the process of knowledge transfer (Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Liu, 2018). This implies that organisational characteristics such as organisational leadership style (Castrogiovanni et al., 2016; Michailova & Minbaeva,

2012; Hong et al., 2009), organisational culture (Wang & Wang, 2016) and organisational learning intention (Liu, 2018) can influence the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of a knowledge holder to transfer knowledge.

In this vein, it has been found that knowledge management such as the ability to share knowledge is positively correlated with top management support and organisational culture (Wang & Wang, 2016). Similarly, based on the SEM methodology, Lekhawipat et al. (2018) empirically found that organisational contexts such as the organisational culture and structure have a positive effect on the individual motivation to transfer knowledge. Moreover, it has been found that leadership behaviour may enhance or impair the process of knowledge transfer (Bryant, 2003; Von Krogh et al., 2012). For instance, effective leadership style that emphasises and promotes cooperation among employees, instead of competition, would enhance staff competencies to transfer their knowledge (Lakshman, 2009). In addition, Wang and Noe (2010) and Mueller (2014) have pointed out that an organisation that establishes trust and encourages staff to seek new information is potentially able to positively improve the motivation of knowledge carriers to transfer knowledge.

Moreover, organisational attributes such as poor investments towards knowledge transfer may result in poor transfer and thus subsequently adversely impact the motivation to transfer knowledge (Reus et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2011; Reus et al., 2016). For instance, Jeon et al. (2011) has proposed that the knowledge holder might be motivated to transfer knowledge but their surrounding external environment might weaken individual motivations to do so. Furthermore, the opportunity seeking of an individual to transfer knowledge can be influenced by organisational characteristics such as workload and free time (Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Burmeister et al., 2020). This would in turn impact the success of knowledge transfer. Despite a high level of

expatriate competency, the performance of knowledge transfer might still be weak if an organisation occupies both the knowledge source and receiver with too many tasks and spare no time for knowledge sharing (Jeon et al., 2011; Connelly et al., 2014). Consequently, based on the above arguments, it is expected that organisational characteristics may have an impact on expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge. Thus, the current study considers the following:

Hypothesis (4): The organisational characteristics have a positive impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.

Hypothesis (5): The organisational characteristics have a positive impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.

Hypothesis (6): The organisational characteristics have a positive impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.

### **Expatriate Competencies and Knowledge Received**

This section discusses the association between the knowledge received by local staff and the three competencies of expatriates: ability in transferring knowledge, motivation transferring knowledge, and opportunity seeking in transferring knowledge.

#### **3.1.1 Ability to Transfer Knowledge and Knowledge Received**

As indicated in the previous chapter, the ability to transfer knowledge is considered one of the three factors in the AMO theory (Burmeister et al., 2016). This thesis refers to the ability to transfer knowledge as the capability of the expatriates to transfer knowledge to the local employees based on their knowledge, skills and experience (Turner & Pennington, 2015). This factor has been investigated in several studies as a determinant for knowledge transfer (Menon & Pfeffer, 2003; Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Kang & Kim, 2017). The majority of these studies have confirmed the positive and significant impact of the ability to source knowledge on the performance of knowledge transfer. For example, through the utilisation of

SEM-PLS, Elbaz et al. (2018) have determined that the amount of knowledge received by employees is significantly dependent on the ability of the firms' managers to transfer knowledge to their respective staffs. Likewise, Huang et al. (2017) has validated the significant impact of the ability of expatriates to perform knowledge transfer in an R&D company in China. Moreover, a prior study has found that expatriate competencies, such as the ability to transfer knowledge, have a positive influence on the amount of knowledge received (Chang et al., 2012). This means that in order to achieve successful knowledge transfer, the source of knowledge should have the ability to transfer the knowledge (Chou et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2017). An example of this would be the ability of the knowledge holder to communicate their knowledge with knowledge seekers effectively.

However, in a few studies the ability to transfer knowledge has had only marginal to no significant effect on the process of knowledge transfer. For example, Kang and Kim (2017) have found a marginal effect of the ability of the knowledge holder on the process of knowledge transfer. Moreover, in a study by Burmeister et al. (2016) it was found that ability of the knowledge holder has no significant influence on the process of knowledge transfer. The inconsistent findings between this study and previous investigations (Chang et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017) could be due to the fact that the reverse, in terms of the direction of knowledge transfer, was not a main concern for the headquarters (Oddou et al., 2013). Here, only little attention is given to enhancing the ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge due to a high requirement of resources in terms of time and cost (Burmeister et al., 2016). Despite this, a positive correlation between the ability of the knowledge source and the knowledge received in general has been well established in existing literature (Chang et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018). Hence, the current thesis considers the following:

Hypothesis (7): The ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a positive impact on the knowledge received by local staff.

### **3.1.2 Motivation to Transfer Knowledge and the Knowledge Received**

An element of the AMO theory is motivation, which in the current study is referred to as the willingness of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to local employees (Elbaz et al., 2018; Turner & Pennington, 2015). The AMO theory suggests that individual motivations to perform a certain given task is a determining factor in achieving the desired performance, thus, having the motivation to transfer knowledge would encourage the achievement of better knowledge transfer (Kang & Kim, 2017; Chen et al., 2010). For example, a regression analysis used in a quantitative study by Huang et al., (2017) provides empirical evidence that the motivation of expatriates in transferring knowledge to headquarters is a prime predictor for successful knowledge transfer. This implies that the process of knowledge transfer may not be as effective if expatriates are not willing transfer knowledge. For this reason, several scholars such as Chang et al. (2012) and Burmeister et al. (2016) urge organisations to pay a great level of attention to enhancing the motivation of their sources of knowledge as they have found that motivation had a positive and significant effect on the performance of knowledge transfer.

Moreover, Lekhawipat et al. (2018) have reported that the actual transfer of knowledge is highly impacted by the motivation of the knowledge holder to do so. Nevertheless, various other factors may adversely impact the motivation of expatriates to share their knowledge and expertise For example, the fear of losing a position or job security which in turn may impact the performance of knowledge transfer (Connelly et al., 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). In other words, if

expatriates perceive that knowledge transfer may threaten their jobs in their respective organisations, they might be reluctant to transfer their knowledge.

This case has been named in previous studies as “knowledge hiding” which refers to the unwillingness of knowledge holders to share knowledge with others for personal reasons (Connelly et al., 2012; Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Yao et al., 2020). Despite this, Chou et al. (2014) have reported that organisations may implement certain HRM practices to overcome the unwillingness of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge to whomever requires it. This may, in turn, enhance the performance of the knowledge received. On the other hand, the study performed by Chou et al. (2014) was not in agreement with previous studies (Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Minbaeva, 2007) as they have found that extrinsic motivation has a negative impact on the knowledge transfer processes. However, this discrepancy could be due to the culture of knowledge sharing in the investigated organisation by Chou et al. (2014) where workers share knowledge with each other on a daily basis without considering any physical rewards (Boudreau, 2003). Thus, the motivation of expatriates in transferring their knowledge to local employees is expected to impact the success of knowledge transfer. Based on these arguments, the current study considers the following:

Hypothesis (8): Motivation of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a positive impact on the knowledge received by local staff.

### **3.1.3 Opportunity Seeking to Transfer Knowledge and Knowledge Received**

In addition to ability and motivation, opportunity seeking is the third component of the AMO theory (Kang & Kim, 2017). Opportunity seeking is defined in the present study as the exploration and utilisation of means and opportunities by expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to the local employees commensurate to the work



of Chang et al. (2012). This theory proposes that employees of an organisation who have the opportunity to interact and contribute will have a positive effect on organisational performance (Elbaz, et al., 2018). Accordingly, it could be argued that opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to local employees can enhance the performance of knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012).

Although it is true that previous studies have focused less on opportunity seeking than on the other two factors of AMO theory (Kang & Kim, 2017), existing literature has proven the well-established relationship between opportunity seeking by the knowledge source and the performance of the knowledge transfer (Huang et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015). For example, Jolaei et al. (2014) have reported that individual intention to seek interactions with other people in the organisation is one of the main factors for transferring knowledge.

The positive impact of opportunity seeking on the performance of knowledge transfer has been confirmed in several previous studies (Kang & Kim, 2017; Burmeister et al., 2016; Argote et al., 2003). An example can be found in the study performed by Kang and Kim (2017) who implemented SEM-PLS to investigate the impact of opportunity seeking by the knowledge source to transfer knowledge on the performance of knowledge transfer. They have reported that opportunity seeking in transferring knowledge is the most significant determinant of knowledge transfer among all three factors of AMO theory. However, if the employees have less free time to interact with other employees, their opportunity to transfer knowledge might also be less, and vice versa (Connelly et al., 2014; Fee & Gray, 2020). Based on these results, it can be concluded that more knowledge is successfully transferred with frequent interactions between the knowledge source and the recipient. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the current thesis is as follows:

Hypothesis (9): Opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a positive impact on the knowledge received by local staff.

### **Knowledge Received and Success of Staff Localisation**

In line with Law et al. (2009), staff localisation in the current thesis refers to the replacement of expatriate staff with competent local employees in an organisation. Notably, prior studies have researched the determinants of human resource localisation, such as staff selection, training, and retention (Al-lamky, 2016; Selmer, 2004), but neglected the non-HRM practises, such as knowledge transfer via expatriate managers as a means for staff localisation (Li et al., 2018). Therefore, this section discusses the relationship between the knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers and the achievement of successful staff localisation.

The current literature on knowledge transfer has extensively discussed the antecedents of knowledge transfer such as the ability and the motivation of the knowledge sender and receiver (Kang & Kim, 2017; Chang et al., 2012; Siemsen et al., 2008; Turner & Pennington, 2015). However, little empirical work has been done on the precursors of knowledge transfer such as successful human resource localisation (Trong Tuan, 2012). Here, an important question is yet to be answered: Can knowledge transfer lead to achieving successful staff localisation? The answer to this question can also clarify the argument that says the lack of knowledge and skills in the local workforce at the GCC countries is one of the main reasons for staff localisation failure (Naithani & Jha, 2009). In this regard, Selmer (2004) mentioned that successful localisation can be achieved if expatriates are able and willing to transfer their knowledge to local employees. Likewise, Law et al. (2009) have investigated the role of expatriate manager appraisal systems as determinants for achieving successful localisation in China. Based on this, it could be inferred that in order to achieve successful localisation, expatriate managers have to transfer their knowledge and

expertise to local employees. In other words, through the dissemination of expatriate knowledge to other staff in the organisation the performance of local employees can be enhanced, which can eventually lead to successful localisation. This implies that transferring knowledge from expatriate managers to local staff may contribute to the improvement of the skills and abilities of the local employees. This in turn would subsequently lead to achieve successful localisation (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Goby et al., 2017). Thus, it is the following is considered:

Hypothesis (10): Knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers leads to successful staff localisation.

### **The Mediation Role of Knowledge Received**

The success of knowledge transfer requires the presence of effective transmission (by expatriate managers) and receipt (by local staff) as well (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Okoroafor 2014). In this regard, it was found that knowledge holders who have the right competencies to transfer the knowledge would enhance the amount of knowledge received by knowledge seekers (Elbaz et al., 2018). Examples of these competencies would be the ability to communicate effectively and cope with cultural differences (Zoogah & Peng, 2011). This could potentially mean that the three competencies of expatriates – ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking in order to transfer knowledge – will enhance the knowledge received by the local staff, which in turn will help to achieve successful localisation.

Moreover, prior studies have argued that the impact of knowledge transfer on a firm's performance is subject to the actual knowledge received by its staff (Chang et al., 2012). Knowledge received, in the current thesis, refers to the actual knowledge received by local staff from their expatriate managers (Chang et al., 2012). In explaining how the new, received knowledge can enhance staff performance, Palacios-Marqués et al. (2013) have stated that the knowledge transferred into an organisation helps its

employees to innovate and develop new methods, which consequently can enhance firm performance. Similarly, Rhodes et al. (2008) and Oyemomi et al. (2016) have reported that knowledge transfer is positively correlated with individual innovation performance. This could imply that in order to achieve successful localisation through expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer, local staff have to receive the external knowledge successfully. Therefore, the current thesis considers the following:

Hypothesis (11): Knowledge received by local staff has a positive and significant mediation relationship between expatriate ability to transfer knowledge and localisation success.

Hypothesis (12): Knowledge received by local staff has a positive and significant mediation relationship between expatriate motivation to transfer knowledge and localisation success.

Hypothesis (13): Knowledge received by local staff has a positive and significant mediation relationship between expatriate opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge and localisation success.

### **The Moderating Role of Absorptive Capacity**

Different terms have been used in previous studies to represent the attributes of the knowledge receiver such as absorptive capacity, ability, and motivation. In the current study, the attribute for absorptive capacity is referred to as the ability of local staff to recognise, understand, and implement new knowledge from expatriate managers (Chang et al., 2012). A series of recent examinations have indicated that absorptive capacity is inclusive of three different significant elements: recognition, incorporation, and implementation of valuable external knowledge (Minbaeva et al., 2014; Forés & Camisón, 2016; Peltokorpi, 2017). According to the literature of knowledge transfer, it is suggested that the success of knowledge transfer is based not only on the characteristics of the knowledge source but on the characteristics of the

knowledge receiver as well (Hutzschenreuter & Listner, 2007; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Okoroafor 2014). Unlike previous studies, Szulanski et al. (2016) have empirically evidenced the importance of determining the right mode and time for the knowledge source and recipient to jointly perform knowledge transfer processes. Moreover, from a practical perspective, expatriate managers may have the required competencies to transfer knowledge, but the local staff may not be able to absorb the knowledge being transferred due to the lack of certain skills or other knowledge. Some examples of these skills and knowledge that may affect local staff absorptive capacity include: lack of prior knowledge (Wijk et al., 2008); educational background and level of experience (Chang & Smale, 2013); and cultural differences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This implies that the success of knowledge transfer is affected if the local staff lacks the knowledge, experience, and level of education needed to recognise and understanding the new knowledge offered by expatriate managers.

With the above, Elbaz et al. (2018) have found that the absorptive capacity of employees positively moderates the relationship between the competencies of managers in travel agencies in transferring knowledge and the results of that transfer. Chang et al. (2012) have examined the moderating role of the absorptive capacity in the context of international companies, unlike the study performed by Elbaz et al. (2018), which focused particularly on local companies in the tourism sector in Egypt. Despite this, the former study has reported that the absorptive capacity of local subsidiaries plays a positive moderating role between the capabilities of expatriates in transferring knowledge and the knowledge received by that branch. The discussion above suggests that the success of knowledge transfer between the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriate managers and the knowledge received could be

moderated by the absorptive capacity of local staff. Thus, this study considers the following:

Hypothesis (14): Absorptive capacity of local staff (Receiver Characteristics) has a positive moderating role between the knowledge received by local staff and localisation success.

### **Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter discusses the conceptual framework used to investigate the relationship between the three categories of competency of expatriates in knowledge transfer and localisation success through the mediating role of knowledge received by local staff. The conceptual framework includes eight different variables from which fourteen hypotheses are proposed. These eight variables are summarised as follows:

- **The ability to transfer knowledge:** the ability of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Turner & Pennington, 2015).
- **The motivation to transfer knowledge:** the willingness of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Elbaz et al., 2018).
- **The opportunity to transfer knowledge:** the exploration and utilisation of means and opportunities by expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Chang et al., 2012 & Turner & Pennington, 2015).
- **Organisational characteristics:** the commitment of an organisation to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination (Lekhawipat et al., 2018).
- **Knowledge characteristics:** the extent to which knowledge is easy to codify, , complex, specific, and available (Minbaeva, 2007).
- **Knowledge received:** the amount of knowledge received by local employees from expatriates (Lyles & Salk, 1996)

- **Absorptive capacity:** the ability of local employees to recognise, understand, and implement knowledge transferred from expatriates (Change et al., 2012).
- **Localisation success:** the practise of replacing expatriate employees by local staff who have the right skills and knowledge to perform at similar levels (Law et al., 2009).

The independent variables considered are the ability to transfer knowledge, motivation to transfer knowledge, and opportunity to transfer knowledge. Organisational attributes, attributes of local staff, and knowledge attributes are conceptualised as independent variables for expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer, motivation, and opportunity seeking. In addition, it is proposed that knowledge received mediates expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer–ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking–and localisation success. Finally, it is hypothesised that the absorptive capacity of the local staff moderates the association between the knowledge received by local staff and localisation success due to the following reasons. First, there is a wide agreement in the current literature of knowledge transfer that knowledge transfer is highly influenced by both knowledge sender (expatriate managers, in this case) and knowledge receiver (local staff, in this case). In addition, the knowledge might be received by local staff but they may not be able to understand it therefore the association between the knowledge received by local staff and localisation success is expected to be moderated by the the absorptive capacity of the local staff. Moreover, even if they understood the new knowledge they may not be able to apply the new knowledge. Furthermore, localisation is expected to be successful when the local staff have the right skills and knowledge to perform at similar levels of expatriate in which these skills can

be received by local from the expatriate staff. The following chapter discusses the methodologies.

## **4 Chapter Four: Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Research methodology refers to the method employed by the scholar to achieve the intended aims of a study and to produce reliable results (Howell, 2013; Mingers, 2001; Hussey, 1997). This system explains not only how the study is conducted scientifically, but also discusses the rationale behind using certain methods or techniques (Kothari, 2004).

The next section discusses the research philosophy of the present study including the justification for using a positivism philosophy. Then, research approaches are explained with the rationale of adopting the deductive approach. Next, a brief discussion about research methods is provided along with reasons behind adopting the quantitative methods in this research, followed by a discussion on the research design and sampling



used. After that, the adopted analysis technique is given, followed by a summary of the current study research methodology (see Table 4.5) and the summary of the research design of the present study (see figure 4.3). Finally, before summarizing the main themes of the current chapter a description of the pilot study that aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the study is provided.

### **Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy refers to the generation of knowledge and the nature of the generated knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, each research philosophy has different assumption about the process of knowledge development. These assumptions guide the researcher on how to conduct the study scientifically (Sekaran, 2006). Therefore, studies such as Zukauskas et al. (2018), Smith and Dainty (1991), and Guba and Lincoln (1994) have emphasised the necessity of following the appropriate philosophy to embark upon the research effectively. In this vein, Johnson and Clark (2006) have mentioned that selecting the relevant philosophy helps the researcher not only to perform the research in a scientific manner, but more importantly it helps to advance his understanding of the investigated issue. In addition, selecting the appropriate research philosophy improves the quality of a study as it helps the researcher to adopt suitable research methods including the nature of data needed for the envisaged issues (Neuman, 2006).

Although different authors have discussed a number of different research philosophies, such as Positivist /Post Positivist, Interpretivist/Constructivist, Transformist, and Pragmatist (Zukauskas et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2009) the Positivism philosophy and Interpretivism philosophy are described as the most common and relevant research philosophies used by social sciences scholars (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Consequently, as this study investigates a social science issue, these two research philosophies are discussed in the following sections to determine the most

suitable one for the current research. This is followed by a summary of the assumptions of these two philosophies in table 4.1 below.

**Social Constructionism (Interpretivism) Philosophy**, which was developed by philosophers such as Berger and Lunkman (1966) and Watzlawick and Shotter (1993), is also called interpretivism philosophy and therefore these terms are used interchangeably in this study (Habermas, 1970; Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Zukauskas et al., 2018). The logic of this philosophy stems from the belief that reality is subjective and based on human assumptions, in contrast to the positivism philosophy which is based on the belief that reality is objective (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Howell, 2013; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

**Positivism Philosophy** is one of the most common research philosophies used

in social and behavioral  
fields (Saunders et al.,  
2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Richardson, 2012).

**Table 4. 1 Assumptions of Positivism and Interpretivism**

This research philosophy assumes that reality is single and unique (Howell, 2013), which enables researchers to forecast people's behaviors and actions by proposing new hypotheses based on existing theory and to confirm or reject of them (Rosenberg, 2018). This means through following this philosophy, the research begins with a causal relationship assuming that the outcomes are determined by the causes.

For example, it argues that knowledge can be obtain only through experiment and observation (Gray, 2013). Based on this philosophy, in order to test the suggested hypotheses, the researcher needs to collect the relevant data after determining the suitable method of data collection. Moreover, the advocates of positivism philosophy have mentioned that, in this type of philosophy, the researcher has no personal effect on the research results (Saunders et al., 2009).

#### 4.1.1 Justifications for the Adoption of the Positivism Philosophy

This section will discuss the most suitable philosophy to be followed in the current thesis. In other words, this section will discuss why positivism philosophy is seen as the most appropriate way of thinking for the present study. Moreover, it justified why interpretivism philosophy is not seen as a suitable philosophy for this study.

Interpretivism philosophy is seen unsuitable for the current study for the following reasons. First, this philosophy is based on the belief that reality is multiple which makes it difficult to prove or disprove the research hypotheses (Zukauskas et al., 2018). Moreover, this philosophy argues that the research is dependent upon the researchers believes and attitudes which can lead to a personal opinion rather than objective facts that cannot be generalised (Kasi, 2009).

	<b>Positivism Philosophy</b>	<b>Interpretivism Philosophy</b>
Researcher Role	No role	Part of the research
Human actors	Not relevant	Key for drawing knowledge
Reasons	To test causality	To get deeper understating
Research flow	Deductive, by generating hypotheses	Inductive, by rich data collection
Concepts	Operationalisation is important to measure	Based on stakeholder view
Analysis method	Needs to be simplified	Might be complex
Generability	Enables Statistical generalisation	Enables theoretical generalisation
Sampling	Random large sample size	Non-random Small sample size

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (2008)

Therefore, positivism philosophy has been chosen to be the most appropriate philosophy for this current study due to the following. First, this philosophy is based on the belief that knowledge can be collected through observation and experimentation to forecast people's behaviors and actions (Gray, 2013) through proposed new hypotheses based on existing theory (Rosenberg, 2018). In this regard, following this

philosophy enables the current study to explore the causal relationships between expatriate manager competencies and staff localisation. In other words, investigating these causal relationships utilizes positivism philosophy (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) that seeks to find the single reality based on the proposed hypotheses. Thus, this philosophy guides both the flow of the current study and the identification of the appropriate research approach, which is discussed in the following section.

### **Research Approach**

Previous studies have identified two research approaches: the deductive approach, which starts with proposing hypotheses to test an existing theory; and the inductive approach which starts with data collection to build a new theory (Rothchild, 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Rahman, 2017; Woo et al., 2017). These two research approaches are discussed in the following sections in order to identify the most suitable one for the current study.

The deductive approach is associated with the school of thought of positivists (Saunders et al., 2009). It is described as the process of testing a theory through proposing hypotheses and following with rigorous testing to verify the research hypotheses (Rahman, 2017). This approach is recommended when a sufficient amount of knowledge about the investigated area exists as the researchers are expected to start their studies by reviewing previous studies and theories to propose new hypotheses (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). These hypotheses then need to be tested via valid and solid measurements (Locke, 2007; Nola & Sankey, 2007). In this vein, Rahman (2017) has pointed out that quantitative and statistical measurements such as SEM are recommended to test the deduced hypotheses.

The second approach in scientific research is called the inductive approach which is associated with the interpretivism philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009). Unlike

**Table 4.2 Comparison of Deductive and Inductive Approaches**

<b>Deduction emphasises</b>	<b>Induction emphasises</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Used when a wealth of knowledge exists</li><li>• Moves from theory to data</li><li>• Used in causal relationships</li><li>• Quantitative data are used</li><li>• Well-structured approach</li><li>• Researcher is independent</li><li>• Sufficient sample size allows conclusions to generalise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Used when little knowledge is available</li><li>• Aims to get deeper understanding</li><li>• Qualitative data are used</li><li>• Flexibly structured approach</li><li>• Researcher is not independent</li><li>• Does not aim to generalise</li></ul>

the deductive approach, which starts with theory, the inductive approach starts with data collection to get a clear understanding of the problem under investigation in order to build a theory (Johnston & Vanderstoep, 2009; Woo et al., 2017). That is, theory formulation is achieved as a result of data collection and analysis. Since this approach is aimed at getting a deeper understanding of the nature of the problem, qualitative research is more likely to be followed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

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Source: (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

#### **4.1.2 Justifications for the Adoption of the Deduction Approach**

Based on the study questions, aims, and philosophy the current study adopts the deductive approach. The inductive approach was not followed for the following reasons. Generally, the inductive approach owes more to the interpretivist school, whereas the current study falls into the positivist school. Moreover, unlike the deductive approach which aims to test a theory, the inductive approach is advocated when the researcher aims to develop a new theory through data collection, which is not the case for the current study. In other words, the deductive approach is used when there is a sufficient literature about the investigated issue. Whereas the inductive approach is used when little knowledge is available about the examined issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, since there is a wealth of studies in knowledge transfer, deduction is

believed to be more effective in achieving the goals and answering the aims and questions of the present study. For example, knowledge transfer, which is the main topic of the current research, has been studied extensively in general (Minbaeva, 2007; Chang et al., 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014; Huang et al., 2017; Liu, 2018) and several studies have tested AMO theory in relation to knowledge transfer (Siemsen et al., 2008; Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018). Moreover, deductive philosophy is seen as the appropriate approach for the current study as the current study aims to test AMO theory in achieving successful localisation. This means, by following the deductive school of thought, the current study begins by proposing hypotheses based on AMO theory and previous studies, and is followed by data collection and rigorous data analysis to accept or reject these hypotheses. This feature is essential for the current study as the study aims to investigate the relationship between the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriates and the knowledge received by local employees. For the aforementioned reasons the current research follows the deductive approach.

### **Research Methods**

Research methodology, in its simplest meaning, refers to the methods and techniques researchers use to answer the questions around the subject of investigation (Blaikie & Priest 2019). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) have argued that the most comprehensive definition of “research method” is the “systematic modes, procedures or tools used for collection and analysis of data” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.5).

There are three types of research methods: the qualitative method, which is based on interpretations; the quantitative method, which is based on numerical data; and the mixed method, which adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Curran & Blackburn 2001). Rahman (2017) has pointed out that although various areas of research often adopt qualitative

and quantitative methods, advocates of each type tend to highlight the merits of their preferred method at the expense of the other type. However, previous studies have proven that each method has its own pros and cons (Choy, 2014). Thus, these features are discussed in order to select the most appropriate method for the current study based on the questions at hand (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Howell, 2013). This is followed by a comparison between the quantitative and qualitative methods in Table 4.3.

The quantitative method is defined as a systematic process of collecting numerical data followed by a rigorous and statistical analysis (Zukauskas et al., 2018; O’Leary, 2004). It is believed that the quantitative method is dominant when positivism philosophy (the adopted philosophy for this study) is followed as the aim is to find the clear cut reality in a systematic way (Burns & Grove, 2003; Gale & Beefink, 2006). As shown in table 4.3 below the quantitative method has a number of advantages. For example, Onwuegbuzie (2004) has mentioned that research findings through the quantitative method enable can be generalized. Moreover, a researcher in quantitative research is considered to be independent which implies that the results are free of bias (Saunders et al., 2009). In addition, previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of the quantitative method in validating research hypotheses empirically (Rahman, 2017). This means the relationships among the study variables can be tested through statistical techniques and systematic measurement (Payne & Payne, 2004). Furthermore, quantitative research enables the researcher to compare and validate the results statistically (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Quantitative methods have also been criticised by a number of scholars, though Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have argued that their advantages outweigh the advantages of qualitative methods. The inability to clarify the roots or the reasons behind the results of the investigated subject is considered to be one of the main

drawbacks of quantitative methods (Zukauskas et al., 2018; O’Leary, 2004). However, this drawback does not affect the current study as none of the research questions asks about how and why expatriate competencies affect the transfer of knowledge to local staff. In other words, this study aims only to investigate a number of hypotheses that aim to confirm or disconfirm the relationship between expatriate competencies and knowledge transferred to local employees. Moreover, the lack of detailed information about the issue under investigation is another reason for the disadvantage of this method. In fact, this weakness is due to the limited involvement of the researcher in the collected data which can also be considered an advantage as the results are often free of bias (Saunders et al., 2009).

On the other hand, the qualitative method is another well-known methodological approach used in scientific research. It refers to the process of understating the nature of the problem to enrich the depth of knowledge which can lead to the generation of a theory (Bryman & Bell, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013). Advocates of the qualitative method have argued that through this method researchers are able to get a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the investigated subject (Chalhoub-Deville & Deville, 2008). This is because the researchers using this method use qualitative tools such as interviews and observation to gather required information (Zikmund et al., 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, it is expected that through these tools researchers are not only be able to get rich information about the investigated topic, but also able to understand the personal perceptions and attitudes of the participants. In addition, these personal perceptions and attitudes may enable the study to clarify the roots or the reasons behind the results of the investigated subject (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, this kind of research method is useful when the



research questions aim to describe, explains or justify certain phenomena (Rahman, 2017; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

However, this research method has a number of drawbacks and limitations as shown in table 4.3. First, it can result in researcher bias due to researchers' involvement in data collection and interpretation (Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders et al., 2009). Second, although this method leads to generating rich data, it often lacks the advantage of results generalization as it does not use statistical and empirical data (Antwi &

**Table 4. 3 Comparison between Quantitative and Qualitative Methods** Hamza, 2015).

Moreover, current literature has stated that the qualitative method is not suitable to test research hypotheses due to the lack of rigors and statistical tests in this method (Rahman, 2017; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders et al., 2009). Finally, this method has been criticised for being highly time consuming, starting from data collection through results coding and analyses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Based on the features of the aforementioned research methods, the next section will justify the most appropriate method for the present study.

Comparison	Quantitative Method	Qualitative Method
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results generalisation</li> <li>• Less bias</li> <li>• Results can be compared statistically</li> <li>• Less time-consuming data gathering</li> <li>• Hypotheses can be statistically tested</li> <li>• Investigator does not interfere with participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich understandings about the examined issue</li> <li>• Basis of hypotheses or theory development</li> <li>• Wealth of data about examined issue</li> <li>• Personal perceptions of investigator considered</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produces less information</li> <li>• Perception of participants is not considered</li> <li>• Roots of phenomenon are not explained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited findings generalisation</li> <li>• Researcher involvement can lead to bias</li> <li>• Requires more time and cost</li> <li>• Does not involve rigorous statistics to test hypotheses</li> </ul>

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Source: Adopted from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017

#### **4.1.3 Justifications for the Adoption of the Quantitative Research Method**

It is appropriate to discuss why the qualitative method is not applied in the current research study before justifying the adoption of the quantitative method. The qualitative method is more appropriate with research questions aimed towards exploring and understanding the roots of an issue and how and why things have happened (Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders et al., 2009), whereas, the questions of the current study are aimed towards understanding the extent to which expatriate competencies influence the process of knowledge transfer to local employees. In fact, for questions that start with “to what extent,” it is recommended that quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods be used (Rasinger, 2013). Another reason for not adopting the qualitative method is related to the nature of data collection and data analysis. This means, due to the researcher personal involvement in data collection and interpretation the researcher may not be able to empirically accept or reject the given hypotheses in the current research (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative method is not suitable for the current study and, consequently, a mixed method is also irrelevant.

On other hand, based on the aims and questions of the current study, the adopted researcher philosophy (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and the features of the research methods (Zukauskas et al., 2018), it has been decided that the

quantitative method is the most suitable for the following reasons. First, the current study has built a conceptual framework that includes a number of hypotheses and it is argued that the quantitative method, in contrast to the qualitative method, is the right method to test research hypothesis (Rahman, 2017; Mertens, 2014; Saunders et al., 2009). Second, the current study aims to develop a theory based on an AMO model where quantitative and statistical data are required to prove the development of that theory (Sarantakos, 2005; Zukauskas et al., 2018). In addition, the quantitative method includes the ability to identify the statistical and causal relationships among the variables of the study (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). This feature is essential for the current study as the study aims to investigate the relationship between expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge and the knowledge received by local employees.

Another reason for embracing the quantitative method is related to the assumptions of the adopted philosophy. In other words, the positivism philosophy—which has been followed in the current study—prefers the quantitative method due to its ability to generate statistical data and results that can facilitate the path to the objective reality of the investigated subject (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Festinger et al., 2013). Thus, it has been concluded that the quantitative method is the most appropriate method for the current study as it includes rigorous research designs in terms of data collection techniques and statistical analysis tools (O'leary, 2004). These research designs are discussed in the following section. This takes into consideration that positivism philosophy and quantitative method have been selected for the current study based on the above arguments as none of the study questions aims at a deeper understanding of the nature of the examined topic.

### **Research Design**

According to Saunders et al. (2009) research design is described as the map for three essential elements in research methodology which are: time horizons of the research (cross-sectional and longitudinal); strategies of the research (e.g. survey, experiment, and case study); and choices of data collection (mono method, mixed methods, and multi-method). Methodological researchers have stressed that these three elements have to be chosen based on the research questions (Bell et al., 2018; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, the research design represents the overall plan of the research based on how its questions are answered (Gray, 2013; Blaikie & Priest 2019). As far the time horizon is concerned, a cross-sectional design is seen as more suitable for the current study for the following reasons. First, the time of the researcher is constrained as he is a part time researcher and full time lecturer. Second, the aim of the current study is to examine the causal relationship at a single time rather than to describe changes over time.

Generally, the research questions can be classified into three purposes, to explore, to describe, or to explain the subject, or any combinations of these purposes (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Since the purpose of current study is to examine the extent to which expatriate competencies impact the process of knowledge transfer to local employees, the current study is explanatory research. Therefore, the next section discusses the explanatory purpose of this study in more detail with only brief justifications for not using the descriptive or exploratory research purposes.

#### **4.1.4 Justifications for the Adoption of the Explanatory Research**

The questions of the current study are not classified as descriptive or exploratory research due to two main reasons. First, the questions of the present study are not meant to explore a problem or to describe one, rather they aim towards investigating the relationships among the study variables. Second, exploratory research requires the

researchers to be flexible and ready to change the study directions if required (Saunders et al., 2009), where the current study has predefined hypotheses that cannot be modified. However, the purpose of current study questions is to explain the causal relationship among the study variables. For example, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge influence the knowledge received by local employees. Therefore, the present study is classified as explanatory research. In order to achieve the purpose of the current study, the next section discusses the different research strategies to identify the most relevant one.

#### **4.1.5 Research Strategies**

Research strategies refer to the different tools and activities used by the researcher such as survey, experiment, case study, action research, and grounded theory, to answer the study questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Collis and Hussey, 2013). Although, previous studies have indicated that no research strategy is considered to be superior (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, Denscombe, 2008), the selection of the research strategy should enable the researcher to achieve the study purposes and answer the questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, based on the questions of the present study, a survey method is seen as the most relevant strategy to answer the study questions. However, it should be noted that other research strategies such as experiment, case study, action research, and grounded theory are not inferior. Therefore, the next section justifies the adoption of a survey strategy for the current study in addition to clarifying the rationale behind avoiding the other strategies.

#### **4.1.6 Survey Strategy**

Survey strategy is widely used in business and management studies, especially with exploratory and descriptive studies that aim to answer research questions such as what, who, and how much (Saunders et al., 2009). It, therefore, tends to be frequently

used in deductive research (Gray, 2013). Saunders et al. (2009) have mentioned that questionnaire survey, structured interview, and structured observation are widely used in deductive research. However, the same source has also mentioned that structured interview and structured observation are more suitable for qualitative research that seeks get deeper information and understanding of the nature of the investigated problem, which is not the objective of the current study. Hence, the next section justifies the adoption of the questionnaire strategy for the current research.

#### **4.1.7 Justifications for the Adoption of the Questionnaire Survey**

The questionnaire is one of the most common tools for acquiring information from participants in social sciences research (McKenna et al., 2006) as it enables the researcher to explore the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants (Bulmer, 2004). This makes the questionnaire suitable for the current study as it aims to examine the attitudes and behaviors of expatriate managers towards knowledge transfer. For example, this kind of survey method allows this research to investigate the integration of the AMO theory with knowledge received. This is in order to explain the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer (based on the proposed framework) enables successful localisation at manufacturing companies on Oman.

Moreover, the current literature shows that many studies are carried out by using the questionnaire technique due to its reasonable cost and time needs for data collection and the minimal skills required by the questionnaire administrators (see Bowling, 2002; Denscombe, 2003; Minbaeva 2008; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Elbaz et al 2018; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). Robson (2002) has pointed out that the questionnaire technique is widely used as it enables the researcher to make a general statement about the entire population based on the sample. This feature is very important for the current study as about 83% of the employees in the private sector in Oman are expatriates

(NCSI, 2019), and it is impossible to cover the entire population. This means this tool helps with the selection of a sufficient sample that can represent the whole population (Marshall, 2014). In addition, since the current study aims to investigate the impact of expatriate competencies on the amount of knowledge transferred, surveys have been recommended as they help to examine the causal effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables (Gary, 2013). From the analytical point of view, Cecic and Musson (2004) have reported that the ability to compare the results is one of the most notable advantages of questionnaire. This feature is also essential for the current study as the researcher aims to investigate the impact of the received knowledge on localisation and to compare the responses to each other by using nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio levels (Sarantakos, 2005).

However, questionnaires, like any other survey tools, have some disadvantages that need to be discussed and proactively overcome using the recommended actions in the current literature. For example, participants may not be clear about what to do in responding to the questionnaire, so including clear instructions (e.g. Tick the right answer, select only one answer) will help avoid such issues (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2005). Additionally, the questionnaire of the current study has been distributed by well-trained assistants along with the researcher. In addition, the survey tool may include grammatical mistakes, formatting issues or unclear terms. In order to avoid these issues, the questionnaire had been distributed to a number of participants and academics to get their feedback before the real distribution. Low response rate is another possible issue of this technique. Nevertheless, the self-administrative method along with help from four assistants have been employed in order to avoid this issue (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, Sarantakos (2005) and McGuirk and O'Neill (2005) have pointed out that helping the participants to understand the purpose of the questionnaire through a logical

order and grouping the items of each construct under a subheading can help increase the response rate. Therefore, the questionnaire of the current study includes nine subheadings about the variables employed in the study.

According to Hardesty and Bearden (2004), the measurement items of each construct may not really measure what the researcher is intending to measure, which undermines the face validity of the questionnaire. Face validity is achieved when the selected items for each construct are valid to measure the constructs (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). Therefore, ten questionnaires have been distributed to academic colleagues in the same field to ensure face validity. Another drawback of the questionnaire survey is the content validity which refers to the ability of the measurement questions to respond to all the proposed relationships among the study variables (Saunders et al., 2009). This issue can also be avoided by distributing the questionnaire of the current study to ten academics to test the content validity. On top of all that, a pilot study of 50 questionnaires has been carried out to test the reliability statistically using SPSS (Sarantakos, 2005).

#### **4.1.8 Questionnaire Design**

Although new questionnaire measurements can be developed, this option is not recommended when existing measures are available as it requires rigorous standards and processes (Fagarasanu & Kumar, 2002). In this vein, Coluci (2012) has pointed out that many previous studies have employed developed items in their questionnaires due to at least three factors. First, developed measurement enables the researcher to compare the study results with previous studies that have used the same measurement. Second, it saves the researcher time compared to developing new measurements that should go through long and standard processes. Third, it enables the researcher to test the validity and reliability in different situations. This advantage is relevant to the



current study as it involves a pilot study that aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the items used. Moreover, it is argued that the adoption of the existing measurements may require minor changes such as changing specific words to make it in line with study content (Coluci, 2012; Beaton et al., 2002). However, any amendment to the questions should be tested through a pilot study to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurements (Wynd et al., 2003).

Based on the aforementioned advantages of adopting an existing measurement and in line with the suggestion of Fagarasanu & Kumar (2002) who have asserted that an existing questionnaire should be used if available, the current study has used existing items from the relevant literature to measure the study variables via close ended questions (see table 4.4 below). This is also in line with several studies in the knowledge transfer area (Elbaz et al., 2018; Kang & Kim, 2017; Chang et al., 2012; Siemsen et al., 2008; Turner & Pennington, 2015). Thus, the next paragraphs discuss the adopted measures of the current study variables and the questionnaire layout.

### **Variable Measurements**

The current study has eight variables all of which have been measured on scales based on previous studies as shown in table 4.4 below. Three of them are independent variables of expatriate manager competencies: ability, motivation and opportunity seeking. They are used as proxies for transferring knowledge to local employees. In addition, two variables, namely the characteristics of the transferred knowledge and the characteristics of the organisation, are used as influencing variables for expatriate managers' competencies. Knowledge received has been tested as a mediator between expatriate managers' competencies and localisation success. Whereas characteristics of the knowledge receiver (absorptive capacity) is used as a moderator variable in the relationship between the knowledge received and localisation success. Next, the

definitions of these eight constructs along with adopted items to measure them are discussed.

### **Ability, Motivation and Opportunity seeking**

In order to measure the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to the local employees, Minbaeva (2007) emphasised that it cannot be measured by asking expatriate managers to evaluate their own competencies as this would be unreliable due to attitudinal and perceptual factors. In other words, expatriate managers may not disclose that they are not motivated to share their knowledge or unable to do so. In this regard, Minbaeva (2007) have argued that the subordinates of the knowledge holders are the right people to evaluate expatriate competencies in transferring knowledge. Thus, the current study has adopted items from previous studies to ask local employees (knowledge receivers) to evaluate the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriate managers (knowledge holders) to transfer their knowledge to the local employees.

### **Ability to Transfer Knowledge**

The current study refers to the ability to transfer knowledge as the ability of the expatriates to transfer their knowledge to the local employees based on their knowledge, skills and experience (Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015). The ability to transfer knowledge has been measured by three items adopted from Turner & Pennington (2015). These items have been selected as, unlike other scales that ask only about expatriate ability to transfer knowledge, they ask about whether expatriates have sufficient ideas worth sharing with local staff. This is important because unless the ideas are available, it might be difficult to assess the ability of someone to transfer useful knowledge. Local managers were asked to evaluate the ability of expatriate managers

to transfer their knowledge to local employees based on a five-point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

### **Motivation to Transfer Knowledge**

Scale of five items was adopted from Elbaz et al. (2018) to measure the motivation to transfer knowledge. Motivation in the present study refers to the willingness of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Elbaz et al., 2018). This measurement has been chosen not only because it helps to measure the willingness of expatriates to transfer knowledge, but also because it helps to measure the extent to which expatriates are keen to solve difficulties that might hinder the transfer of knowledge, such as cultural differences. Based on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, local employees have been asked to clarify the extent to which expatriates are motivated to transfer their knowledge to local employees. Five areas have been investigated through this measurement, which are: fear of losing a position or control; motivation to deal with cross-cultural differences; motivation to allocate time to solve challenges that hinder knowledge transfer; and motivation to make continual efforts to resolve challenges that impede knowledge transfer.

### **Opportunity Seeking to Transfer Knowledge**

Opportunity seeking is defined in the present study as the exploration and utilisation of means and opportunities by expatriates to transfer their knowledge to the local employees (Chang et al., 2012). In order to examine the role of opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer their knowledge, five items have been adopted from the previous study in which two items have been adopted from Chang et al. (2012) and three items have been adopted from Turner and Pennington (2015). The rationale behind selecting these two sources is due to two reasons. First, the items in Chang et al.

(2012) are crucial to the current study as they examine the extent to which expatriates seek the opportunity through social relationships to transfer their knowledge. It has been proven that utilising social relationships enhances knowledge transfer as it builds trust between the knowledge holder and the knowledge receiver (Dhanaraj, et al., 2004; Hansen et al., 2005). Second, the items from Turner and Pennington (2015) are used to investigate the overall opportunity seeking of expatriate managers, such as the opportunity to transfer knowledge, and whether expatriate managers give priority to knowledge transfer in their relationships. Thus, participants have been asked to evaluate these five items based on a five-point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

### **Knowledge Receiver Characteristics**

In line with Change et al. (2012) the current study defines knowledge receiver characteristics as the ability of the local employees to recognise, understand, and implement the knowledge transferred from expatriates. Six items validated by Change et al. (2012) and also used by Elbaz et al. (2018) have been adopted to measure this construct. This measurement suite suits the current study as it comprehensively covers different characteristics of local employees, such as having the technical ability, having the necessary skill to absorb, and having the ability to convert and implement the knowledge transferred from expatriates. Based on a five-point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, participants have been asked to indicate the extent to which local employees are able to acquire and implement transferred knowledge.

### **Organisational Characteristics**

Organisation characteristics in the current study refer to the commitment of an organisation to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination including, factors such as organisational culture and structure, and organisational incentives and regulations for knowledge sharing (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat, et al., 2018). To measure organisation characteristics, nine items have been adopted from Lekhawipat et al. (2018), who validated his items based on the work of Yang and Farn (2009) and Lin et al. (2012). This scale was selected as it enables the current study to examine the impact of organisational culture, organisational structure, organisational location, motivation for knowledge sharing, availability of knowledge transfer rules, authority, availability of time for knowledge holder and receiver to interact, and the experience level of knowledge holder and receiver.

### **Knowledge Characteristics**

Knowledge characteristics in the present study are defined as the extent to which knowledge is easy to codify, provided in blueprints, complex, specific, and reachable (Minbaeva, 2007; Acharya et al., 2020). To measure knowledge characteristics, four items have been adopted from Minbaeva (2007) as they provide comprehensive descriptions not only about knowledge complexity but also about its availability, in contrast to other studies that focus mainly on knowledge complexity (Cummings & Teng, 2003; Huang et al., 2017). Local employees have been asked to indicate the extent to which organisational knowledge could be classified as: (1) easy to codify, which means that knowledge can be provided in blueprints; (2) complex, which means “knowledge is about highly interdependent routines, individuals and technologies;” (3) specific, which means “knowledge about specific expertise”; and (4) available, which means knowledge is easily accessible by new personnel (Minbaeva, 2007). In line with

Minbaeva (2007), the items of measuring knowledge characteristics were reversed. However, one item namely complexity was not reversed as in recent studies it has been found that more knowledge would be transferred if the knowledge is complex as complex knowledge could be the most valuable knowledge to the firm's competitiveness (Silveira, 2017). Participants have been asked to select the relevant answer from a five-point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

### **Knowledge Received**

Knowledge received in the current study refers to the amount of knowledge received by local employees from expatriates (Minbaeva, 2007; Change et al., 2012). In order to measure this variable, in line with Chang et al (2012), the scale of Lyles and Salk (1996) that covers six types of knowledge is used. Participants have been asked to indicate the extent to which have they learned from expatriate managers these six types of knowledge based on a five point scales that starts with 1, meaning no or little extent, and goes to 5, meaning a very great extent. This scale has been adopted as it covers the related knowledge in the target industry of the current study. For instance, it includes knowledge relevant to the industrial sector, such as manufacturing knowledge and product development knowledge, in addition to general knowledge, such as corporate culture knowledge and managerial knowledge.

### **Localisation Success**

Localisation success in the present study refers to the practise of replacing expatriate employees by local staff that have the right skills and knowledge to perform at a similar level (Law et al., 2009). In order to measure localisation success six item have been adopted from (law et al., 2009). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which staff localisation is successful at their organisation based on a five-point Likert

scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. These items have been selected as they are in line with study questions that aim to examine not only the localisation process but specifically the success of staff localisation as localisation might take place but not necessary to be successful (Law et al., 2009). For instance, participants were asked about the successful participation of local staff in strategic decisions, unlike other measurements that seek to identify the intention of the organisation to replace expatriates (Kühlmann & Hutchings, 2010) or to identify localisation strategies (Trong Tuan, 2012).

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**Ability: the ability of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Turner & Pennington, 2015).**

The expatriate managers have a lot of good ideas worth sharing.

The expatriate managers are capable of sharing important information.

The expatriate managers have the ability to communicate good ideas about their job.

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**Motivation: the willingness of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Elbaz et al., 2018).**

The expatriate managers are not afraid of losing power and control to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

The expatriate managers are willing to solve difficulties in order to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

The expatriate managers are willing to cope with cultural differences in order to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

The expatriate managers are willing to devote time in order to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

The expatriate managers are willing to make persistent efforts to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

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**Opportunity Seeking: the exploration and utilisation of means and opportunities by expatriates to transfer their knowledge to local employees (Chang et al., 2012 & Turner & Pennington, 2015).**

**Table 4.4 Variable Measurements** The expatriate managers seek opportunities through social relationships in order to solve difficulties in the knowledge transfer process.

The expatriate managers utilise social ties to generate trust and cooperation in order to solve difficulties in the knowledge transfer process.

The expatriate managers have the opportunity to share information.

The expatriate managers have the time and place (such as a meeting room) to exchange best practices.

The expatriate managers believe sharing information is a priority in their relationship with their subordinates.

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**Knowledge Received: the amount of knowledge received by local employees from expatriates (Lyles & Salk, 1996)**

Technological expertise that you have received from expatriate managers.

Marketing Expertise that you have received from expatriate managers.

Product development expertise that you have received from expatriate managers.

Manufacturing processes expertise that you have received from expatriate managers.

Managerial expertise that you have received from expatriate managers.

Knowledge about your organisational culture that you have received from expatriate managers.

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**Receiver Characteristics: the ability of local employees to recognise, understand, and implement knowledge transferred from expatriates (Change et al., 2012).**

Local employees have the ability to acquire new knowledge from expatriate managers to achieve their organisation's targets.

Local employees know the vision of what their organisation is trying to achieve through the transfer of knowledge from expatriate managers.

Local employees have the technical competency to absorb knowledge from expatriate managers.

Local employees have the necessary skills to implement practices learned from expatriate managers.

Local employees have the ability to convert knowledge gained from expatriate managers into practice.

Local employees have the ability to exploit new knowledge or practices gained from expatriate managers.

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**Knowledge Characteristics: the extent to which knowledge is easy to codify, , complex, specific, and available (Minbaeva, 2007).**

The organisational knowledge of my organisation is characterized as easy to codify, i.e., information is often provided in blueprints, manuals, and procedures.

The organisational knowledge is characterized as complex, i.e., knowledge is about highly interdependent routines, individuals, and technologies.

The organisational knowledge of my organisation is characterized as specific, i.e., knowledge in its context is about specific functional expertise.

The organisational knowledge of my organisation is available and easily accessible to new personnel.

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**Organisation Characteristics: the commitment of an organisation to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination (Lekhawipat et al., 2018).**

Our organizational culture is conducive to knowledge sharing.

Our organizational structure is conducive to knowledge sharing.

Our organizational geographic fragmentation is conducive to knowledge sharing.

The time and resources for knowledge sharing at our organisation are sufficient .



Our organization offers organisational incentives for knowledge sharing.

Our organization has complete or standard regulations about knowledge sharing.

Our organization is conducive to knowledge sharing because of problems with authority.

In our organization, knowledge providers and receivers have contact time and interaction.

In our organization, differences exist in experience levels between knowledge providers and receivers.

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**Localisation Success: the practise of replacing expatriate employees by local staff who have the right skills and knowledge to perform at similar levels (Law et al., 2009).**

The progress of localisation (Omani staff) in our organisation is very successful.

In our organisation, many local managers have successfully replaced expatriate managers.

In our organisation, many local managers have participated in making important strategic decisions.

With respect to the current number of expatriate managers in our organisation, localisation progress is satisfactory.

Our organisation has developed a group of competent local managers who are ready to replace expatriate managers.

Our organisation has developed a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers.

Our organisation will soon develop a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers.

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#### **4.1.9 Questionnaire Layout**

The structured questionnaire design is adopted in the present study (see appendix A). The questionnaire includes seven sections over approximately four pages, which is in accordance with prior research that suggests that up to six pages are appropriate (Zikmund et al., 2013). The first section aims to examine the impact of expatriate competencies in transferring knowledge. The first three questions measure the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge; the following five questions measure the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge; the last five questions of this section are included to measure the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.

The second section contains seven items to measure the amount of the knowledge received by local employees from expatriate managers. These seven questions ask local employees to indicate the amount of knowledge received from

expatriate managers in areas related to: technological knowledge, maintenance knowledge, quality control knowledge, product/service related knowledge, managerial knowledge, corporate culture knowledge, and HRM knowledge.

The third section contains six questions to measure the absorptive capacity of local staff. These questions aim to measure the ability of local staff to acquire new knowledge from expatriate managers, their awareness of what the organisation is trying to achieve through the transfer of knowledge from expatriate managers, and the ability of local staff to convert knowledge gained from expatriate managers into practice.

The fourth and fifth sections aim to examine the impact of the characteristics of the transferred knowledge and the characteristics of the organisation on expatriate manager competencies in knowledge transfer. Specifically, section four aims to measure the role of the organisation commitment in enhancing the ability, motivation and the opportunity seeking of the expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to the local staff. Furthermore, section five aims to assess the impact of knowledge characteristics (e.g. codify, , complex, specific, and available) on expatriate managers' ability, motivation and the opportunity seeking of the expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to their subordinates local staff.

Section number six is used to measure staff localisation success. It aims to measure the success and progress of localisation (by Omani staff) at target organisations by asking local employees to indicate the extent to which local managers have successfully replaced expatriate managers, participated in making essential decisions and satisfied them regarding localisation progress. The last section also includes ten factual questions about the participants such as: demographics, education level, and work experience.

## **Sampling**

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting certain cases (elements) from the entire population to represent that population (Bell et al., 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2015). In addition to saving time and the cost, surprisingly, previous studies have argued that sampling can lead to higher accuracy than questioning every single element of that population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This could be justified by three reasons given by Saunders et al. (2009). That is, the researcher can use the time saved by sampling only to: (a) devote more time to designing and piloting; (b) gather more details about the selected samples; and (c) spend more time checking and validating the accuracy of the data. However, the accuracy of the sampling strategy and process is a pivotal part as it plays a vital role in the accuracy of the research results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Kothari, 2004). This means using inappropriate sampling, such as using insufficient sample size, could result in a misleading conclusion. To avoid this issue, prior studies have recommended that research strategy should be selected based on the research questions and objectives as it should enable the researcher to address them (Saunders et al., 2009). Now, it is worthwhile to be aware of the available sampling strategies including their pros and cons in order to select the most appropriate one for the present study.

### **4.1.10 Sampling Strategies**

Sampling strategies can be classified into two categories: random sample (probability), in which all the elements of the entire population have an equal chance of being selected; and non-random sample, in which not all members of the entire population have an equal chance (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). The former includes simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, and cluster sampling, whereas the latter includes convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling, and self-selection sampling (Saunders et al., 2009).

Random sampling in the current study may not enable the researcher to reach the local employees who have been line managed by an expatriate manager. This is an important aspect of the current study as asking local employees randomly might not meet the study objectives if the questionnaire were answered by local employees who have not previously been line managed by an expatriate manager. In this regard, in light of the research questions and objectives, non-random purposive sampling is seen as the most suitable sampling strategy for the present study due to the following reasons. First, purposive sampling is recommended when the researcher aims to collect data from the people who have more knowledge and experience about the issue under investigation (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). This feature is essential for the current research as it aims to examine expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge to local employees by surveying the local managers who have been line managed by expatriate managers. This means local managers who have worked under the supervision of an expatriate are the right people to answer the survey. Furthermore, since the current study also aims to examine the impact of knowledge transfer on localisation success, selecting purposively the appropriate participants who have the relevant knowledge about localisation success (in this study, the local managers) is another reason for selecting this technique. The selection of the local managers purposively due to their expertise about localisation is seen as an essential condition to address the present study questions. Moreover, non-random sampling is widely used in knowledge transfer studies (see: Li & Hsieh, 2009; Schreiber et al., 2011; Choi & Johanson, 2012; Elahi et al., 2018; Liu, 2018). Finally, random sampling has not been selected for the current study as the complete list of target participants (local managers) is not available.

Although purposive sampling has been criticised in terms of generalisation (Saunders et al., 2012), it has also been argued that the purposive approach in

quantitative studies that use appropriate sample size “would do better at achieving representative samples for the statistical generalizability” (Polit & Beck, 2010 p. 4). That is, the bigger a sample size is, “the greater the likelihood that unusual cases will cancel each other out, which in turn can contribute to the sample’s representativeness” (Polit & Beck, 2010 p. 4).

#### **4.1.11 Sampling Frame and Size**

Sampling frame is the overall population that research is targeting (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Since the current study aims to examine expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer, private sector companies are seen as the sampling frame (see figure 4.1 below). This is because 83% of the workforce in the private sector in Oman is made up of expatriates, unlike the public sector in which many institutions have a very limited number of expatriates (NCSI, 2019). Within the private sector, manufacturing companies are targeted in the current study due to the following reasons. First, the number of expatriate employees in this sector is much higher than in other sectors, such as the financial or services sectors (Muscat Security Market, 2019). Second, the ninth five-year development plan of Oman vision 2040 includes this as a promising sector. Thus, the current study could contribute to this sector by investigating the role of expatriate managers in achieving successful staff localisation. Another justification for targeting private sector is related to the Oman vision 2040 that aims to increase localisation in the private sector to 42% by 2040 in which the results of the current study could provide some insight into this area.

It should be noted that data related to the list of local managers working in the private sector and specifically at manufacturing companies is not available. However, a few governmental websites are available where contact details of the target companies can be collected. For example, the websites of the Muscat Security Market and the

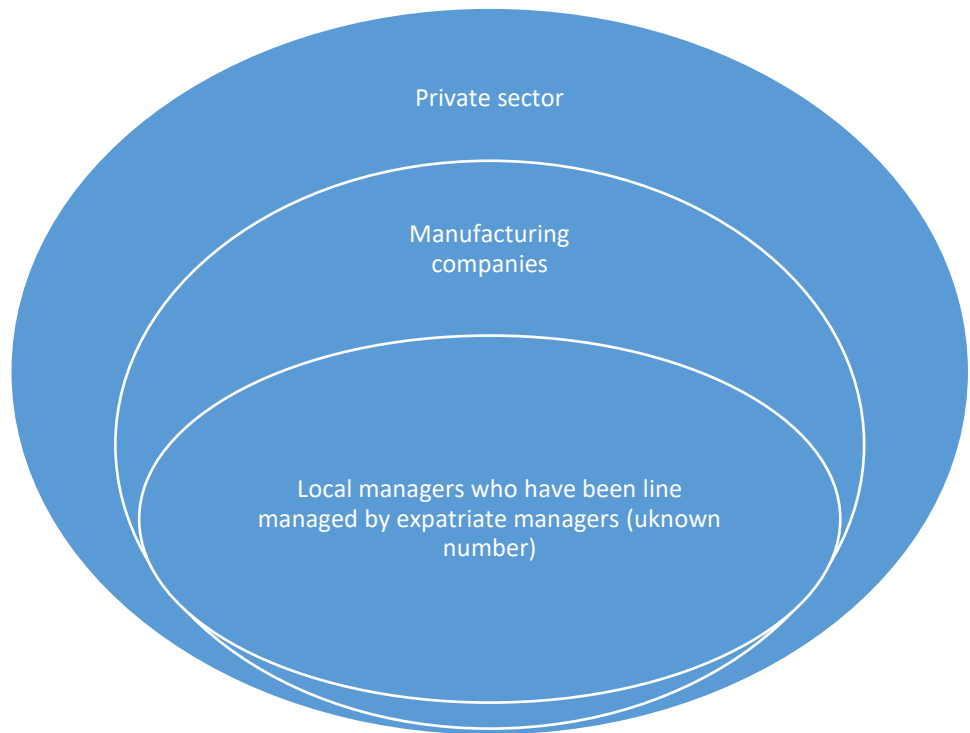
Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) include official information about many (though not all) operating firms in the industrial sector, including manufacturing companies. Thus, these websites have been helpful for the current study due to the following reasons. First, they are official governmental websites that have lists of many companies. Second, and more important, they include very useful information for the current study. Such as the number of expatriate employees and the contact details of each company, unlike other sources where not all the information is available about all the companies. It should be noted that these lists are not organized by sectors or inclusive of all companies. However, they have been very helpful in reaching the relevant companies as the lists contain contact details.

Turning the sampling size, it is vital to have a sufficient sample size to produce a robust statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2012). In this regard, it is acknowledged that unlike CB-SEM approach, PLS-SEM has the ability to achieve a robust statistical result even with relatively small sample size (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). For example, it was concluded that even with 100 surveys, PLS analysis can achieve high statistical power, which allows to detect the significance of a specific relationship effectively (Reinartz et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014). In fact, based on the work of Cohen (1992), Hair et al. (2014) suggested that the sample size should be determined based in accordance to the maximum number of arrows pointing at a particular variable. According to this, the required sample size for the current study would be 59 responses, as the maximum number of arrows is three, which can achieve a statistical power of 80%. As far the sample size of the current study, the researcher was able to collect 327 valid responses during the allocated time for data collection. Thus, this number is adequate to get a robust PLS-SEM result as it is above the

minimum sample size suggested in the aforementioned studies (Henseler et al., 2009; Reinartz et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014).

Here, it should be mentioned that the researcher faced a number of challenges to secure a sufficient valid responses. In this thesis the main instrument was developed in English whereas the official language of the target participants is Arabic. This challenge was solved through back translation that is, translating the original language to the participants' language, then translate it back to the original language to ensure accuracy (Zikmund, et al., 2013).

Another challenge was the doubts of some target companies that the research would not be used for competition purposes. In order to avoid this issue, the researcher obtained a letter of support from the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in Oman that ensures that the study is only for scientific research purpose in which this letter was very helpful. In addition, researcher's time was another challenge as he is a full time lecture at a national university. In response to this, the researcher recruited four research assistants to collect the data. These assistants were given oral training on data collection issues and techniques.



**Figure 4. 1 Sample Frame**

#### **Translation of the Questionnaire**

Instrument translation from one language to another might cause some problems due to the multiple meanings of some concepts (Saunders et al., 2012). In order to avoid this issue, back translation is recommended. That is, translating the original language to the participants' language, then translating it back to the original language for comparison and accuracy checking (Singh, 1995; Zikmund, et al., 2013). In this research, the main instrument was developed in English, then the back translation method was used as the target participants were native Arabic speakers. In this regard, the English version was translated into Arabic by a professor with a PhD in linguistics from the UK. The Arabic version was then translated back into English by a native Arabic speaker who is fluent in English in order to ensure consistency between the Arabic instrument and the English instrument (Mullen, 1995). Finally, a fluent English



speaker and a native Arabic speaker compared both instruments and suggested the final version.

### **Research Ethics**

Research ethics refers to the process of maintaining the ethical principles and values required to protect individuals or groups who are involved in the study. (Collis & Hussey, 2013). In other words, these ethical principles determine the rights of both the researcher and the subjects (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, it is crucial for the researcher to maintain ethical principles, morals, and values throughout the research processes (Kalof et al., 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2013). Accordingly, the current study has ensured the following ethical principles as suggested by McNabb (2013).

The first ethical principle is related to the relevance of the study. That is, the study aims and objectives should be in accordance with the extant literatures. In this regard, the researcher has spent around a year reviewing the literatures of knowledge transfer and staff localisation to ensure the current study is purposeful and relevant.

The second principle is related to the truthfulness, in which all the provided information should be free of deception and fraud. In order to ensure this, the researcher has provided all relevant information in the cover letter attached to the study's survey. This includes providing accurate and appropriate information about the study such as its purpose, reasons target group members may want to participate, and how obtained data are saved.

The third ethical principle is concerned with the thoroughness of given information. This has been ensured through explaining the relevant facts and concepts thoroughly rather than using shortcuts. In addition, the researcher's contact details have been given in the cover letter to allow participants to request any additional clarification or information.

Objectivity is the fourth ethical principle that focuses on ensuring that the study is free of bias. This has been ensured by giving the participants full freedom to answer the survey without any intervention by the researcher.

Furthermore, as suggested by Kalof et al. (2008), the participants' privacy and anonymity have been ensured. In this regard, the researcher guaranteed that the information and answers provided by the participants would be treated confidentially, the answers kept securely, and participants identities kept anonymous as the questionnaire requests no names or any other identifying information. In addition to that, they were informed that their participation is totally voluntary and they have the right to leave the survey at any time. In order to ensure the effectiveness of proposed ethical considerations and in accordance with Plymouth University, an application was submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics & Integrity Committee (FREIC) at Plymouth University to get the ethical approval for this research. Accordingly, after a few amendments at the direction of this committee, the approval letter was obtained (see Appendix B).

On the other hand, the ethical consideration about the researcher have been ensured. For example, proper citation is used for any information or ideas taken from other sources. In this regard, APA style is followed in this thesis to give credit to others work. In top of this, turnitin software was used to avoid plagiarism.

Moreover, the researcher has ensured the ethical consideration that can cause any research misconduct. This includes gathering real data and reporting the results as they are without any manipulation. This step is very important as it enables the researcher to provide reliable, credible and transparent findings. In this regard, the researcher has spent about two month to gather the relevant data. In addition, Saunders et al (2012) stressed that the personal harm to the researcher is an essential ethical

consideration that must not be neglected. In this regard, the researcher of this thesis did not divulge any sensitive personal information about himself that can cause a harm to him. Furthermore, researcher's personal safety while collecting data has also been considered such as meeting participants at a safe place.

### **Questionnaire Administration**

Based on the researcher's previous experience, sending emails to companies without prior contact was not seen as an optimal method as the response rates tend to be very low. Therefore, the researcher decided to have face to face meetings with company authorities to discuss their willingness to participate in this study. Through these meetings the companies were briefed about the researcher, the research topic and aims, and confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data. In order to get sufficient responses, the researcher undertook four initiatives. First, the researcher translated the original questionnaire into Arabic, the native language of target participants (for more details see section 4.7, Translation of the Questionnaire). Second, the researcher requested and received a letter of support from the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in Oman (see appendix C). This letter was very important to reassure companies that the research would not be used for competition purposes. Many of the companies with target participants asked to see it. Third, the researcher recruited four research assistants from among his students to collect the data. These students had worked with the researcher on previous projects and shown their competencies in data collection, and were also given oral training on data collection issues and techniques. Fourth, in order to encourage faster contact and responses, the researcher utilized his personal relationships with many people, including employees and other indirect contacts of the target companies. Interestingly, the majority of the visited companies that agreed to participate in the study appreciated the value and the importance of study's topic. However, a few companies refused to fill the survey for different reasons.

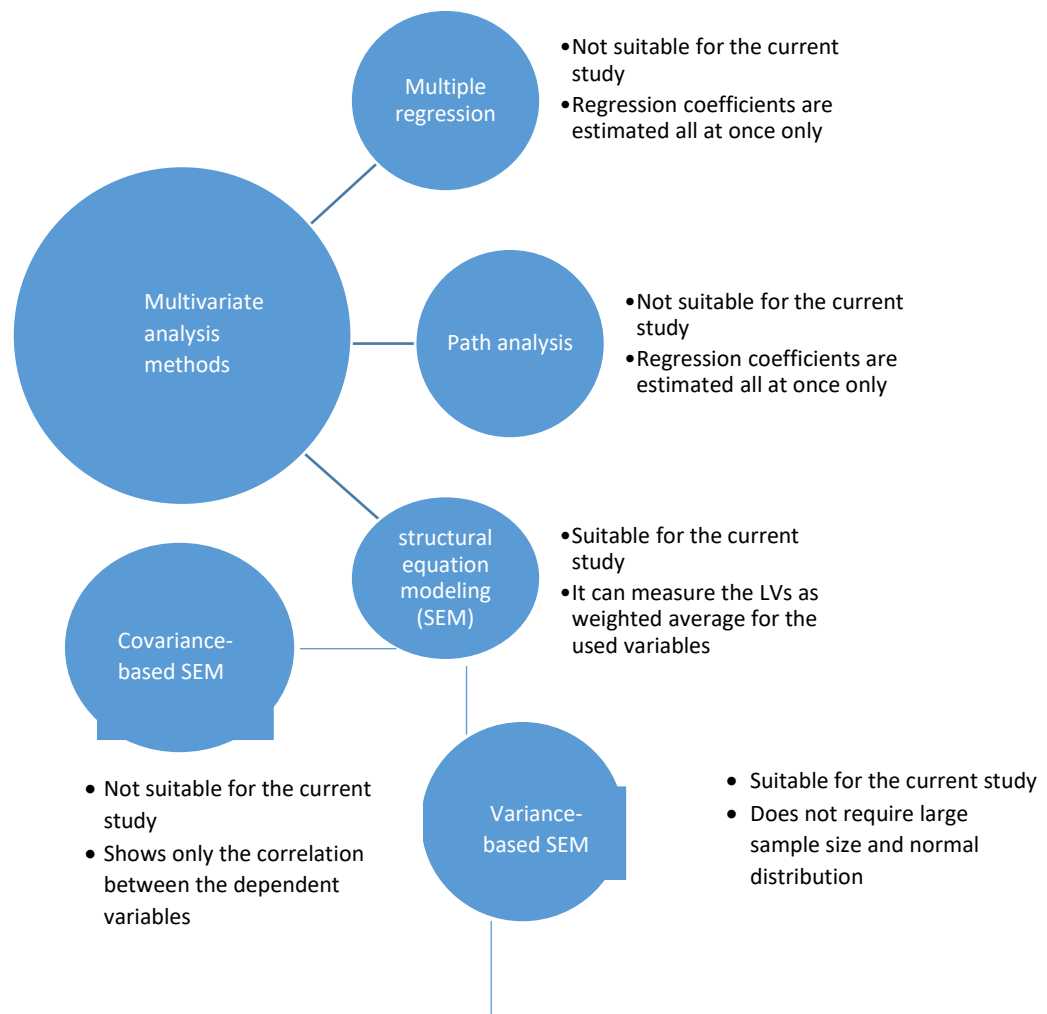
For example, a few companies mentioned that they are busy with inventory management since the distribution of the survey was the end of the year. Moreover, two companies refused to fill the questionnaire without giving any justification. Since the level of rejection is low, the researcher was able to collect the target sample size.

The data collection process started on the late end of November 2019 and continued until the end of January 2020. Approximately 1,050 surveys were distributed to more than 100 companies, about 90 of which filled out and returned the survey. In fact, some companies returned fewer than 5 copies and some returned 5-10 copies. In total, 362 filled in survey were sent back to the researcher. Out of these surveys, 9 copies were not complete, 12 copies were filled in by local staff who were not managed by expatriate managers, 14 copies were filled in by non-middle or top management staff. Thus there were 327 useable copies of the survey. The properly completed copies of the survey were analysed using SEM-PLS Warp 6.0; this is discussed in the following section.

### **Method of Analysis**

The literature suggests a variety of analytical techniques that can be used to test the relationships among the chosen variables (Byrne, 2010; Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004; Henseler et al., 2009). Some of these techniques are suitable to explore the relationship between two constructs only at one time, such as the chi-square test, Pearson correlation, and Spearman's rank order correlation ( $\rho$ ) (Shih & Fay, 2017). However, these approaches are not suitable for the current study as this study has more variables that need to be tested simultaneously. Furthermore, to test the relationships between a number of independent variables and one dependent variable, multiple regressions, path analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) can be used (Kock, 2010; Kock, 2019) (see figure 4.2 below). However, multiple regressions and path analysis methods enable the researcher to estimate the coefficients of association between the

independents variables and the dependent variable all at once, unlike SEM that can measure the latent variables (LVs) as a weighted average for the variables (Henseler et al., 2009). Therefore, multiple regressions and path analysis methods are not recommended for the current study because the current study includes a complex model with a number of exogenous variables (such as the ability to transfer knowledge, the motivation to transfer knowledge, and the opportunity to transfer knowledge) and a number of endogenous variables, such as knowledge received and localisation success (Wong, 2013). This means the conceptual framework of the current study includes various direct and indirect paths in which each path needs to be measured. Thus, SEM has been adopted for the current study. The rationale behind this decision is explained in detail in the next section.



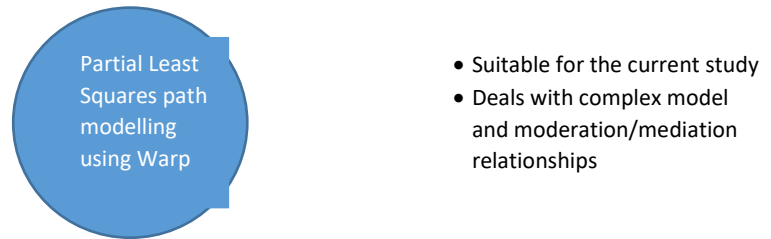


Figure 4.2: Multivariate analysis methods Henseler et al., 2009; Byrne, 2010; Kock, 2019

#### 4.1.12 Justifications for the Adoption of Structural Equation Modelling

In order to investigate interrelated relationship in a complex model, previous studies have recommended SEM which can be defined as “a statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory (i.e., hypothesis-testing) approach to the analysis of a structural theory on a given phenomenon” (Byrne, 2010). SEM includes two statistical methodologies which are covariance-based (CB-SEM) and PLS path modelling (PLS-SEM) or variance-based SEM (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004; Henseler et al., 2009; Wong, 2013). CB-SEM is an approach in SEM that normally uses software such as AMOS, EQS, LISREL, and MPlus to confirm or reject the proposed hypotheses (Henseler et al., 2009). However, since the CB-SEM approach requires a large sample size and normal distribution, many researchers in the business area prefer to use PLS-SEM as normal distribution may not be achieved in reality (Wong, 2013). These limitations are not in the PLS-SEM approach (Hair et al., 2014; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). It should be noted that variance-based SEM includes different techniques such as generalised structured component analysis and path analysis (Lastovicka & Thamodaran, 1991; Hwang et al., 2010). However, previous studies have argued that PLS-SEM is the most prominent technique in business and management studies (Ali, Rasoolimanesh,

Sarstedt, Ringle & Ryu, 2018). The present study has adopted PLS-SEM using Warp PLS V6 due to the following reasons.

First, PLS-SEM is an effective method for testing complex models (Henseler et al., 2009). The current study includes a complex framework that contains eight variables; each variable has a number of items with more than twelve hypotheses. Therefore, PLS-SEM is a suitable statistical tool as it supports investigating the high complexity relationships. Moreover, PLS-SEM is deemed appropriate for analyzing mediation relationships (James et al., 2006). A mediator is a construct that influences the relationship between two other variables (Frazier et al., 2004). Such an attribute is essential for the current study, since it has proposed a mediation relationship. The current study suggests that knowledge received intervenes in the relationship between the expatriate competencies and localisation success. Hence PLS-SEM is a viable statistical technique to test this kind of relationship with reliable results (Henseler et al., 2009).

In addition, PLS-SEM is claimed to be the most useful approach for behavioral research aims for testing a causal model (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). In this vein, the current study includes a number of causal hypotheses through integrating ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking as drivers of knowledge transfer, which can be seen as key antecedents of successful localisation, hence this requires PLS-SEM. Furthermore, like other management studies, the data collected for the current study may not be normally distributed. However, unlike the covariance-based approaches, PLS-SEM can deal with this issue as it does not need a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2016; Wong, 2013), thus, this advantage is essential for the current study. Furthermore, the PLS-SEM approach is preferred for the current thesis as it allows for explanation of the variance between the dependent constructs

(Hair, et al., 2017). This feature is not available in the covariance-based approach which can show only the correlation among dependent variables (Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt & Ringle, 2010). Finally, the PLS-SEM approach has been commonly used in knowledge transfer studies (Susanty, et al., 2012; Ali, Musawir & Ali, 2018; Elbaz et al., 2018; Kianto et al., 2019; Vlajcic et al., 2019; Rese et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2020).

#### **4.1.13 Justifications for the Adoption of WarpPLS Variance-Based SEM**

The PLS-SEM approach can be performed through various software packages such as PLS-Graph, SmartPLS, and WarpPLS. As stated above WarpPLS is adopted for the current study. WarpPLS is one of the Variance-Based SEM software packages that uses PLS regression (Kock, 2019). This software has been used in many social science studies. The first version of this software was released in 2009 then followed by five other versions where the sixth version was released in 2018 (see Kock, 2009; Kock, 2019). Measuring nonlinear relationships is a unique advantage of WarpPLS unlike other PLS software packages that deal mainly with measuring liner relationships. Liner relationship refers to the case where an increase/decrease in one variable leads to decrease/increase in another variable constantly (De Winne et al., 2019). Conversely, nonlinear relationship refers to the situation where the increase/decrease in one variable does not lead to constant increase/decrease in another variable. Though, that relationship can be predictable by using WarpPLS, unlike smartPLS which can deal only with liner relationships (Sun et al., 2015; Kock et al., 2019). This means that through this software it is possible to approximate the best relationship between variables that have scattered relationships.

In addition, WarpPLS is an effective tool to easily study to the moderation relationship in the current study (Kock et al., 2020) because the present thesis aims to the examine a moderation relationship. Furthermore, the latest version for WarpPLS



has the ability not only to measure the composites effect “which are exact linear combinations of indicators,” but also to transform the composite effect into the factor effect which is known as the PLSF method (“F” “refers to the correlation-preserving factor estimation process that underlies the method”) (Kock, 2019, p 2). This means the “PLSF method maximizes the fit between factor covariance matrices,” unlike “covariance-based SEM [that] maximizes the fit between indicator covariance matrices” (Kock, 2019, p 6).

Other key advantages of WarpPLS are (Kock et al., 2010; Kock, 2019):

- It has comfortable and easy interface with clear steps and guidelines.
- It produces graphs that are easy to understand.
- It easily produces a P value and effect size.
- It deals with both formative and reflective models.

#### **4.1.14 PLS-SEM Assessments**

There are two main steps in PLS-SEM assessments: the measurement (also called outer) model, that is, the association between the LVs and the observed indicators; and the structural (also called inner) model, that is, the association among the LVs (Hair, et al., 2017). In the PLS measurement model, the aforementioned measures have been put forward to ensure the reliability and the validity of the reflective measurement of the LVs. If any of these measures is not met, it may lead to revising the path model in some way, such as excluding certain indicators (Henseler et al., 2009; Kline, 2015). The successful estimation of the measurement model permits the researcher to start the estimation of the structural model (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). The details of these assessments are discussed in Chapter Five: Analysis and Findings to make it easier for the reader to understand the results and their meaning and requirements in a single place.

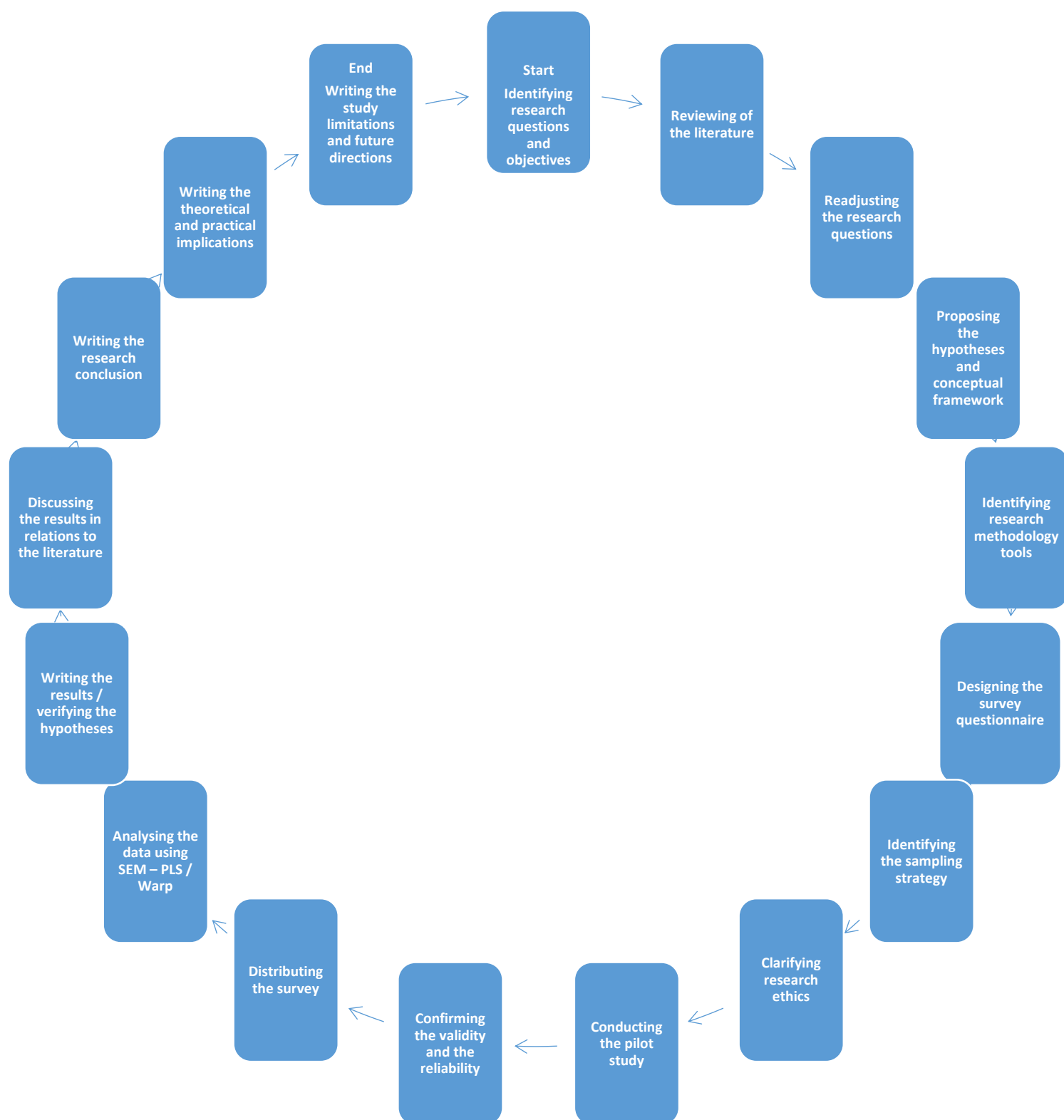
### **Summary of the Research Methodology**

As shown in table 4.5 below the methodological perspectives are presented with a brief justification for the adopted methodology. First, research philosophies are discussed and the rationale behind following the positivism philosophy is justified. Next, the research approaches are outlined, followed by a justification for the adoption of the deduction approach. Subsequently, research design of the current thesis is outlined including the strategies of the research (e.g. survey, experiment, and case study), choices of data collection (e.g. mono method, mixed methods, and multi-method) and time horizons of the research (e.g. cross-sectional and longitudinal). In this regard, the justifications for adopting a survey questionnaire, mono method, and the cross-sectional method are given. In addition, the measurements of the current study variables are discussed including the items and the sources of each variable and the layout of the questionnaire. Moreover, this chapter has discussed the sampling strategies including the rationale behind adopting non-random sampling namely purposive sampling. Furthermore, the analysis method of the current study has been explained. In this vein, the selection of SEM and WarpPLS has been justified.

**Table 4. 5 The current study's research methodology summary**

Why not this type?	<b>*Research Methodology Flow</b>		Why this type?
	<b>Philosophies</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hypotheses cannot be approved due to “multiple realities view”</li> <li>Research bias might happen due to personal involvement</li> </ul>	Interpretivism Realism Pragmatism	<b>Positivism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps to investigate the causal relationships</li> <li>Helps to confirm the proposed hypotheses objectively</li> </ul>
	<b>Research Approaches</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inductive is useful for theory development</li> </ul>	Inductive	<b>Deductive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a wealth of literature on knowledge transfer</li> <li>It suggests statistical data collection and analysis</li> </ul>
	<b>Research Strategies</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of these strategies are used when the aim is to get a deeper understating of the investigated phenomenon</li> </ul>	Experiment Case Study Action Research Grounded Theory	<b>Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps to examine the causal effect of the independent variables on the dependents variables</li> <li>Reasonable cost and time for data collection</li> </ul>
	<b>Research Choices</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current study does not aim to describe and explain the roots of a certain phenomenon</li> </ul>	Mixed Methods Multi-method	<b>Mono Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current study questions are explanatory and can be answered quantitatively through a survey</li> </ul>
	<b>Time horizons</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current study does not aim to describe the change over time</li> </ul>	Longitudinal	<b>Cross-sectional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beside time constraints, the aim of the current study is to examine the relationships at a single time</li> </ul>
	<b>Data Collections</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumes more time and cost and is more suitable with getting rich information which is not the case of the current study</li> </ul>	Interview Observation	<b>Questionnaire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Along with cost and time advantages, it helps to examine the causal effect of the independent variables on the dependents variable</li> </ul>
	<b>Sampling Strategies</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can only be used when the entire population size is known</li> </ul>	Probability (Random) Sampling	<b>Non-random Purposive Sampling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of the entire population is not available</li> <li>Helps to reach the right participants</li> </ul>
	<b>Data Analyses</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires normal distribution</li> <li>The current study has a complex model with indirect relationships</li> </ul>	SEM-CV	<b>Variance-based SEM/ Using PLS Warp</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can deal with a complex model</li> <li>Can deal with nonlinear relationships</li> <li>Can deal with moderation/mediation relationships</li> </ul>

**\*The adopted types are written in red colour**



**Figure 4. 2 The Flow of The Current Research Design**

### **Pilot Study**

Pilot study refers to the initial distribution of the survey to a small number of the target participants who share the same features of the study population (Cuffe, 2007; Zikmund et al., 2012). This initial study is considered a rehearsal for the main study as it helps the researcher ascertain the clarity of the study instrument and measure its validity and reliability (Pansiri, 2006; Kalof et al., 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In order to ensure the effectiveness of the study instrument, its validity (face validity, content validity, and construct validity) and reliability have to be tested (Saunders et al., 2012).

#### **4.1.15 Content and Face Validity**

Content validation is defined as the process of checking the extent to which the study instrument covers what it is intended to assess (Colton & Covert, 2007; Vogt & Johnson, 2011). For example, whether the 45 items that have been adopted from previous studies cover the current research questions and whether they enable the researcher to measure the relationships within the current study constructs (Saunders et al., 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In fact, since the current study has adopted well-known, existing measures that have been tested and published in high impact factor journals (Table 4.6 below), it is believed that this contributes positively to the validity and the reliability of the study instrument (Bryman, 2016).

**Table 4. 6 Journals of the Adopted Measures**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Journals</b>	<b>Author (s)</b>
Ability to Transfer Knowledge (ABI)	Journal of Small Business Economics	Turner & Pennington (2015)
Motivation to Transfer Knowledge	Journal of Knowledge Management	Chang et al. (2012)
Opportunity Seeking to Transfer Knowledge	Items 1 & 2 Academy of Management Journal	Chang et al. (2012)
	Items 3, 4 & 5 Small Business Economics	Turner & Pennington (2015)
Knowledge Received	Journal of International Business Studies	Lyles & Salk (1996)
Knowledge Characteristics	Management International Review	Minbaeva (2008)
Receiver Characteristics (Absorptive Capacity)	Academy of Management Journal	Change et al. (2012)
Organisation Characteristics	Journal of Knowledge Management	Lekhawipat et al. (2018)
Localisation success	Journal of International Business Studies	Law et al. (2009)

On the other hand, face validity aims to enhance the clarity of the survey through checking for grammatical issues, logical flow of questions, and the overall appearance of the questionnaire (De Vaus, 2007). In this vein, Walliman (2017) has suggested that validity can be checked by distributing the questionnaire to a number of experts. Thus, the first draft of the questionnaire was given to seven assistant professors in business and management at Salalah College of Applied Sciences (CAS Salalah) to check the extent to which the used measures cover the current research questions. There were no major comments from these faculty members, however, they recommended adding subheadings for the ability, motivation, and the opportunity seeking to transfer the knowledge to enhance the logical flow of the items. Therefore, the 13 items of ability, motivation, and the opportunity seeking have been divided into three sections. This step was followed by two more steps: (a) The revised survey was given to two native English

speakers who were faculty members in the English department at CAS Salalah to check for linguistic issues; and (b) The revised survey was given again to seven PhD faculty members, four at CAS Salalah, and three at Plymouth University; they were asked to check the questions for clarity, logical flow of the items, and the overall appearance of the questionnaire. In addition, they were asked to check the cover letter and to write down the estimated duration to complete the survey. Although no significant issue was found, the following suggestions were given: (a) the cover letter is lengthy; (b) a few items seem to be similar in meaning; (c) section numbers need to be readjusted; and (d) there is unnecessary repetition of words in a few items. For example, all the items of knowledge characteristics start with “The knowledge in our company is characterized as ...” where it could be mentioned only once at the subheading to reduce the length of the survey.

In response to these comments the researcher has taken the following actions which did not cause any significant conflict with questionnaire approved by the Faculty Research Ethics and Integrity Committee at Plymouth University. Unnecessary information in the cover letter was removed. The numbering of the subheadings was changed to Alphabetical Letters to differentiate them. The repetitive words in a few of the constructs were removed from the items and kept at the subheadings. However, although a few items were thought to be same, none of them was removed as this feature is common and essential for reflective constructs.

#### **4.1.16 Construct Reliability**

After adjusting according to the suggestions by the experts, the revised survey was distributed to a small portion of the target population. The number of participants in pilot studies in the current literature on knowledge transfer ranges between 15 and 100. For example, Elbaz et al. (2018) piloted their survey with 50 participants, Huang

et al. (2017) used 100 participants, whereas Li (2012) used 15 participants. Therefore, in line with the Elbaz et al. (2018) study that employed AMO theory, the same as the current study, the pilot of current study used 50 questionnaires collected from local managers working at manufacturing companies at Oman.

In order to test the construct reliability, Cronbach's alpha test has been recommended (Saunders et al., 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Cronbach's alpha is a test used to check the internal consistency, that is, the extent to which all items are measuring their respective constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). The Cronbach's alpha for every construct was calculated by using SPSS software as shown in Table 4.7 below. Since all the constructs of the current study had Cronbach's alpha greater than the threshold of 0.7, no item was deleted (Field, 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2009). On the other hand, previous studies have pointed out that a value of Cronbach's alpha that is too high might cause multidimensionality (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Henseler et al., 2015). However, the highest value of Cronbach's alpha in the current study was less than 0.94 which is considered an acceptable value in knowledge management and localisation studies, thus no item was removed (Law et al., 2009; Li & Hsieh, 2009; Turner & Pennington, 2015). This means that the correlation between the indicators of each variable is significant (Collis & Hussey, 2013). In addition, the Corrected Item-Total Correlation as shown in Table 4.7 is greater than a threshold of 0.3 which shows that the corresponding indicator does represent its construct (Field, 2009, Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). Thus, that item has a strong correlation with overall scale score (Field, 2009).



**Table 4. 7 Corrected Item-Total Correlation and Cronbach's Alpha**

Constructs	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Ability to Transfer Knowledge (AB)</b>	The expatriate managers have a lot of good ideas worth sharing. <b>(AB1)</b>	0.745	<b>0.907</b>
	The expatriate managers are capable of sharing important information. <b>(AB2)</b>	0.878	
	The expatriate managers have the ability to communicate good ideas about their jobs. <b>(AB3)</b>	0.824	
<b>Motivation to Transfer Knowledge (MT)</b>	The expatriate managers are not afraid of losing power and control due to transferring knowledge to their subordinates. <b>(MT1)</b>	0.690	<b>0.929</b>
	The expatriate managers are willing to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge. <b>(MT2)</b>	0.843	
	The expatriate managers are willing to cope with cultural differences in order to transfer knowledge. <b>(MT3)</b>	0.837	
	The expatriate managers are willing to devote time to solve difficulties in order to transfer knowledge to their subordinates. <b>(MT4)</b>	0.836	
	The expatriate managers are willing to make persistent efforts to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge to their subordinates. <b>(MT5)</b>	0.883	
<b>Opportunity Seeking to Transfer Knowledge (OP)</b>	The expatriate managers seek opportunities through social relationships to solve difficulties in the knowledge transfer process. <b>(OP1)</b>	0.674	<b>0.889</b>
	The expatriate managers utilise social ties to generate trust and cooperation to solve difficulties in the knowledge transfer process. <b>(OP2)</b>	0.799	
	The expatriate managers have the opportunity to share information. <b>(OP3)</b>	0.774	
	The expatriate managers have the time and place (such as meeting room) to exchange best practices. <b>(OP4)</b>	0.666	
	The expatriate managers believe sharing information is a priority in their relationships with their local subordinates. <b>(OP5)</b>	0.742	
<b>Knowledge Received (KR)</b>	Technological expertise. <b>(KR1)</b>	0.656	<b>0.916</b>
	Marketing Expertise. <b>(KR2)</b>	0.804	
	Product development expertise. <b>(KR3)</b>	0.879	
	Manufacturing processes expertise. <b>(KR4)</b>	0.724	
	Managerial expertise. <b>(KR5)</b>	0.788	
<b>Knowledge Characteristics (KCH)</b>	Knowledge about your organisational culture. <b>(KR6)</b>	0.740	<b>0.793</b>
	Easy to codify, i.e., information is often provided in blueprints, manuals, and procedures. <b>(KCH1)</b>	0.710	
	Complex i.e., knowledge is about highly interdependent routines, individuals, and technologies. <b>(KCH2)</b>	0.710	
	Specific, i.e., knowledge in its context is about specific functional expertise. <b>(KCH3)</b>	0.461	
	Available, i.e., always available and easily accessible by new personnel. <b>(KCH4)</b>	0.548	

<b>Receiver Characteristics (Absorptive Capacity) [ABC]</b>	Locals have the ability to acquire new knowledge from expatriate managers to achieve organisational targets. <b>(ABC1)</b>	0.707	<b>0.880</b>
	Locals know the vision of what the organisation is trying to achieve through the transfer of knowledge from expatriate managers. <b>(ABC2)</b>	0.621	
	Locals have the technical competency to absorb knowledge from expatriate managers. <b>(ABC3)</b>	0.712	
	Locals have the necessary skills to implement practices gained from expatriate managers. <b>(ABC4)</b>	0.681	
	Locals have the ability to convert knowledge gained from expatriate managers into practice. <b>(ABC5)</b>	0.663	
	Locals have the ability to exploit new knowledge or practices gained from expatriate managers. <b>(ABC6)</b>	0.787	
<b>Organisation Characteristics (OCH)</b>	Our organisational culture is conducive to knowledge sharing. <b>(OCH1)</b>	0.702	<b>0.899</b>
	Our organisational organisational structure is conducive to knowledge sharing. <b>(OCH2)</b>	0.736	
	Our organisational geographic fragmentation is conducive to knowledge sharing. <b>(OCH3)</b>	0.561	
	The time and resources for knowledge sharing in our organisation are sufficient. <b>(OCH4)</b>	0.714	
	Our organisation offers organisational incentives for knowledge sharing. <b>(OCH5)</b>	0.648	
	Our organisation has complete and standard regulations about knowledge sharing. <b>(OCH6)</b>	0.708	
	Our organisation is conducive to knowledge sharing because of the authority. <b>(OCH7)</b>	0.685	
	In our organisation, the knowledge providers and receivers lack contact time and interactions. <b>(OCH8)</b>	0.624	
	In our organisation, differences exist in experience level between knowledge providers and receivers. <b>(OCH9)</b>	0.602	
<b>Localisation success (LOC)</b>	The progress of localisation (Omani staff) in our organisation is very successful. <b>(LOC1)</b>	0.731	<b>0.943</b>
	In my organisation, many local managers have successfully replaced expatriate managers. <b>(LOC2)</b>	0.799	
	In my organisation, many local managers have participated in making important strategic decisions. <b>(LOC3)</b>	0.859	
	With respect to the current number of expatriate managers in our organisation, I am satisfied with our localisation progress. <b>(LOC4)</b>	0.765	
	Our organisation has developed a group of competent local managers who are ready to replace expatriate managers. <b>(LOC5)</b>	0.853	
	Our organisation has developed a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers. <b>(LOC6)</b>	0.856	
	Our organisation will soon develop a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers. <b>(LOC7)</b>	0.834	

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the following points. First it explained the alternative research philosophies including the justification for using a positivism philosophy for the current study. Then, research approaches are discussed with the rational of adopting the deductive approach. Next, research methods are explained along with reasons behind adopting the quantitative methods in this thesis. Also, the adopted research design and sampling used are given. After that, the discussion on analysis technique for the current study is provided. As a summary of the above, Table 4.5 has been developed to show not only the rationale behind the adopted methodological view and techniques but also to overview the drawbacks of the alternative options. Finally, the results of the pilot study, which confirm the content validity and the constructs reliability, are given. These results permitted the final version of the survey to be distributed. Thus, the results of the current study are presented in the following chapter.

## **5 CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

So far the current study has discussed the related literature, developed the conceptual framework, and described the methodology. Additionally, 327 valid questionnaires have been collected from manufacturing companies in Oman. Therefore, based on WarpPLS, the analysis and the findings of the current thesis are presented throughout this chapter in three subsections. First, an overview of the descriptive statistics used, including the respondents profile and data quality tests, is presented. Second, the measurement model and structural model assessments are given along with a brief description of the related assessments and the suggested criteria for each assessment. Third, the analysis of the mediation and the moderation tests are presented as the current study included knowledge received as a mediator variable and the absorptive capacity as a moderator variable. Finally, the results of the current study hypotheses are presented and followed by a summary of the chapter.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Before describing the two stages, namely the measurement model and the structural model, of SEM-PLS, it is worthwhile to describe the respondents' profile information. This step is considered to be the foundation of all quantitative reasoning which makes its presence vital for any research study (Larson & Plonsky, 2015). Therefore, respondent profiles for the current study are described in the following section. In addition, the next three sections show the different tests that aim to ensure the quality of the collected data. This includes non-response bias, missing data and outliers, and common method bias.

#### **5.1.1 Respondent Profiles**

This section describes the respondent's profiles such as gender, age, education, department, work experience, position, organisation business type, and locally

managed by an expatriate (this refers to whether the respondent has worked with an expatriate, or not).

a) Gender

According to the results, about two thirds of the participants (66%) are male and about one quarter (25%) are female. The remaining 9% of the respondents preferred not to disclose their gender. The male domination in the returned surveys could be due to the fact that male employees account for 70% of the total workforce in Oman, whereas female employees account for only 30% (NCSI, 2020).

b) Age

The results in Table 5.1 below show that the age groups are classified into five ranges where the 18-25 age group is the first and over 55 years is the last on the scale. Out of these age groups, most of the respondents fall into the 26-35 and 36-45 age groups with 54% and 24% of the total participants respectively. Those in the age group of 18-25 years and 46-55 years account for 11% and 5% respectively. Finally, about 6% of the surveyed managers preferred not to disclose their ages. It is not surprising that the majority of the respondents fall into the 26-45 years range as about 69% of the workforce in Oman belongs to the age group of 25-39 years (NCSI, 2020).

c) Education

Regarding the educational level of the participants, the majority of the surveyed managers hold undergraduate degrees. Of all participants, 42% hold an undergraduate degree, 31% have a school diploma, and about 9% hold a postgraduate degree. The remaining participants indicated that they have other educational levels.

d) Department

As shown in Table 5.1, 92% of the participants work in one of the six predefined departments. The highest percentage, 38%, of the participants are from administration and HRM followed by 15.5 % working in accounting and finance, 15% working in production and 13.5 % working in marketing. Information Technology and Research and development are represented by 10% of the total respondents, whereas 8% preferred to not indicate their department.

e) Work experience

As far as work experience of the surveyed managers is concerned, the results show that 43% of them have more than eight years of experience compared with 38% with two to seven years of experience and only 12% with less than two years. The remaining 7% of the participants preferred not to disclose their experience.

f) Job Position

As shown in Table 5.1, the positions of the participants are classified into four categories which are: Executive, Director General, Head of Department or Supervisor. The majority of the participants are Heads of Departments and Supervisors with 39% and 43% respectively. On the other hand, about 10% of the respondents are Directors General compared to 7% who are Executives. It should be mentioned that since the current study targets middle-top management, 14 observations were excluded as they indicated that they do not hold a management position.

g) Business Type

As shown in Table 5.1, the types of business activities of the surveyed companies are building materials; electronics; metal; food and beverage; or wood, plastic or paper. Among these business activities, the largest group of participants is from beverage with 28%, followed by metal products at 24%. Conversely, only about 7% of the participants work for electronic companies compared to 12% for wood, plastic or paper, and 18% for building materials. The remaining 11% of responses were not specified.

#### h) Expatriates Percentage

As not all employees might be aware of the total percentage of expatriates in the firm, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of the expatriates in their respective departments. The answers show that about 30% of the respondents mention that expatriate staff occupy more than 50% of their particular departments; 21% mention the expatriate percentage is between 26-50%; 13% state it is between 10-25%; whereas about 20% of the respondents say it is less than 10%. The remaining 16% preferred not to disclose the expatriate percentage.

#### i) Managed by expatriate

Participants were asked to indicate whether they have been supervised by an expatriate in order to exclude responses from those who have not been working under the supervision of the expatriate managers as justified in Chapter 4, Research Methodology, section 4.6.1. Among these participants, about 50% have been managed by an expatriate for more than three years, whereas about 29% have been managed by an expatriate for 1-2 years. The remaining 21% indicate that they have been subordinates of expatriates for less than a year. In addition, 12 cases were ignored because they had not worked with expatriate

managers and their judgment about expatriate managers' competencies to transfer knowledge might not be reliable. Thus, the number of usable surveys is 327.

**Table 5. 1 Respondent Characteristics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	218	66.7
	Female	81	24.7
	Prefer not to disclose	28	8.6
<b>Age</b>	18-25 years	37	11.3
	26-35 years	175	53.5
	36-45 years	78	23.9
	46-55 years	17	5.2
	Over 55 years	2	0.6
	Prefer not to disclose	18	5.5
<b>Education</b>	School Diploma	100	30.6
	Undergraduates	137	41.8
	Postgraduates	28	8.6
	Other	62	19.0
<b>Department</b>	Production	49	15.0
	IT	24	7.3
	Marketing	44	13.5
	Administration/HR Management	124	37.9
	Research and Development	9	2.8
	Accounting and Finance	51	15.5
	Other	26	8.0
<b>Work experience</b>	Less than 2 years	40	12.2
	2-7 years	124	37.9
	8-13 years	79	24.2
	14-20 years	35	10.7
	Greater than 20 years	28	8.6
	Prefer not to disclose	21	6.4
<b>Position</b>	Executives	23	7.0
	Director General	31	9.5
	Head of Department	128	39.2
	Supervisor	145	44.3
<b>Business Type</b>	Building materials	59	18.0
	Electronics	22	6.7
	Metal	78	24
	Food and beverage	92	28.1
	Wood, plastic or paper	40	12.2
	Other	36	11.0
<b>Expatriates Percentage</b>	Less than 10%	65	19.9
	10-25 %	43	13.1
	26-50 %	68	20.8
	Greater than 50%	99	30.3
	Prefer not to disclose	52	15.9



<b>Managed by an expatriate</b>	Yes	327	100
	No	12	excluded
<b>Years working with expatriates</b>	Less than year	69	21.1
	1-3 years	94	28.7
	Greater than 3 years	164	50.2

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### 5.1.2 Non-Response Bias

As not all the targeted respondents might have the time or the willingness to complete the survey, scholars are concerned about non-response bias (Dillman, 2011; Gorrell et al., 2011). Non-response bias, which is also known as non-response error, refers to the bias that results from a significant difference between the answers of the respondents and those who did not answer the survey (Pont, 2007). In other words, the answers of those who filled in the survey might not be representative of the non-respondents and, thus, the generalizability of study findings would be in question (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Dillman et al., 2011). In this regard, the extrapolation method is suggested to test this issue to ensure that results are free of non-response bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). This method suggests that the researcher compare the results of those who filled the survey at the early stage of data collection with those who have completed the survey at the late stage of data collection. In order to implement this method, SPSS through T-Test was used in the current study as it allows comparison between two groups, in this case the late respondents and the early respondents (Pallant, 2013). This test indicates whether the group variances are same. In other words, if the samples have homogeneity of variance then the variances of both samples are of the same nature.

Following the method of Armstrong and Terry (1977), the current study compared the first 30 early responses with 30 late responses by selecting 25 items randomly. As shown in Table 5.2, t-values “Sig. (2-tailed) are not significant as they are above 0.05.” This means that the same variance is shared by both groups and there

is no significant difference between them. Thus, it can be concluded that the results are free of non-response bias and, hence, the sample used by the current study may be assumed to be representative of the whole population.

**Table 5. 2 Non-Response Bias (Levene's Test and T-test)**

NO	Items	Variances	Levene's Test for Variances Equality		t-test for Means Equality	
			F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
1.	AB1	Equal variances assumed	.007	.936	.121	.467
		Equal variances not assumed			.121	.467
2.	AB2	Equal variances assumed	.394	.533	.894	.033
		Equal variances not assumed			.894	.033
3.	AB3	Equal variances assumed	.117	.733	.800	.067
		Equal variances not assumed			.800	.067
4.	MT1	Equal variances assumed	.306	.582	.528	-.200
		Equal variances not assumed			.528	-.200
5.	MT3	Equal variances assumed	.260	.612	.471	.200
		Equal variances not assumed			.471	.200
6.	MT5	Equal variances assumed	1.800	.185	.710	.100
		Equal variances not assumed			.710	.100
7.	OP1	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.000	.122	.400
		Equal variances not assumed			.122	.400
8.	OP4	Equal variances assumed	.011	.916	.909	.033
		Equal variances not assumed			.909	.033
9.	OP5	Equal variances assumed	.881	.352	.522	.200
		Equal variances not assumed			.522	.200
10.	KR2	Equal variances assumed	.488	.488	.255	.333
		Equal variances not assumed			.255	.333
11.	KR4	Equal variances assumed	.009	.925	.076	.533
		Equal variances not assumed			.076	.533
12.	ABC1	Equal variances assumed	2.305	.134	.165	-.400
		Equal variances not assumed			.165	-.400
13.	ABC2	Equal variances assumed	.135	.715	.549	-.167
		Equal variances not assumed			.549	-.167
14.	ABC5	Equal variances assumed	1.035	.313	.129	-.433
		Equal variances not assumed			.129	-.433
15.	ABC6	Equal variances assumed	.247	.621	.828	-.067
		Equal variances not assumed			.828	-.067
16.	KCH2	Equal variances assumed	.566	.455	.095	.400
		Equal variances not assumed			.095	.400
17.	KCH3	Equal variances assumed	.003	.955	1.000	.000
		Equal variances not assumed			1.000	.000
18.	KCH4	Equal variances assumed	.106	.745	.195	.367
		Equal variances not assumed			.195	.367
19.	OCH2	Equal variances assumed	2.578	.114	.312	.267
		Equal variances not assumed			.312	.267
20.	OCH3	Equal variances assumed	.249	.619	.553	.167
		Equal variances not assumed			.553	.167
21.	OCH6	Equal variances assumed	.610	.438	.598	.133
		Equal variances not assumed			.598	.133
22.	OCH9	Equal variances assumed	.183	.670	.538	.167
		Equal variances not assumed			.538	.167

23. LOC1	Equal variances assumed	.025	.875	.561	.200
	Equal variances not assumed			.561	.200
24. LOC2	Equal variances assumed	1.157	.287	.525	.233
	Equal variances not assumed			.525	.233
25. LOC5	Equal variances assumed	.007	.934	.128	.533
	Equal variances not assumed			.128	.533

### 5.1.3 Missing Data and Outliers

Due to different factors, it is common in social sciences research that not all surveys administered are fully completed (Karanja et al., 2013) For example, it has been mentioned that factors such as respondents' unwillingness to answer certain items, lack of knowledge about particular items, or lack of time are among the reasons for incomplete answers (Karanja et al., 2013). This issue is called missing data, that is, a situation where a few items were not answered by the respondents, whether intentionally or by mistake (Tsikriktsi, 2005; Field, 2009). In this regard, the existence of missing data could threaten the validity of the research as it may result in bias due to the inability to fully represent the real answers (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Thus, in order to solve this issue, Kock (2020) has reported that WarpPLS provides the ability to deal with missing data automatically by replacing unfilled answers with the mean of the respective variables. Nevertheless, it has been recommended that surveys with over 15% of the total observations missing to be removed (Hair et al., 2016). Hence, the current study has omitted nine incomplete surveys that had missing data over the suggested percentage.

Outliers is another issue that refers to the scores that differ markedly from those of other answers (Tinsley & Brown, 2000; Field, 2009). It has been argued that these scores might affect the shape and the sign of the structural relationship among the variables and, thus, it is recommended to remove the outlying cases (Seo, 2006; Zikmund et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). However, Kock (2010), has stated that the act of removing the outliers is not a correct option as it may change the actual

relationship among the variables. Additionally, the author has mentioned that WarpPLS has the potential to reduce the outlier automatically without omitting the sets in which the sample size is retained. Thus, since the adopted analysis software for the current study (WarpPLS) can deal with this issue effectively, there is no need to run any test for this issue (Kock, 2020).

#### **5.1.4 Common Method Bias**

Scholars are concerned when data is obtained by a single method (Kock & Lynn, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2012) as it may have an adverse impact on the measurement validity and hence lead to unreliable findings (Bagozzi & Yi, 1991; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Gorrell et al., 2011). This issue is called common method bias (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). In the current study data has been collected from a single source which might cause common method bias. Thus, two steps based on scholar's suggestion have been implemented to check for and reduce this issue, namely, the procedural action and the statistical test (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003). The former was achieved by informing the respondents that their answers would be anonymous and confidential which would encourage respondents to answer the questionnaire without thinking of being positive, socially acceptable, and consistent (Kock, 2010). On the other hand, statistically, common method bias has been checked in the current study by two tests, namely, Harman's one-factor through SPSS software (De Winne et al., 2019), and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) based on a full collinearity test through WarpPLS (Kock, 2020). The former assumes that the variance of a particular factor should not exceed 50% of total variance (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Lings et al., 2014). As shown in Appendix D, the highest factor accounted for only 29.43% of the total variance which is less than the threshold of 50% and, hence, this implies that the current study is free of common method bias (Lings et al., 2014). The

latter, VIF, assumes that there is no concern about common method bias if the result of all variable VIFs are no more than 3.3 (Kock, 2020). As shown in Table 5.3 below, all VIF results are below the critical threshold. Therefore, based on these two tests, it is clear that there is no concern about common method bias in the present study.

**Table 5. 3 Block Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs)**

	AB	MT	OP	KR	KCH	OCH
AB					1.614	1.614
MT					1.700	1.700
OP					1.717	1.717
KR	1.720	2.491	2.352			
KCH						
OCH						
LOC				1.414		

### **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Analysis**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are two main models in PLS-SEM assessments, the measurement or outer model that is the association between the LV and the indicators, and the structural or inner model that is the association among the LVs (Hair, et al., 2017). The summary of the assessment criteria is outlined in Table 5.4 below.

**Table 5. 4 Measurement Model and Structural Model Criteria**

Measurement model assessments for reflective model				Structural model assessment	
Reliability	Test		Result	Test	Result
	1) Indicator reliability	Factor Loading	$\geq 0.7$	Path Coefficient	Significant: $\geq 0.5$ Sign: + or – Magnitude: $> 0.1$
	2) Construct reliability	Cronbach alpha	$\geq 0.7$	The explained variance ( R <sup>2</sup> )	0.67, 0.33 and 0.19 as substantial, moderate, and weak respectively
		Composite reliability	$\geq 0.7$		
Validity	1) Convergent validity	Average variance extracted (AVE)	$\geq 0.5$	The effect size (f <sup>2</sup> )	0.02 is small, 0.15 is medium, and 0.35 is large effect
	2) Discriminant validity	Cross loadings	The correlation between the items and their construct needs to be higher than their association with other LV.	The predictive relevance (Q <sup>2</sup> )	$> 0$ (0.02 as small, 0.15 as medium, and 0.35 as large predictive relevance)
		Fornell-Larcker criterion	Construct is correlated with its own items more than any other LV		
		Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)	$\geq 0.90$		

Sources (Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015)

### **5.1.5 Nature of the Constructs**

Before discussing the two stages of PLS-SEM assessments, it should be noted that reflective models and formative models require different types of tests in PLS-SEM (Henseler et al. 2009; Hair et al., 2013). In reflective models the change in the value of the LV is reflected (i.e. manifested) in the changes of the items, taking into account that these items are neither totally different from each other (can overlap with each other) nor making the full meaning of the examined variable (Henseler et al., 2009; Ringle et al., 2010). Conversely, in formative model the investigated construct is fully represented by the items used where these items cause the change of the LV value (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair, et al., 2017). The decision as to whether the items are reflective or formative is a debatable issue among scholars as some argue that the items are by nature either formative or reflective (Chang et al., 2016) and others argue that the nature of the relationship between the items and the variables should determine the choice (Hulland, 1999; Henseler et al., 2009; Ringle et al., 2010).

Based on the latter argument and the nature of the causal relationships among the items and variables of the current study, the reflective view is seen as more relevant to the conceptual framework. For example, in the current study, motivation to transfer knowledge is represented by a number of items that do not form the full meaning of this variable, rather they reflect it, in that, if a certain item is deleted, the variable is still measurable (Ringle et al., 2010). In addition, all measurements used have been adopted from previous studies to measure the variables in which they were used as reflective items (see table 4.4 at chapter four). In other words, previous studies have offered various and different items that can help to explain and measure each of the eight variables employed in the present study (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair, et al., 2017). For example, three observed items have been adopted to measure the variation in the ability

of the expatriates to transfer the knowledge (Navarro et al., 2010; Turner & Pennington, 2015). Table 5.5 below shows the nature and codes of the current study variables. Since all the constructs in the current study are reflective, the following section explains the measurement model for the reflective model employed in the present study through indicator reliability, construct reliability, discriminant and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2013; Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 5.5 Nature and codes of the Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Organisation Characteristics</b>	Reflective	OCH
<b>Knowledge Characteristics</b>	Reflective	KCH
<b>Ability to Transferring Knowledge</b>	Reflective	AB
<b>Motivation to Transferring Knowledge</b>	Reflective	MT
<b>Opportunity Seeking to Transferring Knowledge</b>	Reflective	OP
<b>Knowledge Received</b>	Reflective	KR
<b>Localisation Success</b>	Reflective	LOC
<b>Absorptive Capacity</b>	Reflective	ABC

#### **5.1.6 Measurement Model in PLS**

For the measurement model, as shown in Table 5.3 above, researchers need to ensure: **1) the reliability of the indicators** via testing factor loading; **2) the internal consistency of the construct** via testing Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability; and **3) the validity of the LVs** through testing both convergent validity (average variance extracted [AVE]) and discriminant validity (Cross loadings, Fornell-Larcker criterion) (Henseler et al., 2009; Kline, 2015). These measures have been put forward to ensure the reliability and the validity of the reflective measurements of the LVs. If any of these measures is not met, it may lead to revising the outer model in some way, such as excluding certain indicators, and rerunning the model (Henseler et al., 2009; Kline, 2015).



**Indicator reliability** is used to ensure the reliability of correlations between items and their LVs, in which the LV should explain a considerable portion of each item's variance (Henseler et al., 2009). Factor loadings is used to ensure the indicator reliability which refers to the path value of the LV towards its indicators. The factor loading value needs to be at least 0.7 with squared loading not less than 0.5 (Ringle et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). However, even factor loading of 0.4 would be considered acceptable provided that the AVE, and Cronbach's alpha meet minimum values (Truong & McColl, 2011; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2016). In addition, loading of 0.5 is considered an acceptable value (Hulland 1999; Kock, 2020). Thus, any factor loading less than 0.5 would be eliminated if it resulted in a significant rise in the composite reliability (Henseler et al., 2009). In the current study only two items from opportunity seeking, namely OP4 and OP5, have been removed as they had loadings less than 0.5. After deleting these items, the model was run again and all indicators of loading were more than 0.5 (see Table 5.6 below). Hence, indicator reliability in the current study has been achieved, allowing other measurements to be checked.

**Table 5. 6 Indicator Loading (Combined Loading)**

	AB	MT	OP	KR	KCH	OCH	LOC	ABC	P- Value	VIFs
<b>AB 1</b>	(0.839)	- 0.246	0.119	- 0.019	0.055	- 0.073	0.101	- 0.022	<0.001	1.785
<b>AB 2</b>	(0.902)	0.183	- 0.130	0.066	- 0.008	- 0.041	- 0.038	0.031	<0.001	2.618
<b>AB 3</b>	(0.910)	0.046	0.019	- 0.048	- 0.043	0.108	- 0.056	- 0.011	<0.001	2.725
<b>MT 1</b>	- 0.214	(0.661)	- 0.092	0.192	0.072	- 0.171	- 0.029	0.051	<0.001	1.430
<b>MT 2</b>	- 0.005	(0.835)	- 0.076	- 0.095	0.044	0.004	0.059	0.028	<0.001	2.174
<b>MT 3</b>	0.099	(0.827)	- 0.069	0.005	- 0.007	0.069	- 0.009	- 0.036	<0.001	2.128
<b>MT 4</b>	0.034	(0.880)	0.110	- 0.056	- 0.024	0.013	- 0.019	- 0.018	<0.001	3.331
<b>MT 5</b>	0.039	(0.884)	0.096	- 0.003	- 0.065	0.047	- 0.008	- 0.013	<0.001	3.405
<b>OP 1</b>	0.046	0.017	(0.842)	0.014	- 0.010	- 0.074	0.090	- 0.016	<0.001	1.707
<b>OP 2</b>	0.004	- 0.022	(0.866)	- 0.162	0.062	- 0.004	- 0.054	0.002	<0.001	1.845
<b>OP 3</b>	- 0.052	0.006	(0.811)	0.159	- 0.056	0.081	- 0.036	0.014	<0.001	1.541
<b>KR 1</b>	0.108	0.118	- 0.153	(0.729)	0.002	0.008	- 0.025	0.055	<0.001	1.725
<b>KR 2</b>	-0.144	0.125	- 0.021	(0.807)	0.156	- 0.251	0.108	- 0.073	<0.001	2.219
<b>KR 3</b>	- 0.087	0.076	- 0.015	(0.856)	- 0.154	0.122	- 0.018	0.017	<0.001	3.314
<b>KR 4</b>	- 0.081	- 0.100	0.084	(0.812)	- 0.037	0.077	- 0.057	- 0.005	<0.001	2.756
<b>KR 5</b>	0.084	- 0.071	0.000	(0.803)	0.013	0.034	- 0.002	0.013	<0.001	2.431
<b>KR 6</b>	0.146	- 0.151	0.096	(0.758)	0.032	0.004	- 0.007	- 0.003	<0.001	2.103
<b>KCH 1</b>	0.006	0.013	- 0.045	0.108	(0.775)	- 0.085	0.119	- 0.084	<0.001	1.508
<b>KCH 2</b>	0.126	- 0.032	- 0.023	- 0.168	(0.778)	- 0.019	- 0.069	0.042	<0.001	1.506
<b>KCH 3</b>	- 0.065	0.133	- 0.077	- 0.030	(0.730)	0.103	- 0.050	0.089	<0.001	1.378
<b>KCH 4</b>	- 0.073	- 0.107	0.141	0.090	(0.767)	0.006	- 0.003	- 0.042	<0.001	1.469
<b>OCH 1</b>	- 0.082	0.055	- 0.086	0.041	0.179	(0.730)	0.057	0.187	<0.001	2.405
<b>OCH 2</b>	- 0.106	- 0.082	0.111	0.035	0.011	(0.770)	0.028	0.158	<0.001	2.677
<b>OCH 3</b>	- 0.037	0.154	- 0.110	- 0.178	- 0.022	(0.640)	- 0.109	- 0.049	<0.001	1.476
<b>OCH 4</b>	0.089	- 0.128	- 0.072	0.044	0.064	(0.752)	- 0.083	- 0.092	<0.001	1.965
<b>OCH 5</b>	0.006	0.225	- 0.237	0.017	0.014	(0.748)	0.071	- 0.133	<0.001	2.010
<b>OCH 6</b>	- 0.152	0.160	- 0.029	0.013	0.007	(0.756)	0.012	0.004	<0.001	1.992
<b>OCH 7</b>	0.069	- 0.183	0.131	0.029	- 0.065	(0.787)	0.119	0.031	<0.001	2.134
<b>OCH 8</b>	0.037	- 0.166	0.203	0.085	- 0.122	(0.734)	- 0.111	- 0.077	<0.001	2.031
<b>OCH 9</b>	0.186	- 0.005	0.072	- 0.121	- 0.071	(0.686)	- 0.009	- 0.041	<0.001	1.817
<b>LOC 1</b>	0.246	- 0.048	- 0.049	- 0.097	- 0.053	0.232	(0.670)	- 0.114	<0.001	1.551
<b>LOC 2</b>	- 0.107	- 0.237	0.208	0.034	0.120	- 0.074	(0.740)	0.145	<0.001	2.102
<b>LOC 3</b>	- 0.015	- 0.025	- 0.023	- 0.011	- 0.012	0.091	(0.827)	0.161	<0.001	2.704
<b>LOC 4</b>	- 0.060	0.235	- 0.105	0.000	- 0.045	- 0.018	(0.794)	- 0.105	<0.001	2.142
<b>LOC 5</b>	- 0.002	0.061	- 0.033	- 0.084	0.061	- 0.069	(0.874)	- 0.040	<0.001	3.389
<b>LOC 6</b>	- 0.059	- 0.019	0.081	0.054	- 0.010	- 0.050	(0.872)	- 0.049	<0.001	3.638
<b>LOC 7</b>	0.035	0.006	- 0.074	0.094	- 0.063	- 0.070	(0.814)	- 0.004	<0.001	2.487

<b>ABC 1</b>	0.094	- 0.034	- 0.071	0.089	- 0.067	- 0.017	0.066	(0.804)	<0.001	2.180
<b>ABC 2</b>	- 0.079	- 0.069	0.172	0.083	0.008	0.019	- 0.049	(0.786)	<0.001	2.068
<b>ABC 3</b>	0.025	0.153	- 0.171	- 0.168	0.013	0.010	- 0.030	(0.821)	<0.001	2.225
<b>ABC 4</b>	- 0.057	- 0.125	0.072	0.063	- 0.061	0.015	0.043	(0.830)	<0.001	2.320
<b>ABC 5</b>	0.092	0.063	- 0.075	- 0.021	- 0.010	- 0.012	0.047	(0.816)	<0.001	2.215
<b>ABC 6</b>	- 0.073	0.010	0.076	- 0.040	0.112	- 0.015	- 0.076	(0.850)	<0.001	2.565

**Construct reliability (internal consistency)** is an estimation of how well the adopted items measure their constructs. These items must be understood in the same way by all respondents (Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). In order to measure the construct reliability, Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha are recommended (Henseler et al., 2009; Saunders et al., 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Kock, 2020).

Composite reliability refers to whether all the items assess the same construct, whereas Cronbach's alpha estimates the extent to which all items measure their concerned constructs consistently (Henseler et al., 2015). Both measures should be greater than 0.7 to be considered acceptable (Field, 2009; Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). For the current study, as shown in Table 5.7 below, all the values of Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha are above the acceptable value threshold of 0.7. These values indicate that the measurement tool employed in the present study has a satisfactory reliability as the internal consistency is achieved. In other words, the survey questions are understood in a similar way by all participants, and if the survey were distributed again to the same participants under the same conditions, the survey would yield consistent results.

**Table 5. 7 Composite and Cronbach's Alpha (Construct Reliability Test)**

Variables	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
AB	0.915	0.860
MT	0.911	0.876
OP	0.878	0.791
KR	0.911	0.883
KCH	0.848	0.760
OCH	0.913	0.893
LOC	0.926	0.906
ABC	0.924	0.901

**Construct validity** refers the extent to which a group of items measure their respective constructs (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). In other words, it could be seen as how well the construct is explained by its items (Hair et al., 2013). Construct validity is checked through convergent validity and discriminant validity.

To test convergent validity, the AVE is used to see the ability of the LV to explain the variance of its items, and its value needs to be at least 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013; Henseler et al., 2015). AVE is met when at least 50% of an item's variance is explained by its LV. This means that if the AVE is less than 0.5, then the variance via the error measurement is greater than the variance of the construct and, thus, the accuracy of the result is questioned.

Similarly, discriminant validity is another test to ensure measurement validity. Discriminant validity is achieved when the correlation between an item and the construct it is intended to measure is higher than its association with other LVs (Cross loadings: at the LV level), and when that construct is correlated with its items more than any other LV (Fornell–Larcker: at the indicator level). Discriminant validity is

satisfied when the square root of the AVE of the LV is more than other LVs (Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). This means these two measures are complementary in that the Fornell–Larcker focuses on the construct level validity, while the cross loading focuses on the item level validity (Hair et al., 2013; Henseler et al., 2015).

As shown in Table 5.8 the current study has a satisfactory convergent validity, as the AVE is higher than 0.5 for all of the variables. This means the adopted items of each construct in the current study are able to explain more than 50% of the variance in their respective constructs. Moreover, Table 5.9 demonstrates that all the items are correlated with their constructs more than they are correlated with other constructs. Thus, it is clear that all the investigated variables in the current study have a satisfactory discriminant validity.

In addition, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations is another test that has emerged recently to assess discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The authors have argued that HTMT is a more effective method to ensure the discriminant validity as it helps to measure the correlation between a construct and other constructs. However, the indicators of HTMT rate is debatable among scholars. For instance, it has been suggested that a value up to 0.85 is acceptable (Kline, 2011) but others have argued that even up to 0.90 is acceptable (Gold et al., 2001; Teo et al., 2008). This means if the HTMT value is achieved, the examined constructs are different from each other and, thus, discriminant validity is confirmed (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 5.10 below, the HTMT results in all cases is less than the threshold of 0.90. This conforms that there is no issue with the discriminant validity as each construct is distinct from other constructs.

**Table 5. 8 AVE (Convergent Validity Test) and Full VIFs (Collinearity Test)**

	AB	MT	OP	KR	KCH	OCH	LOC	ABC
<b>AVE</b>	0.782	0.675	0.705	0.632	0.582	0.540	0.643	0.669
<b>Full VIFs</b>	1.967	2.824	2.578	1.758	1.914	2.317	1.675	1.313

**Table 5. 9 Square Root of AVEs (Discriminant Validity Test)**

	AB	MT	OP	KR	KCH	OCH	LOC	ABC
AB	(0.884)	0.644	0.611	0.491	0.342	0.321	0.304	0.141
MT	0.644	(0.821)	0.748	0.575	0.330	0.374	0.324	0.013
OP	0.611	0.748	(0.840)	0.508	0.393	0.413	0.356	0.021
KR	0.491	0.575	0.508	(0.795)	0.356	0.443	0.393	0.012
KCH	0.342	0.330	0.393	0.356	(0.763)	0.640	0.468	0.286
OCH	0.321	0.374	0.413	0.443	0.640	(0.735)	0.611	0.158
LOC	0.304	0.324	0.356	0.393	0.468	0.611	(0.802)	0.118
ABC	0.141	0.013	0.021	0.012	0.286	0.158	0.118	(0.818)

**Table 5.10 HTMT Ratios**

(good if < 0.90, best if < 0.85)							
	AB	MT	OP	KR	KCH	OCH	LOC
AB							
MT	0.734						
OP	0.741	0.894					
KR	0.566	0.657	0.612				
KCH	0.423	0.402	0.508	0.437			
OCH	0.366	0.419	0.492	0.496	0.777		
LOC	0.348	0.360	0.422	0.440	0.566	0.680	
ABC	0.161	0.071	0.079	0.089	0.347	0.182	0.147

**Collinearity** refers to the concern that arises when two or more items are highly correlated, which indicates redundancy among the LVs of the study (Hair et al., 2017). According to Kock and Lynn (2012), collinearity can be tested by checking the full VIF. As demonstrated in Table 5.8, the results show that there is no concern about the collinearity in the present study, as the VIF of each predictor construct is below the

thresholds of 5 (Hair et al., 2012). Thus, this result demonstrates that there is no redundancy among the LVs. Another method to identify any possible sources of multicollinearity is through checking the correlations among indicators (Knock, 2019). As shown in appendix E, all the indicators are correlated with themselves more than with another indicator and thus, this confirms that there is no concern about the multicollinearity.

The successful estimation of the measurement model permits the researcher to estimate the structural model (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, the next section will discuss the assessments of the structural model, which is also called the inner path model of SEM-PLS.

### **Results of the Structural Model in PLS**

The structural (inner) model focuses on the association between the LVs (Hair, et al., 2017). In other words, the assessment of the structural model helps the researcher to examine the fit of the study's hypotheses (Schreiber et al., 2011). In this vein, through the structural model, the relationship between the expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer and the knowledge received by local employees is examined. The structural model can be assessed through the estimation of the path coefficient/significance, the explained variance ( $R^2$ ), the effect size ( $f^2$ ), and the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) (see Table 5.4 above) (Tenenhaus et al., 2005; Henseler et al., 2009; Karim & Weisz, 2011).

#### **5.1.7 Model Fit Quality Indices**

According to Kock (2019), model fit quality indices refer to how well the model fits with the “empirical indicator correlation matrices,” that is, the extent to which the employed model can produce accurate results. Kock (2019) has suggested various measures to assess the model fit as listed in Table 5.11 below. As demonstrated in this table, all values of model fit indices have been met. The p-value of the average path

coefficient is less than 0.05, which indicates a significant regression between the dependent and independent variables (Kock, 2010). Through the value of the Average R-squared (ARS), it could be concluded that the independent variables significantly explain the variance of the dependent variable (Kock, 2019). Moreover, as shown in Table 5.11, it is clear that the average block VIF and the average full collinearity VIF are acceptable, which suggests that the model is free of collinearity (see section 5.2.2 above for a full explanation). In addition, it is obvious that the model has a large (0.546) global fit which means that the results of the current study can be generalised. Furthermore, values for SPR, RSCR and SSR are considered valid. The accepted value of SPR indicates that there is no concern with Simpson's Paradox Instance, as none of the variables contribute negatively to the LV variance ( $R^2$ ). It also confirms that causality problems, such as reversed path, are not threatening the study results (Kock, 2019). In addition, as shown in table 5.11, it should be noted that 57% of localisation success variance can be explained by the joint variance of all independent variables, as the model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) with adjusted R-square: (0.571). This result is important as the current study examines the joint effects of knowledge transfer determinants on the localisation success. Thus, based on these ten measures, it is argued that the model fit of the current study is acceptable, which allows structural measures to be then checked.



**Table 5. 11 Model Fit Quality Indices**

Model fit indices	Values	Criteria*	Decisions
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.401, $P < 0.001$	$P < 0.05$	Accepted
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.578, $P < 0.001$	$P < 0.05$	Accepted
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.571, $P < 0.001$	$P < 0.05$	Accepted
Average block VIF (AVIF)	2.870	acceptable if $\leq 5$	Accepted
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.841	acceptable if $\leq 5$	Accepted
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.546	$S \geq 0.1$ , $M \geq 0.25$ , $L \geq 0.36$	Accepted
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	$\geq 0.7$	Accepted
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	$\geq 0.9$	Accepted
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	$\geq 0.7$	Accepted
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	$\geq 0.7$	Accepted

Based on Kock (2019)

### Structural Model Assessments Description

Before discussing the results of the structural model, it is worthwhile to have an overview of the meaning of the criteria in each assessment. Thus, the following sections will discuss the assessments: estimation of the path coefficient/significance, explained variance ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).

**In path analysis (structural relationships)**, the path coefficient reflects the relationship strength between two LVs in the model (Henseler et al., 2009). In other words, the path coefficient helps to verify the correctness of the proposed hypotheses. In measuring the path coefficient, three things should be considered: sign, magnitude, and significance of the path coefficient (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Ringle et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). The path needs to be less than or equal to 0.05 to be significant (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). The magnitude of the path coefficient between any two LVs needs to be more 0.100 to represent an influence between the two LVs with confidence (Ringle et al., 2010). The contrary sign of the path coefficient to the proposed hypotheses indicates that these hypotheses are not supported (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). Figure 5.1 illustrates the structural relationships of the hypotheses which are explained in the following subsections.

**Explained variance ( $R^2$ )** is a measure used to indicate the proportion of the variance for the endogenous LV that can be represented by the causal variable (independent variable). This means the  $R^2$  result will identify the extent to which the variance of a certain LV explains the variance of another variable. A low  $R^2$  indicates that the LV is unable to explain that variable variance (Henseler et al., 2009). With regards to the values of  $R^2$ , 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak respectively (Hair et al., 2011). It has also been recommended that 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 be considered as substantial, moderate, and weak respectively (Chin, 1998). However, Cohen (1988) has suggested that 0.26, 0.13 and 0.02 as substantial, moderate, and weak respectively.

**Effect Size ( $f^2$ )** is another measure in the structural model which aims to test how substantially the predicted construct impacts the dependent LV by viewing the changes in the  $R^2$  (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). For instance, after calculating the  $R^2$  in the full model, the researcher excludes the intended LV and recalculates  $R^2$  to see the variance that is explained in the reduced model as compared to the full model (Au et al., 2008). The main aim here is to establish whether a certain LV has no to low impact on the dependent variable and also whether a single LV has a substantial effect. For example, through the effect size ( $f^2$ ), the researcher of the current study has been able to see the individual effects of the ability to transfer knowledge, motivation to transfer knowledge, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge on the dependent variable. To describe the effect size, it has been suggested that  $f^2$  values of 0.02 are small, 0.15 are medium, and 0.35 are large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988; Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Roldan & Sanchez-Franco, 2012).

**Predictive validity (relevance  $Q^2$ )** refers to the ability of the model to predict the indicators of the endogenous LV (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Henseler et al.

(2009) have pointed out that for the reflective measurement model, the  $Q^2$  can be assessed through the blindfolding procedures technique. This technique helps the researcher to know how accurate the tested model is in predicting omitted values, where the  $Q^2$  value should be greater than zero to be accepted (Henseler et al., 2009; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). In order to indicate the degree of  $Q^2$ , it has been recommended that 0.02 be considered small, 0.15 be considered medium, and 0.35 be considered large predictive relevance of the examined LV (Henseler et al., 2009; Henseler et al., 2015).

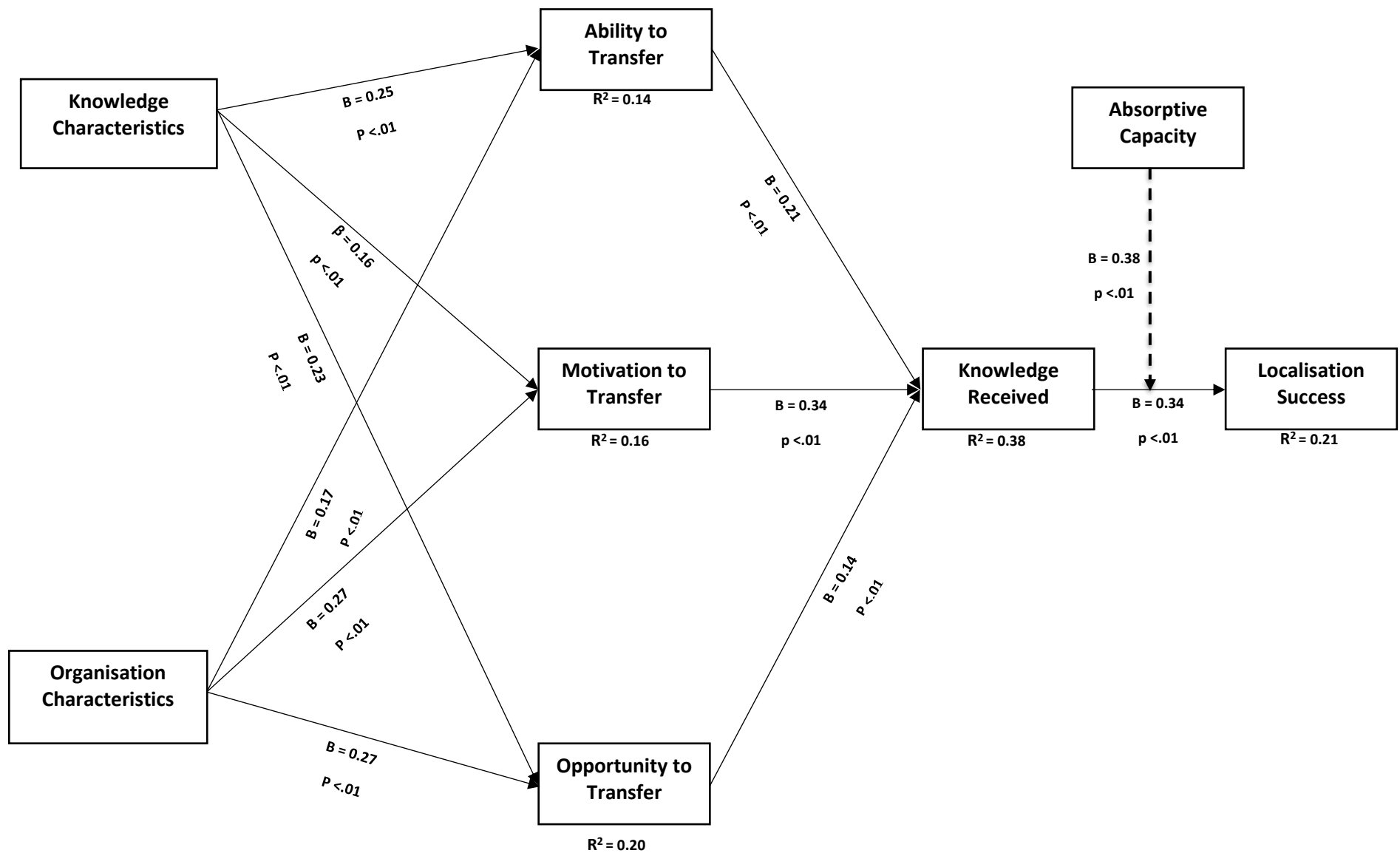


Figure 5. 1 The Structural Relationships

### **5.1.8 The Relationship between KCH and AB, MT, and OP**

The current study investigates fourteen hypotheses. The first three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) examine the impact of knowledge characteristics on expatriate ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge to their local Omani subordinates. These three hypotheses predict that knowledge characteristics have a positive and significant impact on ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriates. The results show that knowledge characteristics have a positive and significant impact on all three competencies of expatriates when transferring their knowledge to their local Omani subordinates (see Table 5.12.) For instance, knowledge characteristics have a positive and significant impact on the ability of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to their Omani subordinate ( $\beta=0.25$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Similarly, knowledge characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the motivation and the opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to their Omani subordinates ( $\beta=0.16$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $\beta=0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ , respectively). These results mean that, expatriate ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge depends on the knowledge characteristics. That is, the more the knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex, the greater the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of the expatriate to transfer knowledge.

As for the explained variance ( $R^2$ ) of the variables AB, MT, and OP, the findings show that all the predictions are meaningful statistically ( $R^2= 0.14$ ,  $0.16$  and  $0.20$  respectively) (see Table 5.12). With regards to effect size ( $f^2$ ), the findings show that knowledge characteristics have a small effect size on the three competencies of expatriates to transfer knowledge (variables AB, MT, and OP) (see Table 5.12). This means that the

characteristics of the transferred knowledge can determine the competencies of the expatriates to transfer the knowledge (variables AB, MT, and OP).

Another important test is the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) test, also known as Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  test, that aims to determine the extent to which a model can predict missing data (Henseler et al., 2009). In other words, if a few values are omitted from a model, will it be possible to predict the omitted values (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). For the current study, it is clear that the employed model has a predictive relevance as the values of  $Q^2$  are greater than 0 as shown in Table 5.13. More specifically, all three dependent variables (AB, MT, and OP) had medium predictive relevance (0.144, 0.158, and 0.206 respectively).

To sum up this section, based on the results for P-value, path coefficient, explained variance, and effect size, it could be concluded that the first three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) are accepted. In other words, it is confirmed that knowledge characteristics (specific, easy to codify, available, and complex) have a positive and significant impact on all three competencies of expatriates (ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriates) when transferring their knowledge to their local Omani subordinates.

**Table 5. 12 Path Coefficients, P-Values, R-Squares and the Effect Size**

Variable Relationships	β/Path Coefficient		P Value		The explained variance ( $R^2$ )		The Effect Size ( $f^2$ )	
	Value	Sign	Value	Effect	Value	Level	Value	Level
<b>KCH</b> → <b>AB</b>	0.25	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.14	Small	0.088	Small
<b>KCH</b> → <b>MT</b>	0.16	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.16	Small	0.055	Small
<b>KCH</b> → <b>OP</b>	0.23	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.20	Small	0.091	Small
<b>OCH</b> → <b>AB</b>	0.17	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.14	Small	0.054	Small
<b>OCH</b> → <b>MT</b>	0.27	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.16	Small	0.102	Moderate
<b>OCH</b> → <b>OP</b>	0.27	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.20	Small	0.114	Moderate
<b>AB</b> → <b>KR</b>	0.21	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.38	Moderate	0.104	Moderate
<b>MT</b> → <b>KR</b>	0.34	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.38	Moderate	0.198	Moderate
<b>OP</b> → <b>KR</b>	0.14	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.38	Moderate	0.074	Small
<b>KR</b> → <b>LOC</b>	0.34	Positive	<0.01	Significant	0.21	Small	0.147	Moderate

**Table 5. 13 The predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)**

Constructs	AB		MT		OP		KR		LOC	
Q <sup>2</sup>	0.144	Medium	0.158	Medium	0.206	Medium	0.376	Large	0.203	Medium

### 5.1.9 The Relationship between OCH and AB, MT, and OP

The next three hypotheses of the current study (H4, H5, and H6) examine the impact of an organisation's characteristics on expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge to their local Omani subordinates. It is hypothesized that organisation's characteristics have a positive and significant impact on these three dependent variables (AB, MT, and OP). The findings of the present study demonstrate that organisation's characteristics have a positive and significant impact on expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge to their local Omani subordinates (see Table 5.12). In this vein, it is clear that the organisation's characteristics have a positive and significant impact on the ability of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to their Omani subordinates ( $\beta=0.17$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Likewise, an organisation's characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the motivation and the opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer their knowledge to their Omani subordinates ( $\beta=0.27$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $\beta=0.27$ ,  $p<0.01$ , respectively). These results indicate that expatriate competencies (AMO) to transfer knowledge are influenced by an organisation's characteristics. For example, the organisation that offers incentives for knowledge transfer and that has clear regulations in regards to knowledge transfer would have a positive impact on the competencies of the expatriate to transfer knowledge to their Omani staff.

As mentioned in the previous section, the variances ( $R^2$ ) of AB, MT, and OP are meaningful statistically. In addition, it is clear that an organisation's characteristics have a small effect size ( $f^2$ ) on the ability of expatriates to transfer their knowledge, but the effect sizes on the motivation and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge are medium. Furthermore, the predictive relevance of AB, MT, and OP are 0.144, 0.158 and 0.206 respectively. This indicates that these three variables can be moderately predicated even if a few items were missed.

To sum up, based on the results of P-value, path coefficient, explained variance, and effect size, it could be concluded that hypotheses (H4, H5, and H6) are accepted. This means the findings of the current thesis confirmed that organisations characteristics have a positive and significant impact on expatriate competencies ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge to their local Omani subordinates. In other words, in order to enhance the expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge at an organisation, that organisation must be committed to facilitate knowledge transfer.

#### **5.1.10 The Relationships between AB, MT, and OP and Knowledge Received**

This section discusses the results of hypotheses 7, 8, and 9 that consider whether the ability (H7), motivation (H8), and opportunity seeking (H9) of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees would have a positive impact on knowledge received by local staff. In this regard, the findings of the current study show that all three variables (AB, MT, and OP) have a positive and significant impact on the knowledge received. The motivation to transfer knowledge accounts for the highest positive impact on knowledge received ( $\beta=0.34$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), followed by the ability to transfer knowledge ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), then opportunity to transfer the knowledge ( $\beta=0.14$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). These results demonstrate



that more knowledge would be received by local staff when their expatriate managers have the ability, motivation, and the opportunity seeking to transfer their knowledge to the local staff.

The explained variance ( $R^2$ ) for the knowledge received is 38, as shown in Table 5.12, which is similar to the results of Elbaz et al. (2018) ( $R^2$ : 38). This means that the three independent variables to transfer knowledge—moderately explain the variance of the knowledge received. As for the effect size of the three competencies of expatriates to transfer the knowledge (ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking) on knowledge received by local Omani staff, ability and motivation had medium effect sizes, whereas opportunity seeking had a small effect size as shown in Table 5.12. In addition, it is obvious that the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of KR is large as shown in Table 5.13. This large value of  $Q^2$  for knowledge received means it would be easy to predict this LV even when certain values of its indicators are missing.

In summary, these results ensure that the model used has a satisfactory predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). Thus, based on these results, it is concluded that H7, H8, and H9 are supported. These findings confirm that more knowledge would be received by local staff when their expatriate managers have the ability, motivation, and the opportunity seeking to transfer their knowledge to the local staff.

#### **5.1.11 The Relationships between KR and LOC**

The current study hypothesises that knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers would positively lead to staff localisation (H10). In other words, the replacement of expatriate staff by local staff (localisation) would be successful if local staff receive useful knowledge from their expatriate managers. The results of the present study

show that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge received and localisation success ( $\beta=0.34$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This result means that the respondents believe that local staff have replaced expatriate staff successfully due to the useful knowledge received by the local staff from their expatriate managers. As for the explained variance ( $R^2$ ) of localisation success, though it is weak ( $R^2 = 21$ ), it is meaningful statistically. In addition, Tables 5.12 shows that knowledge received has moderate effect size ( $f^2$ ) on localisation success. This means the predicated variable, in this case the KR, moderately impacts localisation success. In addition, the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of localisation success is 0.203. This value indicates that the localisation success would be moderately predicated if a few items were missing and, hence, indicates a satisfactory predictive relevance.

Finally, it is confirmed that H10 is accepted based on the aforementioned results. The findings of the current thesis confirm the positive and significant relationship between knowledge received and localisation success. In other words, the results demonstrate that in order to have a successful localisation, local staff must receive useful knowledge from their expatriate managers.

#### **5.1.12 The Mediation Role of Knowledge Received**

The mediation relationship refers to the intervention of the mediating variable in the interaction of the independent and the dependent variables (Pieters, 2017; Memon et al., 2018). The mediational design helps to provide a better explanation of the interaction between the exogenous and endogenous variables (Rungtusanatham et al., 2014; Pieters, 2017; Memon et al., 2018). Therefore, mediation variables are widely used, almost mandatory, in contemporary research (Rucker et al., 2011; Aguinis et al., 2016; Green et al., 2016). The knowledge received by local staff acts as a meditating variable in the

relationships between expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge and localisation success.

In order to test this mediation effect, the guidelines of Kock (2020) and Hair et al. (2014) have been followed. They suggest two steps to test the indirect relationship. They recommend testing the direct association between the independent and the dependent variables once without the mediating variable, and then again with it included. Based on this, three outcomes are expected to determine the mediation effect (see Table 5.14). First, the mediation effect can be complete/full if the direct association between the independent and dependent variables becomes insignificant after the intervention role of the mediating variable in such a relationship. For example, if the relationship between expatriate competencies and localisation success becomes insignificant when knowledge received (mediation) is included, it would mean the relationship is fully explained by knowledge received. In other words, the effect of these competencies on localisation success is achieved through the intervention of knowledge received. Second, the mediation effect can be partial if the direct association between the independent and dependent variables remains significant after including the mediating variable in such a relationship. This means that such a relationship is partially explained by knowledge received. Third, there might be no mediation effect if the indirect relationship is insignificant.

**Table 5. 14 Expected Results of Mediation Effect**

No	Direct Relationship	Indirect Relationship	Result
1	Insignificant	Significant	Full mediation
2	Significant	Significant	Partial mediation
3	Insignificant/ Significant	Insignificant	No mediation

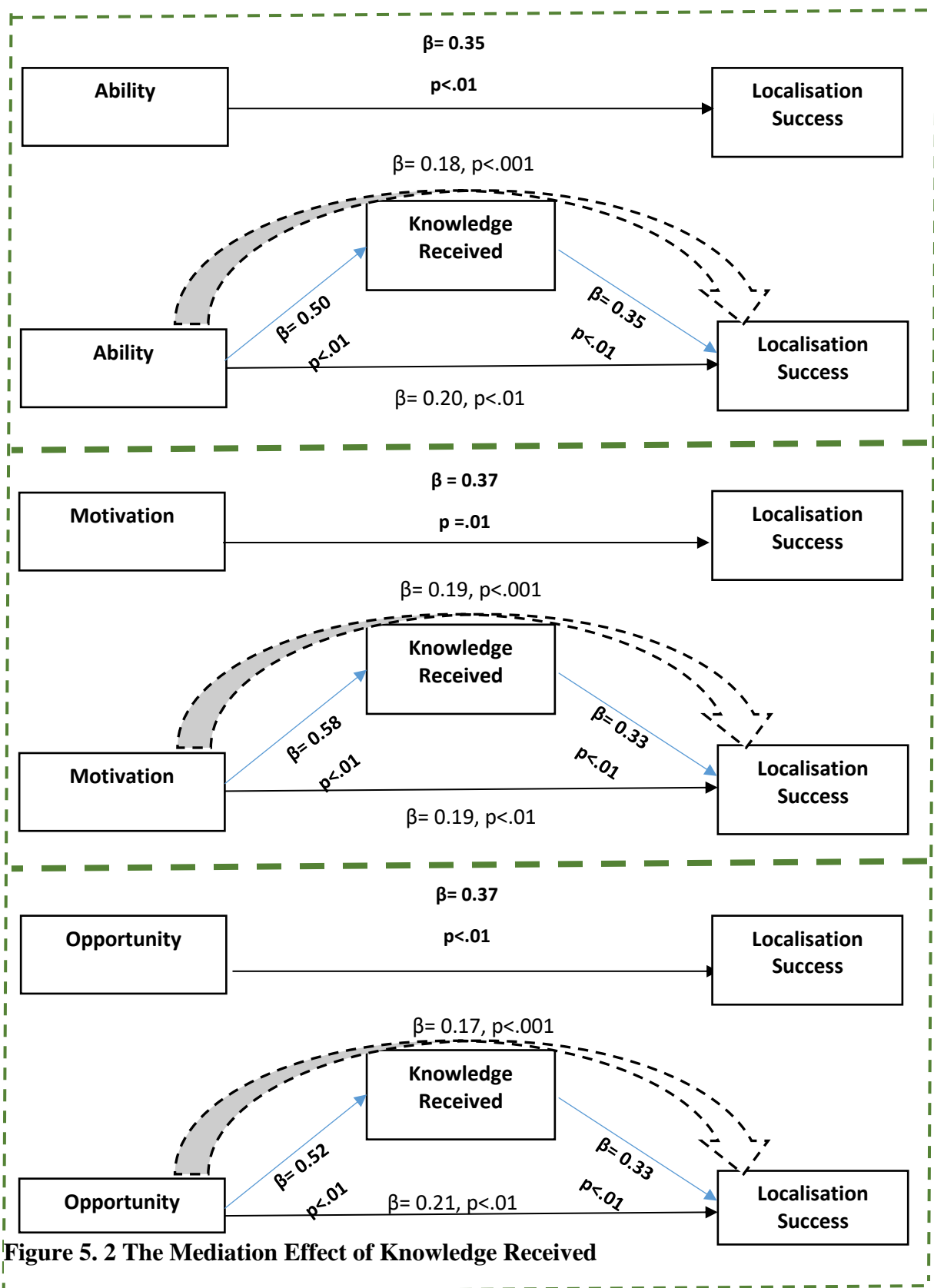
For the current study, it is expected that knowledge received by local staff plays a mediating role in the relationships between expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge and localisation success. As suggested by Kock (2020), a separate model for each mediation relationship would enable the researcher to achieve accurate and valid results (see Figure 5.2). The results here show that the direct relationship between ability to transfer knowledge and localisation success remains significant after the inclusion of knowledge received ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, it could be concluded that knowledge received partially mediates such a relationship (see Table 5.15). In other words, the results demonstrate that knowledge received explains the relationship between ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge and localisation success. Likewise, the results show that the association between motivation to transfer knowledge and localisation success is partially explained by knowledge received as their direct sign remains significant after the inclusion of the mediation ( $\beta=0.19$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Finally, it has been found that knowledge received plays a partial mediation role in the relationship between opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge and localisation success ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). To summarise the mediating role of knowledge received, each hypothesis is discussed separately in the following sections

As shown in figure 5.2 below, the direct relationship between ability to transfer knowledge and localisation success is significant without the mediation. Then, after adding the knowledge received as mediating variable to the model, the direct relationship remains significant. Therefore, the knowledge received by local staff acts as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between expatriates ability to transfer knowledge and

localisation success. This means that such a relationship is partially explained by knowledge received. Therefore, it is confirmed that hypothesis H11 is supported.

Moreover, this study proposes that the impact of expatriates motivation to transfer knowledge on localisation success is subject to the knowledge received by local staff. As shown in figure 5.2, it is clear that knowledge received by local staff has a partial mediating role in the relationship between expatriates ability to transfer knowledge and localisation success. This is because the positive and significant direct relationship between motivation to transfer knowledge and localisation remains significant after the inclusion of the mediation ( $\beta=0.19$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Accordingly, it is confirmed that H12 is accepted based on the aforementioned results.

Furthermore, the results of the current thesis show that the association between opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge and localisation success is partially explained by knowledge received as their direct sign remains significant after the inclusion of the mediation. This result demonstrates that knowledge received explains the relationship between expatriate managers opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge and localisation success. Hence, H13 is accepted.



**Figure 5. 2 The Mediation Effect of Knowledge Received**

**Table 5. 15 Results of Mediation Effect (direct and indirect impacts)**

<b>Results of direct effects without and with meditation</b>							
Hypotheses	Path	Direct effects <b>without</b> Mediation			Direct effects <b>with</b> Mediation		
		B	P-value	Description	$\beta$	P-value	Description
N/A	AB $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.35	< 0.01	Significant	0.20	< 0.01	Significant
N/A	MT $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.37	= 0.01	Significant	0.19	< 0.01	Significant
N/A	OP $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.37	< 0.01	Significant	0.21	< 0.01	Significant
<b>Results of indirect effects with inclusion of mediation (KR) N/A: Not Available</b>							
Hypotheses	Path	Indirect Effect			Mediation Results		
		$\beta$	P-value	Description	Effect	Level	Supported
H 11	AB $\rightarrow$ KR $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.18	< 0.001	Significant	Established	Partial	Yes
H 12	MT $\rightarrow$ KR $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.19	< 0.001	Significant	Established	Partial	Yes
H 13	OP $\rightarrow$ KR $\rightarrow$ LOC	0.17	< 0.001	Significant	Established	Partial	Yes

**Note:** N/A = Not Applicable AB= Ability; MT = Motivation; OP = Opportunity seeking; KR = Knowledge received; LOC= localisation

### 5.1.13 The Moderating Role of Absorptive Capacity

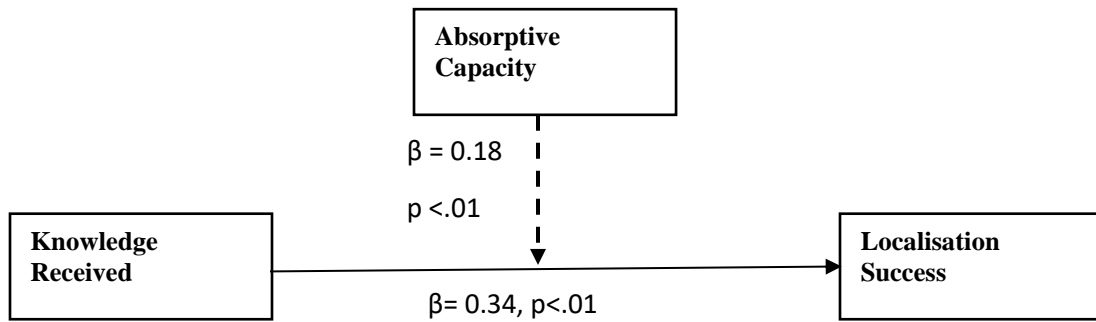
The moderating variable refers to the variable that affects the relationship between two other variables (Aguinis et al., 2017; Memon et al., 2019). This means, the moderating variable can change the nature of the correlation between the independent and the dependent variables (Andersson et al., 2014; Dawson, 2014). For example, the inclusion of the moderator variable might cause the direct relationship between the independent and the dependent variables to be stronger, weaker, or reversed/changed (Gardner et al., 2017). In this vein, it is argued that the rationale behind including the moderator variable in a model is to see when the antecedent has the strongest effect on an outcome (Frazier et al., 2004). For example, the current study employs absorptive capacity as a moderator variable to see whether high absorptive capacity will cause a stronger relationship between knowledge received and localisation success.

A number of investigations have been conducted to enable better understanding of the moderation relationship, including its analysis methods and interpretation guidelines (Henseler & Chin, 2010; Fassott et al., 2016). In this regards, previous studies have suggested three methods to test the moderation effect which are: Two-Stage, Product-Indicator, and Orthogonalizing (Fassott et al., 2016; Memon et al., 2019). Interestingly, the latest version of the software adopted for the current study, Warppls7.0, includes these three methods for PLS path modeling. A two-stage method is recommended for a formative model, which is not the case for the current study that is based on a reflective model (Chin et al., 2003). On the other hand, although the product-indicator method is appropriate for testing the moderation effect of the reflective model, it is criticized for causing multicollinearity (Henseler & Chin, 2010). This issue is not a concern for the orthogonalizing method (Fassott et al., 2016; Memon et al., 2019). In addition, it has been argued that this method is superior to the other methods in terms of its high prediction. Therefore, the present thesis has implemented an orthogonalizing method to test the strength of the moderation effect.

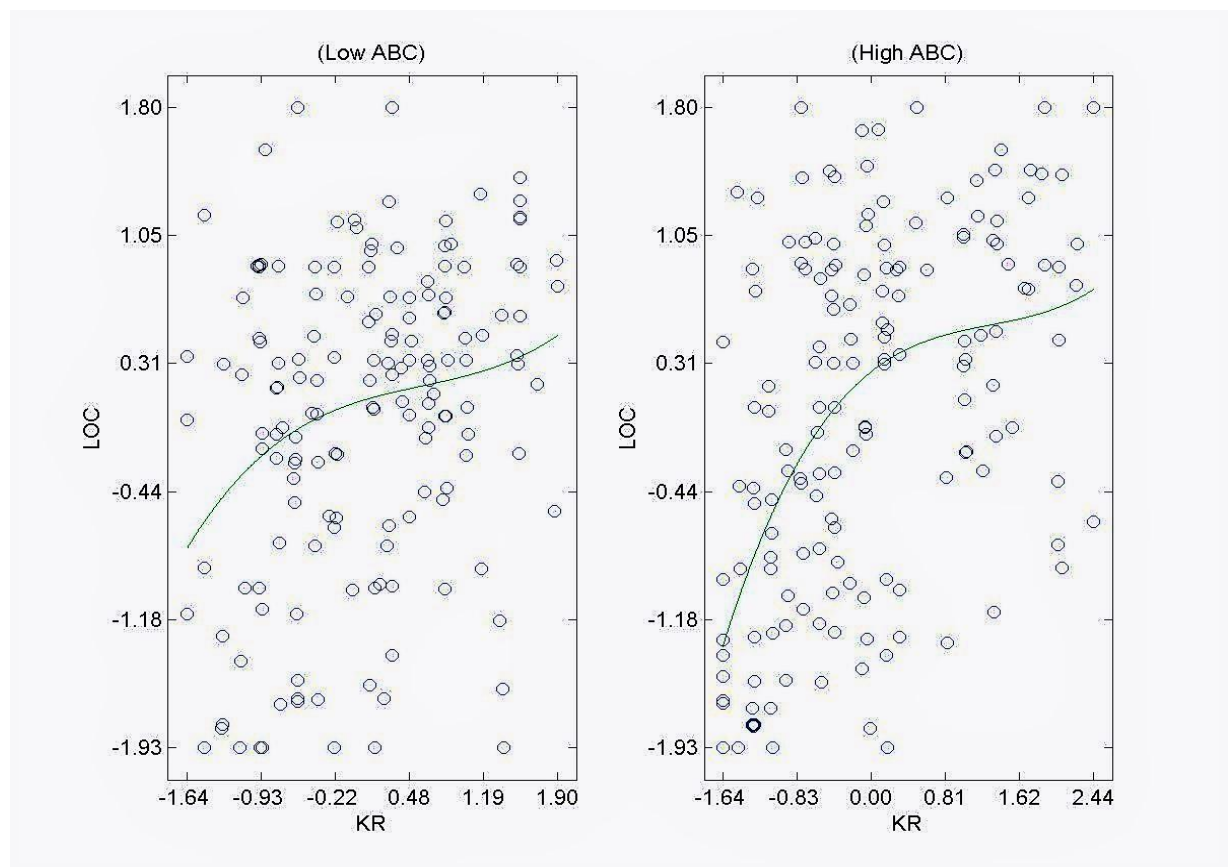
The results of the current study, as shown in Figure 5.3, demonstrate that the absorptive capacity of local staff moderates the relationship between received knowledge and localisation success ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ). More specifically, the greater the absorptive capacity, the stronger the relationship between knowledge received and localisation success (see figure 5.4). In other words, the impact of received knowledge was found to have more effect on localisation when local staff have more absorptive capacity. For example, as absorptive capacity increases (such as the ability to implement and exploit new



knowledge or practices learned from expatriate managers), knowledge received by local staff leads to more successful localisation. Therefore, H14 is supported.



**Figure 5. 3 Results of the Moderation Effect**



**Figure 5. 4 High/Low Moderating Effect of Absorptive Capacity**

### **Summary of the Results and Hypothesis Testing**

As shown in Table 5.16 below, both knowledge characteristics and organisation characteristic have a positive and significant impact on expatriate competencies (AMO) to transfer knowledge. Hence, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 are accepted. Moreover, the results show that all the three competencies of expatriates to transfer knowledge have a positive and significant impact on knowledge received by local staff. That means that H7, H8, and H9 are supported. In addition, it has been found that knowledge received has a significant positive impact on localisation success. Thus, H10 is supported. Furthermore, H11, H12, and H13 are accepted as the findings indicate that knowledge received plays a partial mediation role between expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer and localisation success. Finally, the results support the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the association between knowledge received by local staff and localisation success (H14). Therefore, it is clear that all 14 hypotheses are supported. Though getting all hypotheses accepted is very common in social science (see Kang et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2012; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Elbaz et al., 2018) it is worthwhile to mention the following classifications. Based on the adopted research philosophy (positivism), it is believed that data can be collected through observation and survey to understand people's behaviour and opinion (Gray, 2013). Thus, this thesis proposed new hypotheses based on an existing theory in this case AMO theory (Rosenberg, 2018). This means, the researcher sets the hypotheses based on the assumption of the adopted theory assuming the the association between the investigated variables . This is followed by data collection and analysis to test the proposed hypotheses based on the obtained data. Here it is should be mentioned that

the researcher is independent (Saunders et al., 2009) and the statistical results are objective (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) based on solid statistical data and analysis (Burns & Grove, 2003; Gale & Beeftink, 2006). In other words, based on this type of philosophy, the researcher has no personal effect on the research results (Saunders et al., 2009).

**Table 5. 16 Summary of Hypothesis Results**

<b>Hypothesis Number</b>	<b>Hypothesis Statements</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
1.	Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.	Yes
2.	Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.	Yes
3.	Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.	Yes
4.	Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.	Yes
5.	Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.	Yes
6.	Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.	Yes
7.	The ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff.	Yes
8.	Motivation of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff.	Yes
9.	Opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff.	Yes
10.	Knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers has a significant impact on staff localisation	Yes
11.	Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the ability of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success	Yes
12.	Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the motivation of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success	Yes
13.	Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success	Yes
14.	The relationship between the knowledge received by local staff and localisation success is stronger when the absorptive capacity is high	Yes

Before summarising this chapter, it is worthwhile to show the highest amount of knowledge received by local staff at each department from their expatriate managers. As shown in table 5.17 below, the highest knowledge received by local staff at production department are managerial expertise and organisational culture knowledge. As for IT staff, technological expertise is the highest knowledge received. The findings showed that marketing and managerial expertise are the highest knowledge received by local staff at marketing department. The staff at administration department indicated that the highest knowledge that they received from their expatriate managers is the organisational culture knowledge. Product development expertise is the highest knowledge received for R&D local staff. Finally, the highest knowledge received by local staff at accounting and finance is technological expertise.

**Table 5.17 Types of Knowledge Received**

		Technological Expertise	Marketing Expertise.	Product Development Expertise.	Manufacturing Processes Expertise	Managerial Expertise	Organisational Culture Knowledge
Dept	Prodcution	35%	41%	51%	51%	53%	53%
	IT	50%	33%	38%	41%	46%	46%
	Marketing	55%	57%	45%	56%	57%	55%
	Administration/HRM	47%	40%	46%	47	57%	64%
	R&D	55%	22%	67%	56%	44%	66%
	Accounting and Finance	58%	39%	37%	45%	47%	53%

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the current study. Based on 327 valid surveys and using WarpPLS, the validity, reliability, and the structural model of the 14

hypotheses have been tested and presented. The descriptive statistics have been presented as well, and it has been concluded that the collected data of the present study did not contain common method bias, non-response bias, or collinearity. The quality of the collected data has been ensured, and the measurement model and structural model assessments have been presented. The former investigates the reliability of the indicators, constructs internal consistency and validity of the LVs, and confirms that all measures have satisfactory results. Whereas the latter assesses the proposed hypotheses of the study and confirms that all the hypotheses of the current study are supported. Thus, the next chapter interprets and discusses the findings presented in this chapter.

## **6 CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**










This chapter discusses the findings of the current study outlined in the previous chapter. This discussion aims to answer the research questions that cover the aims and objectives and compare the findings with the existing body of knowledge. In addition, interpretations and justifications of the results are articulated. Thus, a brief overview of the aims and questions of the current study including the research hypotheses are recalled prior to the discussion of the findings.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, the findings of the relationship between knowledge characteristics and expatriate manager competencies (AMO) are discussed to address the first question and hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. Then, the relationships between organisation characteristics and expatriate manager competencies are discussed in relation to the second question and hypotheses H4, H5, and H6. Next, the outcomes of the relationships between expatriate manager competencies and knowledge received are discussed in relation to question three and hypotheses H7, H8, and H9. After that, the findings regarding the relationships between knowledge received and localisation success are discussed in order to address question four and hypothesis H10. Subsequently, a discussion on the mediating role of knowledge received results is provided as it relates to question five and hypotheses H11, H12, and H13. Next, a discussion on the moderating role of the absorptive capacity of local staff is outlined to cover question number six and hypothesis H14. Finally, a summary of the whole chapter is provided.

### **Recall of Research Aims, Questions, and Hypotheses**

In order to facilitate the flow of the findings discussion, this section will not only recall the aims/objectives, questions, hypotheses, and gaps of the present study, but will also highlight the alignment among them as shown in table 6.1. The current study has three aims and six objectives based on these aims. Based on these aims (A) and objectives (B), six questions (Q) and fourteen hypotheses (H) (see Table 6.1 below).

**Table 6.1 The Intersection of Aims/objectives, Questions, Hypotheses, and Contributions**

<b>First Aim:</b> To investigate the factors that may influence expatriate manager competencies (ability, motivation, opportunity seeking) in transferring knowledge.		
		
Objectives	Questions	Hypotheses
A1: To examine the extent to which organisation characteristics can influence expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.	Q1: What is the impact of organisation characteristics on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge?	H1: Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge. H2: Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge. H3: Knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge.
A2: To examine the extent to which knowledge characteristic can influence expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.	Q2: What is the impact of knowledge characteristic on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge?	H4: Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. H5: Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. H6: Organisation characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge.
		
<b>Fourth Contribution:</b> The current study investigates the predictors of AMO by examining the impact of organisation characteristics and knowledge characteristics on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.		
<b>Second Aim:</b> To explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers can lead to successful localisation in manufacturing companies in Oman.		
		
Objectives	Questions	Hypotheses
B1: To examine the impact of expatriate manager competencies (ability, motivation, opportunity seeking) on knowledge received by local staff.	Q3: What is the influence of expatriate manager competencies (ability, motivation, opportunity seeking) in transferring knowledge to local employees (knowledge received) in manufacturing companies in Oman?	H7: The ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff. H8: Motivation of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff. H9: Opportunity seeking of expatriates to transfer knowledge to local employees has a significant impact on the knowledge received by local staff.
B2: To highlight the impact of knowledge received by local employees on achieving successful localisation.	Q4: What is the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation?	H10: Knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers has a significant impact on staff localization
B3: To investigate the influence of expatriate manager competencies (ability, motivation, opportunity seeking)	Q5: What is the mediating role of the knowledge received between	H11: Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the ability of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success



in transferring knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role knowledge received.	expatriate competencies and successful localisation?	H12: Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the motivation of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success H13: Knowledge received by local staff is significantly mediating the relationship between the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers in transferring knowledge and the localisation success
↓	↓	↓
<b>Second Contribution:</b> The present study examines the impact of expatriate competencies–ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking–to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received.		
B4: To examine the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the relationship between the knowledge received and localisation success.	Q6: What is the moderating role of the absorptive capacity between knowledge received and successful localisation?	H14: The relationship between the knowledge received by local staff and localisation success is stronger when the absorptive capacity is high
↓	↓	↓
<b>Third Contribution:</b> The present study examines the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation through the moderating role of absorptive capacity.		
<b>Third Aim:</b> To propose and validate a model that can enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees with the aim of achieving staff localisation.		
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Hypotheses</b>
Covers question one to question six. Q1-Q6		Covers hypothesis one to hypothesis fourteen. H1-H14
↓	↓	↓
<b>First Contribution:</b> The present study integrates Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity-seeking theory with knowledge transfer in order to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer (based on the proposed framework) enables successful localisation in the manufacturing companies on Oman.		

### **The Relationship Between KCH and AB, MT, and OP (H1-H3, Q1)**

The current study includes not only the outcomes of knowledge transfer (knowledge received and localisation success) but also the determinants of knowledge transfer. Thus, the findings of the present study confirm that knowledge characteristics are positively correlated with expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge. This result demonstrates that the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of knowledge holders to transfer knowledge to their subordinates are influenced by the characteristics of the knowledge. For instance, whether the transferred knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex. In the following subsections these three findings are discussed to address the first question and the first three hypotheses (H1-H3). This ultimately leads to achieving the first aim that covers the first half of the fourth contribution of the current thesis (see Table 6.1 above).

#### **6.1.1 Knowledge Characteristics and Ability**

The results support the first hypothesis of the present study that proposes that knowledge characteristics have a significant positive impact on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to their subordinate local staff (H1). This result indicates that the ability of the expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to the local staff is more effective when the transferred knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex. This result is inconsistent with Zander & Kogut (1995) Rivkin (2001) and Uygur (2013) who found that the ability to transfer knowledge is negatively correlated with the knowledge complexity, that is the more complex knowledge is, the less knowledge is transferred. However, recent studies documented the opposite. For example, it has been found that more knowledge would be transferred if the knowledge is complex as complex

knowledge could be the most valuable knowledge to the firm's competitiveness. The result of this study is in line with this direction. In other words, the result of this thesis is consistent with Silveira (2017) who found that the more complex knowledge is the better knowledge transfer is. This result can be explained by the fact that companies are trying to transfer and acquire the most complex and unique knowledge that would enhance their competitive advantage. In other words, the result of the current study is that, at individual level rather than at organisational level, the ability of expatriate managers may not be obvious in the transfer of complex knowledge as transferring complex knowledge, though it could be important, could threaten their job security. Thus, in this study the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge is positively correlated with the knowledge that is complex, specific, easy to codify and available. For example, besides having sufficient good ideas worth sharing, expatriate managers should be capable of sharing important information with their subordinate local staff. In addition, the result of the current study is in line with Minbaeva (2008) who have reported a positive correlation between knowledge characteristics and the ability of knowledge senders to transfer knowledge, and also with Nelson and Winter (2009) who have pointed out that knowledge that can be documented and structured easily positively enhances the ability to transfer the knowledge. The findings of the current study could indicate that the ability of knowledge carriers to share knowledge depends on the complexity and difficulty of that knowledge. In this regards, Riusala and Smale (2007) have found that the harder the knowledge is to teach to other employees, the greater the difficulty experienced by the knowledge sender. Thus, based on the aforementioned **findings of the current thesis**, it could be concluded that

expatriate managers would be able to transfer more knowledge to their local subordinates if the knowledge were specific, easy to codify, available, and complex.

### **6.1.2 Knowledge Characteristics and Motivation**

The outcomes of the current study highlight that knowledge characteristics are predictors of expatriate manager motivation to transfer knowledge. This confirms the second hypothesis that considers whether knowledge characteristics would have a significant impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge (H2). This result demonstrates that the motivation of the knowledge holder to transfer knowledge to their subordinates is influenced by the characteristics of the knowledge. For example, the more the knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex, the more motivated the expatriate manager is to transfer that knowledge to their local subordinates. This finding is in line with previous work of Minbaeva (2008) who has found that the exclusive impact (without entering other variables to the model) of knowledge characteristics such more codifiability, simplicity, specificity, and availability has a positive impact on the performance of knowledge transfer. This could imply that the characteristics of knowledge would enhance the motivation of the knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge, and hence enhances the degree of knowledge transfer. This would, interestingly, signal the importance of codifying knowledge through capturing it in working manuals, rules, procedures, and codes (Lin, 2011; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014) and the importance of making the desirable knowledge specific, by, for example, focusing on functional expertise (Minbaeva, 2008) in order to achieve knowledge transfer.

### **6.1.3 Knowledge Characteristics and Opportunity Seeking**

The findings reveal that knowledge characteristics positively and significantly impact the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge to local staff. This confirms the third hypothesis of the current study that considers whether knowledge characteristics have a significant impact on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer their knowledge (H3). In other words, when knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex, it encourages knowledge carriers to search for and utilize the means and chances to transfer knowledge to their local subordinates. The result of the current study is consistent with previous work. For example, it has been argued that knowledge holders may be reluctant to transfer knowledge if they are worried about the quality of their knowledge (Husted & Michailova, 2002). This might imply that complex and uncodifiable knowledge that is difficult to transfer (Nelson & Winter, 2009; Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2014) might affect the confidence of the knowledge holder and, thus, discourage the search for means and chances to transfer knowledge. Consequently, this aspect of the research suggests that simplifying and codifying the knowledge is a vital step for an organisation to encourage their knowledge holders to transfer knowledge to their subordinates.

To conclude the contribution of the current study in regards to the impact of organisation characteristics, the findings confirm that expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge to their local subordinates will be more effective when the knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex. Further, this result might highlight the importance of providing knowledge in blueprints and manuals and making it available and easily accessible to both knowledge providers and seekers.

### **The Relationship between Organisation Characteristics and Expatriate Competencies (H4-H6, Q2)**

Organisation characteristics are used in the current study as a predictor of expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge. In other words, as in hypotheses H4, H5, and H6, it is expected that the organisation which is supportive of knowledge transfer would have a positive impact on the expatriate ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge to their subordinates. Thus, based on the findings of these hypotheses, the next subsections discuss the answer to the second question. It is based on the second objective (A2) of the current study which ultimately highlights the second part of the fourth contribution (see Table 6.1 above).

In the following subsections, each of three findings (H4, H5, and H6) is discussed to address the first question and the first three hypotheses. This ultimately leads to achieving the first aim of this study, which covers the first half of the fourth contribution of the current thesis.

#### **6.1.4 Organisation Characteristics and Ability**

The findings of the current thesis validate the positive impact of organisation characteristic on the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge (H4). This means the ability of the knowledge holder would be enhanced if the organisational structure and culture were conducive to knowledge sharing (Lekhawipat et al., 2018). For example, the organisation that provides sufficient time and resources for knowledge sharing would enhance the ability of their expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to their local employees. This finding is consistent with past empirical studies. For instance, it has been found that organisational culture and organisational structure are among the key determinants of knowledge transfer success (Susanty et al., 2012). In addition, it has been

revealed that the ability of the knowledge sender is reduced if they are occupied with too many tasks and are left with no time for knowledge transfer (Lekhawipat, et al., 2018). This could imply that despite a high level of expatriate competency, the performance of knowledge transfer might be hindered if an organisation occupies both the knowledge sender and receiver with too many tasks leaving no spare time for knowledge sharing (Connelly et al., 2014; Jeon et al., 2011). This demonstrates the essential role of the organisation in supporting and enabling the knowledge holder to transfer knowledge to seekers.

#### **6.1.5 Organisation Characteristics and Motivation**

Turning to the impact of organisation characteristics on expatriate manager motivation to transfer knowledge, the findings of the current thesis reveal a positive and significant correlation between the two (H5). This means that organisations that have effective culture, structure, resources, incentives, and standard regulations that are in favour of knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, 2007) encourage knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge to others. This result is in line with previous studies that reveal that organisational culture and management support have significant positive influence on employee motivation to share knowledge, specifically (Minbaeva et al., 2003; Lekhawipat et al., 2018), and on the performance of knowledge transfer, generally (Bryant, 2003; Reus et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2011; Von Krogh, et al., 2012; Reus et al., 2016). This implies that organisations supportive of knowledge transfer would encourage and motivate the knowledge holders—expatriate managers—to transfer their knowledge to their subordinates—local staff, in this research. For example, this could happen through providing incentives to transfer knowledge, and implementing clear regulations that encourage knowledge

transfer (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018) or through establishing friendly relationships among staff which in turn may enhance the motivation of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge to others (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012). For example, on Minbaeva's influential study on the impact of HRM practices on the success of knowledge transfer, the implementation of performance-based compensation had a positive influence on individual motivation and consequently led to effective knowledge transfer (Minbaeva et al., 2003). Moreover, following an effective leadership style that promotes cooperation among employees, instead of competition, would enhance staff motivation to transfer their knowledge (Lakshman, 2009). In addition, an organisation that inspire trust and encourages staff to seek and learn more ideas is potentially able to positively improve the motivation of knowledge carriers to transfer knowledge (Wang & Noe, 2010; Mueller, 2014).

#### **6.1.6 Organisation Characteristics and Opportunity Seeking**

Concerning the influence of organisation characteristics on the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge, the findings suggest that organisation characteristics positively impact opportunity seeking (H5). This means that the search and utilisation of means and chances by expatriate managers to transfer knowledge (Chang et al., 2012) is positively influenced by the commitment of an organisation to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination (Wang & Wang, 2016; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). This commitment is represented through various elements such as organisational culture and structure, and organisational incentives and regulations for knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, 2007). In other words, organisational support may lead expatriate managers to



believe that transferring knowledge through social ties, trust, and cooperation with local staff is a priority (Chang et al., 2012).

This result matches previous study findings (King & Marks, 2008; Lekhawipat et al., 2018) which indicate that organisational support would positively enhance the effort of a knowledge holder to seek more opportunity to transfer knowledge. For instance, it has been found that, opportunity seeking of the knowledge holder to transfer knowledge would be influenced by the decisions of the organisation related to workload and free time (Lekhawipat, et al., 2018). This implies that despite a high level of expatriate competency, the performance of knowledge transfer might still be weak if an organisation occupies the knowledge source with too many tasks and no spare time for knowledge sharing (Jeon et al., 2011; Connelly et al., 2014). This then implies that the organisation authority and regulation could shape individual behaviors towards knowledge transfer.

Castrogiovanni et al. (2016), for instance, have tested the performance of knowledge transfer with three different leadership styles, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, and found that democratic leadership enables a better level of knowledge transfer. This indicates that the performance of knowledge transfer is better where the leader gives employees the opportunity to debate and make decisions collectively rather than where the autocratic leader makes decisions themselves without enabling others to participate. Thus, it could be concluded that it is essential for organisations to pave the way for knowledge carriers to search and utilize the means and chances to transfer knowledge to their local subordinates. This could happen, for example, through providing sufficient time and resources for knowledge transfer and establishing efficient culture and regulation

that support knowledge transfer (Chang et al., 2012; Connelly et al., 2014; Lekhawipat et al., 2018).

To sum up the contribution of the current study in relation to the impact of organisation characteristics, the findings confirm that expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge are positively influenced by organisational commitment to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. This leads to discussion of outcomes in next section.

### **The Relationships Between Expatriate Competencies and Knowledge Received (H7-H9, Q3)**

The current study has identified three competencies of expatriate managers as predictors of successful knowledge transfer to the local staff. These competencies are the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to their local staff subordinates. In other words, this study has hypothesized (H7, H8, and H9) that local staff are able to receive new knowledge if their expatriate managers have ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. The following sub sections discuss the findings of these hypotheses in relation to the third question and the first objective to highlight the first half of the second contribution of the current study (see Table 6.1 above).

#### **6.1.7 Ability and Knowledge Received**

The findings suggest that the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge has a significant positive impact on the amount of knowledge received by local staff. This indicates that in order to transfer knowledge from expatriate managers to their subordinate local staff, the expatriate managers should have the ability to transfer the knowledge. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Chang et al., 2012; Gonzalez & Chakraborty,

2014; Huang et al., 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018). For example, Elbaz et al (2018) reported that in order to have a successful knowledge transfer from managers to their employees, managers should be capable of sharing important knowledge. Moreover, Chang et al., 2012 have empirically investigated the success of knowledge transfer between a headquarters and its foreign subsidiary and reported that the ability of expatriates to communicate good ideas about their jobs is one of the key predictors of effective knowledge transfer.

It has been argued that expatriate employees who were recruited based on superior practical and technical knowledge and skills, not their abilities in knowledge transfer, may hinder the flow of knowledge among the staff, which in turn may adversely impact overall organisational performance (Peng, 2011; Chang et al., 2012). This could be explained through the following. The success of knowledge transfer requires specific competencies to do so regardless of the technical knowledge and skills of the employees. This means an employee might be excellent in his job but might not be able to share high knowledge with others if he lacks the critical skills such as the ability to cope up with culture differences or the ability to explain the tacit knowledge. In this vein, it has been mentioned that the ability of knowledge holders to clearly explain the importance of knowledge and to understand the requirements of knowledge receivers are among the main drivers of successful knowledge transfer (Menon & Pfeffer, 2003; Huang et al., 2017). By this, the current study concludes that expatriates who have the ability to share important knowledge and the capability to communicate good ideas about their job would transfer knowledge to their subordinate local staff successfully.

### **6.1.8 Motivation and Knowledge Received**

Turning to the second predictor of knowledge received, the findings of the present thesis validate the positive and significant impact of expatriate manager motivation to transfer knowledge on the knowledge received by the local staff (H8). This result shows that in order to have successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local staff, expatriate managers should have the motivation to do so. This is in accordance with AMO theory that suggests that individual motivation to perform a certain given task is a determining factor in achieving the desired performance. In this research it is the motivation to transfer knowledge that would encourage the achievement of better knowledge transfer (Kang & Kim, 2017; Chen et al., 2010). In addition, this finding is in line with previous work (Chang et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017; Wei & Lin, 2018). For example, it has been found that expatriate motivation in transferring knowledge from the subsidiary to the headquarters is a prime predictor for successful knowledge transfer (Huang et al., 2017). Their results have demonstrated that knowledge transfer is more effective when knowledge carriers are happy to take the initiative to share their knowledge with their colleagues. This could suggest that the process of knowledge transfer may not be successful if knowledge holders are not motivated to transfer knowledge. This lack of knowledge transfer could be due to number of reasons such as the fear of losing a position or job security, which in turn may impact the performance of knowledge transfer (Lekhawipat et al., 2018; Connelly et al., 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012). For these reasons, several authors such as Chang et al. (2012) and Burmeister et al. (2016) urge firms to pay a great level of attention to improving the motivation of knowledge holders. Moreover, Minbaeva (2007) concludes that individual characteristics such as motivation

to transfer knowledge lead to superior knowledge transfer outcomes. In her study, it has been confirmed that the motivation of the headquarters staff was among the key predictors for knowledge transfer to subsidiary staff. Thus, it is clear that this result confirms the vital role of knowledge sender motivation in achieving successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local staff.

#### **6.1.9 Opportunity Seeking and Knowledge Received**

Concerning the third predictor of knowledge received, it has been revealed that the opportunity seeking of expatriate managers is positively and significantly correlated with the knowledge received by local staff (H9). In other words, expatriate managers who seek the opportunity to disseminate their knowledge enable effective knowledge transfer to their local staff. Previous studies have indicated that opportunity seeking can be performed through formal meetings or informal social activities to enable favourable interactions for knowledge transfer (Burmeister et al., 2016). This result is consistent with past studies (Argote et al., 2003; Burmeister et al., 2016). For instance, Kang and Kim (2017) have reported that opportunity seeking of knowledge carrier to transfer knowledge is the most significant determinant of knowledge transfer among all three factors of AMO theory. Other similar findings have been reported by Jolaei et al. (2014) who have concluded that individual seeking of interactions with other people in the organisation is one of the key facilitators for knowledge transfer. In this regard, Minbaeva (2007) has pointed out that if the knowledge holder does not search for and utilize the means and chances to transfer knowledge to the knowledge receiver, knowledge transfer would be difficult. This idea is further emphasised by Schon and Argyris (1996) who have argued that communication

bridges and dialogue among employees are positively associated with knowledge transfer success.

Furthermore, the results provided by Hansen (2002) support the prediction that the existence and richness of interaction among knowledge holders and knowledge seekers would result in a fruitful knowledge transfer. This interaction could be achieved if knowledge senders actively utilise social ties to create trust and cooperation to facilitate the knowledge transfer process (Chang et al., 2012). In this vein, Elbaz et al. (2018) recently stated that knowledge transfer from managers to their staff is more effective among managers who seek to find opportunity to interact with their subordinates. Based on this finding, the third question and the first objective of the second aim of the current study (third part of H9) are clarified, ensuring the essential role of knowledge-sender opportunity seeking in achieving successful knowledge transfer from the expatriate manager to their subordinate staff.

To concluded the role of expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge, which is related to the second contribution, the findings of the current study prove that expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge plays a key role on the success of knowledge transfer to local staff. In other words, in order to have successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local staff, expatriate managers should be able to transfer knowledge, motivated to transfer knowledge, and seeking the opportunity to transfer knowledge. However, how would the successful transfer of knowledge to local staff lead to successful localisation? The answer to this is discussed in the following section.

#### **The Relationship Between Knowledge Received and Localisation (H10, Q4)**

The current study represents an effort to test a conceptual model of the role of knowledge transfer in achieving successful staff localisation. In other words, this study

investigates the possibility of enhancing the performance of local staff who replace expatriate staff through transferring knowledge from knowledge carriers (expatriates) to knowledge seekers (local staff) based on the proposed model. In order to do so, the current study asked local staff to indicate the extent to which they have received useful knowledge from expatriate managers such as manufacturing knowledge, product development knowledge, corporate culture knowledge, and managerial knowledge.

Interestingly, the results of this research show that knowledge received by local staff has a positive and significant impact on localisation success (H10). This means the replacement of expatriate staff by local staff is found to be successful due to the successful transfer of knowledge from expatriate managers to the local staff. This result is in line with the results of Kim (2014) who has empirically validated the effect of knowledge management, such as knowledge dissemination, on organisational success. Likewise, this result is in line with Chang et al. (2012) who have argued that sending headquarters expatriates who are competent in knowledge transfer to a local subsidiary would lead to enhanced overall performance at the subsidiary. To explain how transferred knowledge can enhance performance, Palacios-Marqués, et al. (2013) has stated that knowledge transferred into an organisation helps its staff to innovate and develop new methods, which can consequently enhance individual and firm performance. For example, when local employees learn new repair knowhow or production processes from their expatriate managers their productivity increases (Chang et al., 2012). The aforementioned discussion confirms that useful knowledge received by local managers is a key facilitator for achieving successful localisation.

### **The Mediating Role of Knowledge Received (H11-H13, Q5)**

The current study expected that the knowledge received by local staff would have a significant mediating role in the relationship between expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge and localisation success. As shown in table 6.1 above, this expectation was hypothesized in H11, H12, and H13 to answer the fifth question that is based on the third objective of the second aim of the current study to highlight the second contribution. In this regard, the current study confirmed empirically that the impact of expatriate manager competencies in knowledge transfer on localisation occur through knowledge received by local staff. This means that in order to achieve successful localisation through expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge, local staff should receive transferred knowledge. Practically, this indicates that even though expatriate managers are competent to transfer knowledge, this may not be sufficient to achieve successful localisation unless there is useful knowledge received by local staff, which in turn will enables local staff to be successful.

This result is in line with the findings of Chang et al. (2012) who have validated the contention that in order to enhance a foreign subsidiary through expatriate knowledge, subsidiary employees should receive knowledge from expatriate managers. Further, this finding is consistent with the argument of Elbaz et al. (2018) who have argued that the positive impact of knowledge transfers by firm managers on firm and employee performance is due to the knowledge received by firm staff. For example, when local employees learn new repair knowhow from the expatriate managers, this increases the equipment productivity and thus increases the return on those investments. Likewise, based on the current study findings, it is argued that the more knowledge received by local staff from expatriate managers, the more successful localisation is. In other words, through the



dissemination of expatriate knowledge to their subordinate local staff, local staff are able to replace the expatriate staff successfully as they would receive skills and knowledge to perform at a similar level (Law et al., 2009).

This result is very important for the governments or the companies that aim to replace expatriates with local staff because it shows that the lack of knowledge and skills of local employees is a main hindrance for achieving successful replacement of expatriates by local staff (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Belwal et al., 2017). Thus, this study demonstrates that in order to achieve that aim successfully, they should make sure that the knowledge of expatriates has been transferred to local staff effectively ahead to the actual replacement, otherwise local staff may fail to perform the expatriate's tasks.

#### **The Moderating Role of Absorptive Capacity (H14, Q6)**

Prior studies have shown that the success of knowledge transfer is not based only on the knowledge sender but also on the absorptive capacity of the knowledge receiver (Hutzschenreuter & Listner, 2007; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Okoroafor, 2014). That is, the ability of the receiver to understand, incorporate, and implement the new knowledge is important (Zahra & George, 2002; Khan et al. 2015). On this basis, local staff absorptive capacity was included in the current study (H14) as a moderator variable between knowledge received and localisation success to answer the sixth question. That is based fourth objective of the second aim of the current study. In other words, even though local staff receive new knowledge from an expatriate, it does not necessarily mean that they will fully understand the transferred knowledge or implement it. Thus, in order to ensure the knowledge received by local staff is beneficial for achieving successful localization, this study argues that considering the moderating role of local staff absorptive capacity is crucial.

In this regard, the findings of this study have confirmed that the local staff absorptive capacity plays a moderating role in the relationship between knowledge received and localisation success. This means the higher the absorptive capacity of local staff is, the stronger the relationship is between knowledge received and localisation success. In other words, this demonstrates that local staff who are able to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge transferred by expatriate managers help to accomplish successful localisation.

This result is consistent with previous studies (Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz, et al., 2018). For example, Chang et al. (2012) have pointed out that expatriate managers may have the required competencies to transfer knowledge, but the local staff may not be able to absorb the knowledge and thus threaten the success of the knowledge transfer. This due to the lack of certain skills or knowledge such as lack of relevant and prior knowledge (Wijk et al., 2008), insufficient educational and experiential background (Chang and Smale, 2013), and cultural differences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

This finding may provide two potential mechanisms for organisations that aim to replace expatriate staff by local staff. First, as a proactive step, the recruitment of local staff should be based on the relevant skills and education in order to enable them to absorb the related knowledge. This point (localization) is quite important in countries that aim to generate employment opportunities for their citizens regardless of the real need (Harry, 2007). Second, these organisations need to test and enhance the absorptive capacity of their existent local staff through various means such as training and rotation (Peng, 2011; Chang, et al., 2012). This is essential as it has been argued that adequate training would enable knowledge carriers to transfer not only explicit knowledge but also tacit (Smith, 2001),

whereas, lack of training may negatively impact the transfer of knowledge (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). For example, organisations may provide training courses related to language or cross culture understanding as preparation prior to actual knowledge transfer from expatriates. To conclude the effect of absorptive capacity discussion, the results of the current study demonstrate that it is crucial for organisations to test and enhance the absorptive capacity to reach fruitful localisation, as the knowledge received by local staff leads to better localisation when the absorptive capacity of local staff is high.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed and justified the main findings of the current study and compared the results with the existing literature on knowledge transfer and localisation. Overall, the results appear consistent with previous studies. Through this chapter it has been argued that in order to achieve a successful localisation through knowledge transfer, a number of conditions have to be met. First, the organisation should be supportive and committed to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination through various means such as enhancing the ability and motivation of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge to local staff knowledge seekers. Second, it has been demonstrated that knowledge that is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex positively enhances the competencies of expatriate managers in knowledge transfer. Thus, organisations are urged to provide knowledge in blueprints and manuals and make knowledge available and easily accessible to knowledge providers and seekers.

Third, this study has identified three conditions of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. They should have the ability to transfer knowledge, the motivation to transfer knowledge, and also seek the opportunity to transfer the knowledge. Fourth, along with expatriate competencies, it has been contended that in order to achieve effective knowledge

transfer and successful localisation, locals must receive knowledge from expatriate managers. More importantly, they should be able to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge transferred by expatriate managers to help accomplish successful localisation. These findings have several insights and implications for manufacturing companies and the government that seek to achieve successful localisation and also for the knowledge transfer and localisation literatures. Thus, the next chapter concludes the entire thesis including the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future studies.

## **7 CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter summarises the main findings of the current thesis and, importantly, links them to the study objectives and questions. In doing so, subsections based on the study aims and objectives cover the related findings outlined in the previous two chapters. Then, the theoretical and practical implications of the study results are explained. Subsequently, a discussion on the limitations and future studies is given. Finally, the conclusion of this chapter is presented.

### **Thesis Conclusion**

Since the early 1970s GCC countries including Oman have established ‘localisation’ strategies, seeking the replacement of expatriate staff with the local workforce, but clearly these plans had not been entirely successful in terms of the targeted percentage of localisation (Moideenkutty, et al., 2016; NCSI, 2019; Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020). For instance, non-Omani staff in Oman still make up more than 83% of the employees in the private sector in 2019 (NCSI, 2019). In this regard, it has been argued that the lack of skills and professionalism in the local workforce is one of the main obstacles

for addressing this challenge (Naithani & Jha, 2009; Belwal, et al., 2017). However, through the literature review, it was found that little attention has been paid to investigating the integrative role of expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge to local staff for the purpose of achieving successful localisation through the moderating role of local staff absorptive capacity (Law et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018). In addition, the characteristics of both organisations and knowledge have been tested as predictors of expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge, as there was a shortage of investigation into this in the extent literature. Therefore, based on AMO theory, this thesis developed a conceptual framework that aimed to explore the extent to which knowledge transferred from expatriate managers to local staff in manufacturing companies in Oman helps to achieve successful localisation.

In doing so, the study has identified three essential competencies for expatriate managers to transfer knowledge successfully, which are the ability, motivation, and the opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. In other words, this thesis argues that in order to achieve successful localisation expatriate managers should have the three aforementioned competencies to transfer knowledge successfully to their local subordinates. However, this study argues that the impact of transferring knowledge from expatriate managers to local staff on localisation success is partially subject to the absorptive capacity of the local staff. This means, if local staff are able to understand and apply knowledge received from expatriate managers, more successful localisation can be achieved and vice versa. In addition, the current thesis has investigated the factors that may influence expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge, namely, organisation characteristics and knowledge characteristic. This means the conceptual

framework has not only included the outcomes of the expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer (localisation) but has also examined the process of achieving localisation through identifying the factors that affect expatriate competencies. Based on this, the three aims and six objectives of the current study have been achieved.

The first aim is to investigate the factors that influence expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge. In order to achieve this aim two objectives have been put forward. The first objective is to examine the extent to which knowledge characteristics can influence expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge. In this vein, this study has found that knowledge that is captured in blueprints or manuals, available, and easily accessible to knowledge providers and seekers positively enhances the competencies of expatriate managers in knowledge transfer.

On the other hand, the second objective is to examine the extent to which organisational characteristics can influence expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge. The results have confirmed the vital role of both organisational and knowledge characteristics in enhancing expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge. For example, it has been revealed that organisational commitment to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination is essential to improve the ability and the motivation of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge. This implies that the organisational culture, management support, authority, and regulation could shape individual behaviors towards knowledge transfer. For example, providing incentives to transfer knowledge, and implementing clear regulations for knowledge transfer encourage knowledge transfer activities. On the other hand, organisations that

occupy the knowledge source with too many tasks and do not provide time for knowledge sharing experience poor knowledge transfer.

The second aim is to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers can lead to successful localisation. This aim has four objectives which attempt to investigate the role of expatriate manager competencies (AMO) in transferring knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received and via the moderating role of local staff absorptive capacity. The first objective is to examine the impact of expatriate manager competencies on knowledge received by local staff. The results show that expatriates who have the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge enable local staff to receive more knowledge. For example, knowledge holders (expatriate managers) who have the ability to share important knowledge and the capability to communicate good ideas about their jobs transfer knowledge to their subordinate local staff successfully. In addition, the results indicate that in order to have successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to the local staff, the expatriate managers should have the motivation to do so. Furthermore, expatriate managers who seek the opportunity to disseminate their knowledge enable effective knowledge transfer to their local staff. For instance, it was found that knowledge carriers who seek opportunities through social relationships and who utilise social ties to generate trust and cooperation with local staff accomplish more knowledge transfer.

As for the second objective that aims to highlight the impact of knowledge received by the local employees on achieving successful localisation, the results show that knowledge received by local staff has a positive and significant impact on localisation success. This indicates that actual knowledge received by local managers in different area

such as manufacturing knowledge, product development knowledge, corporate culture knowledge, and managerial knowledge is a key facilitator for achieving successful localisation. For instance, when local employees learn new repair knowhow or product development processes from expatriate managers, their productivity increases which consequently leads to the achievement of successful localisation.

Furthermore, the third objective is to investigate the mediating role of knowledge received in the relationship between expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge and successful localisation. In this regard, the results have revealed that, knowledge received partially mediates such a relationship. In other words, the results demonstrate that knowledge received explains the relationship between all the three competencies of expatriates to transfer knowledge and localisation success.

As for the fourth objective that aims to examine the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the relationship between knowledge received and localisation success, the results confirm the moderating role of absorptive capacity. In this vein, successful localisation is at its best level when local staff have high absorptive capacity, that is, high ability to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge. This implies that in addition to the importance of enhancing expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge, it is crucial to improve the absorptive capacity of local staff.

The third aim is to propose and validate a model that can enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees in order to achieve successful staff localisation. The results of the current study confirm that in order to achieve successful localisation a number of conditions must be met. First, expatriate managers should have three competencies to transfer knowledge, namely, the ability to transfer



knowledge, the motivation to transfer the knowledge, and the willingness to seek the opportunity to transfer knowledge. Second, it is argued that in order to achieve effective knowledge transfer and successful localisation, local staff must be able to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge transferred by expatriate managers. This demonstrates that the degree of knowledge transfer success and localisation success are even higher when the local staff have high absorptive capacity. Third, in order to enhance expatriate manager competencies, two things are essential, the organisation characteristics and the knowledge characteristic. For example, organisations should be supportive and committed to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. This can be done through various means, such as enhancing the ability and motivation of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge to local staff seekers.

Moreover, organisations are urged to capture knowledge in blueprints and manuals, and to make knowledge available and easily accessible to both knowledge providers and seekers. This is because this study has shown that knowledge that is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex positively enhances the competencies of expatriate managers in knowledge transfer. In summary, all the hypotheses of the current study have been supported, which has enabled the aims and the objectives to be achieved. On this basis, it can be concluded that the integrative role of the different elements on the proposed framework enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local employees. This ultimately leads to the achievement of successful staff localisation.

### **Implications**

The current study findings hold important implications for both theory and practice. Based on AMO theory, the current study investigates causal relationships to

explore how expatriate competencies, organisational characteristics, knowledge characteristics, and receiver characteristics (absorptive capacity) can enhance the performance of the knowledge transfer process, which in turn could lead to successful localisation being achieved. Based on that, the results validate the appropriateness of integrating the AMO framework and knowledge transfer determinants to explain the achievement of successful localisation. These findings have several insights for the manufacturing companies seeking to achieve successful localisation. In addition, this study has made several contributions to the knowledge transfer and localisation literatures. The theoretical and practical implications and contributions of this work are presented in the following subsections. Prior to discussing the theoretical and practical implications of these results, a summary of current thesis contributions is given:

- The present study integrates AMO theory with knowledge transfer in order to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer (based on the proposed framework) enables successful localisation in the manufacturing companies on Oman.
- The present study examines the impact of expatriate competencies (AMO) to transfer knowledge on achieving successful localisation through the mediating role of knowledge received.
- The present study examines the impact of knowledge received on achieving successful localisation through the moderating role of absorptive capacity.
- Unlike the previous studies that investigate the outcomes of the AMO framework on knowledge transfer performance, the current study investigates the predictors of AMO by examining the impact of organisation characteristics

and knowledge characteristics on expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge.

- Unlike the previous studies which have focused mainly on AEs (Kang et al., 2010; Shao & Ariss, 2020), the current study takes a different direction by focusing on SIEs.

### **7.1.1 Theoretical implications**

The current study has integrated AMO theory into localisation studies to explore the extent to which the process of knowledge transfer from expatriate managers can lead to achieving successful localisation. In this regard, the current thesis has important theoretical implications in the knowledge transfer and localisation literatures. Here, the model developed and examined in this study establishes a MOA framework as an appropriate framework for firms aiming to achieve successful localisation through expatriate transfer knowledge competencies. In particular, in light of the AMO theory, the outcomes of this study indicate that successful knowledge transfer in this context requires the presence of five factors. First, the knowledge sender (expatriate manager, in this case) has to have three competencies to transfer knowledge successfully. These are ability to transfer knowledge, motivation to transfer knowledge, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. For example, besides having sufficient good ideas worth sharing, expatriate managers should be capable of sharing important information with their subordinate local staff. In addition to that, having the motivation to transfer knowledge and seeking the opportunity (such as utilising social ties to generate trust and cooperation) to exchange information with the knowledge seekers (local staff) are critical competencies to enable successful knowledge transfer from expatriate managers to local staff. These results imply

that investigating the role of expatriates in knowledge transfer would require measuring three competences namely the ability, motivation and the opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. In other words, future studies that aims to examine the impact of knowledge transfer from knowledge holder on the success of knowledge transfer should not focus only on the technical skills but should be based on also the knowledge holder competencies. In this vein, Chang et al (2012) mentioned that the majority of studies on expatriates and knowledge transfer neglected the important role of knowledge carrier competencies to transfer knowledge. Hence, paying attention to the whether the knowledge holder has the ability, motivation and opportunity seeking is necessary. The ability of employees to transfer knowledge is impacted by several factors such as resources, skills, time availability, and workers' discretion (Morris et al., 2011; Turner & Pennington, 2015; Burmeister et al., 2020). For example, the ability of the knowledge holders will lessen when they are occupied with too many tasks and are left with no time for knowledge transfer. Nevertheless, even if the knowledge holder has the ability to transfer knowledge, the transfer process may not take place if the knowledge holder lacks the motivation to do so (Chang et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2017). Thus, there is fear that the knowledge carrier may not be motivated to transfer the knowledge due to various reasons such as a fear of a loss in position or an authoritative power (Selmer, 2004). However, although these two elements are essential for the success of knowledge transfer, it has been suggested that in order to achieve an optimal level of knowledge transfer, it is vital for the knowledge carrier to seek the opportunity to interact with whoever needs their knowledge (Minbaeva, 2007; Ikyanyon & Ode, 2017).

Second, this study has emphasised the importance of considering the actual knowledge received by knowledge seekers (local staff) when measuring the success of knowledge transfer. This is crucial as there might be an effort to transfer knowledge by knowledge holders, but there could be no to little real knowledge actually received by the knowledge seekers. For that, local staff were requested in the current study to rate the extent to which they have received new knowledge from their expatriate managers. This confirms the necessity of measuring the actual knowledge received rather than measuring the overall success of knowledge transfer. Third, it has been concluded that it is not enough to consider the competencies of knowledge carriers but important to pay attention to the absorptive capacity of knowledge receivers as well. That is, the extent to which knowledge seekers have the ability to understand, incorporate, and implement new external knowledge is important. In this vein, the current study has found that employees with high absorptive capacity lead to better knowledge transfer outcomes as compared to those with low absorptive capacity. This result proves that the higher the absorptive capacity of local employees is, the stronger the association is between knowledge received and localisation success. This relationship is established as the results showed that local staff who are able to understand, incorporate, and implement new knowledge transferred by expatriate managers help to accomplish successful localisation. In this regard, neglecting the absorptive capacity of knowledge recipient would result in incomplete understating about the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. Therefore, while applying AMO theory to measure the success of knowledge transfer, both sides should be considered, the knowledge sender and the knowledge seeker.

Fourthly this thesis has found that achieving successful localisation is subject to the factors in the aforementioned points. In other words, in order to achieve successful localisation, expatriate managers (senders) should have the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge and the local staff (receivers) should have high absorptive capacity. In addition, there must be actual knowledge received by local staff. Lastly, it should be noted that the knowledge senders are influenced by two external factors, namely, organisation characteristic and knowledge characteristics. The former indicates that organisations that are supportive and committed to facilitating the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination are positively correlated with the competencies of knowledge senders. The latter points out that knowledge that is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex positively enhances the competencies of expatriate managers in knowledge transfer. Future studies that aim to investigate the role of expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge with the aim to achieve successful localisation are argued to go beyond the four elements of the AMO theory (ability, motivation, opportunity and the outcome in this case successful localisation). This would help to get a holistic understanding about the process of knowledge transfer. More specifically it is vital to consider the factors that mediate or moderate such relationship. For example, the results of this study found that the positive impact expatriate competencies to transfer on localisation success is explained by the knowledge received by local staff. In addition to the aforementioned theoretical implications, the current study offers a number of practical implications that are outlined in the next section.

Through this, this paper offers further insight into the association between expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer and achieving successful staff localisation.

Here, the knowledge sender (expatriate manager, in this case) has to possess three competencies: the ability to transfer knowledge, motivation to transfer knowledge, and to be able to seek opportunities to transfer knowledge.

However, in addition to these factors, literature in this regard should note the importance of the amount of knowledge received by knowledge seekers (local staff) in achieving successful staff localisation. Furthermore, while AMO framework covers the competencies of knowledge sender, attention must also be paid to the absorptive capacity of knowledge receivers as well. That is, the extent to which knowledge seekers have the ability to understand, incorporate, and implement new external knowledge.

In total this paper validates the applicability of AMO theory in different context that is localisation.

### **7.1.2 Practical Implications**

The insights reported in this thesis have identified key factors for achieving successful localisation. First, the research has confirmed the importance of expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge to their subordinate local staff, which ultimately leads to achieving successful localisation. This means manufacturing companies that seek to replace expatriates with local staff should first ensure the effective transfer of knowledge from expatriate managers to local staff. In order to do so, this thesis has identified a number of key knowledge transfer enablers (such as expatriate manager competencies, local staff absorptive capacity, and organisational commitment). Three of these enablers are related to knowledge holders, in this case expatriate managers. In other words, expatriate managers should have three competencies to be able to successfully transfer knowledge to their subordinate local staff.

The first competence is that expatriate managers should have the ability to transfer knowledge. This competence is important as the knowledge holders may fail to transfer knowledge if they lack the ability to communicate their ideas effectively. In addition, this requires knowledge holders to be able to clarify the main aim of knowledge transferred to local employees and also to be able to anticipate the needs of knowledge receivers. The latter means, waiting for local staff to ask for new knowledge will not be sufficient, rather, expatriate managers should be urged to share useful knowledge with their local subordinates. In order to do so, company management is advised to give local staff the opportunity to identify their knowledge shortfalls. This will not only allow useful knowledge to be identified by local staff but will also enable company top management to evaluate the outcomes of knowledge transfer and take any necessary actions. For example, after certain periods of time organisations can survey local staff about what they have learned since identifying knowledge shortfalls earlier.

However, it should be noted that some expatriate managers may not have the ability to transfer knowledge. In this regard, two implications are very important. First, expatriate selection should not be primarily based on the technical skills but should be based on knowledge transfer competencies. For example, utilising expatriate recruitment interviews to identify their ability to communicate their ideas effectively by devoting a few questions in this regard is advised. Second, regarding existing expatriates who lack the ability to transfer their knowledge effectively, company management is advised to provide related training programs to enhance this skill. For example, they may provide training programs related to communication skills and cultural differences issues.



Nevertheless, having the ability to transfer knowledge may not be enough, especially if the knowledge carrier is for any reason not motivated to transfer knowledge. Thus, the second competence is related to expatriate manager motivation to transfer knowledge. This means that in order to ensure effective knowledge transfer, organisations must motivate expatriate managers to do so. This can be a sensitive area to address due to the possible fear of loss of position or authoritative power which may make the knowledge holder reluctant to share their knowledge. This issue can be overcome by providing financial rewards or even verbal recognition to knowledge holders. For example, top management can offer financial incentives such as bonuses to expatriates who are active in knowledge transfer to improve local talent effectively. In addition, non-financial rewards such as public recognition in events or meetings, paid leave, and prizes can be used to motivate expatriate managers. Another way to ensure expatriate motivation could be through including a number of questions about their motivation to transfer knowledge to the local staff in the aforementioned survey that would be filled in by their local subordinates. In this case, knowledge transfer can be considered as a necessary aspect of expatriate contracts.

Another important competence, along with ability and motivation, is opportunity seeking to transfer knowledge. In this manner, it has been proposed that in order to accomplish optimal performance of knowledge transfer, it is essential for expatriate managers to seek the opportunity to interact with whoever needs their knowledge, in this case the local staff. The importance of this step rests on enhancing the opportunity to transfer more knowledge. In this regard, opportunity seeking of expatriate managers would help knowledge seekers to get constant feedback as well as create more opportunities to

clarify any ambiguity in regards to the transferred knowledge. Opportunity seeking can be executed formally, such as through meetings, or informally, such as social activities. In this regard, top management is urged to give high priority to both formal interactions, which include holding frequent meetings and gathering of employees of similar expertise, and also informal interactions, which include social gatherings such as those at sport clubs. Informal opportunity seeking is recommended not only due to its ability to provide additional time and mode for knowledge transfer, but more importantly, due to its role in enhancing and improving trust and relationships among expatriates and local staff. In other words, interactions between knowledge holders and knowledge seekers can enhance the trust between them, which in turn facilitates the knowledge transfer process.

In addition, it is critical for companies to acknowledge the absorptive capacity of local staff as an important factor for achieving successful localisation. In this regard, an important caveat is that positive competencies of knowledge holders alone may be insufficient to facilitate knowledge transfer. For example, the findings of the current study have demonstrated that low absorptive capacity has adverse impacts on achieving successful localisation. Thus, it should be noted that in addition to the competencies of knowledge holders (expatriate managers), knowledge receivers (local staff) should have the ability to recognise, understand, and implement transferred knowledge. This is so important, as the knowledge transfer may not be successful if the local staff are not able to understand or apply the new knowledge and hence may inhibit the success of localisation. Thus, to ensure successful localisation, particular focus should be given to the ability of local staff to understand the importance of the new knowledge gained, how to incorporate this knowledge into their systems of work, and how to effectively implement it. To achieve

this, companies are advised to ensure the following things. First, they should create awareness for local staff about the vision of what they aim to accomplish through knowledge transfer from expatriate managers. Second, they should provide training programs such as functional skills workshops and multiple languages sessions that can enhance the ability of local staff to acquire and absorb new knowledge. Third, they should follow up on whether local staff have been able to convert, exploit, and implement the skills, knowledge, and practices gained from expatriate managers. This can be undertaken through a survey completed by expatriate managers to indicate local staff performance in response to transferred knowledge.

Apart from the importance of knowledge sender and knowledge receiver competencies, it is crucial to recognize the impact of organisational characteristics and knowledge characteristics on the competencies of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge. With respect to the former, expatriate manager competencies in transferring knowledge are influenced by organisational commitments to facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. In this vein, companies are advised to implement the following in order to enhance the competencies of expatriate managers in knowledge transfer.

First, companies are advised to provide sufficient time and resources for knowledge transfer to enhance the ability of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to local employees. The importance of this step rests on the fact that the ability of knowledge senders is reduced if they do not have sufficient time for knowledge transfer. Practically, this can be achieved by asking expatriate managers to prepare a monthly timetable that shows slots for knowledge transfer. Second, companies are urged to offer incentives for

knowledge transfer to motivate expatriate managers. For example, this could be done through giving a yearly award for the best knowledge transferer, akin to a best employee award. Consequently, it should be emphasised that organisations that are supportive of knowledge transfer have a positive impact on the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge to their local subordinates. In this vein, organisations that aim to achieve successful localisation are urged to adopt effective means and procedures to enhance the competencies of expatriate managers to transfer their expertise to local staff, which in turn enables locals to replace expatriates successfully.

Furthermore, this study has investigated the influence of knowledge characteristics on expatriate competencies to transfer knowledge to their subordinate local staff. In this regard, it has been found that expatriate manager competencies to transfer knowledge to their local subordinates would be more effective when the transferred knowledge is specific, easy to codify, available, and complex. Thus, in order to have effective knowledge transfer, companies are advised to provide important knowledge in explicit forms. For example, blueprints and manuals, and make them available and easily accessible by knowledge providers and seekers alike. This would help knowledge seekers to accumulate the required knowledge faster. Notwithstanding the aforementioned implications, a number of limitations should be acknowledged in this study in order to call for future investigations to overcome them. Consequently, the next section is devoted to addressing this.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

While the current study investigates the extent to which expatriate competencies can facilitate achieving successful localisation, future research could investigate the factors that can enhance these competencies. In other words, the model of the current study could be used as a basis for further empirical studies on what organisations can do to improve

expatriate competencies in knowledge transfer. For example, future investigation could continue to explore the factors that can improve the ability of expatriates to transfer knowledge, such as training (Minbaeva et al., 2003). Similarly, further research is needed to explore the factors that can increase the motivation of expatriate managers to transfer knowledge, such as job security (Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Connelly et al., 2012; Lekhawipat et al., 2018). This is critical because it is assumed that due to the fear of losing power or position, knowledge holders may not be motivated to transfer their knowledge to local staff who are prepared to replace them (Selmer, 2004; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012). Thus, an interesting research question for future studies would be how to keep expatriate managers motivated to transfer their knowledge to local staff who are expected to replace them in the future.

Moreover, this study has demonstrated the role of the knowledge transfer process in achieving successful localisation and identified the related factors in this process, such as expatriate competencies, organisation characteristics, knowledge characteristics, and receiver characteristics (absorptive capacity). The current study has proposed a model that can help to achieve successful localisation regardless of its consequences. In other words, though localisation is seen as a main aim of the GCC countries for generating more employment opportunities for their citizens, others may argue that localisation might be costly for companies (Selmer, 2004). Thus, looking forward, further research could extend this model to include company performance. This means, further studies could explore the impact of knowledge transfer and successful localisation on company performance. In order to perform such study, future investigations could examine this issue through

longitudinal studies to record the change in company performance over time as attributed to localisation success.

Another limitation of the current study is related to the subjective measurement of knowledge received by local staff. Even though this is the most commonly used measure in the knowledge transfer literature (Lyles & Salk, 1996; Minbaeva, 2007; Chang et al., 2012; Elbaz et al., 2018), further study may investigate the quality of knowledge received by local staff rather than measure the extent to which they have received knowledge from expatriate managers. In other words, measuring the knowledge received by local staff from a quality perspective may broaden understanding of the impact of knowledge received on successful localisation.

In addition, seeking the view of expatriate managers to evaluate their own competencies would be unreliable due to possible attitudinal and perceptual biases (Minbaeva, 2007). Expatriate managers for instance, may not disclose that they are not motivated to share their knowledge or unable to do so. Thus, the current study focused exclusively on the views of the local employees (knowledge receivers) to evaluate the ability, motivation, and opportunity seeking of expatriate managers (knowledge holders) to transfer their knowledge to local employees. Although the results of the current study did not indicate any risk of common method variance, seeking multiple views from different sources such as expatriate managers and local staff may provide a more balanced view (Riusala & Smale, 2007). Hence, further studies may seek the view of both knowledge providers and seekers. For example, in addition to distributing questionnaires to local staff, conducting interviews with expatriate managers might help to broaden understanding of

the impact of knowledge holders (expatriate managers) and recipients (local staff) on achieving successful localisation.

Furthermore, based on the positivistic paradigm, employing a cross sectional survey methodology was seen the most appropriate approach for conducting this research due to time constraints as the research is a part time PhD student and full time lecturer. However, a longitudinal study could help to bring enhanced insight about the impact of knowledge transfer determinants on the achievement of successful localisation. Thus, future investigation is required to employ longitudinal study in this regard. In addition, although the sample size of this study was determined as per the rule of thumb of SEM-PLS literature and proved to be appropriate to produce a robust statistical test, larger sample size may enhance the findings of the investigated subject. It should be noted that due to time constraints and associated costs, the researcher of the current study could not spend more than two months in data collection. Thus, future studies may allocate more time and resources to collect more observations.

It should be mentioned that the aims and conceptual framework of this study have been developed based on the needs of the GCC countries. Therefore, further studies may investigate other countries such as European countries. For example, future studies can investigate the factors that can influence achieving successful localisation along with challenges that may hinder this goal. Here, other factors might be added to the model such as psychological factors. For instance, future studies can investigate the effect of personality and intellect on the ability of knowledge holders to transfer their knowledge. The current study did include these factors as they are not under the scope of this thesis.

Finally, the current study found that the moderating role of local staff absorptive capacity is key in the process of knowledge transfer and successful localisation. However, further studies could take this one step further by examining other determinants of local staff absorptive capacity. In other words, another avenue for future investigation could be to focus on the factors that can challenge local staff to receive knowledge from expatriate managers successfully. This could be drawn from language competencies, training programs received, or education levels that could be investigated as predictors of local staff absorptive capacity.

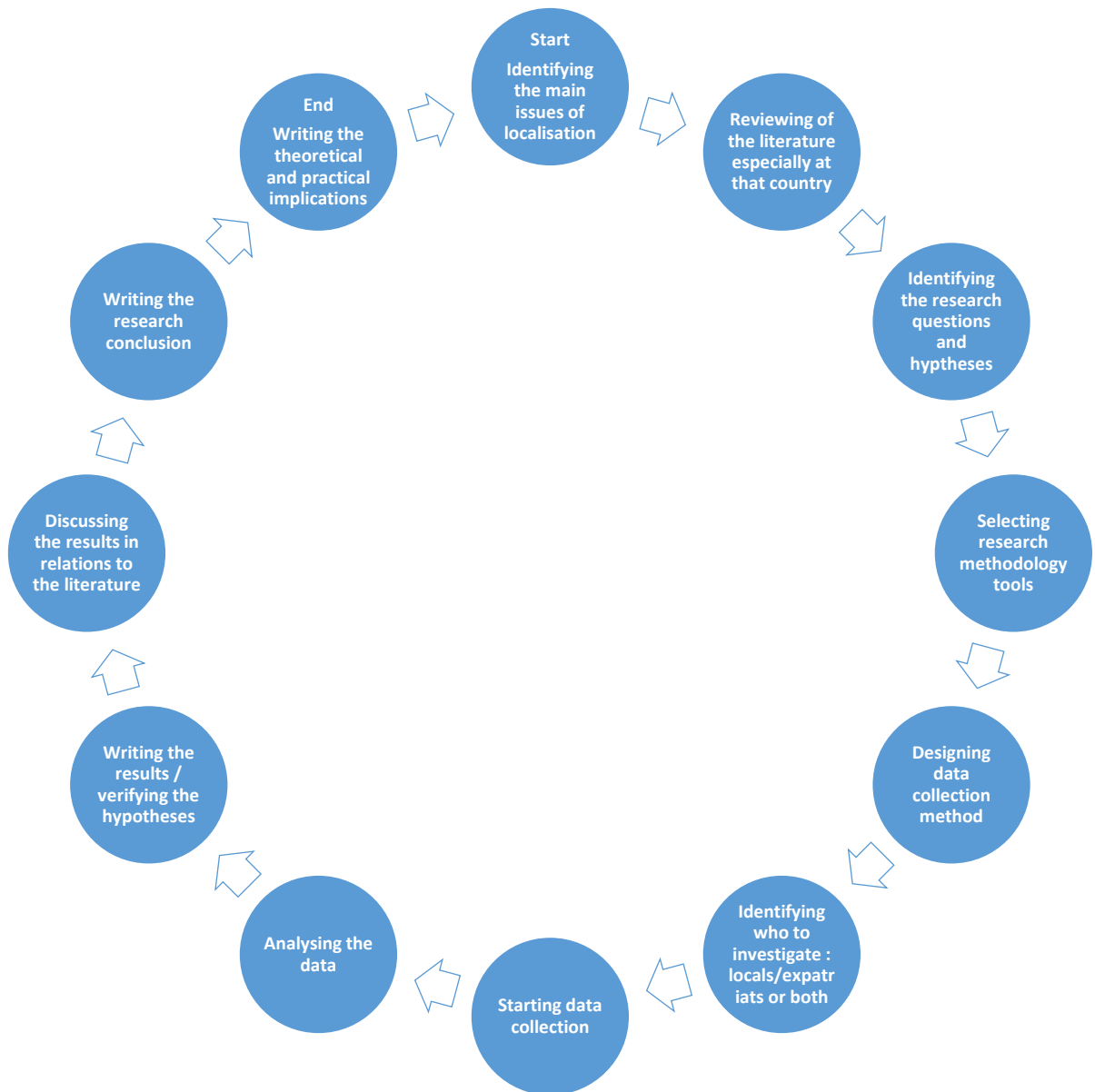
### **Suggested Procedures**

This section proposes procedures for future studies that aim to investigate localisation at similar countries. First, the researcher needs to identify the main issues of localisation such as the percentage of expatriates in the local workforce and unemployment ratio of local staff. Second, the researcher needs to review the extant literature of localisation especially at that particular area. This will help the study to identify the main gaps and will also helps to broaden the understanding of the investigator about the main challenges.

Thirdly, the research questions need to be developed followed by research methodology selection. Fourthly, it is important to select an appropriate data collection method that can help to gather the important information in the right manner. For example, conducting face to face interview may not allow some participants to show the reality as their names are identified. On the other hand, conducting questionnaire survey might enable gathering real information due to the respondents anonymity. After that, data needs to be collected from



the right people followed by data analysis and discussion. Finally, the main theoretical and practical implication need to be written down along with the research summary.



**Figure 7.1 Suggested Procedures to Investigate Localisation at Similar Countries**

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has summarised the main results of the current thesis in relation to its aims and objectives. The theoretical and practical implications have been discussed, followed by a discussion of the limitations and future studies. The main conclusion that can be drawn is that achieving successful localisation requires the joint effect of five determinants which are expatriate competencies, knowledge received, local staff absorptive capacity, organisation characteristics, and knowledge characteristics. These five factors are predicated on knowledge holder competencies to transfer knowledge, actual knowledge received by local staff, knowledge receiver competencies to understand and implement newly received knowledge, organisational commitment towards knowledge transfer, and, finally, characteristics of transferred knowledge. Thus, it is clear that all 14 hypotheses of this study have been accepted and the research aims and objectives successfully met.

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## 9 Appendices

### Appendix A: Thesis Questionnaire



#### Questionnaire: Knowledge Transfer

**Plymouth University**  
**Plymouth Business School**  
**Faculty of Business**

I am a PhD student at Plymouth University, UK and a lecture at University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Oman. This study aims to examine the role of expatriate competencies as antecedents of knowledge transfer and its impact on localization. This survey is a part of my PhD thesis and will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The answers will be used for scientific research purpose and will be treated anonymously and confidentially. Your cooperation is highly appreciated. Information of how and why your personal data are used along with your rights in relation to that data can be found either on the attached consent form or via the following link for further information: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-participant-privacy-notice>.

**Section 1: Please rate to what extent the following items accurately describe the competencies of your expatriate managers to transfer the knowledge to the local subordinate employees (Omanis): Please circle your response to the following statements:**

**1= Strongly Disagree   2= Disagree   3=Neutral   4=Agree   5= Strongly Agree**

#### **Ability to Transfer Knowledge**

1. The expatriate managers have a lot of good ideas worth sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The expatriate managers are capable of sharing important information.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The expatriate managers have the ability to communicate good ideas about their job.	1	2	3	4	5

#### **Motivation to Transfer Knowledge**

4. The expatriate managers are not afraid of losing power and control to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The expatriate managers are willing to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The expatriate managers are willing to cope with cultural differences to transfer knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The expatriate managers are willing to devote time to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The expatriate managers are willing to make persistent efforts to solve difficulties to transfer knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5

#### **Opportunity seeking to Transfer Knowledge**

9. The expatriate managers seek opportunities through social relationships to solve difficulties in knowledge transfer process.	1	2	3	4	5
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10. The expatriate managers utilise social ties to generate trust and cooperation to solve difficulties in the knowledge transfer process.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The expatriate managers have the opportunity to share information.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The expatriate managers have the time and place (such as meeting room) to exchange best practices.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The expatriate managers believe sharing information is a priority in their relationship with their local subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5

Section B) Please indicate to what extent have you received from your expatriate managers:  
Please circle your response to the following statements:

**1=Did not Receive at all**  
**4= Well Received**

**2= Poorly Received**  
**5= Very Well Received**

**3= Moderately Received**

1. Technological expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Marketing expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Product development expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Manufacturing processes expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Managerial expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Knowledge about your organisational culture.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C) Please indicate to which extent the local employees (Omanis):

**1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree**

1. Have the ability to acquire new knowledge from the expatriate managers to achieve the organisation targets.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Know the vision of what the organisation is trying to achieve through the transfer of knowledge from the expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have the technical competency to absorb the knowledge from the expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Have the necessary skills to implement the practices gained from the expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Have the ability to convert knowledge or practices gained from the expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Have the ability to exploit new knowledge or practices gained from the expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D) ) To what extent do you agree or disagree that your organisational knowledge could be classified as: Please circle your response to the following statements:

**1= Strongly Disagree   2= Disagree   3= Neutral   4= Agree   5= Strongly Agree**

1. Easy to codify, i.e., information is often provided in blueprints, manuals and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Complex, i.e., knowledge is about highly interdependent routines, individuals, and technologies.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Specific, i.e., knowledge in its context is about specific functional expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Available i.e., always available for and easy accessible by new personnel.	1	2	3	4	5

Section E) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:  
Please circle your response to the following statements:

**1= Strongly Disagree   2= Disagree   3= Neutral   4= Agree   5= Strongly Agree**

1. Our organisational culture is conducive to knowledge sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our organizational structure is conducive to knowledge sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Our organisational geographic fragmentation is conducive to knowledge sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The time and resources for knowledge sharing in our organisation are sufficient.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our organisation offers organizational incentives for knowledge sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Our organisation has complete and standard regulations about knowledge sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Our organisation is conducive to knowledge sharing because of the authority.	1	2	3	4	5
8. In our organisation , the knowledge providers (expatriates ) and receivers (Omanis) lack contact time and interactions	1	2	3	4	5
9. In our organisation, differences exist in experience level between knowledge providers and receivers.	1	2	3	4	5

Section G) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:  
Please circle your response to the following statements:

**1= Strongly Disagree   2= Disagree   3= Neutral   4= Agree   5= Strongly Agree**

1. The progress of localisation (Omani staff) in our organisation is very successful.	1	2	3	4	5
2. In my organisation, many local managers* have successfully replaced expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5

3. In my organisation, many local managers have participated in making important strategic decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
4. With respect to the current number of expatriate managers in our organisation, I am satisfied with our localisation progress.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our organisation has developed a group of competent local managers who are ready to replace expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Our organisation has developed a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Our organisation will soon develop a sufficient number of local managers to replace expatriate managers.	1	2	3	4	5

\*Local managers: Omani managers

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF

In this part, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your employment.

### I) Record gender: Tick one

- (1) ☐ Male                      (2) ☐ Female                      (3) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

### II) Your nationality: Tick one

- (1) ☐ Omani                      (2) ☐ Non-Omani                      (3) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

### III) Your age group: Tick one

- (1) ☐ 18-25 years                      (2) ☐ 26-35 years                      (3) ☐ 36-45 years  
(4) ☐ 46-55 years                      (5) ☐ Over 55 years                      (6) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

### IV) Your education level: Tick one

- (1) ☐ Diploma                      (2) ☐ Bachelor's degree                      (3) ☐ Master's degree                      (4) ☐ Doctorate  
(5) ☐ Other .....please specify                      (6) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

### V) Your Department: Tick one

- (1) ☐ Production                      (2) ☐ IT                      (3) ☐ Marketing                      (4) ☐ /Administration/HR Management  
(5) ☐ Research and Development                      (6) ☐ Accounting and Finance  
(7) ☐ Other .....please specify

### VI) Your total years of work experience: Tick one

- (1) ☐ Less than 2 years                      (2) ☐ 2-7 years                      (3) ☐ 8-13 years  
(4) ☐ 14-20 years                      (5) ☐ Greater than 20 years                      (6) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

### VII) Your organisation's position:

- (1) ☐ Executives                      (2) ☐ Director General                      (3) ☐ Head of Department

(5) ☐ Other ..... please specify

**(VIII) Your organisation business area:**

(1) ☐ Building materials (2) ☐ Electronics (3) ☐ Metal (4) ☐ Food and beverage

(5) ☐ Wood, plastic or paper (6) ☐ Other .....please specify

**(IX) Your estimate of the percentage of expatriates employed in your department**

(1) ☐ Less than 10% (2) ☐ 10-25 % (3) ☐ 26-50 % (4) ☐ Greater than 50%

(5) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

**(X) I have been line managed by an expatriate: Tick one**

(1) ☐ Yes

(2) ☐ No

(3) ☐ Prefer not to disclose

**(XX) If your answer was yes: How long?**

(1) ☐ Less than a year

(2) ☐ 1-3 years

(3) ☐ Greater than 3 years

*Thank You Very Much for Your Participation*

## Appendix B: Ethical Approval Letter of This Research



Date: 08 November 2019

Dear Nasser,

**Ethical Approval Application No: FREIC1920.05**

**Title: Expatriates competencies as antecedents of knowledge transfer and its impact on staff localisation and firm's performance**

Thank you for your application to the Faculty Research Ethics & Integrity Committee (FREIC) seeking ethical approval for your proposed research.

The committee has considered your revised application and is fully satisfied that the project complies with Plymouth University's ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Approval is for the duration of the project. However, please resubmit your application to the committee if the information provided in the form alters or is likely to alter significantly.

The FREIC members wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely  
(Sent as email attachment)

Mr Derek Shepherd  
Chair  
Faculty Research Ethics & Integrity Committee  
Faculty of Arts & Humanities (SoLCG & PBS)

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Derek Shepherd, Chair, Faculty Research Ethics & Integrity Committee, Faculty of Arts & Humanities (SoLCG & PBS),  
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T +44(0)1752 585557 E [freic@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:freic@plymouth.ac.uk) W [www.plymouth.ac.uk](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk)

## Appendix C: Supporting Letter form MOHE, Oman

<b>Sultanate of Oman</b> <b>Ministry of Higher Education</b> <b>College of Applied Sciences Salalah</b>		<b>سلطنة عمان</b> <b>وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي</b> <b>كلية العلوم التطبيقية بصلالة</b>
الموافق : .....		الرقم : .....
		التاريخ : 29/9/2014
إلى من يهمه الأمر		
تحية طيبة...		
<b>الموضوع : تسهيل مهمة الباحث الفاضل/ ناصر بن محمد الحمر الكثيري</b>		
<p>نود إفادة عنايتكم الكريمة بأن الباحث/ أ. ناصر بن محمد الحمر الكثيري ، طالب دكتوراه بجامعة بليموث بالمملكة المتحدة ومحاضر بكلية العلوم التطبيقية بصلالة يعمل حالياً بإعداد دراسة تهدف إلى قياس قدرات المدراء الوافدين في نقل المعرفة إلى الكادر العمالي ودور ذلك في تحقيق تعمين ناجح وأداء مؤسسي أفضل، وذلك ضمن متطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه من جامعة بليموث بالمملكة المتحدة.</p> <p>عليه يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحث لإجراء هذه الدراسة عن طريق توزيع استبانات على الموظفين العماليين ممن يشغلون وظائف إدارية أو إشرافية. علماً بأن البيانات والنتائج سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط، للاستفسار يرجى التواصل مع أ. ناصر الحمر على <a href="mailto:nasser2014.sal@cas.edu.om">nasser2014.sal@cas.edu.om</a> أو (92898908).</p>		
وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير ...		
 ناصر بن محمد الحمر الكثيري معيد الكلية		
سلطنة عمان - ص.ب : ٣٤٧ - المسعادة - الرمز البريدي : ٢١٥ - هاتف : ٢٣٢٢٦٦١١ - فاكس : ٢٣٢٢٥٦٢٠ Sultanate of Oman - P. O. Box : 347 - Al-Saada - Postal Code : 215 - Tel. : 23226611 - Fax : 23225620		



**Appendix D: Common Method Bias**  
**Total Variance Explained (Harman's one-factor test)**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.242	29.426	29.426	13.242	29.426	29.426
2	4.829	10.731	40.158	4.829	10.731	40.158
3	3.896	8.657	48.815	3.896	8.657	48.815
4	2.104	4.676	53.491	2.104	4.676	53.491
5	1.968	4.374	57.865	1.968	4.374	57.865
6	1.288	2.862	60.727	1.288	2.862	60.727
7	1.132	2.515	63.242	1.132	2.515	63.242
8	1.032	2.292	65.535	1.032	2.292	65.535
9	.903	2.007	67.542			
10	.885	1.967	69.509			
11	.844	1.876	71.385			
12	.774	1.719	73.104			
13	.728	1.617	74.721			
14	.673	1.497	76.218			
15	.632	1.404	77.622			
16	.622	1.381	79.003			
17	.581	1.292	80.295			
18	.571	1.268	81.564			
19	.554	1.231	82.794			
20	.520	1.156	83.951			
21	.496	1.102	85.053			
22	.469	1.043	86.096			
23	.450	.999	87.095			
24	.438	.973	88.068			

25	.388	.863	88.931
26	.387	.861	89.791
27	.383	.852	90.643
28	.343	.762	91.405
29	.327	.727	92.132
30	.313	.695	92.827
31	.305	.678	93.505
32	.284	.631	94.136
33	.279	.620	94.756
34	.253	.562	95.319
35	.248	.551	95.870
36	.240	.534	96.404
37	.231	.512	96.916
38	.216	.479	97.395
39	.204	.453	97.848
40	.191	.424	98.271
41	.173	.384	98.656
42	.171	.380	99.036
43	.154	.342	99.378
44	.147	.327	99.705
45	.133	.295	100.000

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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

## Appendix E: Correlation Among Indicators

Part 1*	AB 1	AB 2	AB 3	MT 1	MT 2	MT 3	MT 4	MT 5	OP 1	OP 2	OP 3	KR 1	KR 2	KR 3	KR 4	KR 5	KR 6	KCH1	KCH2	KCH3	KCH4
AB 1	1.000	0.613	0.633	0.215	0.358	0.429	0.452	0.440	0.449	0.455	0.355	0.352	0.281	0.281	0.249	0.320	0.355	0.264	0.256	0.210	0.215
AB 2	0.613	1.000	0.769	0.380	0.550	0.538	0.535	0.544	0.473	0.436	0.462	0.409	0.369	0.398	0.347	0.396	0.384	0.234	0.223	0.188	0.214
AB 3	0.633	0.769	1.000	0.357	0.531	0.507	0.526	0.555	0.490	0.457	0.505	0.364	0.277	0.351	0.321	0.378	0.396	0.264	0.238	0.215	0.248
MT 1	0.215	0.380	0.357	1.000	0.521	0.418	0.449	0.444	0.332	0.377	0.423	0.381	0.413	0.390	0.339	0.272	0.233	0.195	0.040	0.129	0.181
MT 2	0.358	0.550	0.531	0.521	1.000	0.622	0.622	0.652	0.532	0.487	0.567	0.340	0.391	0.403	0.327	0.327	0.326	0.272	0.197	0.260	0.247
MT 3	0.429	0.538	0.507	0.418	0.622	1.000	0.667	0.658	0.543	0.506	0.462	0.404	0.376	0.394	0.378	0.437	0.435	0.286	0.141	0.258	0.190
MT 4	0.452	0.535	0.526	0.449	0.622	0.667	1.000	0.814	0.578	0.587	0.546	0.376	0.383	0.387	0.324	0.399	0.380	0.255	0.196	0.187	0.220
MT 5	0.440	0.544	0.555	0.444	0.652	0.658	0.814	1.000	0.629	0.527	0.580	0.370	0.416	0.435	0.369	0.422	0.435	0.224	0.148	0.213	0.252
OP 1	0.449	0.473	0.490	0.332	0.532	0.543	0.578	0.629	1.000	0.613	0.503	0.296	0.386	0.374	0.352	0.371	0.380	0.269	0.177	0.244	0.270
OP 2	0.455	0.436	0.457	0.377	0.487	0.506	0.587	0.527	0.613	1.000	0.556	0.241	0.244	0.261	0.231	0.278	0.324	0.262	0.276	0.228	0.281
OP 3	0.355	0.462	0.505	0.423	0.567	0.462	0.546	0.580	0.503	0.556	1.000	0.421	0.403	0.419	0.410	0.376	0.372	0.294	0.203	0.231	0.288
KR 1	0.352	0.409	0.364	0.381	0.340	0.404	0.376	0.370	0.296	0.241	0.421	1.000	0.553	0.503	0.432	0.559	0.476	0.256	0.142	0.206	0.224
KR 2	0.281	0.369	0.277	0.413	0.391	0.376	0.383	0.416	0.386	0.244	0.403	0.553	1.000	0.691	0.618	0.496	0.476	0.318	0.119	0.173	0.278
KR 3	0.281	0.398	0.351	0.390	0.403	0.394	0.387	0.435	0.374	0.261	0.419	0.503	0.691	1.000	0.785	0.554	0.508	0.236	0.061	0.204	0.216
KR 4	0.249	0.347	0.321	0.339	0.327	0.378	0.324	0.369	0.352	0.231	0.410	0.432	0.618	0.785	1.000	0.527	0.474	0.297	0.083	0.220	0.240
KR 5	0.320	0.396	0.378	0.272	0.327	0.437	0.399	0.422	0.371	0.278	0.376	0.559	0.496	0.554	0.527	1.000	0.704	0.283	0.163	0.236	0.280
KR 6	0.355	0.384	0.396	0.233	0.326	0.435	0.380	0.435	0.380	0.324	0.372	0.476	0.476	0.508	0.474	0.704	1.000	0.279	0.211	0.182	0.293

<b>KCH 1</b>	0.264	0.234	0.264	0.195	0.272	0.286	0.255	0.224	0.269	0.262	0.294	0.256	0.318	0.236	0.297	0.283	0.279	1.000	0.490	0.390	0.473
<b>KCH 2</b>	0.256	0.223	0.238	0.040	0.197	0.141	0.196	0.148	0.177	0.276	0.203	0.142	0.119	0.061	0.083	0.163	0.211	0.490	1.000	0.436	0.436
<b>KCH 3</b>	0.210	0.188	0.215	0.129	0.260	0.258	0.187	0.213	0.244	0.228	0.231	0.206	0.173	0.204	0.220	0.236	0.182	0.390	0.436	1.000	0.426
<b>KCH 4</b>	0.215	0.214	0.248	0.181	0.247	0.190	0.220	0.252	0.270	0.281	0.288	0.224	0.278	0.216	0.240	0.280	0.293	0.473	0.436	0.426	1.000
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>OCH 1</b>	<b>OCH 2</b>	<b>OCH 3</b>	<b>OCH 4</b>	<b>OCH 5</b>	<b>OCH 6</b>	<b>OCH 7</b>	<b>OCH 8</b>	<b>OCH 9</b>	<b>LOC 1</b>	<b>LOC 2</b>	<b>LOC 3</b>	<b>LOC 4</b>	<b>LOC 5</b>	<b>LOC 6</b>	<b>LOC 7</b>	<b>ABC 1</b>	<b>ABC2</b>	<b>ABC3</b>	<b>ABC4</b>	<b>ABC5</b>
<b>OCH 1</b>	1.000	0.741	0.382	0.455	0.431	0.451	0.545	0.389	0.410	0.368	0.384	0.478	0.331	0.383	0.366	0.342	0.266	0.249	0.221	0.230	0.222
<b>OCH 2</b>	0.741	1.000	0.433	0.524	0.415	0.499	0.554	0.465	0.430	0.379	0.418	0.500	0.364	0.374	0.345	0.345	0.168	0.185	0.122	0.136	0.188
<b>OCH 3</b>	0.382	0.433	1.000	0.483	0.436	0.407	0.407	0.418	0.343	0.308	0.250	0.300	0.252	0.219	0.264	0.212	0.070	0.093	0.075	0.015	0.051
<b>OCH 4</b>	0.455	0.524	0.483	1.000	0.553	0.585	0.473	0.469	0.414	0.327	0.297	0.363	0.315	0.364	0.361	0.324	0.018	0.054	0.038	0.089	0.100
<b>OCH 5</b>	0.431	0.415	0.436	0.553	1.000	0.584	0.580	0.506	0.422	0.360	0.297	0.438	0.366	0.453	0.439	0.395	0.073	0.070	-0.034	-0.017	0.012
<b>OCH 6</b>	0.451	0.499	0.407	0.585	0.584	1.000	0.566	0.461	0.414	0.354	0.360	0.411	0.345	0.389	0.407	0.349	0.033	0.128	0.043	0.117	0.072
<b>OCH 7</b>	0.545	0.554	0.407	0.473	0.580	0.566	1.000	0.525	0.508	0.428	0.405	0.485	0.429	0.460	0.457	0.385	0.146	0.178	0.048	0.107	0.180
<b>OCH 8</b>	0.389	0.465	0.418	0.469	0.506	0.461	0.525	1.000	0.626	0.324	0.285	0.355	0.264	0.340	0.370	0.285	0.055	0.035	-0.041	0.013	-0.004
<b>OCH 9</b>	0.410	0.430	0.343	0.414	0.422	0.414	0.508	0.626	1.000	0.367	0.303	0.360	0.342	0.376	0.367	0.296	0.083	0.133	0.019	0.058	0.088
<b>LOC 1</b>	0.368	0.379	0.308	0.327	0.360	0.354	0.428	0.324	0.367	1.000	0.445	0.465	0.534	0.479	0.501	0.431	0.108	0.030	0.031	0.014	0.064

<b>LOC 2</b>	0.384	0.418	0.250	0.297	0.297	0.360	0.405	0.285	0.303	0.445	1.000	0.697	0.459	0.584	0.527	0.468	0.230	0.223	0.128	0.166	0.184
<b>LOC 3</b>	0.478	0.500	0.300	0.363	0.438	0.411	0.485	0.355	0.360	0.465	0.697	1.000	0.557	0.664	0.615	0.625	0.246	0.185	0.115	0.143	0.157
<b>LOC 4</b>	0.331	0.364	0.252	0.315	0.366	0.345	0.429	0.264	0.342	0.534	0.459	0.557	1.000	0.645	0.661	0.592	0.023	-0.004	-0.077	0.044	0.067
<b>LOC 5</b>	0.383	0.374	0.219	0.364	0.453	0.389	0.460	0.340	0.376	0.479	0.584	0.664	0.645	1.000	0.798	0.672	0.105	0.032	0.016	0.057	0.087
<b>LOC 6</b>	0.366	0.345	0.264	0.361	0.439	0.407	0.457	0.370	0.367	0.501	0.527	0.615	0.661	0.798	1.000	0.732	0.035	0.028	-0.005	0.083	0.086
<b>LOC 7</b>	0.342	0.345	0.212	0.324	0.395	0.349	0.385	0.285	0.296	0.431	0.468	0.625	0.592	0.672	0.732	1.000	0.083	0.083	-0.029	0.079	0.121
<b>ABC 1</b>	0.266	0.168	0.070	0.018	0.073	0.033	0.146	0.055	0.083	0.108	0.230	0.246	0.023	0.105	0.035	0.083	1.000	0.662	0.590	0.571	0.557
<b>ABC 2</b>	0.249	0.185	0.093	0.054	0.070	0.128	0.178	0.035	0.133	0.030	0.223	0.185	-0.004	0.032	0.028	0.083	0.662	1.000	0.541	0.549	0.538
<b>ABC 3</b>	0.221	0.122	0.075	0.038	-0.034	0.043	0.048	-0.041	0.019	0.031	0.128	0.115	-0.077	0.016	-0.005	-0.029	0.590	0.541	1.000	0.651	0.594
<b>ABC 4</b>	0.230	0.136	0.015	0.089	-0.017	0.117	0.107	0.013	0.058	0.014	0.166	0.143	0.044	0.057	0.083	0.079	0.571	0.549	0.651	1.000	0.634
<b>ABC 5</b>	0.222	0.188	0.051	0.100	0.012	0.072	0.180	-0.004	0.088	0.064	0.184	0.157	0.067	0.087	0.086	0.121	0.557	0.538	0.594	0.634	1.000