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How managers' global mindset influences the effectiveness of virtual teams

Evidence from MNCs operating in Finland

School of Management
Master's thesis in International Business

Vaasa 2026

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ABSTRACT:

Due to the increasingly global and complex nature of multinational corporations (MNCs), managers are more frequently required to lead geographically dispersed and culturally diverse virtual teams. As collaboration takes place mainly through digital tools, managing communication, trust, coordination, inclusion, and team effectiveness can become challenging. Although previous literature has examined virtual team effectiveness and global mindset separately, less attention has been given to how managers' global mindset influences the processes connected to virtual team effectiveness. Therefore, this thesis addresses this research gap by exploring how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness in MNCs operating in Finland.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight managers experienced in leading culturally diverse teams in MNCs operating in Finland. The data were analysed thematically, resulting in five main themes.

The findings suggest that a global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness through everyday leadership behaviour. Openness, adaptability, clear communication, trust-building, psychological safety, and inclusion support effective teamwork. Managers also need to understand team members as individuals, because collaboration may be influenced not only by cultural background, but also by personality, seniority, language confidence, and working style.

This study also identifies perceived limits of the global mindset. When it is underdeveloped, managers may rely on assumptions, misinterpret behaviour, weaken trust, and unintentionally exclude team members. Even a well-developed global mindset cannot eliminate structural challenges such as time zone differences, scheduling difficulties, language barriers, and limited informal interaction, nor can it replace leadership and project management skills.

The findings indicate that effective leadership of diverse virtual teams requires both a global mindset and practical management skills. MNCs and HR departments can support managers through cross-cultural training, mentoring, international assignments, and opportunities to work with diverse colleagues. Managers should translate openness, adaptability, and cultural awareness into everyday actions, such as adjusting communication, building trust, and encouraging participation. Organisations should also ensure that managers have the coordination and project management skills needed to structure virtual teamwork. This thesis contributes to theory by clarifying how global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness in practice and by emphasising the importance of understanding both cultural and individual differences.

KEYWORDS: global mindset, virtual teams, virtual team effectiveness, managerial leadership, multinational corporations

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Abbreviations

MNC/MNE - Multinational corporation/ Multinational enterprise

VT - Virtual teams

GVT - Global virtual teams

1 Introduction

This part presents the background and significance of the study, introduces the research questions, objectives and delimitations, as well as explains the key concepts. Finally, the overall structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Background of the study

The global workforce landscape is continuously evolving due to emerging trends and innovations (World Economic Forum, 2024). Advances in technology, market globalization, and increasing employee mobility have enabled organizations to move beyond traditional on-site work arrangements and actively integrate global virtual teams (GVT) into daily operations (Cavusgil, 2024; Jimenez et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant turning point when remote and hybrid work practices became widely accepted, and digital technologies became integral to daily work (World Economic Forum, 2024). As a result, many managers have had to lead geographically distributed teams, often for the first time (Caligiuri et al., 2020).

Changes in working practices have created new challenges, especially when it comes to managing geographically dispersed teams (Caligiuri et al., 2020). These kinds of teams are usually considered global teams, consisting of members from different nationalities, cultures, and functional backgrounds. Such teams tend to be more diverse than traditional, co-located teams (Pucik et al., 2023).

When team members operate across different time zones and come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, establishing mutual trust and developing connections becomes more difficult (Hinds, 2014). This situation can create a cross-cultural risk, which, according to Cavusgil (2024), may lead to communication problems and misunderstandings due to differences in expectations and values.

In many globally operating organizations, collaboration is primarily structured through global teams (Pucik et al., 2023). Multinational corporations (MNCs) often operate in several countries, creating highly diverse environments through communication with different units across countries (Cavusgil, 2024). In such organizations, communication and coordination are mostly based on work conducted in virtual teams (VT) (Batırlık et al., 2022). However, to effectively manage VT, managers need capabilities that extend beyond the traditional managerial skills needed to lead face-to-face teams (Berry, 2011). Time zone differences, reliance on technology, cultural diversity, and other factors make leading VT complex (Zander et al., 2012).

In order for global teams to be effective and work well together, it is important to have positive personal relationships with each other (Pucik et al., 2023). This can be further understood through the concept of team dynamics, which involve both observable behaviors, such as how team members communicate, collaborate, handle conflict, and lead, as well as underlying attitudes such as trust, openness, and cohesion (Delice et al., 2019). The effectiveness of these dynamics often depends on the managers' ability to read situations, recognize and address different conflicts early enough, which is particularly challenging when working in virtual settings where you cannot see how people react or feel their energy as clearly (Pucik et al., 2023).

This is where the concept of managers' global mindset becomes highly relevant. Javidan et al. (2006) argue that a global mindset is one of the most essential capabilities for global leaders to understand people from different cultural contexts. Similarly, Cavusgil (2024) emphasises the need for managers to educate themselves about different cultures and their shared values and behaviours. This kind of awareness helps managers develop a global perspective and the ability to think more broadly, which Hasse (2022) considers increasingly important in today's globalised environment. Leaders with a global mindset are especially equipped to work across cultural boundaries, as they can recognise, respect, and adapt to differences in how people think, behave, and interact (Javidan & Walker, 2012).

Although the concept of global mindset has been widely studied (Arora et al., 2022), most research has examined it from a broad leadership perspective, focusing on managerial capabilities, rather than in the specific context of VT effectiveness (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Javidan and Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). For example, Levy et al. (2007) explains the connection between global mindset and effective global management, emphasizing its importance in how managers process information and makes decisions. However, limited research has explored how these capabilities translate into effectiveness when leading VT in MNCs. When reviewing the literature, it is difficult to find studies that explore how global mindset influences processes within the team, particularly in multicultural VT.

Recent analyses have highlighted the competitiveness challenges Finland is currently facing and emphasised the need for stronger strategic leadership in large Finnish companies (McKinsey & Company, 2025). In this context, it becomes particularly important to examine the leadership capabilities of managers within MNCs operating in Finland, especially as organizations increasingly rely on global and VT (Tran et al., 2016). Finland represents a relevant setting for this study due to its highly international business environment, with several MNCs operating the country. Therefore, it is relevant to explore how managers working in MNCs in Finland develop a global mindset and apply it in practice, as this may provide insights into how these organizations can strengthen leadership effectiveness in culturally diverse environments and enhance overall organizational success.

Therefore, while the importance of global mindset as a core managerial capability is growing, its impact on the effectiveness of VT in MNCs remains underexplored. This thesis aims to address that gap by exploring how managers global mindset influences different team dynamics that contribute to the effectiveness of those teams within multinational corporations operating in Finland.

1.2 Research question, objectives and delimitations

The primary aim of this study is to explore how managers' global mindset influences the functioning and effectiveness of VT in MNCs operating in Finland. In increasingly diverse and geographically dispersed workplaces, it is important for team members to feel understood and included. Therefore, this study examines whether managers have the skills needed to lead diverse VT, how they work to create inclusiveness, and how their global mindset shapes communication and collaboration. It also seeks to better understand the experiences through which leaders develop their global mindset and how this shapes their ability to lead effectively in cross-cultural virtual contexts.

Accordingly, the research question that this thesis aims to answer is the following: "How does managers' global mindset influence the effectiveness of virtual teams in multinational corporations operating in Finland?"

This research question is divided into two sub-questions:

1. How do factors related to managers' global mindset support the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland?
2. How do managers perceive the limits of these factors in supporting the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland?

In particular, the objectives of the research are to:

- Examine how managers' global mindset influences team dynamics such as communication, trust, cohesion, and conflict management in virtual teams.
- Explore how managers' leadership behaviours shaped by global mindset contribute to the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland.
- Provide insights into how MNCs operating in Finland can support managers in developing a global mindset for leading diverse virtual teams effectively.

To meet these objectives, this study employs a qualitative research approach. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with managers who work in MNCs op-

erating in Finland. The data will be analysed to explore how a global mindset influences team dynamics and virtual team effectiveness, providing practical insights for leadership in multicultural, remote settings.

This thesis has several delimitations. First, this study is focused on MNCs operating in Finland, including both Finnish-owned and foreign-owned companies, rather than only Finnish MNCs. Second, the research examines managers' perspectives only, without including the views of team members. Third, the study focuses specifically on virtual teams rather than face-to-face teams. Although factors such as technology, organizational culture, and cultural distance can also affect virtual team effectiveness, they are not the main focus of this research. The primary focus is on how managers' global mindset influences team dynamics and overall effectiveness.

1.3 Key concepts

Global Mindset describes a leader's ability to effectively guide and engage people and organizations across varying cultural, political, and institutional contexts. It involves being open to different cultural ways of thinking and the ability to understand and connect those differences in practice (Javidan & Walker, 2012, p. 38; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002, p. 117).

Cultural intelligence is defined as "an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings," comprising four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 21-23).

Team dynamics refer to the evolving combination of shared attitudes, behaviours, and thought processes within a team that influence how it functions over time. These include observable actions like communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership styles, as well as underlying attitudes such as trust, openness, cohesion, and team viability (Delice et al., 2019, p. 3).

Virtual teams can be defined as teams that bring together people separated by time, distance, culture, and occasionally by organizational barriers (Powers, 2018). Collaboration within these teams typically occurs remotely, relying on digital tools to coordinate tasks and projects, often without face-to-face interaction (Malhotra et al., 2007).

Virtual team effectiveness can be understood as the ability of a team operating remotely to achieve its intended goals and produce planned outcomes, which depends on how well distributed knowledge among members is integrated (Alsharo et al., 2017). In addition, team effectiveness is influenced by the collective skills of the team, such as managing conflicts and miscommunications, assigning fair and clear roles, and maintaining strong communication (Berry, 2011).

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are defined as an organizations that “operate across national boundaries” (Enright & Subramanian, 2007, p.906). These enterprises “engage in foreign direct investment and own or control value-added activities in more than one country” (Dunning & Lundan, 2008, p. 3).

AI-use declaration

In this thesis, artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to edit the text and language, improve clarity and flow, and maintain consistency across chapters. This is reported to ensure the study's transparency.

The main tool I used was ChatGPT (OpenAI; GPT-5 and GPT-5.5, May 2026). I also used Grammarly to check and edit the text's spelling, grammar, and language. All AI-generated suggestions were always reviewed and edited by the author and were not used directly without revision or as a copy-paste.

1.4 Structure of the study

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. First is defined the background of the study and the relevance of the topic. Furthermore, the re-

search gap, research questions, and objectives are defined, along with main definitions of the key concepts. At the end of chapter one the overall structure of the study is introduced.

The second chapter is the literature review and focuses on the main theoretical concepts of the thesis: global mindset and virtual team effectiveness. This includes a discussion of the main theoretical aspects of global mindset, its dimensions, its relevance for managers, as well as the actions that can support its development. Next, the factors influencing virtual team effectiveness in MNCs are discussed, focusing on challenges, as well as team dynamics and the managers role in leading virtual teams. Finally, the chapter concludes by summarizing both theoretical concepts together by developing the theoretical framework for the research.

The third chapter is about the study's methodology. It outlines the research approach, research design, data collection methods, and approaches to data analysis.

Chapter four presents and analyses the findings in relation to the research questions.

Chapter five is the conclusion, where the findings are discussed and answers to research questions are provided. The thesis concludes by addressing its limitations and suggesting directions for future research.

2 Virtual team effectiveness and MNCs

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the study by discussing the concepts of virtual team effectiveness and global mindset in the context of MNCs. First, the concept of virtual teams is introduced by presenting their importance in MNCs, followed by a discussion of virtual team effectiveness and the factors that influence it. In this study, virtual team effectiveness is used to understand how virtual teams function and what factors support or limit their functioning in the MNC context. The role of managers in leading virtual teams is then addressed.

Second, the concept of global mindset is introduced, including its dimensions, relevance for managers, and how it can be developed. In this study, global mindset is used to understand how managers' capabilities to work across diverse cultural contexts influence the way they lead culturally diverse teams in virtual environments and respond to challenges associated with virtual collaboration. Finally, these two concepts are brought together by exploring how global mindset can influence the effectiveness of virtual teams.

2.1 Virtual teams in MNCs

Nowadays, businesses increasingly focus on expanding into international markets, highlighting the growth of cross-border operations, which have expanded and become far more complex in recent decades (Cavusgil, 2024). These activities are driven by various actors involved in international business, among which focal firms play a central role. Focal firms can be understood as the core of international business operations, the ones who initiate and lead international business activities by developing and delivering products or services to global markets (Cavusgil, 2024). Multinational corporations (MNCs), also known as multinational enterprises (MNEs), represent key focal firms in international business. Cavusgil (2024) defines MNCs as "large company with substantial resources that performs various business activities through network of subsidiaries and affiliates located in multiple countries" (p.16).

In order to operate internationally, MNCs establish production facilities, marketing units, and regional headquarters across various countries, particularly in regions such as Asia, Europe, and North America (Cavusgil, 2024). As a result, this leads to the development of extensive networks linking subsidiaries and affiliated entities across multiple regions. This also introduces a high level of organizational complexity. Cavusgil (2024) defines organizational structure as “reporting relationships inside the firm that specify the links between people, functions, and processes” (p.319). The more MNCs engage in international operations, the more complex their organizational structures become (Cavusgil, 2024).

In such complex organizational settings, managers are often required to collaborate and share decision making responsibilities across different locations and units. This increases the need for effective communication and coordination, but also creates challenges, as managers may operate in different cultural and geographical contexts (Cavusgil, 2024; Deresky, 2017). However, advancements in technologies related to communication, production, transportation, and information have made it possible to manage geographically dispersed operations more effectively, making communication and coordination across such units easier (Cavusgil, 2024). As a result, organizations increasingly rely on virtual teams to facilitate communication and coordinate their operations between units (Jimenez et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2016).

As the organizational structure of MNCs is complex, it is important to consider the broader concept of teams to better understand the role of virtual teams in this context. Teams can be defined as a “group of people who are glued together by a common purpose, committed to and accountable for shared goals, rather than only just their own individual objectives and agenda” (Pucik et al. 2023, p. 280). In MNCs, global task coordination is a common practice, which leads to the formation of global teams (Cavusgil, 2024). These teams consist of geographically distributed groups of employees and are often diverse, as members come from different locations and cultural backgrounds (Pucik et al., 2023). Their main task is to collaborate to solve problems or develop prac-

tices that influence company operations on a broader scale (Hill & Bartol, 2016; Thomas & Inkson). Collaboration within these teams often takes place through virtual means, such as video conferencing tools and intranets, as well as occasional face-to-face interactions (Cavusgil, 2024).

Virtual teams can be defined as teams whose members are geographically distributed, often across different locations and countries, separated by time zones, and who work together primarily through electronic communication technologies (Batırlık et al., 2022; Horwitz et al., 2006; Malhotra et al., 2007). In contrast to traditional face-to-face teams, where members are primarily located in the same place and interact directly with one another, VT relies on digital tools for communication, with members being geographically dispersed (Berry, 2011; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000).

For many organizations it has become a necessity to work in distributed teams to remain competitive in the global market (Jabbour Al Maalouf & Sarkis, 2025). While the use of virtual work practices had already been increasing over time, the COVID-19 pandemic left many companies with no choice but to switch to virtual work. Since then, many companies have adapted to these changes and working styles have evolved, revealing both the benefits and challenges of virtual collaboration (Klonek et al., 2022; Pucik et al., 2023; Taras, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2024).

Virtual teams may operate entirely online, meaning that their work is organised fully digitally and they may never meet in person (Berry, 2011; Malhotra et al., 2007). Additionally, as cross-border collaboration has become increasingly common, VT often consist of members outside the company, such as freelancers, contractors, and suppliers, rather than only full and part time employees from the company (Jimenez et al., 2017). These teams rely on a variety of digital tools that facilitate communication across time zones and physical distances. Synchronous tools, such as videoconferencing platforms like Zoom, enable real-time interaction among team members, while asynchronous tools,

such as email and messaging platforms, allow communication and coordination to continue even when team members are working at different times (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002).

As the use of VT has increased, scholars have recognised the difficulty of categorizing them as either fully virtual or non-virtual (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006). This has led to the concept of virtuality, which suggests that teams may differ in their level of virtuality. The level of virtuality depends on the physical distance between team members and their reliance on computer-mediated communication (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Gilson et al., 2015). Berry (2011) explains that “the highest degree of virtuality is when all members work apart from each other in distant locations and only communicate and interact through computer-mediated communication or other distance communication technologies” (p.188). In contrast, a low level of virtuality can be observed when team members send emails to each other while they are in the same workspace, for example in shared office, but still rely on digital tools for communication.

The growing popularity of GVT can also be explained by the opportunities they bring for the organizations (Jimenez et al., 2017). From an organizational perspective, one of the key advantages is the ability to distribute work across different time zones, allowing tasks to be completed continuously as they are passed between regions. Additionally, work in VT can increase cost efficiency for both organizations and employees, as organizations can bring together diverse talent without relocation costs, while employees do not need to commute to work and back (Jimenez et al., 2017). From an employee perspective, research suggests that working in GVT provides more independence, improved focus, and a global environment that offers challenges and opportunities for growth (Nurmi & Hinds, 2016).

In MNCs, virtual teams are not only geographically dispersed, but also culturally and organizationally complex. This makes leading and managing these teams more demanding, as managers need to work across distance, time zones, digital communication tools, and different cultural expectations (Berry, 2011; Pucik et al., 2023; Cavusgil, 2024). Therefore,

managing virtual teams in MNCs requires capabilities beyond traditional team management, such as the ability to understand cultural differences, adapt communication, build trust, and create collaboration through virtual means (Berry, 2011). Global mindset describes these types of managerial capabilities, which may help managers respond to the challenges of culturally diverse virtual collaboration and support virtual team effectiveness (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007; Pucik et al., 2023)

2.2 Virtual team effectiveness

Team effectiveness is considered one of the most important competencies for successful project delivery, as projects that are poorly managed, particularly in diverse contexts, often fail to meet initial goals (Riesenberger, 2016). However, simply bringing together individuals with the required knowledge and skills in virtual environments does not guarantee that they will be able to work effectively and innovate across contexts (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006). This is particularly relevant in VT, where achieving effectiveness can be more complex due to working across distance, time zones and digital platforms (Berry, 2011).

Team effectiveness can be understood as the evaluation of team outcomes based on how well they meet predefined criteria (Hackman, 1987). In research on teamwork, effectiveness can be explained through the input-process-output (IPO) framework originally proposed by McGrath (1964). Inputs refer to the characteristics and resources that team members bring to the team, processes describe how members interact and coordinate their work, and outputs represent the results that the team achieves (McGrath, 1964; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). In this framework, team effectiveness is typically evaluated through three main outcomes: team performance, the satisfaction of team members, and team viability, which refers to the willingness of members to continue working together in the future (Hackman, 1987).

Additionally, team effectiveness is influenced by team dynamics, which evolve over time as team members adjust to different processes and demands they face (Humphrey &

Aime, 2014; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Simply put, interactions between team members create team dynamics, which can be defined as an evolving combination of shared attitudes, behaviours, and thought processes within a team that influence how it functions over time. As team members work together for a certain period, they eventually become used to each other's ways of working and develop expectations about how others communicate, collaborate, and complete tasks (Delice et al., 2019).

Previous research shows that achieving effectiveness in VT requires attention to several areas, including organizational culture, the nature of team tasks, technological tools used for collaboration, the development of team members through training, and the way work and team processes are organised (Cohen & Gibson, 2003). Similarly, Berry (2011) argues that VT effectiveness depends on several factors, including clear communication among team members, the ability to manage conflicts effectively, and clearly defined roles within the team. This emphasizes the importance of examining the factors that enhance or limit virtual team effectiveness.

In this study, virtual team effectiveness is mainly examined through the dimensions of team performance and team member satisfaction, while team viability is considered as a supporting dimension. This is because the study does not primarily focus on the long-term continuity of teamwork or team members' willingness to continue working together in the future (Hackman, 1987). Performance is central, because the complex structure of MNCs, especially in virtual teams, creates interest in understanding how work is coordinated, communicated, and managed across locations. These aspects may influence how effectively team members collaborate and achieve shared goals. Similarly, team member satisfaction is relevant because managers play an important role in creating an inclusive environment that supports effective collaboration across cultures, where members feel listened to, understood, and valued (Berry, 2011; Kayworth & Leidner, 2002; Klein & Kleinhanns, 2003; Pucik et al., 2023).

2.3 Factors affecting virtual team effectiveness in MNCs

The way teams manage their internal dynamics can determine whether global teams in MNCs benefit from their diversity and global opportunities or struggle to overcome the challenges created by their differences (Stahl et al., 2010). Due to the complex nature of virtual teams, it is necessary to examine the factors that influence team effectiveness to better understand what affects the process of collaboration and goal achievement in virtual teams (Berry, 2011). Therefore, this section discusses both factors that support virtual team effectiveness and factors that may limit it. This distinction helps to better understand the conditions that contribute to successful virtual teamwork, as well as the challenges that may reduce its effectiveness. Later, this distinction will also support the analysis of how managers' global mindset influences the way these enhancing and limiting factors are managed in virtual teams.

2.3.1 Factors enhancing virtual team effectiveness

Authors argue that teams develop over time, adjusting to different processes and demands they face, which makes it complicated to clearly specify what traits and actions lead teams to the best results (Humphrey & Aime, 2014; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). However, team effectiveness is influenced by team dynamics, and when these dynamics are managed effectively, collaboration within the team becomes smoother and better supports the achievement of shared goals (Delice et al., 2019).

One framework that helps to explain how teams function is the A-B-C framework developed by Salas et al. (2008), which identifies three main elements of teamwork: behaviours, attitudes, and cognitions. These elements are further described as key components that shape team dynamics (Arrow et al., 2000). Behaviours such as communication, collaboration, and coordination describe the actions of team members (Delice et al., 2019). Attitudes include factors such as openness, trust, cohesion, and team viability, reflecting the underlying perceptions of team members. Cognitions refer to knowledge elements, including transactive memory, shared mental models, and knowledge ex-

change (Delice et al., 2019). These actions, underlying perceptions, and cognitions are important components in enhancing the effectiveness of virtual teams.

Communication, collaboration and coordination are considered important behavioural processes that affects how VT perform (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Lin et al., 2008; Venkatesh & Windeler, 2012). These processes are closely connected, as effective communication supports both collaboration and coordination among team members and helps to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings (Batırlık et al., 2022).

Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) explain that coordination refers to the ability of team members to align their actions, efforts, and timing to complete tasks effectively. Communication supports this process by enabling team members to exchange information, clarify responsibilities, and work together to achieve shared goals (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006; Morgan et al., 1993). As a result, these processes complement each other, as clear communication helps team members develop a shared understanding of tasks and responsibilities, which in turn supports more effective coordination of their activities (Paul et al., 2016).

Trust is an important aspect of team dynamics and is also among the most researched elements in the VT literature (Gilson et al., 2015). In the work environment, trust can be defined as: “willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). Trust influences whether team members are willing to share feedback, reach out for help, express their opinions, and communicate openly, which is particularly important in VT (Breuer et al., 2016; Choi & Cho, 2019). Without trust within the team, even appropriate knowledge and expertise may not be enough to ensure success, as teams may struggle to perform effectively if members are unable to trust and rely on each other (Mathieu et al., 2008). However, building trust can be more challenging in VT, where members

interact mainly through digital communication and have fewer opportunities for direct personal interaction.

Team cohesion can be understood as “the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group” (Festinger, 1950, p. 274). In other words, cohesion reflects the extent to which team members feel connected to the group and are motivated to stay and work together. Research suggests that team cohesion is positively related to team performance, particularly when team tasks require strong interdependence and coordination of information and effort (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

In addition, appreciation within the team, clear role definitions, and a friendly and supportive atmosphere within the team contribute to effective teamwork (Klein & Kleinhanns, 2003). When team members understand their roles and feel valued within the team, collaboration tends to become more efficient.

2.3.2 Factors limiting virtual team effectiveness

While working in VT provides organizations with opportunities for global collaboration, it also introduces several challenges that organizations need to be aware of to succeed (Jabbour Al Maalouf & Sarkis, 2025; Mockaitis et al., 2012). Previous studies identify cultural diversity, communication issues, lack of physical presence, time zone differences, trust building, as well as coordination and leadership challenges as some of the most common difficulties faced by MNCs when operating in VT (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023).

In MNCs, teams are often globally distributed and diverse, which increases the complexity of virtual collaboration. This complexity arises because team members may differ not only in their cultural backgrounds, professional expertise, and language skills, but also in their values and personal traits (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Taras et al., 2019). As a result, greater cultural diversity within teams is expected to lead to more pronounced differences in attitudes and behaviors (Mockaitis et al., 2012). While

some scholars focus on these challenges, others emphasize its potential benefits, arguing that diverse backgrounds bring different perspectives and knowledge, allowing teams to access a wider range of ideas and information, which can support creativity and problem-solving (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000; Ng & Tung, 1998).

Nevertheless, cultural diversity in virtual teams creates additional complexity. Brett et al. (2006) identify common cultural challenges in multicultural teams, including differences in decision-making norms, expectations regarding authority and leadership, variations in communication styles, and challenges related to language proficiency. For example, while in some cultures it is common to speak over others and express ideas immediately, in others this may be considered inappropriate, as individuals prefer to wait for their turn to speak and avoid interrupting others (Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

In fact, differences in native languages and language proficiency can further complicate communication. Even when team members share a common business language, such as English, misunderstandings may still occur, and certain words may be interpreted in different ways (Pucik et al., 2023; Zakaria, 2017). As a result, individuals who feel less confident in their language skills may participate less actively and feel less influential within the team (Hinds, 2014).

In virtual teams, communication challenges arise due to a lack of face-to-face interactions, as team members are not able to fully observe the person on the other side of the screen, making it difficult to notice emotions and feelings from team members that signal their current feelings, which increases the risk of misunderstandings (Degbey & Einola, 2020; Dietz-Uhler & Bishop-Clark, 2001; Pucik et al., 2023). Another problem arises from the inability to receive immediate feedback, particularly when communicating via email or other asynchronous tools, which may reduce work efficiency. On top of that, working across different time zones makes it more difficult to schedule meetings and coordinate communication among team members, further complicating communication through digital means (Pucik et al., 2023).

The absence of physical presence represents another key challenge in virtual teams. Without regular face-to-face interaction, teams struggle to stay connected around shared organizational goals and long-term success (Begley & Boyd, 2003). This view is also supported by Taras (2025), who emphasizes that many challenges in GVT arise from the lack of non-work-related communication, meaning that team members lack the informal interactions, that are common in face-to-face teams. This can create challenges in building relationships and developing trust. The absence of such informal communication can eventually affect overall team dynamics and effectiveness.

In addition, in virtual settings colleagues may experience conflicts more often, which represents another challenge that can limit the effectiveness of virtual teams (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Mockaitis et al., 2012). According to Jehn (1995), conflict within teams can be divided into two types: relationship conflict and task conflict. Relationship conflict arises from interpersonal tensions and misunderstandings between team members, often leading to negative emotions. In contrast, task conflict refers to disagreements related to the work itself, such as differences in opinions about work structure, decisions, or problem-solving approaches, and may in some cases have positive effects, as it allows team members to express their opinions and potentially identify better solutions (Jehn, 1995). However, the importance of trust and team cohesion becomes especially visible in such situations, as these factors help teams resolve conflicts and maintain performance (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

Finally, leading VT introduces additional challenges, as managers need to operate and manage teams primarily through digital communication. In these settings, it becomes more difficult to track progress, coordinate tasks, receive quick responses from team members across locations, and observe how individuals are working. This makes coordination more complex and requires managers to develop different skills to maintain effective collaboration within the team (Batırlık et al., 2022; Berry, 2011).

While some challenges are beyond managers' control and cannot be completely addressed, their leadership approach and way of thinking can still influence how these challenges are managed. For example, limiting factors such as time zone differences, lack of physical presence, cultural diversity, and language-related challenges are often part of the MNC context (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023; Zakaria, 2017). However, by communicating clearly, setting clear expectations, building trust across the team, and coordinating work thoughtfully, managers can reduce the negative effects of these limitations and support more effective teamwork (Breuer et al., 2016; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Therefore, the following sections explore the role of managers in leading virtual teams and the capabilities that may influence how effectively these teams are managed.

2.4 The managers role in leading virtual teams

Creating effective virtual teamwork requires abilities that differ from those needed in face-to-face teams (Berry, 2011). Different authors have highlighted the complexity and challenges that leading a virtual team brings for managers (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Berry 2011). As stated by Berry (2011), "Virtual teams that are designed, managed, and implemented effectively can harness talent and knowledge from anywhere in the world to solve problems and complete work tasks on a 24/7 schedule" (p.195). Managing GVT therefore requires managers to recognize emerging challenges and find effective ways to address them (Taras, 2025).

For example, cultural misunderstandings can be reduced if managers establish shared rules and expectations when onboarding team members to a project. In addition, the lack of informal communication in virtual environments may weaken trust and engagement, which highlights the need for managers to encourage team bonding through informal interactions, such as video calls or team-building activities. Another challenge relates to uneven effort distribution caused by different workloads or institutional priorities, which can be addressed through open discussions about responsibilities, timelines and expectations (Taras, 2025). Effective leadership in virtual teams also requires balanc-

ing both task achievement with team member satisfaction. Kayworth and Leidner (2002) suggest that leaders must ensure that team members remain engaged and recognize the importance of their contribution to the team, which can be more difficult in virtual environments, where physical distance may reduce attention and commitment to team tasks (Klein & Kleinhanns, 2003).

These challenges highlight several important skills that leaders need to lead VT effectively, including communication, setting clear expectations, allocating resources, and modelling desired behaviours (Duarte & Snyder, 2001). Although these competencies are similar to those required in traditional face-to-face leadership, managers need to understand how to apply them effectively in the context of virtual teamwork (Berry, 2011). In addition, Pucik et al. (2023) emphasise that leaders working with global and distributed teams need skills to manage a range of emotions, resolve conflicts, listen actively, take initiative, and demonstrate cultural empathy.

Cross-cultural competence is therefore an essential capability for leaders of global teams (Zander et al., 2012). Without it, managers may remain in an ethnocentric orientation, relying on their own cultural perspective to interpret and evaluate others (Cavusgil, 2024; Neuliep, 2022). In contrast, effective managers move beyond this perspective and adopt a more globally oriented mindset.

For example, managers who adopt a geocentric orientation are open-minded, demonstrate an interest in working in diverse environments, and can look beyond country-specific thinking to understand business and life situations across different cultural contexts (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Story et al., 2014). Geocentric orientation can be defined as “a global mindset that enables manager to understand a business or market without regard to country boundaries” (Cavusgil, 2024, p.82). This highlights global mindset as a key capability that allows managers to better navigate different cultural environments and more effectively lead diverse virtual teams (Cavusgil, 2024).

Given that the success of virtual teams largely depends on the effectiveness of leadership, this emphasizes the importance of leadership style and the extent to which managers are open-minded (Berry, 2011; Cavusgil, 2024). Managers who demonstrate such open-mindedness have a more flexible way of thinking, as they view situations from a broader perspective. This enables them to operate across cultural boundaries, interpret diverse environments, and continuously adapt their approaches to changing global conditions (Paul, 2000). It also allows them to better recognize both the factors that enhance virtual team effectiveness and the challenges that may limit it, and to respond to them appropriately (Story et al., 2014). By recognizing cultural differences among team members and finding ways to manage them, managers can build trust within the team, which is one of the key elements in enhancing the effectiveness of virtual teams. This, in turn, can lead to higher work engagement and greater team satisfaction (Cavusgil, 2024; Gilson et al., 2015).

Therefore, leading culturally diverse virtual teams requires more than technical skills or the abilities needed in traditional face-to-face teams (Berry, 2011). Managers need to find effective ways to work with people from different countries, cultures, perspectives, and working styles. This creates a need for a global mindset, as it supports openness, broader way of thinking, and the ability to understand and work across different cultural contexts (Levy et al., 2007). In this way, global mindset becomes relevant for understanding how managers deal with the enhancing and limiting factors of virtual teamwork in order to lead diverse virtual teams effectively.

2.5 Global mindset and virtual team effectiveness in MNCs

Globalization has resulted in the expansion of multinational organizations, both in number and scale, creating a need for leaders who can work effectively in international environments (Story et al., 2014). Although there is a significant amount of knowledge on how to globalize organizations through areas such as technology and logistics, there is still limited understanding of how to prepare individuals for global roles (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). This has led to increased academic attention toward the concept of global

mindset (French, 2018). In this study, global mindset is the central concept connecting managers and virtual team effectiveness, because the effectiveness of virtual teams strongly depends on how managers lead, communicate, and respond to the demands of culturally diverse virtual work (Berry, 2011; Pucik et al. 2023). Global mindset helps to explain how managers interpret cultural differences, adapt their leadership approaches, and manage challenges that arise in MNC contexts (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). Therefore, global mindset is relevant for understanding how managers influence the factors that enhance or limit virtual team effectiveness.

It is individuals in leadership roles who need to develop such capabilities to manage the complexity that international environments bring, especially in virtual settings (Cavusgil, 2024; Jeannet, 2000; Levy et al., 2007). From a cultural perspective, a global mindset helps managers move beyond an ethnocentric view by developing cultural self-awareness, openness to other cultures, and the ability to integrate useful practices from different contexts (Levy et al., 2007).

Mindset can be understood as a set of cognitive filters shaped by past experiences, which influence how individuals process information and whether they adapt to or reject new ideas, depending on how open they are to new perspectives (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). Mindset impacts various aspects of behaviour, including thinking, learning, decision-making, and the way individuals work (Frankel, 2023). The way managers think, lead and make decisions is therefore shaped by their mindset, which is directly connected to their global mindset. Building on this, global mindset represents a managerial capability that enables leaders to operate effectively in international and cross-cultural settings. It influences how managers interpret situations and make decisions, which can have direct impact on the firm's global performance in the long term (Levy et al., 2015).

In academic literature, global mindset has been defined in various ways. For example, Levy et al. (2007) explain global mindset as a “highly complex cognitive structure characterised by an openness to and articulation of multiple cultural and strategic realities

on both global and local levels, and the cognitive ability to mediate and integrate across this multiplicity” (p.244). Cohen (2010) adds another perspective, explaining global mindset as the “ability to influence individuals, groups, organizations, and systems that have different intellectual, social, and psychological knowledge or intelligence from your own” (p.5). Ranker et al. (2015) further emphasize that global mindset is “the ability to step outside one’s base culture and to understand that there is no universally correct way to do things” (p.23).

From a corporate perspective, Begley & Boyd (2003) define global mindset as “the ability to develop and interpret criteria for business performance that are not dependent on the assumptions of a single country, culture or context and to implement those criteria appropriately in different countries, cultures and contexts” (p.25-26). Similarly, Gupta and Govindarajan (2002) define global mindset as “one that combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity” (p.117).

Javidan and Bowen (2013) propose a definition of global mindset as “the set of individual qualities and attributes that help a manager influence individuals, groups and organizations who are from other part of the world” (p.147). They further emphasize that demonstrating strong global mindset attributes supports effective collaboration with diverse individuals in international environments.

This highlights that today it is no longer just about technical skills, to operate in an international environment, managers need the cognitive ability to think beyond their own cultural assumptions to be able to understand other markets and competitors (Levy et al., 2007). While each definition offers a different perspective, they all highlight the importance of openness, the ability to work across cultures, and the capacity to adapt one’s thinking beyond the comfort zone to view the world more broadly, which are important managerial capabilities for leading virtual teams in MNCs.

2.5.1 Global mindset as a managerial capability

Global mindset consists of three main dimensions introduced by Javidan and Bowen (2010, 2013): intellectual capital, psychological capital, and social capital. They emphasise that the most effective global leaders demonstrate strength across all three dimensions (Javidan et al., 2010). Figure 1 conceptualises these three capitals along with their nine underlying components.

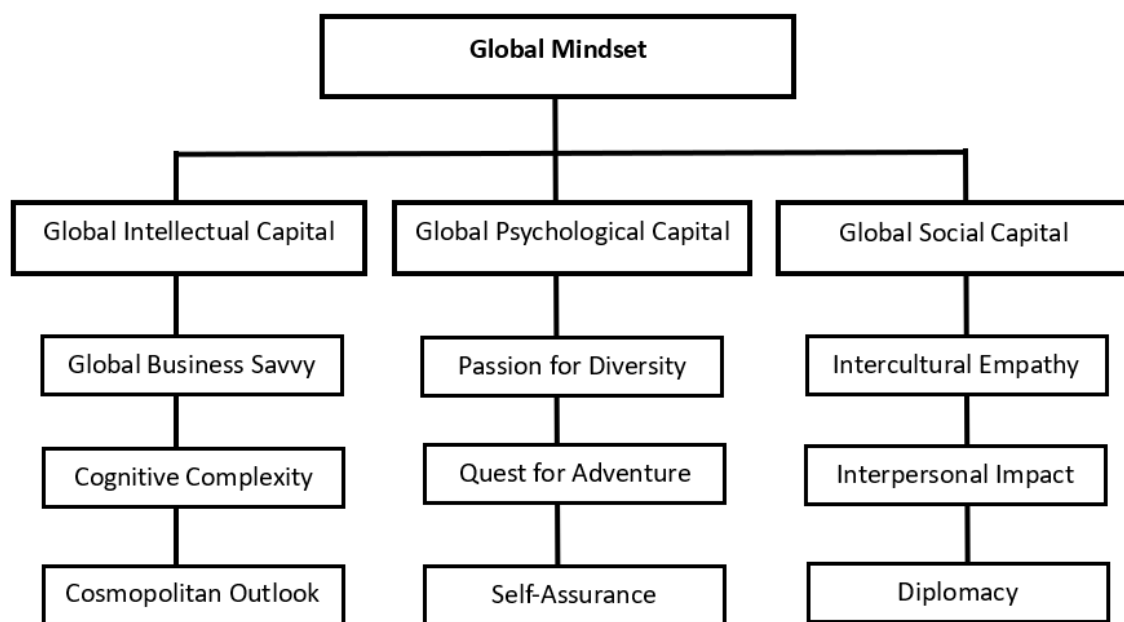


Figure 1. The Structure of Global Mindset (Javidan & Bowen, 2013, p.147).

Global Intellectual Capital is the cognitive side of global mindset, referring to managers' knowledge of the global business they operate in, their ability to understand how organizations operate across cultures, and their overall ability to learn (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). It consists of three attributes. Global Business Savvy refers to understanding how business operates worldwide, being aware of competitor actions, and recognizing how strategic risk varies based on location (Javidan et al., 2010; Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Cognitive complexity refers to the ability to process large amounts of information, under-

stand complex concepts, and communicate them clearly (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Cosmopolitan outlook is the ability to understand global differences, including awareness of cultures and economic and political contexts.

Global Psychological Capital is the affective aspect of a global mindset. It reflects a manager's interest, motivation and comfort in working in diverse environments (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). It includes passion for diversity, where managers see cultural differences as an opportunity rather than a burden. Similarly, the quest for adventure reflects managers' openness to unfamiliar situations. Finally, self-assurance refers to having the energy and confidence to operate in global contexts, feeling motivated rather than drained (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Global Social Capital, as the third dimension, represents the behavioral aspect of global mindset. It refers to the ability to build relationships with people from different cultural and professional backgrounds. It includes intercultural empathy, which emphasizes the ability to connect with diverse individuals and collaborate effectively. Interpersonal impact refers to the ability to build relationships across cultures and influence others while understanding different perspectives (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Diplomacy reflects the ability to communicate respectfully, listening to others' opinions, understanding different viewpoints, and being willing to work together (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

To summarise, the three dimensions are interconnected and together influence how leaders think, feel, and act. Global Intellectual capital reflects an understanding of global differences, psychological capital reflects the willingness and confidence to engage in diverse environments, and social capital reflects the ability to build trust through behaviour. By combining these three capitals, managers develop capabilities that enable them to stay competitive by effectively managing the complexities of cross-border operations and achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the global environment (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

The dimensions of global mindset explain its structure, however, its relevance for managers becomes evident in how they think, make decisions, and lead in complex global and virtual environments. As managers' actions and decisions directly impact organisational success, a global mindset has become an essential managerial capability (Levy et al., 2015). It also shapes managers' global orientation, which is a positive perspective toward international issues and the ability to adapt to diverse contexts and cultural norms (van Bulck, 1979).

Levy et al. (2007) conceptualize global mindset as a cognitive information-processing capability that affects how managers interpret and apply information from diverse cultural and strategic environments. This idea is illustrated through an information-processing model (see Figure 2), consisting of three phases: attention to multiple cultural and strategic dynamics, integrated interpretation of those dynamics, and individual action.

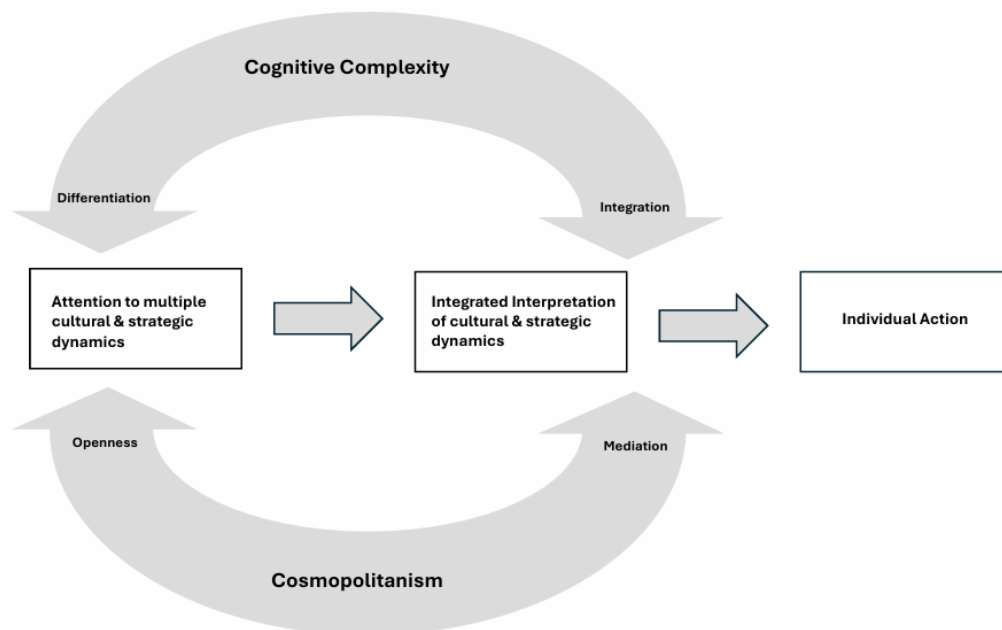


Figure 2. Information-processing model of global mindset by Levy et al. (2007, p.244).

In the first phase, managers identify relevant cultural and strategic differences. This is where having a global mindset comes in handy, as it affects the way managers interpret

information and draws their attention to diverse sources that managers without global mindset might not notice. In the second, interpretation stage, managers make sense of this information and connect it into a clear pattern. In the action stage, they use this understanding to guide decisions and actions.

These phases are supported by three central cognitive capabilities: cognitive complexity, cosmopolitanism and openness (Levy et al., 2007). Cognitive complexity refers to the ability to process large amounts of information and focus on what is relevant, cosmopolitanism reflects openness to information regardless of its origin, and openness phase is about evaluating information without bias.

Similarly, French (2018) emphasises the concept of global information processing, focusing on two related mindsets: integrative and differentiative. A differentiative mindset separates and makes sense of global complexity, while an integrative mindset brings those insights together for context-appropriate action.

This perspective is important for managers because it explains their methods of gathering, analysing, and assessing data from diverse cultural and strategic settings (Levy et al., 2007). When managers apply a global mindset and process information this way, decision making, coordination, and communication improve in culturally diverse and geographically dispersed teams.

This relationship is further illustrated by Beechler and Javidan (2007), who present a global mindset framework connecting leadership qualities and behaviours needed to effectively influence people from different backgrounds (see Figure 3). The framework shows how a global mindset is built through the three previously discussed global mindset components: intellectual, psychological, and social capital. These capitals further enable different behaviours that affect the way managers work in global environments. Such abilities include: “behavioural flexibility and discipline to act appropriately”; “perceiving, analysing and decoding the global operating environment”; and “identifying ef-

fective managerial action in the global operating environment” (Beechler & Javidan, 2007, p.160).

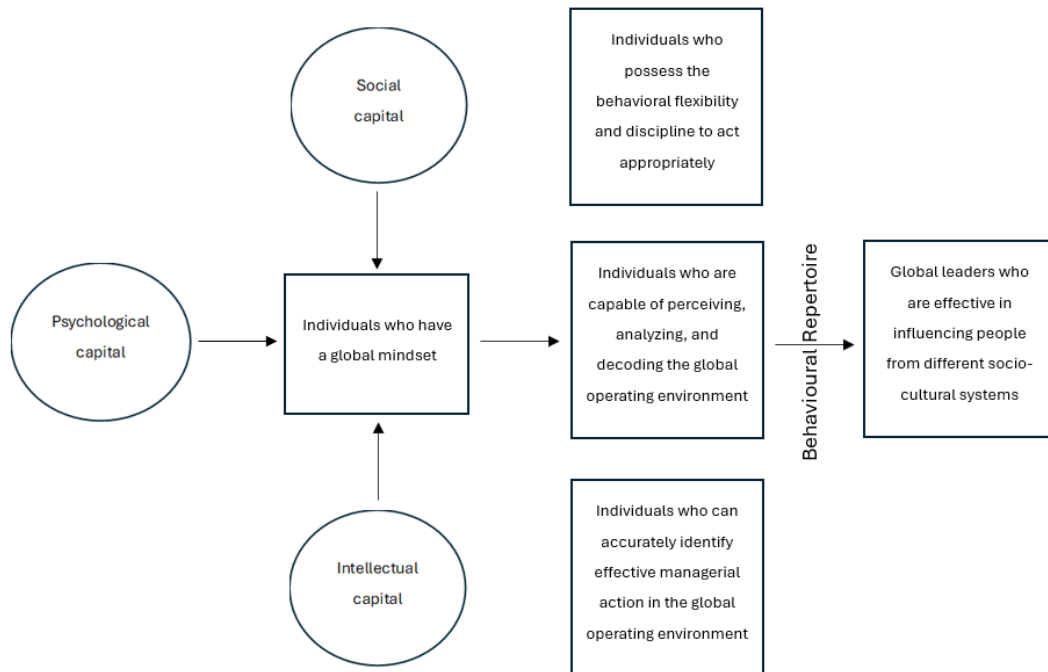


Figure 3. Global mindset framework by Beechler and Javidan (2007, p.160).

In addition, behavioural repertoire describes the set of behaviours a leader can apply when managing different situations, particularly when working across diverse environments (Beechler & Javidan, 2007; Hooijberg, 1996). As a result, managers who combine these capabilities are better able to work with and influence people in diverse cultural environments. Therefore, if global mindset shapes how managers interpret different situations, recognize global opportunities, and respond to them, it becomes essential for organizations to support its development by creating an environment that encourages exposure to diverse contexts, continuous learning, and openness to new perspectives (Paul, 2000).

Developing a global mindset requires a willingness to constantly grow as a person and put in continuous effort for it to happen (French, 2018; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002).

According to Javidan and Bowen (2013), a global mindset can emerge through experiences, but it can also be developed through different programmes and learning activities. The development of global mindset can be viewed through the cycle of attention, interpretation and action, which is represented in information processing model by Levy et al. (2007). Managers learn by paying attention to cross-border interactions and then reflecting on what they observe in relation to their own local context. Over time, this kind of learning helps build key global mindset capacities, such as cognitive complexity, cosmopolitanism, and openness (Levy et al., 2007; Daft & Weick, 1984).

Building on this, Gupta and Govindarajan (2002) identify four key factors that influence the speed at which a global mindset can be developed: “curiosity about the world; an explicit and self-conscious articulation of current mindsets; exposure to diversity and novelty; and a disciplined attempt to develop an integrated perspective that weaves together diverse strands of knowledge about cultures and markets” (p.120).

First, the more interest a person has in the world around them, the more likely they are to seek out global information and new valuable experiences. This can be connected with the psychological capital of global mindset, which Javidan and Bowen (2013) describe as the hardest one to develop, as it is closely related to deeper personal aspects and motivations (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Supporting this view, Story et al. (2014) found that characteristics such as hope, confidence, resilience, and optimism are positively associated with higher levels of global mindset. Development can be supported through self-reflection and intentional exposure to unfamiliar experiences, which is commonly used by MNCs to increase individuals’ interest in the world (Javidan & Bowen, 2010).

Secondly, the way individuals understand the world is closely connected to their existing mindset, and this perspective also affects how our mindset develops, either confirming what we already believe or leading us to change our views. Through reflection, managers can challenge their assumptions and recognize that their viewpoint is only one of many possible interpretations (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). For example, writing down as-

sumptions about other cultures or markets and later comparing them with others can reveal differences in thinking and therefore broaden understanding. This kind of reflective work contributes to the development of both psychological and intellectual capital, as managers deepen their knowledge and perspectives on cultures and global work practices (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Exposure to diverse cultures and environments is another key factor in developing global mindset (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). Development depends not only on individual motivation, but also on the experiences and support provided by organizations (Levy et al., 2015). Research shows that experiences such as living abroad and speaking multiple languages contribute positively to development, whereas short-term international business trips alone do not have the same effect (Story et al., 2014).

Organizations can therefore help in global mindset development by providing meaningful international experiences and by building diversity into teams and organizational structures. However, an individual-level development takes time, therefore it is not advised to rely only on a single approach. Instead, combining individual learning with structural diversity is essential for effective development (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002).

Different practices support the development of specific dimensions of global mindset. Global intellectual capital, considered the easiest dimension to develop, can be strengthened through education, such as training programmes, courses, and seminars (Javidan & Bowen, 2010). In contrast, global social capital develops through intercultural interaction and collaboration (Javidan & Bowen, 2010, 2013). Participation in international projects and work assignments provides the opportunity to work together with people from diverse backgrounds and understand how organizations operate across different settings (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Levy et al., 2015). A practical example of this can be seen in global companies such as ABB, Unilever, and Nestlé, which utilize a networking culture by bringing together employees from different parts of the organization through inter-

national projects and training programmes. This increases managers' ability to collaborate effectively in global contexts (Paul, 2000).

Finally, developing a global mindset requires the ability to integrate diverse cultural and market knowledge into one coherent view (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). This capability is a strong indicator of well-developed global intellectual capital, as it involves working with complex information and combining different viewpoints so that they lead to shared understanding and aligned action (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Recognizing that business practices and strategies that are effective in one context may not apply in another is an important aspect of this integrative process (Ranker et al., 2015). For managers, these skills are important for creating a structured and coordinated environment where diverse perspectives are brought together around shared goals and values, and collaboration across locations is actively supported (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). While there are different practices for developing a global mindset, the outcomes of these efforts cannot be predicted. They depend on individual characteristics such as cognitive abilities, personality, motivation, as well as the level of organizational support provided (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Levy et al., 2015; Osland et al., 2006).

To summarize, global mindset is a combination of intellectual, psychological and social capital, each contributing to leading virtual teams in different ways. Global intellectual capital supports managers' ability to understand complex cultural and organizational differences. This helps managers to navigate diverse environments by organizing coordination, aligning tasks, and clarifying expectations, so that team members across locations understand shared goals and responsibilities (Javidan et al., 2010; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). Global psychological capital is associated with openness, motivation, and interest in working with people from different countries and cultures, as well as seeing diversity as an opportunity rather than a challenge. This can support team cohesion, as managers with a genuine interest in diversity may create a more inclusive

team atmosphere where members feel that their opinions are valued and respected (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Javidan et al., 2010; Story et al., 2014). Global social capital is closely related to relationship-building and intercultural empathy, which can support creating trust within the team. This is especially important in virtual teams, where members are geographically separated and may have limited or no face-to-face interaction, making this dimension particularly relevant for building trust and collaboration (Beechler & Javidan, 2007; Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

2.5.2 The role of global mindset in enhancing virtual team effectiveness

In this study, managers' global mindset is understood as a capability that helps enhance virtual team effectiveness through its influence on key team dynamics, such as communication, coordination, trust building, and team cohesion. It shapes how managers think and behave, which in turn influences how they lead virtual teams and how effectively they manage these factors in practice (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). Managers with global mindset capabilities may therefore be better able to organize and manage virtual teamwork in culturally diverse settings, leading to improved effectiveness (Gilson et al., 2015; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Lin et al., 2008; Venkatesh & Windeler, 2012).

Communication is one of the most important factors influencing virtual team effectiveness, as virtual collaboration mainly relies on how well communication is structured and maintained (Dietz-Uhler & Bishop-Clark, 2001; Pucik et al., 2023). At the same time, in MNCs virtual teams are often multicultural, which can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication due to differences in communication styles and interpretations (Cavusgil, 2024). Managers with a global mindset are better able to recognize and adapt these differences, showing appreciation for other cultures. This gives them an advantage in leading employees more effectively in cross-cultural virtual settings (Cavusgil, 2024; Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

If coordination within the team is smooth and everyone knows their responsibilities and shared goals, it indicates successful communication (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Morgan et

al., 1993). Managers who possess strong global intellectual capital are better able to process complex information and align diverse team members with appropriate tasks (Javidan et al., 2010; Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Their cognitive complexity enables them to create clear communication patterns that lead to structured coordination (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Additionally, if a manager possesses global psychological capital, the manager can better navigate cultural differences and identify ways it benefits the team rather than limits it, thereby coordinating the work so that each member can bring out their best skills (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

A global mindset can also support trust building, which is one of the key elements of virtual team effectiveness (Gilson et al., 2015). Managers who possess global social capital are better able to build relationships with people from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, while also understanding other perspectives and recognising differences (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Interpersonal skills such as intercultural empathy, diplomacy, active listening, and willingness to work together can further strengthen trust within the team (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Managers with global mindset competencies are also more interested in learning about different cultures and use this knowledge to improve the effectiveness of business operations. When leading international teams, it is a requirement rather than an option to understand cultural differences, such as perceptions of time, values, personal space, communication styles, and even small details like gestures or symbols (Cavusgil, 2024). Without this understanding, managers may form incorrect assumptions or misinterpret actions and behaviours (Cavusgil, 2024). Additionally, managers with a global mindset are more willing to learn about and understand cultural differences. This can improve the well-being of team members, as they feel more included and valued when their cultural backgrounds are recognised and respected in the work environment. This, in turn, positively influences team effectiveness through higher engagement and productivity.

Team members are more likely to feel connected to the team when they experience inclusion and mutual respect, strengthening team cohesion (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). In virtual teams, where building personal connections is more difficult, managers with global mindset capabilities may be more likely to foster an inclusive and engaged environment in which team members feel connected and like they belong (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Managers with higher psychological capital are more likely to demonstrate motivation and interest in working with diverse teams. In contrast, social capital supports the building of meaningful relationships through behaviours such as active listening, respect for different viewpoints, and effective conflict handling (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

2.5.3 The limitations of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness

In contrast, managers who lack or have not fully developed global mindset capabilities may struggle to meet the demands of leading culturally diverse virtual teams. In this study, the limitations of global mindset are understood through the difficulties managers may face when they are less able to interpret cultural differences, adapt their communication, and build relationships and trust across cultures (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). When these capabilities are weak, managers may be more likely to face miscommunication, coordination difficulties, reduced trust and weaker team cohesion in their teams (Gilson et al., 2015; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023).

Biased interpretation of cultural differences can be a major limitation. Managers can achieve better effectiveness in a cross-cultural context by being open-minded and leaving their stereotypes and assumptions behind (Cavusgil, 2024). For this reason, managers with an underdeveloped global mindset may rely on assumptions and think from an ethnocentric perspective, as they lack sufficient cultural awareness and openness (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Managers who primarily view situations through their own cultural perspective may fail to recognise alternative viewpoints or working styles. This can result in decisions that do not consider the diversity within the team and may create barriers to collaboration, leading to misunderstandings, misaligned expectations, and ineffective

collaboration within the team, as managers may lack understanding of others' reasoning and thought processes (Cavusgil, 2024).

Difficulty in adapting communication styles across cultures is another limitation faced by virtual teams (Pucik et al., 2023). Managers with limited global mindset capabilities may struggle with both verbal and non-verbal communication in culturally diverse environments (Cavusgil, 2024). This can be explained by a lack of global intellectual capital, which reduces their ability to process complex information and communicate it clearly across contexts, increasing the likelihood of miscommunication and reducing overall communication effectiveness (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

When managers lack global social capital, they may find it harder to build strong connections with people from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, which can limit virtual team effectiveness. This may occur because managers are less comfortable working with people who are different from themselves, may fail to understand different perspectives, and misinterpret some behaviours due to limited knowledge. As a result, it becomes more difficult to develop trust, which can negatively affect collaboration, coordination, and overall team performance (Cavusgil, 2024; Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Unintentional exclusion can occur when managers make some team members feel left out, unheard, or undervalued. This often happens not on purpose, but because of a limited global mindset that reduces awareness and understanding. As in virtual teams, communication takes place through online meetings and written messages; not everyone has equal opportunities or confidence to participate, creating space for this situation to occur (Hinds, 2014). Some team members may feel less comfortable speaking up due to language barriers, cultural norms, or the lack of non-verbal cues. Managers who lack a global mindset may not recognise differences in participation and communication styles. Because of this, they might make wrong assumptions about performance or unintentionally overlook some team members, even if their lower participation is tied to these

differences. Over time, this can reduce engagement, limit knowledge sharing and weaken team cohesion.

Diversity has its advantages and disadvantages. While it can enhance creativity and introduce different ways of approaching the problems, managers who lack a global mindset may struggle to integrate these diverse perspectives into team processes (Cavusgil, 2024; DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000; Ng & Tung, 1998). As a result, the potential benefits of diversity may remain unused. This is especially important in virtual teams, where work is often more separated and individual due to distance. Therefore, managers need to create opportunities for idea sharing that intentionally raise participation.

2.6 Summary of theoretical framework

The key theoretical concepts discussed in the previous sections and their relationships are summarised in the theoretical framework presented in Figure 4. The framework shows that virtual team effectiveness in MNCs is influenced by factors that can either enhance or limit how teams' function, such as communication, coordination, trust, cultural diversity, lack of physical presence and leadership challenges. These factors are further shaped by managers' capabilities, with global mindset positioned as the main influencing factor. The arrows in the framework illustrate this direction of influence, showing how managers' global mindset, or the lack of it, shapes the way they respond to factors affecting virtual team effectiveness. In this study, global mindset helps explain how managers approach the leadership of virtual teams, while limited or underdeveloped global mindset capabilities may explain why some challenges are not effectively addressed. Therefore, the empirical analysis will be guided by this framework by exploring how managers describe their capabilities, leadership approaches, and responses to the enhancing and limiting factors of virtual teamwork.

The first part of the literature review focused on the concept of virtual team effectiveness and identified key factors influencing team performance. According to Hackman (1987), team effectiveness is reflected in three main outcomes: team performance, team

member satisfaction, and team viability. In this study, these outcomes provide a basis for understanding how virtual teams function and how their effectiveness can be evaluated.

Based on the literature, communication, collaboration, coordination, trust, and team cohesion were identified as factors that enhance virtual team effectiveness (Delice et al., 2019). In contrast, factors that may limit effectiveness include cultural diversity, communication issues, lack of physical presence, time zone differences, trust-building difficulties, coordination challenges, and leadership issues (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023). The theoretical framework (see Figure 4) builds on this by illustrating how managers' global mindset influences these outcomes both indirectly, through shaping factors that enhance or limit virtual team effectiveness, and directly through their ability to make decisions and act effectively in complex global environments (Levy et al., 2015).

The second part of the literature review focused on the concept of a global mindset, its relevance for managers working in MNCs, and ways to develop it. It also explored how global mindset both enhances and limits the effectiveness of virtual teams. According to the main theoretical perspectives used in this study, global mindset can be understood as a set of capabilities that enable leaders to successfully operate across international contexts, including working, leading, and influencing people while feeling comfortable doing so (Begley & Boyd, 2003; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). While definitions vary, they consistently emphasize elements such as openness, the ability to work and integrate across cultures, and the ability to adapt thinking beyond familiar contexts (Begley & Boyd, 2003; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007).

There are three main dimensions of global mindset: global intellectual capital, global psychological capital, and global social capital teams (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). These dimensions reflect managers' knowledge of global contexts, willingness to learn from cultural differences, motivation to operate in international environments, and ability to build relationships across cultures. Together, they contribute to managers' cultural intel-

ligence and global orientation (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; van Bulck, 1979). Depending on how developed manager's skills and understanding are, these dimensions influence how managers respond to the challenges of leading virtual, culturally diverse teams (Javidan & Bowen, 2013).

Managers with a well-developed global mindset are more likely to demonstrate cultural intelligence, which helps them to recognize cultural differences, create inclusive environments, and feel comfortable working in diverse settings. This, in turn, supports their ability to adapt communication approaches, build trust, and coordinate work effectively across virtual teams. As a result, they strengthen factors that enhance virtual team effectiveness, such as communication, coordination, trust, and team cohesion (Gilson et al., 2015; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Lin et al., 2008; Venkatesh & Windeler, 2012).

At the same time, managers who struggle to interpret cultural differences accurately, adapt to diverse communication styles, or build relationships across cultures may contribute to misunderstandings, reduced trust, and coordination challenges. This suggests that limited or underdeveloped global mindset capabilities may reduce virtual team effectiveness. In this way, a global mindset not only enhances positive team processes but also helps explain why certain challenges in virtual teams are not effectively addressed.

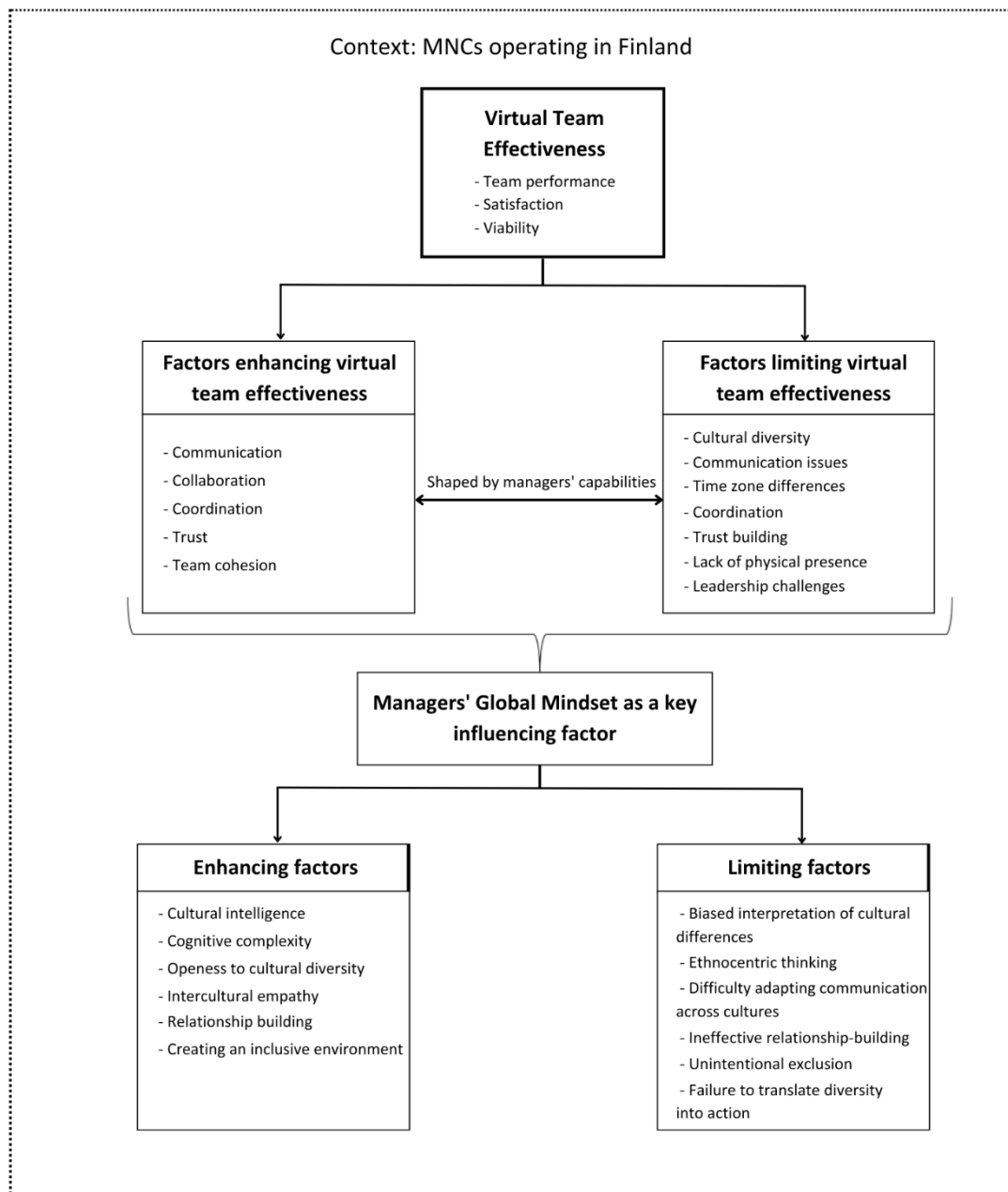


Figure 4. Theoretical framework of the thesis.

3 Research methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. Following the research onion structure proposed by Saunders et al. (2023), it first discusses the research philosophy, approach, method, strategy and time horizon, explaining the different steps that create the research methodology (p.128). Second, a detailed description of the data collection and sample is provided. This is followed by the data analysis section and, finally, the quality of the research is introduced, explaining the reliability and validity of the study.

3.1 Research design

Research philosophy can be understood as the development of knowledge, which broadens the perspective on the research field (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 131). Each research philosophy provides its own unique and valuable way of understanding organisational business realities (Morgan, 2006; Saunders et al., 2023). There are five most discussed philosophies within business and management: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 145). The philosophy adopted in this study is interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2023).

Interpretivism explains the difference between humans and physical phenomena, with humans being the ones who create and give meaning to their experiences. The idea is that each individual creates different social realities by interpreting each situation differently, meaning that there is no single objective reality, but rather multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2023). This further explains the meaning of interpretivist research, which is to gain a deeper understanding of different social realities and contexts. Interpretivism is subjective, and interpretivist research focuses on understanding these different perspectives and meanings, while recognizing that the researchers own interpretations and values may influence the research findings. This shows the importance for the researcher to adopt an understanding approach and try to see the situation from the participants perspective (Saunders et al., 2023). This perspec-

tive is appropriate for this study, as the goal is to focus on individual experiences, perceptions, and interactions, to understand how managers perceive and experience leading virtual teams in a multination environment.

The design of the study can be explained through the reasoning one adopts, which can be either deductive or inductive (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 154). The deductive approach refers to drawing conclusions based on existing theory (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). On the other hand, inductive reasoning refers to a process in which observations and research findings are used to develop theoretical statements (Eriksson et al., 2016). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016), researchers may also apply a third logic, known as abduction (p.22). In practice, both deductive and inductive approaches are often used in different phases of the research. This leads to an abductive method, in which the researcher works between data and theory, combining elements of both deduction and induction to interpret findings and develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Suddaby, 2006).

This study combines both deductive and inductive elements. The deductive approach is reflected in the use of existing literature on global mindset and virtual team effectiveness. By collecting additional data through interviews to develop new insights regarding the managers global mindset and how it affects their work in virtual teams, the study follows an inductive logic. Therefore, this study can be described as adopting an abductive approach, where theory and empirical data are connected throughout the whole study (Saunders et al., 2023).

Each study has its purpose, and according to Saunders et al. (2023), these can be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, or a combination of these (p.179). This thesis focuses on a topic that has not been widely researched, namely how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness. Even though these concepts have been studied separately, there is limited research on their combination. Therefore, this thesis explores this relationship and identifies the factors that contribute to these outcomes,

which aligns with an exploratory research approach (Saunders et al., 2023). At the same time, the study also includes descriptive elements, as it aims to provide a clearer understanding of the topic being researched. This is in line with the idea that descriptive research can build on exploratory studies by providing a more detailed understanding on the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2023).

To answer the proposed research question, it is important to collect appropriate data, which requires selecting a suitable research design (Eriksson et al, 2016). Research designs can be categorised as quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2023). The main difference between these methods is that quantitative research is based on numeric data, while qualitative research focuses on non-numerical data, with mixed methods combining both (Saunders et al., 2023). A common example of quantitative data collection is questionnaires, whereas qualitative data is often collected through interviews (Saunders et al., 2023).

The data for this thesis is collected through interviews, as the goal is to gather managers opinions and understand their experiences related to global mindset and how it influences the way they lead virtual teams. Therefore, to answer the research question in this study, a qualitative method is used, as the research relies on non-numerical data (Eriksson et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2023). Additionally, this methodological choice is supported by Yin (2018), who highlights that qualitative research often follows an abductive approach, where the researcher moves between theory and data. This is in line with this study, as it combines existing theory with empirical insights. This qualitative study follows a mono method approach, meaning that it uses a single data collection technique, which is interviews, identifying this study as mono method qualitative study (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 186).

Additionally, to answer the research question and meet the study's objectives, it is important to select an appropriate research strategy (Saunders et al., 2023). The case study approach is suitable for this research, as it makes it possible to examine the research

phenomenon within its real-life context and gain detailed insights into the topic (Yin, 2018). In this research, the focus is on interviewing managers, with each participant considered a case within the case study. According to Yin (2018), in case study research, the case can refer to different units, such as individuals, groups, or organisations, depending on the focus of the study. As several participants were interviewed for this thesis, each of them represents a separate unit of analysis. This makes the research strategy a multiple case study, as it includes participants from different MNC's operating in Finland (Yin, 2018).

The research onion structure proposed by Saunders et al. (2023) also includes the time horizon as part of the research design. The time horizon can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal. A cross-sectional study takes place at a specific point in time, while a longitudinal study is conducted over a longer period, allowing the researcher to observe changes and development in the phenomenon being studied (Saunders et al., 2023). The time horizon of this thesis is cross-sectional, as it focuses on examining managers current experiences and perspectives rather than conducting long term observations of changes over time.

3.2 Data collection and sample

The data for this thesis were collected through interviews, which can be understood as an interaction between two or more people engaged in a structured conversation. In this process, the interviewer asks questions to gain insights into the interviewees' opinions and experiences regarding the research topic (Saunders et al., 2023). The term interview is broad and includes different types, such as standardised or non-standardised interviews. Standardised interviews are typically used to collect quantitative data. In contrast, non-standardised interviews are commonly used in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2023). This thesis follows a non-standardised approach, which includes semi-structured and unstructured interviews. More specifically, the data for this study is collected through semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2023).

When conducting a semi-structured interview, the interviewer follows pre-prepared topics, issues, or themes to guide the conversation. At the same time, there is flexibility to adjust the wording and order of the questions, allowing the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and explore the topic in more depth (Eriksson et al, 2016; Saunders et al., 2023). Additionally, this type of interview introduces certain challenges for the interviewer. It requires the interviewer to follow the interview structure while ensuring that all prepared themes are covered, and to actively listen and ask follow-up questions to gain deeper insights (Eriksson et al., 2016). It is also important to remain flexible and not rely too strictly on the prepared structure, but rather allow the interviewee to speak openly and express their experiences related to the topic, so as not to risk overlooking important insights that might emerge during the discussion. Additionally, due to the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews, it may be more challenging to compare and group responses across participants (Eriksson et al, 2016).

The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were created based on the existing theory illustrated in the theoretical framework, meaning that the data collection was partly guided by existing theory (Saunders et al., 2023). The semi-structured interview questions were divided into five main sections: background information; virtual team effectiveness in the MNC context; enhancing and limiting factors of virtual team effectiveness; global mindset as a managerial capability; and the role of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness, including both its enhancing factors and limitations. While the interviewer followed the interview structure and questions to ensure that all necessary topics were discussed, the order of some questions changed when certain topics had already been addressed earlier by the interviewee. Additionally, the wording of some questions was adapted to maintain a conversational style with each interviewee. Each interviewee was provided with the interview questions in advance to ensure they could prepare their thoughts on the topic.

The interviews were conducted during the first three weeks of May 2026. Each participant was interviewed separately through Microsoft Teams in real-time, qualifying them

as synchronous electronic interviews (Saunders et al., 2023). All interviews were automatically recorded and transcribed my Microsoft Teams with the interviewee's permission, and the data remained available to both parties after each interview. By using the automatic recording and transcription functions of Microsoft Teams, the interviewer was able to focus on listening to the interviewees and formulate additional questions during the interview based on the context (Saunders et al., 2023). All interviews were conducted in English due to the lack of other common language. Following each interview, the transcripts were reviewed and corrected where necessary by comparing them with the recordings. The extracts used in the thesis were also lightly edited to improve clarity and readability without changing their original meaning.

According to Saunders and Townsend (2018), the choice of sampling technique depends on how the research question is intended to be answered. Statistical explanations are typically achieved through probability sampling, whereas the generation of rich, in-depth insights is associated with non-probability sampling. Therefore, this thesis applies non-probability sampling, as the aim is to gather experiences and insights rather than numerical data.

The selected sample should be closely aligned with the population defined by the research question and objectives (Saunders et al., 2023). In this study, the sample consists of managers working in MNCs operating in Finland and leading virtual teams. This aligns with the research question and objectives, as the aim is to understand how managers' global mindset influences the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland. Therefore, managers who lead virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland can provide relevant insights and share their experiences, which can lead to conclusions and help find out what effect managers' global mindset has on virtual team leadership. The focus on MNCs is particularly important, as these organizations operate across different cultural and geographical contexts, where virtual teamwork is common to coordinate work between units.

The sample in this study is created using both purposive and snowball sampling. Respectively, purposive sampling refers to selecting participants based on their relevance to the research question (Saunders et al., 2023). Specifically, the author applied purposive sampling by first identifying MNCs operating in Finland and then using the LinkedIn platform to search for managers within these companies. Their profiles were reviewed to determine whether their roles involved leading teams in a virtual context. Suitable candidates were then contacted through the LinkedIn platform, and in some cases through email.

On the other hand, snowball sampling can be understood as a method where current participants recommend other individuals who may be suitable for the research (Saunders et al., 2023). Snowball sampling was also applied in this study, as some interviewees shared their contacts and recommended other potential participants within their network who met the criteria of the study. This approach helped to identify one additional manager for the study.

An overview of the interviewees is presented in Table 1, which shows that the sample consisted of eight interviewees from seven different companies. Both men and women were interviewed, holding positions across different MNCs operating in Finland. The companies in which the interviewees are operating are Deloitte, Boston Consulting Group, Accenture, Konecranes, ASSA ABLOY, HUR and HID Global. The interviewees' experience in positions where they lead or manage teams in virtual work environments and culturally diverse settings varied from a minimum of two years to more than ten years. The variety of MNCs, fields of work, leadership experience, and team sizes among participants brought a range of perspectives to the topic. This sample aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, as its purpose was to provide detailed managerial insights from managers leading virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland, rather than aiming for broad statistical generalisation (Saunders et al., 2023). The interviews lasted an average of 47 minutes, ranging from 28 to 71 minutes.

Table 1. Interviews overview.

Interviewee	Company	Code	Interview lenght
1	A	1A	47:58
2	B	2B	35:16
3	C	3C	28:33
4	D	4D	71:08
5	E	5E	49:35
6	F	6F	36:06
7	G	7G	48:48
8	D	8D	58:37

3.3 Data analysis

To analyse the collected data, this thesis employs a thematic analysis approach, which involves coding the data to identify patterns and themes associated with the research goal (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022). According to Saunders et al. (2023), this type of analysis involves six steps, which this study also followed. The first step was to become familiar with the collected data, which meant reviewing the interview transcripts, listening to the recordings, and, accordingly, becoming familiar with each interviewee's point of view. Next, the data was coded and categorised based on the meanings identified in the data. The coding process was conducted manually. During this process, codes were adjusted, and new ones were added as necessary. The next step involved grouping codes with similar meanings into broader categories, which were then incorporated into themes. Further, as the themes were developed, they were refined, defined and named. This step was important, as the data was refined to ensure its relevance to the research question. The themes that were identified from the interview data are (1) perceptions of virtual team effectiveness in the MNC context, (2) factors that support effective virtual teamwork, (3) factors that limit virtual team effectiveness, (4) global mindset as a managerial capability for virtual team effectiveness, and (5) the perceived limits of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness.

3.4 Quality of the research

While reliability and validity are commonly used to access the quality of quantitative research, in qualitative research it is often questioned whether these criteria are fully applicable (Eriksson et al, 2016; Saunders et al., 2023). Therefore, as an alternative to reliability and validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the concept of trustworthiness. As this study follows an interpretivist philosophy, which assumes multiple realities and acknowledges that meanings are created together by researcher and the participants, trustworthiness is considered a more suitable evaluation criterion than traditional measures such as reliability and validity (Eriksson et al, 2016). Trustworthiness consists of four aspects: “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability”, which are the criteria used to access the quality of this research (Eriksson et al, 2016).

Credibility in this research refers to ensuring that the findings genuinely reflect participants’ real experiences and perspectives (Saunders et al., 2023). It focuses on whether the researcher has correctly understood and accurately represented what participants intended to express (Saunders et al., 2023). In this study, credibility was supported through semi-structured online interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams, which allowed participants to share detailed experiences. These interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed, which allowed participants to review the transcript immediately after the interview if they wished, and comment in case any details were inaccurately transcribed.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study may be applicable in other contexts or settings (Saunders et al., 2023). It is closely related to the concepts of external validity or generalisability, although in qualitative research the focus is not on statistical generalisation, but rather on providing an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2023). According to Eriksson et al. (2016), transferability is not concerned with replication, but rather with the extent to which similarities across different research contexts can be identified. To support transferability in this study, the research context, design, sampling process, and data collection methods are described

in detail, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Saunders et al., 2023).

Dependability can be understood as the criterion that serves a similar purpose in qualitative research as reliability does in quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2023). It refers to the extent to which the research process is logical, traceable, and well documented, making it clear to the reader how the study was conducted (Eriksson et al., 2016). In this study, dependability was enhanced by following the six-step thematic analysis process by Saunders et al. (2023), creating a clear description of the data analysis process. Additionally, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, providing a clear record of the collected data and supporting transparency and traceability throughout the research process (Ahmed, 2024).

Confirmability ensures that the findings are based on the collected data rather than being shaped by the researchers' personal assumptions or imagination (Eriksson et al., 2016). In this study, confirmability was supported by ensuring that the interview transcripts were based directly on the recorded data, with no need for translation, as the interviews were conducted in English, the same language as this study. Audio recordings were used to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and to correct any unclear or inaccurately transcribed sections by referring back to the original recordings. Where necessary, parts of the interview transcripts were also clarified with participants to ensure their ideas were properly understood and accurately represented (Ahmed, 2024).

4 Findings

This chapter presents the research findings on how managers' global mindset influences the effectiveness of virtual teams in the context of MNCs operating in Finland. The structure of the chapter follows the main themes identified from the semi-structured interview data, which are also reflected in the interview guide. First, virtual team effectiveness in the MNC context is discussed. Second, the factors influencing virtual team effectiveness are addressed. Then, global mindset as a managerial capability is discussed, followed by the role of global mindset in enhancing virtual team effectiveness. Finally, the chapter discusses limitations of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness.

4.1 Perceptions of virtual team effectiveness in the MNC context

Before exploring how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness, it is important to first understand how participants view virtual teams and their effectiveness in the context of MNCs. Therefore, this section presents how interviewees view virtual teamwork, how they evaluate virtual team effectiveness, and how the MNC context in their opinion influences the functioning and performance of virtual teams.

Many interviewees shared a similar understanding of what an effective virtual team means in practice. Participants emphasised the importance of structure, coordination, ownership, autonomy, clear responsibilities and shared goals. Interviewees focused on the importance of having clear vision of work tasks and independent way of working to reach common goal.

For me it's about having people who are confident operating independently. I try to give them the confidence and the autonomy, and for that, I need to make sure that their roles and responsibilities are clear, and there needs to be a strong trust within the team. (2B)

I also think an effective virtual team needs a shared vision of where we are going, as well as common learning and development goals that everyone feels satisfied with. (6F)

For me, virtual team effectiveness means an organised team that works in an organised way towards the same goals. (7G)

When we are not in the same place, probably the most important thing would be for each team member to take ownership of their own work, otherwise things don't really get progressed. As a team leader, I can't be looking over everyone's shoulder constantly, so that's the number one thing I'm looking for in my own team members, and that's like the kind of behaviour I try to encourage that they feel like they are not just helping with something, but rather encourage and show that they are owning the entire process. (4D)

At the same time, participants did not describe effectiveness only through performance outcomes, such as whether tasks are completed or whether targets are reached. Instead, virtual team effectiveness was also connected to how the team works together and how well members can stay aligned and connected despite the distance. One interviewee stated that the qualities of an effective virtual team are no different from those of an effective face-to-face team, while others emphasised personal rapport and openness.

An effective virtual team looks exactly like an effective face-to-face team. I don't feel that there is any difference in terms of like we know each other, we also kind of care about each other and personal life, whether something going on in their lives, we have the kind of intimacy within the team. We have an actual team feeling, not just tasks on tasks. (1A)

I think effective virtual teamwork means that the team is still able to feel connected and build personal rapport, even when working virtually. For me, this personal connection is important because without it, it is difficult to be myself, communicate openly, and share what I am going through. (6F)

This suggests that interviewees understand virtual team effectiveness as both task and goal related, as well as relational. While shared goals, ownership of one's work, and clearly structured work matter, the findings also show that trust and personal connection between team members are necessary for maintaining collaboration across distance.

After discussing what virtual team effectiveness means to interviewees, all participants were asked to share their opinions on how working in an MNC influences how virtual teams operate and perform. Interviewees placed strong emphasis on the opportunities the MNC context offers, especially access to international talent, broader expertise, and diverse cultural perspectives.

It of course depends on the industry, but it might be that the best CV or the most skilled person for the project is not in my team, but in another country, not Finland. And you get the opportunity to use the best talents in all the projects. (1A)

It does give us, as a team, a certain amount of flexibility and provides access to diverse expertise, different skill sets, and cost advantages across locations. (4D)

That is where the big value is, that we are such a huge firm and we have such great experts globally that I'm able to utilize those. (8D)

Many participants also mentioned the cultural aspect that working in a multinational company brings, such as the opportunity to combine different ways of thinking and apply them to different projects with different clients.

You get to learn about other cultures, you get to work with other cultures, you get, you know, differences in opinion, you get diversity, you get many, many good things within your group. (1A)

I think overall it's a positive thing that the team is multinational, because people bring different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, which helps us look at things in different ways. (5E)

I think it creates more opportunities than challenges. Of course, there are challenges, but I think the opportunities sort of outweigh the challenges it creates. One is like you get to work with people from different cultural backgrounds, and that gives you more exposure to how people approach certain things. (6F)

As we come from different countries and cultures, we are quite fast problem solvers when we put our heads together. It also helps us understand different stakeholders and customers, as we can better see where the other party is coming from. And

sometimes, as we come from different countries, we can also use our different language skills. (7G)

However, even though interviewees placed more emphasis on the opportunities of working in an MNC, they also recognised that the MNC context can make teamwork more complex. These challenges were mainly related to how people from different backgrounds interpret situations, what they expect from work, and how they approach responsibilities. According to interviewees, adjusting to these differences and learning each other's ways of working requires time and effort.

At the same time, I think it can also create some challenges, especially around cultural differences in hierarchy and ways of working. For example, in some cultures people may initially communicate in a very formal way or expect more direct instructions, which takes time to adjust to. (5E)

There have been situations where someone had a different understanding of work responsibilities or how present you need to be at work, such as the understanding of mixing free time and work time can really differ. (7G)

This suggests that while the MNC context creates both opportunities and challenges, participants placed stronger emphasis on the opportunities, which were generally seen as outweighing the challenges. These opportunities were mainly related to access to international talent, broader expertise, and diverse perspectives that multinational teams can bring. At the same time, the challenges were connected to different expectations, work styles, and ways of interpreting situations. Therefore, the MNC context highlights the importance of managers' ability to lead these teams and to understand and respond to these differences.

4.2 Factors that support effective virtual teamwork

The interviewees were asked what factors enhance virtual teamwork and how these factors support teamwork in practice. Across the interviews, several supporting factors were repeatedly mentioned, including trust. Interviewees emphasised that trust is especially important in virtual work because managers cannot constantly monitor team

members' progress or directly observe whether tasks are being completed. Additionally, trust was described as something that needs to work both ways. Managers need to trust their teams, but team members also need to trust their managers enough to ask for support, raise concerns, express opinions, and contribute confidently to the team.

You must have the trust, and it needs to work both ways. I need to trust that team members are handling their work even when I cannot physically see them, but they also need to trust that they can reach out to me whenever needed. I think that's enabled by having clear expectations, roles, and regular one-to-one meetings. (2B)

I think it's the trust and the trust goes, of course both ways. I need to know that I can get support from my superiors when needed, and my team needs to understand that when I check in with them, it is only to make sure that the agreed tasks are progressing as planned. (3C)

I think trust is a huge factor, because when I work with people from different countries, I may never see these individuals in my entire life. So, I need to be able to trust what they report about their work, so that I can confidently share the same information with clients and give an accurate picture of what we are doing. (4D)

I think trust is a very important factor in virtual teamwork. (5E)

Having a psychologically safe space where you can express yourself is very important. For me, this is part of trust. The team trusts that they can have open conversations, and I trust that I can have open conversations with them. This matters in any team, but in a virtual team it is especially important. (6F)

Similarly, one interviewee discussed trust through the lens of accountability. This participant explained that accountability helps create trust, as team members need to feel confident that others are taking responsibility for their tasks and delivering what has been agreed.

Definitely trust and also accountability, because accountability, I think, leads to trust. So trust is the end result, and accountability is the root cause of that. In virtual teams, it is easy to feel that another person or team you work with is not delivering, especially when there is little transparency about what they are doing. That is why accountability is key for building trust and working effectively as a virtual team. (7G)

Another commonly mentioned factor that interviewees strongly connected to effective virtual teamwork was clear communication. Participants emphasised that in a virtual context, communication needs to be as clear as possible. This includes sharing necessary information, repeating important points, and asking for clarification whenever needed to avoid misunderstandings.

I also think communication needs to be kept very clear and sometimes repeated, because there is always a risk of misunderstandings. (5E)

Overcommunicating about everything is important. Even if you feel like you're overcommunicating, you are usually still leaving something out. (1A)

It is hard to work virtually and understand each other without clear communication. I sometimes tell my team that it is better to communicate more, or even repeat things, because people forget and we are not in the same space to remind each other every detail. (7G)

It is important that communication is easy. For example, if someone in my team has something to discuss, they can just message me on Slack and ask for a quick call. Then we discuss it for 15 minutes, continue our own work, and come back to it later if needed. (6F)

These responses show that clear communication is a key factor in effective teamwork. Since team members are not physically in the same place, there are various tools that can make daily communication clear and effective. As stated by participant 1A, "different chats help to organise the communication, having daily meetings, having a kind of strict way of having your documents, as well as clearly onboarding the team for each bigger or smaller project".

Many interviewees also emphasised the importance of coordination and collaboration, which can be strengthened by, and clearly goes hand in hand with clear communication. When there are clear routines, regular meetings, shared tools, and agreed responsibilities, it is possible for the team to stay aligned regardless of distance.

Regular one-to-one meetings help us check in and provide opportunities to talk. In virtual teams, informal coffee machine conversations do not happen naturally, so these check-ins need to be scheduled to make sure we communicate regularly. (2B)

We have weekly meetings and use different virtual platforms to visually follow up tasks and who is responsible for what, so that we are working towards our quarterly goals and targets. (7G)

We follow scrum principles, so that work is planned in two-week cycles. Every two weeks, we have sprint planning sessions where we look forward to the next two weeks and evaluate what we want to get done during that time. (4D)

Whenever we sell a project, we make a high-level work plan, where this is what we are going to do each week, and these are the deliverables you will get after each week or after the project. (8D)

Another key aspect mentioned by the interviewees was personal connection within the team and team cohesion. Participants emphasised that to communicate clearly and work effectively together, team members need to feel comfortable and open with one another. Therefore, virtual teams should not become only task-focused, as personal connection also supports trust, openness, and collaboration. Interviewee 1A also noted that knowing team members individually is important for the team's success.

It is important to understand everyone's strengths and weaknesses. (1A)

Interviewee 4D connected this more directly to physiological safety, explaining that team members should feel able to contribute regardless of their seniority.

A big part of building trust is building a team where you have a healthy level of psychological safety. That is one of the most important things that I try to achieve inside our team: a culture where every individual, no matter of the seniority within the organization, feels like they can contribute to each meeting and does not fear that their opinions will get shot down. (4D)

Another interviewee also emphasised the importance of giving team members space to speak openly, especially in one-to-one settings, where it may be easier to discuss both work-related and personal factors affecting performance.

I try to make sure people have enough time in conversations, especially in one-on-one settings, since it can be easier for people to open about issues there. I also think it's important to maintain a channel where team members feel comfortable discussing not only work-related topics but also personal factors that can affect their performance. (5E)

In summary, interviewees shared different factors that, in their opinion, enhance the effectiveness of virtual teamwork (see Table 2). The most commonly identified supporting factors were trust, clear communication, coordination and collaboration, and personal connection with psychological safety. The table summarises the main supporting factors across the interviews. Since interviewees could mention more than one factor, the total shows how many interviewees referred to each factor.

Table 2. Factors supporting virtual team effectiveness identified by interviewees.

Supporting factors	Interviewees	Total
Trust and accountability	1A; 2B; 3C; 4D; 5E; 6F; 7G	7
Clear communication	1A; 2B; 5E; 6F; 7G; 8D	6
Coordination and collaboration	1A; 2B; 4D; 6F; 8D	5
Personal connection and psychological safety	1A; 4D; 5E; 6F	4

4.3 Factors that limit virtual team effectiveness

Alongside the factors that enhance virtual teamwork, participants identified several factors that can limit virtual team effectiveness and make virtual teamwork challenging (see Table 3). These factors were not described as making virtual teamwork ineffective, but rather as aspects that require more intentional management in virtual teams.

The most mentioned limiting factor was time zone differences. Interviewees explained that it can be challenging to work on projects with teams located on the other side of the world. Even when the time difference is only a few hours, managers still need to consider it when planning meetings, deadlines, and communication. Some interviewees also noted that team members sometimes need to make compromises, such as starting the day earlier or working later, in order to collaborate with colleagues in other regions. These findings show that time zones can slow communication and progress if not managed carefully.

Usually you have to think a bit when you leave work in the afternoon about what you need to do so that the first few hours are being utilised effectively by the rest of the team members who start their workday earlier. So, if there are any blockers in the team's workflows that are pending on my side, I need to resolve them before I leave work. (4D)

Time zones are such a big thing. If you want to have a decent conversation with someone from who's sitting in Malaysia, you need to schedule the call before 10 a.m. Finnish time, otherwise it's going to be very late for them and they may have like zero energy to come and contribute to the meeting. (6F)

If you are based in Europe and need to meet people from Australia, but also from the West Coast of the US, finding a common time is very hard. It requires flexibility from the team to sometimes work late or start the day earlier. I feel that currently this is the most challenging part and makes us less effective. (7G)

One participant also explained that while time zones can give challenges, they are part of the working environment in international virtual teams. Therefore, they need to be continuously taken into account rather than treated only as an occasional challenge.

Time zones are just something that need to be taken into account. I think that is just the framework that we work in. So, I don't see it as a challenge, it is just something that we need to consider. (3C)

On the other hand, some interviewees also expressed that time zone differences can sometimes support efficiency if the work is managed well. This means that the work can be coordinated around the clock: when one team finishes their workday, the task can be assigned further to another team that is just starting theirs. However, this requires good management and planning.

In a way, if you manage the team well and you have a task that someone can kind of pick up on, time zones can also be a good thing. That means we can work around the clock, when we stop - they start, etc. (1A)

Sometimes different time zones can be very efficient as well because we work in shifts. For example, people from Australia may start working on a task and be ready when we wake up. Then we work on it, and when people in the US wake up, they review it. So, when we start our day again tomorrow, they have finalised something for us. There are pros and cons. (7G)

Another factor that limits virtual team effectiveness, and came up in many interviews, is coordination and scheduling. This is closely related to time zone differences, which create challenges in scheduling meetings and coordinating work. However, interviewees also explained that coordination can be affected by different calendar events and national holidays. This becomes especially challenging when working with larger and more diverse teams across different countries. Therefore, managers need to be aware of these differences and plan ahead so that these differences do not negatively affect the work.

I think scheduling is definitely one of the main challenges in virtual teamwork, even though I try to stay flexible, in the end, everyone has limits like different time zones and working hours. (5E)

There are also other time-related issues, such as different bank holidays in different countries. In Europe they overlap quite a lot, but when working between Europe and Asia, there can be many differences. (4D)

While many participants mentioned coordination and scheduling as challenges, some interviewees also noted that these aspects have become easier with today's digital tools. For example, participant 1A explained that scheduling is not a major problem anymore because calendars and availability are visible online.

I don't see scheduling and coordination as a big problem now that we have the tools that we have. You see when they are free from the calendar, etc. (1A)

Similarly, participant 6F expressed that scheduling is not necessarily difficult when team members are willing to find a suitable time, as shared calendars make coordination easier.

I don't think scheduling itself or coordination is super challenging these days, it's the time zones that complicate doing it. You are able to see everyone's calendar. It's easy to schedule. If you both want to talk, then it's like super easy to make things work. (6F)

Some interviewees mentioned cultural differences as a factor that can in some ways limit virtual team effectiveness. This was mainly connected to different approaches to work, differences in how people from different cultures communicate and express themselves, as well as different understandings of hierarchy. Additionally, it was mentioned that when team members from the same location or culture work closely together, smaller groups can form within the larger team. Therefore, managers may face the challenge of keeping everyone aligned and maintaining a shared team spirit, which can be more difficult in a virtual environment. While the benefits of cultural diversity were mentioned earlier, these differences can still limit how effective virtual teamwork is if managers are not able to recognise them and respond accordingly.

I think one challenge is maintaining the 'we as a team' spirit. For example, one part of the team works a lot together because they focus on the same topic, while another part of the team also works closely together on their own topic. So sometimes the challenge is how to connect these smaller teams within the larger team, while still making sure that we have a shared team spirit as one whole team. (2B)

At the same time, I think it can also create some challenges, especially around cultural differences in hierarchy and ways of working. For example, in some cultures people may initially communicate in a very formal way or expect more direct instructions, which takes time to adjust to. (5E)

In some cultures, people are more comfortable taking initiative themselves, while in others hierarchy can be stronger. I have noticed that this can sometimes be a challenge. In my work, I have sometimes had to protect my own team members from higher local hierarchy, because local managers may not always be as used to a flat organisational structure or creating a socially safe space within the project. That has definitely been one of the main cultural pain points I have faced. (4D)

Similarly, as a manager needs to be aware of misunderstandings regarding cultural differences, not assuming that everyone works in the same way and has the same thinking style, managers also need to be aware of language barriers. Interviewees emphasised the importance of being aware that when English is the main working language, as it commonly is in MNCs, team members may have different levels of fluency. In diverse teams, there may also be few or no native English speakers, which can increase the risk that information is interpreted differently and leads to misunderstandings.

I don't think we have a single member in the team who speaks English as their native language, so that can be a challenge when we need to go through very nuanced technical details. (4D)

I have experienced misunderstandings in virtual teams quite often which mainly arise due to language barriers and differences in how people express or interpret messages. (5E)

Being a non-native speaker and having native speakers in your team can lead to misunderstandings. A person may understand your message with a different tone, even if you meant it in a neutral or friendly way. (7G)

In addition to cultural differences, interviewees noted that personality differences can add complexity to virtual teams. As people interpret situations differently, it can be harder in a virtual environment to “read” others or to understand how they feel on a certain day. Therefore, these differences can become more difficult to recognise and manage virtually.

Sometimes cultural or personality differences can become amplified in a virtual environment. There is a risk that people misunderstand each other or take things the wrong way. (1A)

I would say that personal differences are much more significant than cultural ones. (3C)

Those two types of people can have very different opinions on how things should be done and how certain functionalities should be implemented. The same kind of logic also applies to different types of people coming from different cultures. (4D)

Some interviewees also reported a lack of informal communication within their teams, which can make it more difficult to lead. As some participants stated, it is important to know what is going on in each other's lives and to have that kind of connection with each other. This would be easier to notice when working in the same office, while in a virtual environment it can be harder to spot and, at the same time, also easier to hide.

You don't get to have these coffee machine discussions, but you need to really have it scheduled in your calendar to make sure you talk regularly. (2B)

People are less likely to bring up bad news or informal information in Teams compared to being in the office. A lot of important updates or early signals usually come up in casual conversations, like during coffee breaks or lunch, and those are missing in virtual settings. (5E)

Overall, interviewees mentioned multiple factors that can limit the effectiveness of virtual teams (see Table 3). The most frequently discussed challenges in the interviews were time zone differences, coordination and scheduling, and language barriers. Cultural differences also came up in several interviews, while some interviewees emphasised that personality differences are harder to observe and read in a virtual environment. A few interviewees also mentioned the lack of informal discussions with colleagues, as meetings in virtual environments are often strictly scheduled and natural non-work-related conversations occur much less often.

Table 3. Factors limiting virtual team effectiveness identified by interviewees.

Limiting factors	Interviewees	Total
Time zone differences	1A; 2B; 4D; 5E; 6F; 7G; 8D	7
Coordination and scheduling	2B; 4D; 5E; 6F; 7G	5
Language barriers	1A; 4D; 5E; 7G; 8D	5
Cultural differences	1A; 2B; 4D; 8D	4
Personality differences	1A; 3C; 4D	3
Lack of informal communication	2B; 5E; 6F	3

4.4 Global mindset as a managerial capability for virtual team effectiveness

A central focus of the interviews was understanding how managers view the leadership capabilities required to lead and manage diverse virtual teams successfully. Therefore, this section presents findings on how interviewees understood global mindset, what abilities they associated with it, and how these capabilities were perceived to support virtual team effectiveness in practice.

One of the most important elements that emerged from the interviews was openness and a curious attitude towards people from different cultures and work environments. This finding highlights the importance of not assuming that one's way of working, communicating, or thinking is the only correct one. As emphasised by the interviewees, teamwork is more effective when team members feel seen and heard. Therefore, managers need to be able to step outside their own way of thinking, listen to different viewpoints, and create space for others to share their perspectives. This was also connected to why many interviewees valued working in MNCs, as they could work with people who bring diverse ideas, experiences, and viewpoints. However, the value of this diversity depends on whether managers can listen to and use these perspectives in practice.

Openness is very important from the manager's side. If you have a very closed mind and are not interested in different cultures, you will never really understand what motivates people, how they work, or how you can best build the team. (2B)

I think having an open mind and a curious mind is super important, so that you don't try to fit their priorities and thinking into the world that you live in. Having an open mind and asking questions, like why you do certain things this way, is much more important than just judging them. (6F)

By keeping my mind open and not letting my assumptions take over in leadership situations. Asking questions can lead to solutions and innovations that I could never think of myself, because the other person brings their own expertise, skills, and cultural background to the table. (7G)

In addition to being open in everyday situations that managers encounter in virtual teamwork, interviewees also described openness as an active willingness to learn about unfamiliar cultural contexts. This can help strengthen teamwork and make team members feel included, especially at the beginning of collaboration when trust has not yet been built. In these situations, managers need to pay attention to how their words or actions may be interpreted.

If there was a new culture I had never worked with before, I would probably do a little bit of research about it, especially in the beginning when you still do not have the trust. It is important to avoid saying something sensitive, because you do not always get a second chance to build trust. So, I would say it is about educating yourself and being very open to learn. (1A)

Based on these findings, a global mindset can be understood as a way of approaching people with openness and willingness to learn from them, rather than pushing one's own opinions or assumptions on them. This becomes especially important in a virtual environment, where managers have fewer opportunities to observe people naturally and understand how team members work and communicate. Therefore, openness can help create space for different perspectives and support more effective collaboration.

Another capability that interviewees connected to a global mindset was adaptability. Several participants emphasised that adaptability is shown by adjusting communication

style across different people and cultural backgrounds, as well as by adapting the level of guidance, support, and directness depending on the team member and situation. Additionally, one interviewee mentioned that managers need to be careful with what they say and how they work when work is coordinated across cultures. For example, humour can be understood differently across people and cultures, so managers need to be aware of how their communication may be interpreted. This shows that global mindset, or the lack of it, becomes visible in daily managerial behaviour and in how managers approach different situations.

It is usually not possible to lead people from different cultures in the same way. Usually, you need to take a different approach. When communicating with team members from different cultural backgrounds, you need to adjust your communication style and think about their perspective, including what type of message will be easiest for them to understand. (4D)

Regarding adaptability, one interviewee shared an example of a situation where a lack of cultural preparation and limited adaption to the context made the work more challenging. This example shows that adaptability is an important capability in leading multicultural virtual teams, as managers need to understand the specific cultural and organizational context in which the team operates.

I went to the Japan project very unprepared. I did not really understand how hierarchy works in a corporate Japanese world. I went with the expectation that it would be very similar to what we do here, and that was not the case. There were some conflicts that could have been avoided if there had been a little more preparation. (1A)

This suggests that a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers adapt their leadership to the specific context. Without this awareness, managers may assume that the same leadership and communication style works in every situation. However, as the interviewees indicated, this can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, or situations where team members feel less valued. Even if managers do not intend anything negative, the findings show the importance of having this capability.

However, many interviewees emphasised that adaptation should not be based only on cultural background, but also on understanding people as individuals. As interviewees stated, each person is different, and factors such as age, seniority, personality, working style, and personal preferences can all influence how people communicate and perform their work in virtual teams. This suggests global mindset helps managers understand people more broadly and avoid relying on stereotypes.

I would say not only cultural backgrounds are the ones where people need to adapt their communication and work style, it's just different people in general. Culture is one aspect, but there are many others that need to be taken into consideration, such as personality and age groups. (1A)

People can be different even when coming from the same cultural background. So, being efficient and considering the different leadership styles that people prefer or work best with is the key. (7G)

Clear communication was explained as an important factor supporting virtual team effectiveness. In this context, managers' global mindset can help them remain open-minded and avoid assuming that everyone in the team understand messages in the same way. This is especially important in diverse virtual teams, where team members may interpret the same message differently depending on their language skills, cultural background, communication style, understanding of hierarchy, or previous work experience.

Managers need to adapt their communication when working with people from different cultural backgrounds. For example, for the team in another country, I may need to check in a little bit more to make sure they have understood the message and that the timeline is clear. (2B)

I also think it is important to be mindful of differences in communication styles across cultures. In some cases, people may agree to tasks or say yes even when they are not fully confident they have the time or capacity, so I try to check understanding and availability more carefully. (5E)

Misunderstandings and wrongly interpreted messages can cause delays in work progress, affect trust within the team, and make collaboration more difficult. Therefore, managers

with a global mindset may be better able to recognize where communication can fail, check understanding more carefully, and reduce the risk of misunderstandings before they affect the team's work.

Trust was discussed as one of the most important factors supporting effective virtual teamwork. Interviewees viewed trust as an important collaboration, communication, personal connection and psychological safety within the team. When there is trust, collaboration becomes smoother because team members feel that their roles and responsibilities are clear and that they are trusted to do their work. Trust also supports communication, as team members may feel more comfortable reaching out to each other or to the manager when needed.

The findings show that trust in virtual teams is supported by managers' availability, openness, personal interest, and the creation of space for informal interaction. The barrier to informal conversations can be higher in virtual teams than in face-to-face work. Therefore, managers need to be aware of the relational side of virtual work and intentionally create opportunities for trust and connection to develop.

Managers need to have an attitude of, "I am here for you, what would you need?" This becomes even more important in virtual teams, because team members cannot just come to the office and ask to have a coffee. Instead, they need to ask whether you can talk and then set up a Teams call. Because of this, the barrier to talk freely might be a higher, so managers need to be very mindful of that. (1A)

When you have a virtual team, you need to take other measures. You have to make sure that sometimes you have time boxes where you can chat about things that are not related to project work, just to bond and get to know each other a bit more. (4D)

I think it comes down to really getting to know the people you work with, which means spending time with them beyond just work tasks. (5E)

These findings show that global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers create an environment where trust, openness, and team cohesion can develop

despite the virtual distance. Global mindset becomes visible through managers ability to be available, approachable and interested in team members as people, not only as employees completing tasks. This can make collaboration easier and help team members feel safer and more valued within the team.

Closely connected to trust and psychological safety, interviewees also mentioned that a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers create an inclusive environment where team members feel their opinions matter. Since trust was discussed as a foundation for effective virtual teamwork, it is also important for making team members feel safe enough to express opinions, ask questions, and contribute to discussions. Interviewees emphasised that some team members may speak more easily, while others may remain quieter due to personality, language confidence, cultural norms or previous work experience.

I focus on making sure that everyone gets a fair chance to speak, especially in meetings. More outgoing team members can unintentionally dominate the discussion, while quieter members may not get enough space to contribute, so I actively manage that balance. (5E)

One tool I use is asking questions instead of telling answers. It is a basic tool to give room for different ideas and thoughts. (7G)

These findings suggest that a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers notice differences in participation and create space for diverse voices within the team. One interviewee also emphasised that managers could support inclusion by being open and vulnerable with their team. By sharing when they are having a difficult day or facing challenges, managers can signal that team members are also allowed to speak openly about anything that affects their work or participation.

When I tell my team, "Guys, I am having a very bad day. I just came out of this meeting where the client said all these things, or this is what happened at home today", then I am basically signalling to my team that when they have problems, they can come and openly discuss it with me. I want them to do that so that they understand where I am coming from, and I understand where they are coming from.

The only way to create an inclusive environment is by being vulnerable with your team. (6F)

When team members trust the manager and feel safe within the team, they are more likely to share ideas, ask questions, and raise concerns. This is important because diverse perspectives can only benefit the team if members feel encouraged to express them and believe that their contributions are valued. Therefore, a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers notice differences in participation, encourage quieter team members to contribute, and create a safe space for everyone.

Finally, interviewees were asked about experiences that had contributed to their ability to work in international and multicultural environments and lead diverse virtual teams. The findings show that all interviewees had some form of international experience, such as a multicultural family background, international study experience at university or even earlier during high school years. One interviewee associated language and culture studies with gaining a more theoretical understanding of cultures and how they work, which also sparked an interest in exploring them further. Another interviewee had completed international exchange work after graduation, which sparked an interest in working in a diverse environment and set the tone for their career.

Studying and experiencing cultures has given me the ability to work in international and multicultural environments. It has helped me to understand that perhaps I am not right, and my truth is not the universal truth. (7G)

Earlier life experience, such as doing an exchange programme and hosting exchange high school student in my family when I was a kid has helped me understand and approach different cultures better. (4D)

These findings suggest that a global mindset is not something managers are simply born with, nor something that remains fixed once developed. Rather, it can develop over time through experience, exposure, reflection, and willingness to learn. Some interviewees also emphasised the role of curiosity, as managers need to be open and interested in learning from new situations. In addition, organisational support was mentioned as rel-

evant, as some companies provide training on how to approach different people, build relationships, and strengthen team cohesion. This shows that a global mindset can develop not only through personal experience, but also through support and encouragement in the workplace.

In summary, the findings show that managers perceived global mindset as a capability built on openness, curiosity, adaptability, cultural awareness, clear communication, trust-building, inclusion, and understanding people as individuals. Through these capabilities, a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers build trust, reduce misunderstandings, create psychological safety, ensure team members feel heard, and adapt their leadership to different people and contexts.

4.5 The perceived limits of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness

Although the findings show that global mindset has a positive influence on enhancing virtual team effectiveness, there are also limits to what this capability can help managers achieve. Therefore, this section focuses on explaining where global mindset was perceived as helpful, but not sufficient on its own. In particular, the findings suggest that global mindset can support managers in responding to different factors affecting virtual team effectiveness and help to minimize challenges, but it does not remove practical, structural, or individual challenges that also affect team effectiveness.

A perceived limit arises when a manager's global mindset is limited or not translated into managerial behaviour. The findings suggest that when managers lack cultural understanding or openness, they may misinterpret why people behave, communicate, or respond in certain ways, leading to misunderstandings that slow work progress. As an example, one interviewee explained that managers need to understand that agreement may be expressed differently across cultural contexts, and that a “yes” does not always mean full agreement or understanding.

If managers do not understand the differences, it can cause challenges. For example, in some cultures, the first answer may often be yes, while a Finnish team member may feel more confident saying no directly. Then the manager may wonder why nothing is happening, even though the person said yes to the task. That is why managers need to seek validation by asking whether the person understood the task, agrees with it, and feels that it makes sense. Otherwise, it can cause frustration and take longer to get things done. (2B)

Another interviewee described how a lack of openness towards cultural differences can result in judgment based on one's own previous experiences, which can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings.

It is easy when you do not understand and are not open to different cultural understandings to go down the wrong path and start judging people. You may try to fit them into your own experiences. It is easy for resentment and negative emotions to build when you are not careful about understanding cultural differences. (6F)

Therefore, global mindset can lead to positive outcomes only when applied in everyday situations, which requires managers' attention, genuine interest and openness. Without this, global mindset can remain unused as a capability.

Another perceived limit is that a global mindset should not be understood only as cultural awareness. The findings show that not all challenges that occur in diverse virtual teams are related to culture, as personal differences between people can also raise challenges. Global mindset becomes limited if managers interpret every difference mainly through culture and, in a way, stereotype people based on their cultural background. As many interviewees stated, managers need to be thoughtful of personal differences, as these can sometimes have a stronger effect than cultural differences. Therefore, managers need to combine cultural awareness with understanding people as individuals. The differences between people, as well as the personal chemistry between them, can also affect trust building in the team, as emphasised by one interviewee.

If you do not like the person that much, or if you just do not click on a social level, building trust can be harder. The conversation does not flow in the same way, and you do not always understand where the other person is coming from. This is am-

plified by the virtual environment, because you do not see the person outside Teams meetings, at lunch, or in other informal situations. You only have one way of communicating. (1A)

This supports the finding that culture alone does not explain all people-related challenges. These challenges are often also connected to individual differences and personal connections between team members. Therefore, managers need to remain open and interested in getting to know people, understanding where they are coming from, and considering their point of view.

Another perceived limitation of global mindset is that it does not replace leadership and management practices. Even if a manager is open-minded, inclusive, and culturally aware, the team may still face problems if the work is unstructured, poorly coordinated, or unclear.

You need to be very structured in basic project management skills. We have a meeting on this day, this is here, you are in charge of that, and this is the goal. (1A)

If the manager is not guiding the work well, there is more risk. Some leaders think they should be very hands-off, but I need to know that everything is going well and check whether people need help. (8D)

This suggests that structured and well-coordinated work is important for managers leading in complex virtual environments, and that global mindset becomes useful only when it is combined with concrete managerial actions, such as coordination and clear accountability.

In summary, a global mindset is an important managerial capability, but it cannot solve all challenges associated with virtual teamwork on its own. It mainly supports areas such as communication, trust-building, inclusion, adaptability, and managing misunderstandings. However, virtual teams also require structure, coordination and clear routines. Therefore, a global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness best when it is combined with practical management skills and translated into everyday leadership behaviour.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the study's findings are analysed and compared with existing literature to provide deeper insight into how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness in MNCs operating in Finland. The structure of this chapter is based on the main findings of the study and the research questions. First, the managers' global mindset, as a capability that influences virtual team effectiveness, is discussed. Second, the limits of the global mindset in virtual team effectiveness are explored. Finally, an updated theoretical framework is presented.

5.1 Managers' global mindset as a capability influencing the effectiveness of virtual teams

This section discusses how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness by comparing the findings with previous literature. The emphasis in this study is on how a global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness through everyday behaviour that connects different factors and helps make the virtual team environment more structured and welcoming to everyone.

One of the main findings was that global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness through openness and curiosity. This aligns with Gupta and Govindarajan (2002), who connect global mindset with exploring and combining diverse perspectives. Similarly, Levy et al. (2007) describe it as the ability to integrate different cultural and strategic perspectives, while Javidan and Bowen (2013) introduce global psychological capital as one of the main dimensions of global mindset, which includes a quest for adventure and reflects managers' openness towards unfamiliar situations. The findings support these views, as interviewees emphasised listening, asking questions, and stepping outside one's own way of thinking. In this way, global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers turn diverse perspectives into a resource for collaboration rather than a source of misunderstanding.

The results also show that global mindset supports adaptability. Previous literature emphasizes that leading across geographical, cultural, and organisational boundaries requires managers to adjust their behaviour and communication to different contexts (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Zander et al., 2012). Similarly, interviewees explained that the same leadership or communication style does not work for every team member. However, the findings add that adaptation should not be based only on cultural background, as personality, seniority, language confidence and working styles also matter. This shows that global mindset supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers recognise and adapt their leadership to both cultural and individual differences, instead of relying on general assumptions or stereotypes.

Another connection between global mindset and virtual team effectiveness is clear communication. Previous studies have identified communication as central to virtual teamwork because geographically dispersed teams rely strongly on digital communication and have fewer informal opportunities to clarify meaning (Jimenez et al., 2017; Zander et al., 2012). This aligns with the findings, as interviewees explained that the same message can be interpreted in many ways. Therefore, global mindset helps managers become more aware of these differences in interpretation, encouraging them to double-check whether everyone has understood the message and arrange additional virtual calls when needed. In this way, repeating and clarifying can prevent misunderstandings and save time later.

In research, trust has been recognised as an important condition for effective teamwork because it allows team members to rely on each other and communicate openly (Mayer et al., 1995). It becomes particularly important in virtual teams, where managers have fewer opportunities to observe team members directly and informal interaction is limited (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). This aligns with the views of interviewees, who explained that trust is a foundation connecting several factors that enhance virtual team effectiveness. Global mindset supports this by helping managers create an environment where team members feel safe to ask for help, raise concerns, and communicate openly.

Additionally, virtual team effectiveness depends on whether team members feel safe to express their opinions and freely communicate with their manager. Previous literature suggests that diverse perspectives benefit teamwork only when they are integrated into collaboration (Levy et al., 2007; Zander et al., 2012). The findings support this by showing that managers need to notice who contributes and who remains quiet, as participation may be affected by personality, language confidence, cultural norms, or seniority. Global mindset therefore supports virtual team effectiveness by helping managers create space for different voices and ensure that diversity is used in practice. Additionally, this can also be connected with

In summary, managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness in five main ways. First, it helps managers remain open and curious. Second, it supports adaptability. Third, global mindset strengthens communication. Fourth, it supports trust-building and psychological safety. Fifth, it supports inclusion and participation. Therefore, the findings indicate that global mindset does not influence virtual team effectiveness directly, but through concrete managerial behaviours that shape how teams collaborate.

5.2 The limits of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness

The findings present global mindset as a supportive capability rather than a complete solution that guarantees virtual team effectiveness. Its influence depends both on how well managers have developed and applied this capability and on whether it is supported by practical management and leadership skills.

First, the results of this study indicate that an underdeveloped global mindset can lead managers to interpret cultural differences through their own expectations and assumptions, resulting in quick judgments without considering the wider context. Similar findings were presented by Cavusgil (2024), who argued that effectiveness in diverse contexts can be better achieved when stereotypes and assumptions are left behind. Javidan and Bowen (2013) also emphasize that an underdeveloped global mindset increases the likelihood of thinking from an ethnocentric perspective.

This aligns with the findings of this study, as participants explained that managers may misunderstand communication styles, expressions of agreement, or approaches to hierarchy. For example, interpreting a culturally influenced “yes” as full agreement may result in unmet expectations and delays in work progress. Limited cultural awareness can also lead managers to assume that a message has been understood as intended, even though language confidence, directness, and cultural communication norms can affect its meaning (Cavusgil, 2024; Pucik et al., 2023). Therefore, the limitation is not only difficulty interpreting cultural differences but also failing to adapt communication and confirm shared understanding.

The findings also support previous literature concerning relationship-building and unintentional exclusion. Managers with limited global social capital may find it harder to build trust with people from different cultural and professional backgrounds (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). In virtual teams, this challenge may become stronger because informal interaction and non-verbal communication are limited, especially if the manager struggles to find common ground and to establish ways to encourage active participation. This supports Hinds’ (2014) view that language confidence and cultural norms may affect who participates actively.

Similarly, recent research shows that communication patterns in virtual teams often reflect the organisation’s culture, affecting who participates in discussions, who feels included, and how contributions are valued (Degbey et al., 2026). This may result in situations where some team members are interrupted, spoken over, or not heard clearly, highlighting the importance of managerial actions in ensuring inclusive communication, which aligns with the research results. Therefore, this suggests that a limited global mindset can weaken trust, reduce knowledge sharing, and limit the use of diverse perspectives, thereby restricting participation.

However, an additional finding that was not emphasised in the theoretical framework of this thesis is that interviewees highlighted the importance of personal differences, show-

ing that not every difference is culture related. Personality, seniority, working style, personal circumstances, and chemistry between people may also affect communication and trust. If managers interpret every challenge mainly through cultural background, cultural awareness may itself lead to stereotyping. Therefore, global mindset is most useful when managers combine cultural understanding with an effort to know team members as individuals.

The second broader limitation is that global mindset cannot remove practical and structural challenges of virtual teamwork such as time-zone differences, coordination and scheduling, which are also identified in previous research (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023). While managers do not have the power to avoid these challenges, as they are part of virtual work in an international context, their leadership approach and way of thinking can influence how they are managed.

Global mindset also does not replace general leadership and project management skills. A manager may demonstrate strong global mindset capabilities, but team effectiveness can still suffer if the work is poorly organised. Coordinating work, tracking progress, and having regular follow-ups with team members are among a manager's primary responsibilities, which also aligns with previous research on leadership and coordination challenges in virtual environments (Batırlık et al., 2022; Berry, 2011). Global mindset therefore strengthens how managers approach people and differences, while practical managerial skills provide the structure needed for effective teamwork.

In summary, the limitations of global mindset arise in two main ways. When it is underdeveloped, managers may misinterpret differences, communicate ineffectively, weaken trust, unintentionally exclude team members, and fail to use diversity. Even when it is present, global mindset cannot remove structural challenges or replace clear coordination and leadership. Its influence therefore depends on how managers apply it and combine it with practical management skills.

5.3 Updated theoretical framework

The original theoretical framework presented the relationship between virtual team effectiveness and managers' global mindset as a key influencing factor. Virtual team effectiveness was presented through three main outcomes: team performance, satisfaction, and viability. These outcomes were influenced by factors that either enhance or limit virtual team effectiveness, while managers' capabilities shaped how these factors were managed. The framework further illustrated how a well-developed global mindset can strengthen the factors supporting virtual team effectiveness, whereas a limited or underdeveloped global mindset may contribute to challenges that reduce effectiveness. The empirical findings broadly support the original theoretical framework but also suggest several refinements based on the interview data.

The findings support the importance of communication, collaboration, coordination, trust, and team cohesion as factors supporting virtual team effectiveness, which is consistent with previous virtual team research (Delice et al., 2019; Gilson et al., 2015; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). The findings further connected trust with accountability and identified personal connection and psychological safety as additional factors supporting open communication, participation, and collaboration. Regarding limiting factors, the findings supported earlier research identifying time-zone differences, coordination and scheduling, language barriers, cultural differences, and trust-building difficulties as challenges of virtual teamwork (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Mockaitis et al., 2012; Pucik et al., 2023). Lack of informal communication and personality differences emerged as additional limiting factors from the empirical data.

The original framework also drew on broader theoretical capabilities related to global mindset, including cultural intelligence, cognitive complexity, openness to cultural diversity, intercultural empathy, relationship-building, and inclusion (Begley & Boyd, 2003; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). Based on the interview data, these theoretical concepts were expressed through more specific managerial capabilities and behaviours such as openness and curiosity, adaptability, understanding people as individuals, clear

communication, trust-building and psychological safety, and inclusion and participation. These additions do not replace the original theoretical concepts but show more clearly how managers' global mindset becomes visible in everyday virtual team leadership.

The findings regarding the perceived limits of global mindset also supported earlier theoretical expectations. An underdeveloped global mindset may lead to biased cultural interpretation, ethnocentric thinking, difficulty adapting communication, ineffective relationship-building, unintentional exclusion, and failure to use diversity in practice (Cavusgil, 2024; Hinds, 2014; Javidan & Bowen, 2013). However, the empirical findings revealed an additional limitation that managers may interpret individual differences mainly through culture. This means that behaviours or working approaches may be assumed to result from cultural background, even when they are more strongly connected to personality or other individual characteristics. The updated framework therefore shows that personality, seniority, language confidence, working style, and personal circumstances should be considered alongside cultural background.

Additionally, while global mindset was explained as a key influencing factor in the original framework, the updated model defines it more specifically as a managerial capability that becomes visible through everyday leadership behaviour. This change reflects the finding that managers possess and apply global mindset capabilities when leading diverse virtual teams. The wording connected to the arrows was also expanded from managers' capabilities to managers' behaviours and capabilities. This reflects the finding that global mindset does not support virtual team effectiveness automatically. Managers need to translate their capabilities such as openness and adaptability into concrete actions such as adjusting communication and encouraging participation.

To summarize, the updated theoretical framework builds on the same overall structure and concepts identified in the literature while incorporating the main empirical findings. These findings provide a more practical and current understanding of the factors man-

agers consider important and clarify which managerial capabilities are closely related to global mindset.

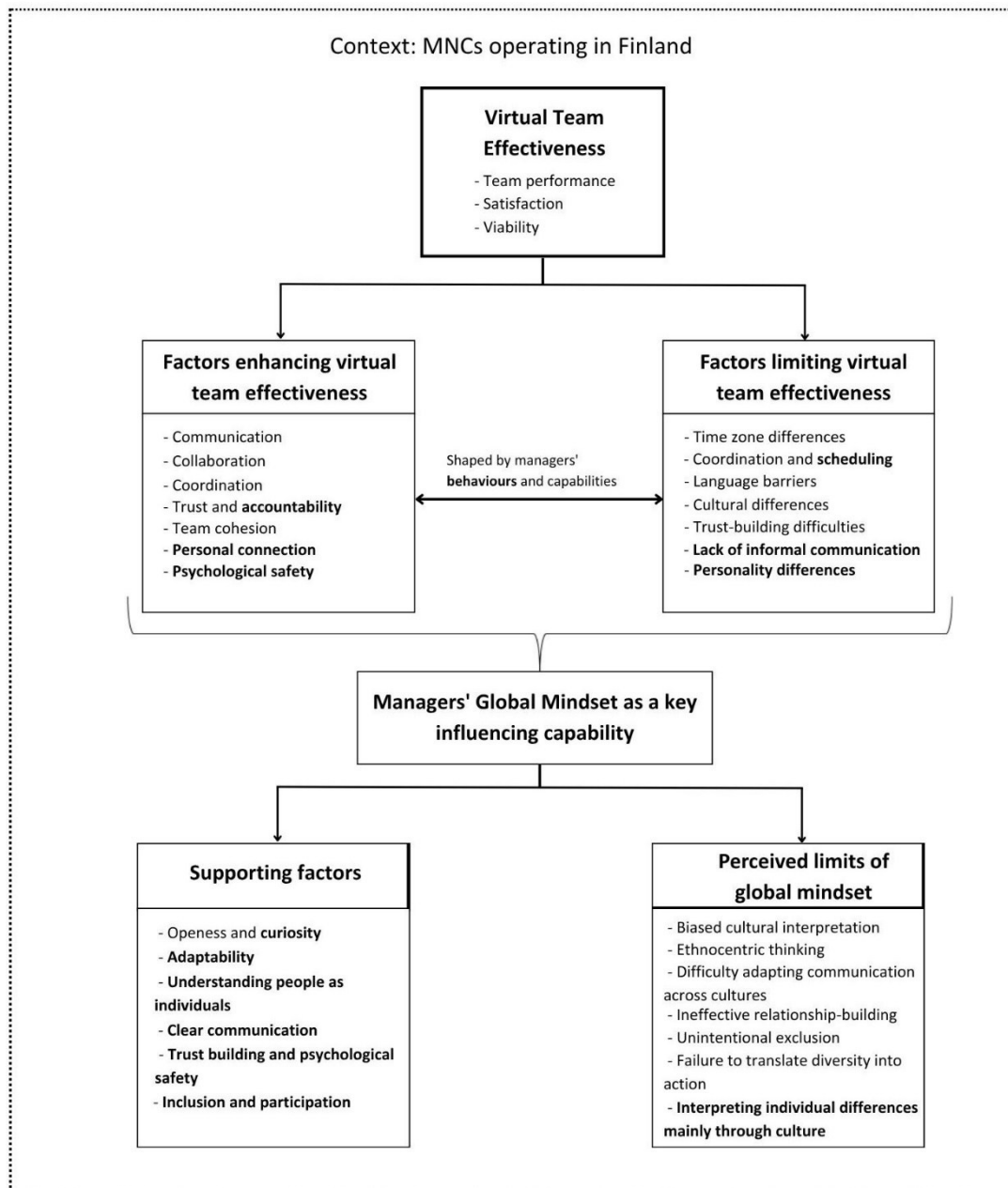


Figure 5. Updated theoretical framework considering research findings.

6 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study by presenting the key findings, practical implications, limitations and suggestions for future research. First, the chapter addresses the key findings by answering the research questions. Then, practical implications are provided for managers and team leaders who lead diverse virtual teams, as well as for MNCs and HR departments. The chapter concludes by addressing the study's limitations and outlining suggestions for future research.

6.1 Key findings

RQ1: How does managers' global mindset influence the effectiveness of virtual teams in multinational corporations operating in Finland?

The findings indicate that managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness by shaping how managers lead diverse teams and respond to the factors affecting virtual teamwork. Its influence is evident in managers' everyday behaviours and capabilities, which shape how they communicate, coordinate work, build relationships, and respond to cultural and individual differences. Therefore, a global mindset does not directly or automatically influence virtual team effectiveness. Instead, it functions as a supporting managerial capability that helps managers strengthen positive team processes and reduce the effects of challenges arising in multicultural virtual work. However, successful virtual teamwork also depends on practical leadership, coordination, and project management skills.

RQ2: How do factors related to managers' global mindset support the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland?

The findings show that factors related to managers' global mindset support the effectiveness of virtual teams in five main ways. First, openness and curiosity help managers listen to different perspectives, avoid assumptions, and remain willing to learn from others. Second, adaptability allows managers to adjust their communication, leadership style, and level of guidance according to different people and situations. Third, a global

mindset supports clear communication by making managers aware that messages may be interpreted differently and that shared understanding needs to be confirmed. Fourth, it supports trust-building and psychological safety by helping managers build personal connections and foster an environment where team members feel safe communicating openly. Fifth, it supports inclusion and participation by encouraging managers to create space for different voices and ensure that team members feel heard and valued. Together, these factors strengthen collaboration and help diverse virtual teams work more effectively.

RQ3: How do managers perceive the limits of these factors in supporting the effectiveness of virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland?

The findings suggest that the limits arise in two main ways. First, when managers' global mindset capabilities are limited or underdeveloped, they may interpret differences through their own assumptions, struggle to adapt communication and face challenges in building trust. This can lead to unintentional exclusion and prevent diverse perspectives from being used effectively, reducing both virtual team effectiveness and the potential benefits of diversity. The findings also show that not every difference is culture-related. Managers with limited global mindset capabilities may incorrectly explain certain behaviours through cultural background, which can lead to stereotyping, even though personality, seniority, language confidence, working style, and personal circumstances may also influence teamwork. Second, even a well-developed global mindset cannot remove practical and structural challenges such as time zone differences, coordination and scheduling difficulties, language barriers, and limited informal communication. However, it can help managers respond to these challenges more thoughtfully and reduce their negative effects on virtual teamwork. A global mindset also does not replace general leadership and project management skills. Therefore, managers perceive it as an important supporting capability rather than a complete solution that guarantees the effectiveness of virtual teams.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the literature on its two main concepts: global mindset and virtual team effectiveness. First, it strengthens the connection between these concepts by clarifying how managers' global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness. Previous research describes global mindset as a capability that enables managers to operate across cultural, geographical, and organisational boundaries (Begley & Boyd, 2003; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). The findings support this view and, more specifically, show that managers' global mindset enhances virtual team effectiveness through concrete managerial behaviours, including openness, adaptability, communication, trust-building, and the creation of psychological safety and inclusion. However, although a global mindset strengthens these behaviours, it does not replace the fundamental leadership and coordination skills required to manage virtual teams effectively in MNCs. In addition, trust emerged as a key process that facilitated communication, participation, and collaboration.

Second, this study extends the cultural focus of global mindset literature by emphasising individual differences. Previous research links a global mindset to managers' ability to recognise and respond to cultural differences (Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). However, the findings indicate that personality, seniority, language skills, working style, personal circumstances, and personal chemistry may influence communication, trust, and participation. Therefore, this study contributes by suggesting that a global mindset involves balancing cultural awareness with an understanding of individual differences.

Third, this study provides a more detailed understanding of how an underdeveloped global mindset can limit the effectiveness of virtual teams. Previous research suggests that limited cultural awareness, global intellectual capital, and global social capital can lead to ethnocentric thinking, communication difficulties, weaker relationship-building, and reduced trust (Cavusgil, 2024; Javidan & Bowen, 2013; Levy et al., 2007). This study adds that these limitations may also lead to unintentional exclusion and prevent diverse perspectives from being applied in practice. It therefore connects limited global mindset

capabilities to specific team processes. It shows that the value of diversity depends not only on the presence of different perspectives, but also on managers' ability to recognise, include, and integrate them into virtual teamwork.

6.3 Practical implications and recommendations

6.3.1 Implications for managers and team leaders

There are several practical implications that can be recommended for managers who lead or manage diverse virtual teams in MNCs. First, according to the research findings, managers need to be open-minded to work successfully in this environment. This means that there is no single right or wrong way of thinking and approaching general situations. Each person is different, and by being open, managers can better understand why people act in ways that may be different from their own. Therefore, it is important to actively ask questions, listen to different perspectives, and make sure that team members feel seen and heard.

Second, managers are advised to pay particular attention to the way they communicate when leading virtual teams. The interview findings indicate that misunderstandings can arise from language differences, cultural norms, communication styles, hierarchy, or different levels of confidence regarding the job role. Therefore, managers should communicate expectations and responsibilities according to the situation, and it is better to over-communicate than to communicate too little in order to manage work successfully.

Third, the findings suggest that in virtual teams, informal conversations that are not job related do not happen as naturally as in face-to-face teams, because online meetings are often strictly scheduled and there is no possibility for informal coffee machine chats as there is in office-based work. Therefore, it is suggested that managers create opportunities for one-to-one discussions, informal check-ins, and team building activities, or conversations that are not only task-focused, but also help team members connect.

Fourth, the findings indicate the importance of building trust and psychological safety within the team. This means that managers should be open and approachable, and in some situations, also show that it is acceptable to discuss challenges or difficulties. In a virtual team environment, it can be harder to notice if someone is struggling, as managers do not see team members face-to-face in daily work. Therefore, managers need to intentionally create an environment where team members feel safe to speak openly, ask for support, and share if something is affecting their work.

Finally, the findings indicate that global mindset is not sufficient without practical managerial skills that support coordination and structure. Global mindset can strengthen virtual team effectiveness only when managers also take care of coordination-related factors. Therefore, managers should make sure that team members understand what is expected from them, stay updated, use their time effectively, and have clear communication routines. This helps global mindset become visible not only as an attitude, but also as concrete leadership behaviour that supports virtual team effectiveness.

6.3.2 Implications for MNCs and HR departments

Furthermore, there are several practical implications for MNCs and their HR departments. First, before hiring someone for a role that includes responsibility for leading a diverse virtual team, it could be beneficial to use a specially designed and validated assessment to examine whether the candidate demonstrates global mindset qualities such as openness, adaptability, and cultural awareness. This could help identify possible biases or a tendency to judge team members through cultural stereotypes. In addition to assessing technical knowledge related to the role, the selection process could include interviews based on specific leadership scenarios that examine how candidates would respond to misunderstandings, different communication styles, unequal participation, or cultural differences within a virtual team. This could help organisations select managers who are not only professionally qualified but also prepared to treat team members fairly and create an inclusive environment.

Additionally, managers require continuous development to maintain their global mindset capabilities and adapt to new possible situations and team members. The findings suggest that global mindset can develop through international experience, exposure to different cultures, reflection, curiosity, and willingness to learn. Therefore, organizations could arrange training sessions in which managers work with team members from cultures, backgrounds, or professional roles with which they have limited previous experience. Together, they could complete a challenging project or simulation designed to reflect typical communication difficulties and misunderstandings, followed by a discussion of how these situations were addressed. This could provide a valuable learning experience for both managers and team members. In addition, mentoring, coaching, international assignments, or opportunities to participate in global projects can help managers recognize their own assumptions, understand different perspectives, and develop their confidence in leading multicultural virtual teams.

6.4 Limitations and future research suggestions

Although this study provides valuable insights into leading diverse virtual teams in an MNC context, it has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study focused only on managers' perspectives and how they interpret global mindset as a capability for leading diverse virtual teams. This means that the findings are based on how managers and team leaders understand working in virtual team environments, while the views of team members were not included. Therefore, the findings reflect how managers understand their own capabilities, leadership behaviour, and virtual team effectiveness, but they do not show how team members experience the same issues. Future research could include team members' perspectives to compare whether managers' views are similar to how team members experience leadership in virtual teams. This could also provide useful suggestions for managers on how they could improve their leadership in this complex environment.

Second, the study was based on a small qualitative sample of eight interviewees. While the semi-structured interviews provided space for discussion and valuable insights into

managers experiences of leading diverse virtual teams, a larger sample could provide a broader understanding of how global mindset influences virtual team effectiveness in different organisational contexts.

Similarly, another limitation is that the interviewees came from different organizations, industries and team settings. Therefore, the managers were leading different types of teams in terms of team size, cultural diversity, and task complexity, which may have influenced their opinions and insights regarding the complexity of leading these teams. Future studies could focus on one industry or compare insights from two different industries. Alternatively, future research could include different organisations and industries but focus on teams of similar size to make the results easier to compare.

Fourth, the study focused on managers leading virtual teams in MNCs operating in Finland. This means that the findings may be influenced by the Finnish working environment and the types of MNCs included in the study. Future research could compare MNCs operating in different countries to examine whether the role and interpretation of global mindset differ across national and organizational contexts.

Another limitation is related to cultural backgrounds of the interviewees. Although all managers were working in MNCs operating in Finland and were based in Finland, they did not all share the same nationality or cultural background. Therefore, their own cultural experiences may have influenced how they understood global mindset, virtual teamwork, and leadership in multicultural teams. Future research could examine this more closely by focusing on managers from one specific cultural background or by specifically comparing managers from different cultural backgrounds.

Finally, this study was cross-sectional, meaning that the data were collected at one point in time. Since the findings suggest that global mindset can develop through experience, future research could use a longitudinal approach to study how managers' global mindset develops over time and how this development affects virtual team effectiveness. Fu-

ture research could also explore how organisations can support the development of global mindset through leadership training, international exposure, mentoring, or other development practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Section 1: Background information

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself, including your current job role and main responsibilities?
2. How would you describe the structure of the team you manage (e.g., size, locations, cultural diversity)?
3. How long have you been leading or working in a virtual team environment?

Section 2: Virtual team effectiveness in MNC context

4. How is work coordinated within your virtual team (e.g. communication, meetings, task management)?
5. What does an effective virtual team look like in practice for you?
6. How do you evaluate effectiveness within your team (e.g., performance, team member satisfaction, long-term viability), and why?
7. Can you give examples of how you recognise when a virtual team is performing well or not?
8. How does working in a multinational company influence how your virtual team functions and performs? Would you say it creates more challenges, opportunities, or both? Please explain with examples.

Section 3: Enhancing and limiting factors of virtual team effectiveness

9. What factors enhance virtual teamwork (e.g., communication, collaboration, coordination, trust, and team cohesion)? Can you explain how they contribute to effective teamwork in practice, with examples?

10. What factors make virtual teamwork more challenging or less effective (e.g., time zones, scheduling, or coordination)? Can you give real examples based on your experience?
11. How has cultural diversity influenced the effectiveness of your team? Would you say it creates more challenges, opportunities, or both? Please explain with examples.

Section 4: Global mindset as a managerial capability

12. What skills are most essential when managing culturally diverse virtual teams, and why?
13. How do you approach working with different cultural perspectives within your team?
14. Have you experienced situations where your own skills or capabilities were not sufficient to manage a virtual, culturally diverse team? What challenges did you face, what did you learn, and what would you do differently or improve?

Section 5: The role of global mindset in enhancing virtual team effectiveness

15. Could you please share your opinion on the following statements? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - A manager's way of thinking influences how effectively a virtual team performs.
 - Managers need to adapt their communication when working with people from different cultural backgrounds.
 - Managers need to use different approaches to build trust in virtual teams, especially when working across cultures.
 - Managers who actively consider different cultural perspectives within their team tend to make better decisions.

16. Can you share what experiences have contributed to your ability to work in international or multicultural environments? How have these experiences influenced your leadership in virtual teams?
17. How do you create an inclusive environment and encourage participation in your team?

Section 6: The limitations of global mindset in virtual team effectiveness

18. Have you experienced misunderstandings in virtual teams due to cultural or communication differences? Can you describe what happened, how you handled it, and what helped resolve the situation?
19. What challenges have you faced in building relationships or trust in virtual teams, especially in cross-cultural contexts?
20. Have there been situations where some team members felt excluded or less involved? What caused this, and how was it addressed?
21. In your opinion, what challenges arise in virtual teams when managers lack the necessary cultural understanding to manage cultural differences?

Section 7: Closing questions

22. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your experience with leading or working in global virtual teams?