

**A Study on Employee Experience and Brand Ambassadorship in IT and ITES
Companies**

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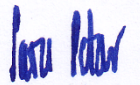
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents and parents, whose lives exemplified integrity, perseverance, and quiet wisdom. Their values shaped my understanding of responsibility, dignity, and purpose long before I engaged with academic theories or organizational research. Although they may never have known the language of brands or institutions, their actions demonstrated how character and conduct define reputation and trust. This research, which recognizes individuals as the true ambassadors of any organization is deeply rooted in the lessons they imparted through their lives.

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I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family for their unwavering support, patience, and belief in me throughout this academic journey. Their encouragement served as a constant source of motivation during challenging moments.

Finally, I acknowledge the influence of my grandparents, whose values of integrity, humility, and perseverance continue to guide my personal and professional life. This research is deeply inspired by the principles they lived by.

ABSTRACT

In today's transparent, socially connected, business ecosystem, employees critically mediate an organization's brand credibility. Employees serve as everyday brand ambassadors for the organization, going above and beyond any formal marketing or communication efforts in the way they behave, interact with others, and the stories they share. This research presents an agenda for studying employees as brand ambassadors from a humane perspective, considering the organizational and psychological boundaries that enable or disable their authentic brand ambassadorship.

The researchers are motivated to discover which organizational boundaries enable or disable employees choosing to advocate on behalf of the organization's brand, such as firm leadership, psychological safety, employee welfare, empowerment, and values alignment. Bridging the fields of internal branding, employee engagement, organizational behavior, and employer branding, the researchers build on a wealth of theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence to articulate the role of the employee experience as a mediator in the relationship between an organization's humane approach and employees' brand ambassadorship.

The researchers will employ a mixed-methods research agenda involving qualitative interviews and focus groups and quantitative survey data from employees in various sectors. The qualitative study investigates how employees experience life as brand ambassadors. The quantitative study focuses on the relationship between organizational boundaries, employee experience, and brand ambassadorship. Structural Equation Modeling is used to confirm the existence of a conceptual model that provides evidence of a pathway between humane organizational practices and the voluntary, credible brand ambassadorship of employees.

The study outcomes will demonstrate that it is humane workplaces characterized by trust, psychological safety, ethical leadership, and engagement that enable employees to become powerful brand ambassadors for an organization, rather than coercive branding practices. The contribution to knowledge will be a unified conceptual model for managing all brand-related boundaries concerning employees. The researchers provide valuable insights into the strategic value of treating employees as humans instead of tools of the brand. At a practical level,

organizational leaders can use the study results to build brand credibility and enhance their employer brand by adopting humane yet sustainable employee practices.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In the contemporary global business environment, the concept of brand value has undergone a fundamental transformation. Traditionally, brand strength was built and sustained through external communication channels, including advertising campaigns, public relations, corporate identity programmes, and digital marketing strategies. Organisations exercised considerable control over brand narratives and invested heavily in crafting polished external images designed to attract customers, investors, and talent (Keller, 2013). However, the emergence of digital communication platforms, social media ecosystems, and employer review environments has significantly disrupted this unidirectional model of brand management. In the current landscape, brand perception is increasingly co-created by multiple stakeholders, among whom employees occupy a uniquely powerful position (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Employees represent the living embodiment of an organisation's brand. Through their day-to-day behaviour, service interactions, professional communications, ethical conduct, and digital presence, employees continuously signal to external stakeholders what the organisation truly stands for (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). In knowledge-intensive and service-driven industries, where product differentiation is difficult and human expertise constitutes the primary source of competitive advantage, the alignment between employees and the organisational brand becomes particularly critical (Ind, 2004). When employees genuinely believe in the organisation, internalise its values, and experience their workplace as fair, supportive, and meaningful, they are more likely to act as credible and voluntary brand representatives, commonly referred to as employee brand ambassadors (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

The phenomenon of employee brand ambassadorship extends well beyond formal marketing or internal branding campaigns. Authentic employee advocacy emerges organically from positive workplace experiences, trust in leadership, psychological safety, fairness, recognition, and value alignment (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Conversely, when employees experience poor leadership, inadequate recognition, psychological insecurity, communication deficiencies, or

a mismatch between stated organisational values and actual workplace practices, their willingness to advocate for the organisation diminishes substantially (Saks, 2006). In extreme cases, dissatisfied or disengaged employees may actively undermine the organisational brand through negative word-of-mouth, public criticism on employer review platforms, or passive disengagement from client-facing responsibilities (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The strategic importance of employee brand ambassadorship is amplified in the information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) sector, which constitutes the empirical context of the present study. South India has emerged as one of the most significant technology corridors in the world, with major IT hubs located in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Visakhapatnam (NASSCOM, 2023). The Indian IT and ITES industry is characterised by high employee mobility, intense competition for skilled talent, complex client relationships, and a strong dependence on employer reputation for talent acquisition and retention (Budhwar et al., 2006). In such an environment, employees who actively support and represent the organisational brand contribute meaningfully to competitive advantage, client confidence, employer attractiveness, and long-term business performance (Cable & Turban, 2003).

The growing recognition of employees as brand assets has prompted both academic scholars and business practitioners to examine the conditions under which employees become genuine brand ambassadors. This body of scholarship has grown across the disciplines of human resource management, organisational behaviour, internal branding, employer branding, and strategic management (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). However, the integration of employee experience (as a comprehensive construct encompassing employees' holistic perceptions of their workplace journey) with employee brand ambassadorship and its downstream effects on business performance outcomes remains insufficiently explored (Morgan, 2017). This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in the South Indian IT and ITES sector.



Figure 1 Research logic, Source - Researcher

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite substantial organisational investment in employer branding, employee engagement, and internal communication, many organisations continue to face a persistent and damaging gap between their external brand claims and the internal realities experienced by their employees (Mosley, 2007). Organisations routinely position themselves as employers of choice, championing values such as innovation, respect, inclusion, employee well-being, and career growth. Yet employees frequently report experiences that contradict these declared values, manifesting as poor managerial behaviour, limited career development opportunities, inadequate recognition, psychological insecurity, and a culture of silence rather than voice (Edmondson, 1999; Purcell & Kinnie, 2007). When this gap becomes visible through employer review platforms such as Glassdoor, LinkedIn commentary, or informal professional networks, brand credibility can suffer significantly.

The core problem addressed by this study is that organisations frequently expect and encourage employees to act as brand ambassadors without adequately understanding or investing in the workplace conditions that make such behaviour possible (Ind, 2004). Employee brand

ambassadorship cannot be manufactured through communication mandates, social media guidelines, or formal participation in branding campaigns. Authentic advocacy is a voluntary, intrinsically motivated behaviour that emerges when employees personally believe that the organisation deserves their public support (Burmahn & Zeplin, 2005). This belief, in turn, is shaped by the quality of the employee experience, that is, the cumulative perceptions employees hold about leadership, fairness, recognition, psychological safety, value alignment, career growth, and organisational support (Plaskoff, 2017).

A secondary dimension of the problem lies in the tendency of organisations and researchers to treat employee brand ambassadorship primarily as a communication or marketing issue, rather than as a strategic business performance concern (Aggerholm et al., 2011). In reality, employee advocacy influences a range of business-critical outcomes, including employer reputation, talent attraction efficiency, employee retention rates, client satisfaction, customer trust, and competitive positioning (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Cable & Turban, 2003). By failing to recognise and measure these linkages, organisations miss the opportunity to leverage employee experience as a driver of sustainable business performance.

There also exists a methodological problem in the existing body of research on employee brand ambassadorship. Studies that adopt purely quantitative approaches are able to identify statistical relationships between constructs but are limited in their capacity to explain how employees perceive, experience, and make meaning of the workplace factors that shape their advocacy behaviour (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Conversely, purely qualitative studies provide rich experiential insights but are unable to validate the statistical reliability and structural integrity of the factors under investigation. The present study addresses this dual limitation by combining Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (a rigorous quantitative technique for validating measurement models) with thematic analysis, which captures the depth and texture of employee experiences as lived phenomena.

The research problem centres on three interconnected challenges: (1) the insufficient understanding among organisations of which workplace factors genuinely drive employee brand ambassadorship; (2) the failure to recognise employee advocacy as a strategic business performance issue rather than solely a branding or human resource concern; and (3) the methodological gap created by single-method approaches that cannot simultaneously validate

and explain the factors shaping employee advocacy behaviour. The present study is designed to address all three challenges in the context of the South Indian IT and ITES sector.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to identify and validate the key factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship, to examine employee perceptions and workplace experiences related to these factors, and to develop a strategic policy framework for strengthening employee brand ambassadorship and improving business performance outcomes in IT and IT-enabled service organisations.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study is guided by three specific research objectives that correspond to its three methodological phases:

Objective 1: To identify and validate the key factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship.

Objective 2: To examine employee perceptions and workplace experiences related to the validated factors through thematic analysis.

Objective 3: To develop a strategic policy framework for strengthening employee brand ambassadorship and improving business performance outcomes.

1.5 Research Questions

The study is structured around three primary research questions, each corresponding to one of the three research objectives:

RQ1: What are the key factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship?

RQ2: How do employees perceive and experience the validated factors that influence employee brand ambassadorship?

RQ3: What strategic policy framework can organisations adopt to strengthen employee brand ambassadorship and improve business performance outcomes?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The quantitative phase of the study is guided by three directional hypotheses, derived from the conceptual framework and grounded in the theoretical literature on employee experience, internal branding, and organisational behaviour:

H1: Humane workplace practices have a significant positive influence on employee experience.

The first hypothesis is grounded in the extensive literature linking ethical leadership, fairness, psychological safety, recognition, and employee voice to positive employee perceptions of the workplace (Edmondson, 1999; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Humane workplace practices are conceptualised as the antecedent conditions that shape the overall quality of the employee experience. When organisations demonstrate genuine concern for employee dignity, well-being, fairness, and development, employees are expected to develop more favourable and positive perceptions of their workplace journey.

H2: Employee experience has a significant positive influence on employee brand ambassadorship.

The second hypothesis is informed by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the literature on organisational identification, brand internalisation, and employer branding (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to social exchange theory, employees who receive positive treatment from their organisation are motivated to reciprocate through behaviours that benefit the organisation, including voluntary brand advocacy. Employees who experience their workplace positively are therefore expected to be significantly more willing to act as brand ambassadors.

H3: Employee brand ambassadorship has a significant positive influence on business performance outcomes.

The third hypothesis draws on the employer branding and strategic management literature, which links employee advocacy to outcomes such as employer reputation, talent attraction, employee retention, customer trust, and competitive advantage (Cable & Turban, 2003; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). When employees actively and voluntarily represent the organisation

positively through referrals, professional networking, client interactions, and social media engagement, they are expected to contribute to measurable improvements in business performance.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The present study holds significance at multiple levels (academic, managerial, business, and employee), each of which is discussed in turn.

From an academic perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on employee brand ambassadorship by offering a rigorously validated measurement model for the key factors that shape this behaviour. The use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis ensures that the factor structure is not merely exploratory but is statistically verified against data collected from a relevant and contemporary organisational context. Furthermore, by integrating constructs from human resource management, organisational behaviour, and strategic management, specifically humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes, the study advances an interdisciplinary framework that transcends the boundaries of any single academic discipline (Morgan, 2017; Plaskoff, 2017). The combination of quantitative validation with qualitative thematic analysis also represents a methodological contribution, demonstrating how mixed-method designs can produce both statistical rigour and experiential depth in this level of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

From a managerial perspective, the study is significant because it provides business leaders and human resource managers with an evidence-based understanding of the workplace conditions that must be cultivated in order to develop a genuinely engaged and advocacy-oriented workforce. In many organisations, the connection between internal workplace quality and external brand strength is neither clearly understood nor systematically managed (Mosley, 2007). The findings of this study can help managers recognise that employee brand ambassadorship cannot be activated through surface-level communication exercises or mandatory participation in branding campaigns; it requires sustained investment in leadership quality, fairness, psychological safety, employee voice, recognition, and value alignment

(Edmondson, 1999; Saks, 2006). This insight has practical implications for the design of people management strategies in the IT and ITES sector.

From a business performance perspective, the study is significant because it positions employee brand ambassadorship as a driver of strategic outcomes, including employer reputation, talent acquisition efficiency, employee retention, client confidence, and competitive advantage. In an industry sector characterised by intense competition for talent and strong dependence on client relationships and service quality, the ability to harness employee advocacy as a performance lever can constitute a meaningful source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The policy framework developed in this study provides organisations with actionable guidance for translating employee experience investments into measurable business results.

From the perspective of employees themselves, the study holds significance because it foregrounds the importance of dignity, fairness, psychological safety, and meaningful work as prerequisites for authentic brand advocacy. Rather than treating employees as instruments of brand promotion, this study recognises that genuine ambassadorship is only possible when organisations create conditions in which employees feel respected, valued, and heard. This perspective is consistent with an ethical and humanistic approach to people management that is increasingly recognised as essential to organisational sustainability (Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Greenleaf, 1977).

1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the present study is defined along several dimensions (sectoral, geographical, methodological, and conceptual), each of which reflects deliberate choices made in the interest of research rigour and practical relevance.

Sectorally, the study focuses exclusively on employees working in IT and IT-enabled service companies. This sectoral focus is justified by the strategic importance of human capital in the IT industry, where employees are the primary creators of value through knowledge, innovation, problem-solving, and client relationship management (Budhwar et al., 2006). The high degree of employee connectivity through professional digital platforms in this sector also means that employee brand ambassadorship (or the absence thereof) is particularly visible and influential.

Moreover, the IT and ITES sector in South India represents one of the most dynamic and competitive talent markets in Asia, making the study of employee advocacy especially pertinent.

Geographically, the study is delimited to South India, encompassing major IT hubs including Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Visakhapatnam. While the study does not claim to represent the entire Indian IT industry or the global technology sector, South India provides a sufficiently large, diverse, and contextually relevant sample frame for this level of study (NASSCOM, 2023). The findings may be cautiously generalised to similar IT and ITES environments in India, though cross-cultural or cross-industry generalisation would require further research.

In terms of participant eligibility, the study includes full-time employees with a minimum of one year of organisational experience. This criterion ensures that respondents have had sufficient exposure to organisational systems, leadership behaviour, cultural norms, and workplace practices to provide meaningful and informed responses. Employees from multiple functional areas, including software development, project management, quality assurance, data analytics, customer support, business analysis, and human resources, are included to ensure breadth of perspective.

Conceptually, the study focuses on four main constructs: humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes. Business performance is measured through perceptual indicators, including brand credibility, customer trust, employer reputation, employee retention intention, referral likelihood, and perceived competitive advantage, rather than through objective financial data. This approach is necessitated by the practical limitations of accessing financial records from multiple private-sector organisations, and is consistent with established practice in perceptual studies of organisational performance (Dess & Robinson, 1984).

The study does not extend to external stakeholder perceptions, customer experience, or financial market performance. It does not examine the perspectives of organisational leaders or human resource managers independently; rather, the focus remains consistently on

employee perceptions as the primary unit of analysis. These delimitations are acknowledged as appropriate boundaries for a study of this nature and scope.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters, each fulfilling a distinct and complementary role in the overall research narrative.

Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the background, research problem, aim, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, significance, scope, and structure of the study. It establishes the academic and practical rationale for the research and situates it within the contemporary landscape of employee brand management and business performance.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, provides a comprehensive and critical examination of the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the study. It covers the theoretical foundations underpinning the conceptual framework, including social exchange theory, signalling theory, and person-organisation fit theory, and reviews the literature on humane workplace practices, employee experience, internal and employer branding, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes. The chapter identifies the key research gaps and presents the conceptual framework guiding the study.

Chapter 3, Research Methodology, details the philosophical, design, and procedural dimensions of the study. It justifies the pragmatic research philosophy and mixed-method sequential explanatory design, describes the quantitative and qualitative phases, explains the sampling strategy and instrument development process, and outlines the data analysis plan for both Confirmatory Factor Analysis and thematic analysis. Ethical considerations are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 4, Data Analysis, presents the complete analytical findings of the study in two integrated parts. The first part reports the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, including demographic profiling of respondents, descriptive statistics, measurement model assessment, reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and structural model findings including hypothesis testing outcomes. The second part presents the thematic analysis of qualitative data, detailing the coding process, the major themes and sub-themes identified,

and the participant narratives that illuminate how employees experience the validated factors in their everyday working lives.

Chapter 5, Discussion, brings together the quantitative and qualitative findings in a cohesive interpretive discussion. It compares the findings against the existing literature, identifies areas of convergence and divergence between the two data sets, and presents the Strategic Policy Framework developed from the integrated findings. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed in detail.

Chapter 6, Conclusion and Recommendations, provides a summative overview of the study, explicitly answers the three research questions, articulates the academic and managerial contributions of the research, acknowledges its limitations, and offers recommendations for practice and future research. The chapter closes with final reflections on the significance of treating employees as strategic contributors to brand and business performance.

The thesis concludes with a comprehensive reference list compiled in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines, followed by appendices containing the survey questionnaire, interview guide, CFA output tables, thematic coding documentation, and relevant ethical approval documentation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The literature review constitutes the intellectual architecture upon which the present study is constructed. Its purpose extends well beyond summarisation of prior scholarship. A rigorous and critically engaged literature review enables the researcher to situate the study within an established academic conversation, to identify the gaps the present research is positioned to address, and to derive the conceptual and theoretical logic that underpins the research design, hypotheses, and analytical framework.

The chapter is organised into five substantive sections. Section 2.2 establishes the theoretical foundations of the study, reviewing four complementary theoretical perspectives. Section 2.3 examines the construct of humane workplace practices across its five constituent dimensions. Section 2.4 addresses employee experience as a central and increasingly strategically prioritised construct in contemporary human resource management. Section 2.5 focuses on psychological safety and organisational trust, two dimensions of employee experience that have received substantial and growing scholarly attention particularly in the context of hybrid work, the post-pandemic talent crisis, and the emerging challenges of artificial intelligence-driven workforce transformation.

The **literature review framework of the study** is developed around the relationship between humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes. Existing literature suggests that organizations that promote ethical leadership, fairness, employee voice, recognition, and well-being are more likely to create a positive and supportive workplace environment. Such humane workplace practices contribute to stronger employee experience by enhancing trust, belongingness, psychological safety, meaningfulness, and satisfaction at work. A positive employee experience, in turn, strengthens employees' emotional and psychological connection with the organization, encouraging them to act as brand ambassadors through referrals, positive word-of-mouth, reputation-building, and digital advocacy. This form of employee brand ambassadorship can support business performance by improving brand credibility, client trust, employee retention,

and organizational reputation. Therefore, the framework positions employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship as important linking mechanisms through which humane workplace practices may influence broader business outcomes.

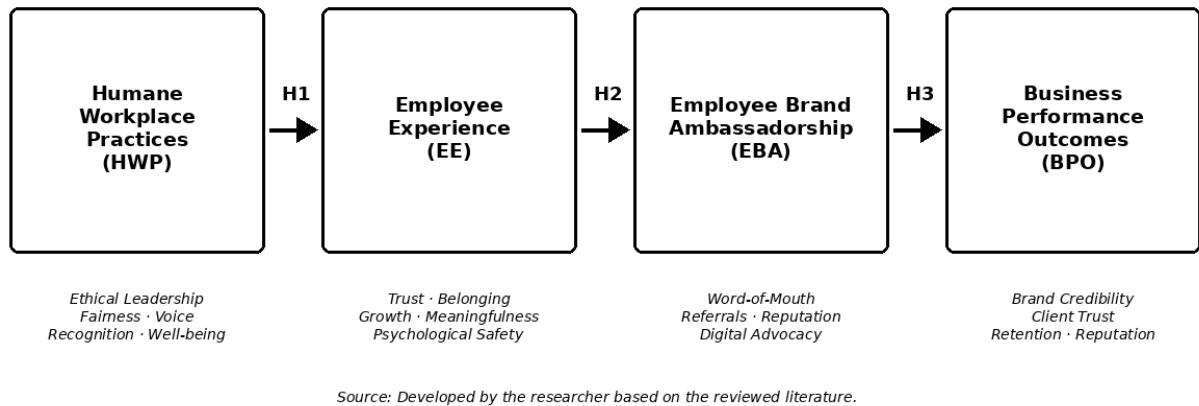


Figure 2.1: Literature review framework. Source: Developed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Overview of the Theoretical Landscape

Theoretical frameworks provide the conceptual scaffolding through which empirical phenomena are interpreted and understood. In the context of employee brand ambassadorship, no single theory offers a complete explanatory account. Rather, the relationship between workplace practices, employee experience, employee advocacy, and business performance is most productively understood through the convergence of multiple theoretical lenses, each contributing a distinct explanatory dimension. The present study draws on four theoretical perspectives: social exchange theory, signalling theory, person-organisation fit theory, and the resource-based view of the firm. These theories are complementary and together provide a robust theoretical basis for the conceptual framework of the study, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Social Exchange Theory	Signalling Theory	Person-Organisation Fit Theory	Resource-Based View of the Firm
Reciprocity drives voluntary advocacy. Positive treatment generates discretionary behaviour beyond formal role.	Workplace practices communicate employer values as signals. Employee advocacy signals credibility to external audiences.	Value congruence between employee and organisation drives identification and authentic brand advocacy.	Human capital-based advocacy is valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate — a source of sustainable competitive advantage.
Blau (1964) Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) Sharma & Gupta (2026)	Spence (1973) Cable & Turban (2003) Van Hoye et al. (2025) Carpentier et al. (2024)	Chatman (1989) Kristof (1996) Anand & Mishra (2026) Lievens & Slaughter (2025)	Barney (1991) Wright et al. (2001) Budhwar et al. (2025)
Explains EE → EBA pathway (H2)	Explains HWP as value signals; advocacy as credibility signal	Explains enacted value alignment as advocacy driver	Explains EBA → BPO pathway (H3)

Figure 2.2: Four Theoretical Pillars of the Conceptual Framework Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed theoretical literature.

2.2.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, originally formulated by Blau (1964) and subsequently developed by Emerson (1976) and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), is among the most widely applied theoretical frameworks in organisational behaviour research. The theory posits that social relationships are governed by an implicit norm of reciprocity, whereby individuals who receive resources, support, or benefits from another party feel obligated to return comparable value. In organisational settings, this exchange relationship operates between employees and their employing organisations. When organisations invest in their employees through fair treatment, recognition, developmental opportunities, and genuine concern for well-being, employees respond by increasing their commitment and willingness to engage in discretionary behaviours that benefit the organisation.

The relevance of social exchange theory to employee brand ambassadorship is substantial. Brand ambassadorship is a voluntary, discretionary behaviour that extends beyond the formal requirements of an employment contract. Employees who perceive that their organisation has treated them fairly are more likely to engage in advocacy as a form of reciprocal exchange (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Sharma and Gupta (2026), in a mixed-method study of Indian software professionals, provided recent and contextually precise

evidence that social exchange reciprocity operates as the primary psychological mechanism through which trust and value alignment translate into voluntary advocacy. Their findings directly extend Cropanzano and Mitchell's (2005) framework into the post-pandemic South Asian technology sector. Kaur et al. (2024) further demonstrated that psychological contract fulfilment significantly mediated the relationship between organisational support and advocacy behaviour among IT employees in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, accounting for 38 percent of the variance in advocacy intention. Figure 2.3 illustrates the reciprocity cycle through which this theory explains the advocacy pathway.

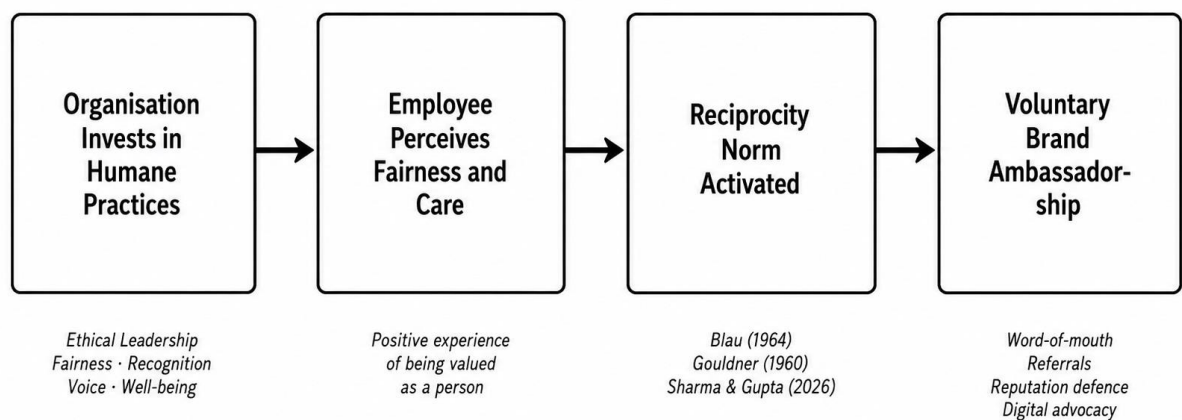


Figure 2.3: Social Exchange Theory - The Reciprocity Cycle in Employee Advocacy Source: Developed by the researcher based on Blau (1964), Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), and Sharma and Gupta (2026).

It is important to note that social exchange theory has been subject to scholarly critique. Gouldner (1960) observed that reciprocity norms vary across cultural contexts and individual dispositions, qualifying the universality of exchange-based explanations. In the South Indian IT context, where cultural norms around hierarchy, collectivism, and organisational loyalty may differ from those assumed in Western scholarship, this caveat warrants methodological sensitivity. Nevertheless, the theory remains the most empirically supported framework for understanding voluntary organisational citizenship behaviour, of which employee brand ambassadorship is a notable expression.

2.2.3 Signalling Theory

Signalling theory, introduced by Spence (1973) and extended to organisational and marketing scholarship, addresses the communication of information between parties where informational asymmetry exists. In employer branding, signalling theory explains how organisations communicate their value proposition as employers. Organisations that demonstrate fairness, ethical leadership, career development, and employee well-being send positive signals about their identity, influencing talent attraction and retention (Cable and Turban, 2003). For the present study, signalling theory operates at two interconnected levels. At the organisational level, humane workplace practices constitute a bundle of signals communicating the organisation's values to employees. At the employee level, brand ambassadorship itself constitutes a form of signalling: employees who publicly advocate for their employer signal credibility and trustworthiness to external audiences.

Van Hoya et al. (2025), in a major update to the signalling framework published in *Personnel Psychology*, examined the credibility of employee testimonials versus corporate employer brand communications across digital platforms, finding that employee-generated content was substantially more authentic and persuasive than official employer messaging. This finding extends the earlier work of Van Hoya and Lievens (2007) and carries direct theoretical implications: the authenticity of employee advocacy signals is determined not by communication strategy but by the quality of the employee experience that motivates the advocate. Lievens and Slaughter (2025), in an integrative review in the *Journal of Management*, similarly argued that digital platforms have amplified the signalling impact of employee advocacy while raising the commercial stakes of negative employee testimonials. Carpentier et al. (2024) provided complementary evidence that authentic employee testimonials were more than twice as effective as corporate employer brand communications in influencing talent attraction decisions.

2.2.4 Person-Organisation Fit Theory

Person-organisation fit theory, developed by Chatman (1989) and elaborated by Kristof (1996) and Cable and Judge (1996), proposes that individuals seek congruence between their own values and those of their employing organisation. When employees perceive a strong fit, they experience greater job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and identification with

the employer brand (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Lievens and Slaughter (2025) reinforced this in their integrative review, demonstrating that symbolic employer brand attributes, particularly perceived organisational values and culture, were stronger predictors of brand internalisation than instrumental attributes such as salary, especially among highly educated knowledge workers characteristic of the South Indian IT sector.

Anand and Mishra (2026) made a particularly important recent contribution by arguing that employees do not assess value alignment against the organisation's stated values but against its observable decision-making behaviour, particularly under adversity. Their study of IT sector employees across four South Indian cities found that value alignment assessed through enacted behaviour was a substantially stronger predictor of brand ambassadorship than alignment assessed through formal values communication. This enacted versus aspirational distinction refines the person-organisation fit construct and is directly reflected in the conceptual framework and research instrument of the present study.

2.2.5 Resource-Based View of the Firm

The resource-based view of the firm, developed by Barney (1991) and building on Penrose (1959) and Wernerfelt (1984), proposes that sustainable competitive advantage derives from resources that are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable. Human capital, including employee commitment and advocacy behaviours, constitutes one of the most strategically significant resources available to organisations in knowledge-intensive industries (Wright et al., 2001). The organisational culture, leadership quality, and trust relationships that enable genuine employee advocacy are deeply embedded in organisational systems and history, making them resistant to imitation. Budhwar et al. (2025) extended this framework by arguing that talent retention advantage generated through superior employee experience constitutes a dynamic capability in the sense of Teece et al. (1997), enabling organisations to reconfigure their human capital more rapidly than competitors. Their study across IT organisations in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Pune found that above-average employee experience scores were associated with significantly lower attrition, higher client satisfaction, and stronger employer brand equity, providing recent empirical support for the RBV argument in the Indian IT context.

Table 2.1: Theoretical Foundations, Key Scholars, and Relevance to Study

Theory	Core Proposition	Key Scholars	Relevance to Study
Social Exchange Theory	Reciprocity drives discretionary advocacy; positive treatment generates voluntary behaviour	Blau (1964); Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005); Sharma & Gupta (2026); Kaur et al. (2024)	Explains the employee experience to advocacy pathway
Signalling Theory	Workplace practices communicate employer values; employee advocacy signals credibility externally	Spence (1973); Van Hoya et al. (2025); Carpentier et al. (2024); Lievens & Slaughter (2025)	Explains HWP as value signals and advocacy as credibility signal
Person-Organisation Fit Theory	Value congruence drives identification and authentic advocacy; enacted values matter more than stated values	Chatman (1989); Anand & Mishra (2026); Lievens & Slaughter (2025)	Explains enacted value alignment as the advocacy driver
Resource-Based View	Advocacy as a rare, inimitable competitive asset; superior employee experience generates sustainable advantage	Barney (1991); Wright et al. (2001); Budhwar et al. (2025)	Explains the brand ambassadorship to business performance pathway

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed theoretical literature.

2.3 Humane Workplace Practices

2.3.1 Conceptual Definition and Scope

The concept of humane workplace practices refers to a cluster of organisational behaviours, policies, and cultural norms that reflect a genuine concern for the dignity, well-being, fairness, and development of employees as human beings rather than merely as instruments of production. The term integrates insights from ethical leadership theory (Brown et al., 2005), high-performance work systems research (Appelbaum et al., 2000), positive organisational behaviour (Luthans and Youssef, 2007), and servant leadership scholarship (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011). What unites these traditions is the recognition that organisational performance and human flourishing are mutually reinforcing rather than competing goals. For the present study, humane workplace practices are operationalised across

five dimensions: ethical leadership, fairness and organisational justice, employee voice and participation, recognition and appreciation, and concern for employee well-being. Figure 2.4 presents these five dimensions, their conceptual character, and the key scholarly sources underpinning each.

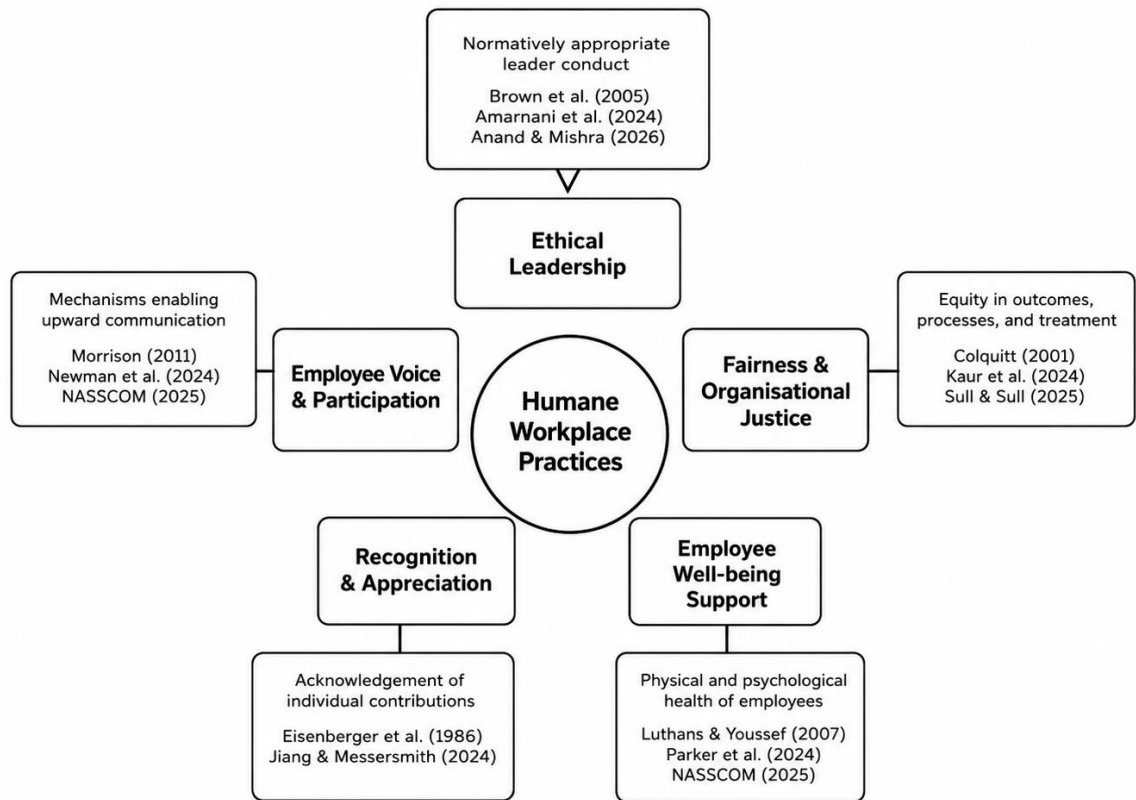


Figure 2.4: Five Dimensions of Humane Workplace Practices and Key Scholarly Sources
Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.3.2 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is defined by Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. Ethical leaders are characterised by their commitment to honesty, integrity, fairness, and concern for the interests of their followers and other stakeholders. In organisational contexts, ethical leadership has been associated with increased employee trust, reduced deviant behaviour, greater organisational commitment, and higher levels of well-being (Trevino et al., 2003).

Amarnani et al. (2024), in research published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, examined the consequences of ethical leadership violations, defined as observable breaches of the ethical conduct norms employees had come to expect from their leaders. Their findings demonstrated that such violations generated sharp and rapid withdrawals of employee advocacy behaviour, with the withdrawal effect persisting for an average of fourteen months after the violation event. Critically, employees who had been the most active advocates prior to a violation experienced the sharpest withdrawal, because the perceived betrayal was proportionally greater for those who had invested more personal credibility in the organisation's reputation. Anand and Mishra (2026), in the South Indian IT sector context specifically, found that ethical leadership was the single strongest predictor of employee brand ambassadorship among the five humane workplace practices dimensions, underscoring the primacy of leader conduct as a driver of genuine advocacy in this sector.

2.3.3 Fairness and Organisational Justice

Organisational justice theory distinguishes among four dimensions of fairness: distributive justice, which concerns the perceived fairness of outcomes; procedural justice, which concerns the fairness of decision-making processes; interpersonal justice, which concerns the respect afforded to employees during organisational transactions; and informational justice, which concerns the honesty of explanations provided (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987). Research consistently demonstrates that organisational justice perceptions are among the strongest predictors of employee trust, commitment, and engagement (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001).

Kaur et al. (2024) provided recent evidence that procedural justice was a stronger predictor of advocacy than distributive justice among IT sector employees in India, suggesting that employees in this sector are more sensitive to the fairness of organisational processes than to the fairness of outcomes per se. This distinction has practical implications: organisations seeking to strengthen advocacy should invest not only in equitable reward systems but in the transparency and consistency of the processes through which rewards and opportunities are allocated. Sull and Sull (2025), drawing on Glassdoor review data from over 1.4 million employees, identified unfair treatment as the single most powerful predictor of employee intent

to leave and negative public commentary, surpassing compensation, career development, and work-life balance as drivers of reputational damage.

2.3.4 Employee Voice and Participation

Employee voice refers to the mechanisms and practices through which employees express their views, opinions, concerns, and ideas to organisational decision-makers (Hirschman, 1970; Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Morrison, 2011). The distinction between structural voice, which refers to the existence of formal voice mechanisms, and functional voice, which refers to the degree to which those mechanisms actually enable employees to influence organisational decisions, is of particular importance in the South Indian IT sector. Newman et al. (2024), in a decade-spanning systematic review published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, demonstrated that structural voice mechanisms alone, in the absence of a psychologically safe culture, had no significant effect on employee voice behaviour or on the downstream outcomes of engagement and advocacy. The functional effectiveness of voice mechanisms depended critically on the psychological safety climate created by direct managers. This finding underscores the interdependence of voice and psychological safety as enabling conditions for genuine advocacy, a relationship examined in greater depth in Section 2.5.

NASSCOM (2025) reported that employee voice and upward communication were among the most frequently cited areas for improvement by IT sector professionals in South India, with only 38 percent of respondents indicating that they believed their concerns were genuinely acted upon by their organisations. This gap between the structural availability of voice channels and their functional effectiveness represents a critical challenge for advocacy development in the sector, and one that the policy framework developed in Chapter 5 directly addresses.

2.3.5 Recognition and Appreciation

Recognition refers to the acknowledgement of employee contributions, performance, and value by organisational leaders and peers. It encompasses both formal mechanisms, such as performance awards and monetary incentives, and informal appreciation, such as verbal acknowledgement and personal commendation (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1966; Deci and

Ryan, 1985; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Jiang and Messersmith (2024) provided recent evidence that recognition practices within high-performance work systems generated stronger advocacy outcomes than any other single HR practice, including compensation, career development, or job design. Their study demonstrated that recognition functioned through the mediating mechanism of affective commitment, consistent with the social exchange theory framework: recognition signals organisational care for the individual employee and motivates reciprocal discretionary behaviour including advocacy.

An important nuance in the recognition literature concerns the form rather than merely the presence of recognition. The qualitative findings of the present study, presented in Chapter 4, reveal that informal, spontaneous, and personally directed acknowledgement from direct managers generated disproportionately strong feelings of belonging and advocacy motivation compared with formal recognition programmes. This distinction between recognition form and function has not been adequately captured in the existing quantitative literature and represents one of the contributions of the present study's mixed-method design.

2.3.6 Concern for Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing hedonic well-being, which includes positive affect and life satisfaction, and eudaimonic well-being, which includes purpose, growth, autonomy, and positive relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Warr, 1990). In the South Indian IT sector of the mid-2020s, well-being has assumed particular strategic significance following the pandemic-era talent disruption, the sustained elevation of attrition, and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence as a structural force reshaping knowledge work. Parker et al. (2024), in a comprehensive review published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, found that the well-being consequences of hybrid work arrangements were highly contingent on the quality of managerial support and organisational design. NASSCOM (2025) reported that burnout and well-being concerns were cited by 67 percent of IT sector respondents as significant factors in their decision to consider leaving their current employer, compared with 48 percent in 2022. Cook (2024) found that well-being quality was the third strongest predictor of voluntary attrition after toxic management culture and lack of career growth, confirming the commercial significance of well-being investment for talent retention in competitive knowledge-intensive labour markets.

Table 2.2: Dimensions of Humane Workplace Practices - Definitions, Evidence, and Advocacy Relevance

Dimension	Definition	Recent Key Evidence	Advocacy Relevance
Ethical Leadership	Normatively appropriate leader conduct; promotion of ethical behaviour in all interactions	Amarnani et al. (2024); Anand & Mishra (2026)	Primary trust builder; advocacy withdrawal follows violations
Fairness and Justice	Perceived equity in outcomes, processes, interpersonal treatment, and communication	Kaur et al. (2024); Sull & Sull (2025)	Enables psychological contract fulfilment; reduces exit intention
Employee Voice	Mechanisms enabling upward communication and genuine employee participation	Newman et al. (2024); NASSCOM (2025)	Gateway to psychological safety; absence suppresses advocacy
Recognition	Acknowledgement of individual contributions by leaders and peers; formal and informal	Jiang & Messersmith (2024)	Informal recognition most impactful for belonging and advocacy
Well-being Support	Genuine organisational concern for physical and psychological health of employees	Parker et al. (2024); NASSCOM (2025); Cook (2024)	Critical post-pandemic retention and advocacy driver in IT sector

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.4 Employee Experience

2.4.1 Evolution and Contemporary Conceptualisation

The concept of employee experience has emerged as one of the most strategically significant constructs in contemporary human resource management scholarship and practice. Although the term has antecedents in earlier work on employee satisfaction, engagement, and the psychological contract, its current formulation as a holistic, journey-based construct represents a meaningful conceptual development. Morgan (2017) is widely credited with consolidating the framework in management discourse, defining employee experience as the intersection of employee expectations, needs, and wants on one hand, and organisational systems, processes, and cultural norms on the other. Unlike employee engagement, which is primarily attitudinal and motivational, employee experience encompasses the totality of an employee's perceptions across their entire organisational journey, from pre-employment brand encounters through daily work, career development, and ultimately exit. Figure 2.5 presents the employee experience journey across six key touchpoints.

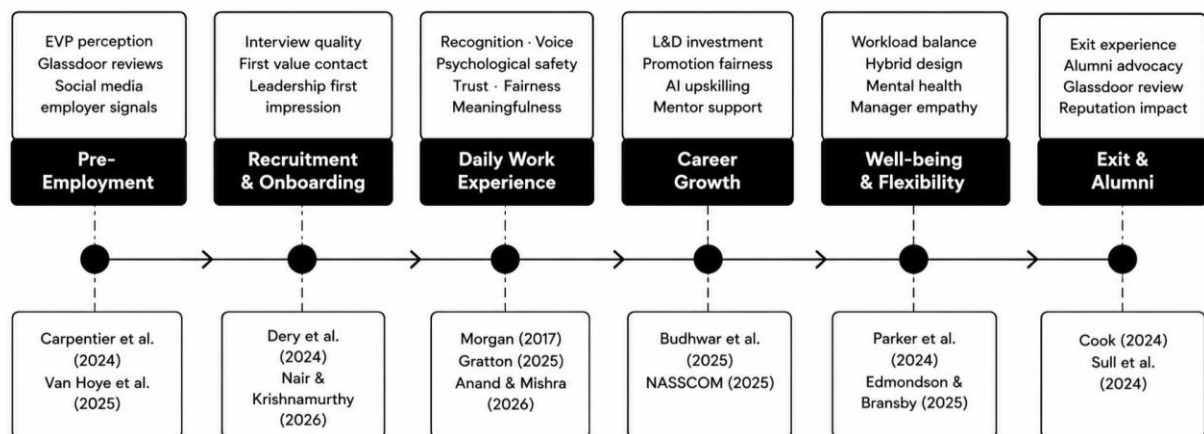


Figure 2.5: The Employee Experience Journey - Key Touchpoints and Scholarly Sources
Source: Developed by the researcher based on Morgan (2017), Dery et al. (2024), and Gratton (2025).

Dery et al. (2024) advanced the employee experience construct significantly by proposing a digital-era framework that accounts for the role of technology in shaping employee perceptions. Their study of 18 IT organisations across Asia-Pacific demonstrated that the design of digital work tools and platforms constitutes a distinct and increasingly important dimension of the employee experience not adequately captured by earlier frameworks.

Employees who experienced their digital work environment as enabling reported significantly higher organisational identification and advocacy intention than those who experienced it as frustrating, even when other dimensions of experience were held constant. This finding is particularly relevant to the South Indian IT sector, where the quality of digital tooling is a daily experiential reality for the majority of the professional workforce.

Gratton (2025), writing in the Harvard Business Review, argued that the future of hybrid work requires a fundamental reimagining of the employee experience as a dynamic and individually negotiated journey rather than a standardised organisational programme. Her argument, grounded in longitudinal research across 50 global organisations, emphasised that the most effective employee experience strategies in the hybrid era treat employees as autonomous agents whose experience is co-designed with them rather than delivered to them, a perspective that aligns closely with the employee voice dimension of the humane workplace practices construct examined in Section 2.3.

2.4.2 Key Dimensions of Employee Experience

Several dimensions of employee experience are particularly relevant to the formation of employee brand ambassadorship: leadership quality, role clarity, learning and development, psychological safety, and organisational trust. Leadership quality is consistently identified as the most powerful determinant of employee experience. Gallup (2023), drawing on surveys of more than 122,000 teams in 96 countries, continued to demonstrate that manager quality accounts for at least 70 percent of the variance in employee engagement, a finding that has remained stable over two decades of measurement. Learning and development have become particularly acute concerns in the mid-2020s South Indian IT sector as the rapid acceleration of generative artificial intelligence capabilities has created significant uncertainty about the future relevance of existing technical skills. Budhwar et al. (2025) found that perceived investment in upskilling for AI-adjacent roles was a significant predictor of retention intention and advocacy behaviour among IT sector professionals in India.

Work meaningfulness, identified by Hackman and Oldham (1976) as a core motivational property of well-designed jobs, has been re-examined in the context of knowledge work and the mid-2020s technology sector. Grant (2008) demonstrated that employees who experience their work as having significant positive impact on others show substantially higher

levels of intrinsic motivation and citizenship behaviour. In the IT sector context, where many employees are engaged in technically complex but abstractly connected work, the cultivation of meaningfulness through clear line-of-sight to client impact and organisational purpose has become an important dimension of leading technology employers' experience strategies.

2.4.3 Employee Experience and Organisational Identification

A particularly important theoretical link connecting employee experience to brand ambassadorship is the construct of organisational identification. Organisational identification, defined by Ashforth and Mael (1989) as the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organisation, involves the incorporation of the organisation's identity into one's own self-concept. When employees identify strongly with their organisation, they are motivated to engage in behaviours that protect and enhance the organisation's reputation (Dutton et al., 1994). Positive employee experiences contribute to identification through multiple pathways. Experiences of fair treatment signal that the organisation's identity is consistent with the employee's values. Experiences of recognition signal that the employee is regarded as a valued community member. Experiences of psychological safety signal that the employee's authentic self is welcomed.

Nair and Krishnamurthy (2026), in a study of authentic employer branding across five South Asian countries including India, found that organisational identification fully mediated the relationship between employee experience quality and brand ambassadorship behaviour, with the mediated effect accounting for 52 percent of the total variance in advocacy intention. Their findings provide the most recent and contextually proximate empirical support for the identification-based theoretical account of the experience-advocacy relationship, and directly validate the conceptual pathway proposed in the present study.

2.4.4 The Post-Pandemic Talent Market and the Experience Imperative

The business case for investing in employee experience has been strengthened considerably by the talent market disruptions of the post-pandemic period. The Great Resignation of 2021 to 2023, and its successor phenomena of quiet quitting and selective attrition, demonstrated at global scale that employees would leave organisations that failed to meet their experience expectations. In the South Indian IT sector, attrition reached historic

highs of 25 to 28 percent during 2022 and 2023 before moderating to 18 to 22 percent through 2025, imposing substantial recruitment, onboarding, and knowledge-loss costs on the sector.

Sull et al. (2024), updating their analysis of Great Resignation drivers using data from over 38 million Glassdoor reviews, found that toxic culture, defined primarily as the perceived absence of ethical leadership, fairness, and psychological safety, was more than ten times more powerful a predictor of attrition than compensation levels. Kuchеров and Zavyalova (2024), in a longitudinal study of employer brand equity in emerging market firms, found that organisations sustaining above-average employee experience scores over a three-year period reported significantly stronger talent attraction, lower recruitment costs per hire, and higher client satisfaction scores than those with below-average or declining experience scores. These findings collectively reinforce the argument that employee experience investment is not merely a human resources concern but a commercially consequential strategic priority.

Table 2.3: Key Dimensions of Employee Experience - Theoretical Basis and Recent Evidence

Dimension	Key Theoretical Basis	Recent Evidence	Relevance to Brand Ambassadorship
Leadership Quality	Purcell & Kinnie (2007); Gallup (2023)	Anand & Mishra (2026); Amarnani et al. (2024)	Strongest single determinant of experience and advocacy
Role Clarity	Rizzo et al. (1970); Hackman & Oldham (1976)	Parker et al. (2024)	Reduces anxiety; enables confident brand representation
Learning and Development	Deci & Ryan (1985); Grant (2008)	Budhwar et al. (2025); NASSCOM (2025)	AI-era upskilling as advocacy differentiator in IT sector
Psychological Safety	Edmondson (1999); Newman et al. (2024)	Edmondson & Bransby (2025); Chatterjee & Bose (2026)	Gateway condition for authentic external advocacy

Organisational Trust	Mayer et al. (1995); Dirks & Ferrin (2002)	Sharma & Gupta (2026)	Most proximate psychological enabler of voluntary advocacy
Work Meaningfulness	Hackman & Oldham (1976); Grant (2008)	Gratton (2025)	Strengthens identification; motivates sustained advocacy

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.5 Psychological Safety and Organisational Trust

2.5.1 Psychological Safety: Foundation and Recent Development

Psychological safety, defined by Edmondson (1999, p. 354) as a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, has emerged as one of the most extensively researched and practically consequential constructs in organisational behaviour over the past quarter-century. A psychologically safe workplace is one in which employees feel confident that they can speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, share concerns, and express ideas without fear of punishment, ridicule, or professional marginalisation. The construct has roots in the earlier work of Schein and Bennis (1965) on organisational learning and change, and has been substantially developed through Edmondson's programme of research on team learning and voice behaviour. Figure 2.6 presents the key dimensions of psychological safety and organisational trust, their antecedents, and their relationship to advocacy outcomes.

	Psychological Safety (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Bransby, 2021; Newman et al., 2024)	Organisational Trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Sharma & Gupta, 2026)
Definition	Shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking	Willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations of the other party
Key Antecedents	Leader inclusiveness No-blame culture Diversity and inclusion Hybrid work design	Perceived ability Leader benevolence Organisational integrity Consistency of conduct
Advocacy Outcome	Enables authentic external advocacy; reduces compliance-based brand participation	Motivates voluntary word-of-mouth; strengthens referral behaviour and retention intent
Recent Evidence	Chatterjee & Bose (2026) Edmondson & Bransby (2025) Newman et al. (2024)	Sharma & Gupta (2026) Mehrotra & Sinha (2026) Dirks & Ferrin (2002)

Figure 2.6: Psychological Safety and Organisational Trust - Definitions, Antecedents, and Advocacy Outcomes Source: Developed by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

Edmondson and Bransby (2025), in a major review published in the Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, synthesised 25 years of evidence on psychological safety and identified three significant new frontiers in the mid-2020s context. First, the advent of widespread hybrid and remote working has created new challenges for psychological safety, as the informal social cues and relationship-building opportunities that build felt safety are attenuated in asynchronous digital environments. Second, the introduction of artificial intelligence tools into knowledge work has created new categories of interpersonal risk, including the risk of appearing less competent than an AI system. Third, the increasing diversity of IT workforces has created a need for more granular understanding of how psychological safety varies across identity groups within the same team.

Chatterjee and Bose (2026) responded directly to the first of these frontiers in a study of psychological safety in hybrid IT teams across seven major Indian technology organisations. Their findings demonstrated that psychological safety was significantly lower in hybrid teams than in fully co-located teams matched on leadership quality, and that the reduction was most acute for employees with less than four years of experience who had fewer established relationships. Critically, the negative effect of hybrid work on psychological safety was

significantly moderated by leader inclusive behaviour, consistent with Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), suggesting that intentional leader investment in inclusive practices can substantially offset the safety-reducing effects of physical distance. This finding has direct implications for the South Indian IT sector, where hybrid working now characterises the majority of professional employment relationships.

2.5.2 Antecedents and Enabling Conditions

Research has identified several key antecedents of psychological safety at team and organisational levels. At the team level, leader behaviour is the most consistently identified antecedent (Edmondson, 1999; Detert and Burris, 2007). Newman et al. (2024), in their decade-spanning systematic review, identified leader inclusive behaviour as the single most consistently supported antecedent across the 147 studies they reviewed, followed by team interdependence, trust climate, and organisational justice perceptions. Their review also identified three underexplored antecedents receiving growing scholarly attention: the design of digital communication platforms, the diversity of team membership, and the perceived organisational response to failure.

In the South Indian IT sector, the hierarchical nature of many organisational cultures constitutes a significant structural constraint on psychological safety. Anand and Mishra (2026) found that power distance significantly moderated the relationship between leader inclusive behaviour and psychological safety, with the safety-enabling effect of inclusive leadership being strongest in high-power-distance cultures. This suggests that leader inclusive behaviour is even more important as a safety enabler in the South Indian IT context than in lower-power-distance organisational cultures, and underscores the strategic priority that IT organisations in this region should attach to developing inclusive leadership capabilities.

2.5.3 Organisational Trust

Trust is a foundational concept in organisational behaviour, defined by Mayer et al. (1995, p. 712) as the willingness of a party 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.'s influential model identifies three key antecedents of trust: ability, which refers to the trustee's perceived

competence; benevolence, which refers to the trustee's perceived concern for the trustor's interests; and integrity, which refers to adherence to acceptable principles.

Sharma and Gupta (2026) provided the most contextually relevant and recent evidence on the trust-advocacy relationship in the present study's target population. Their mixed-method study of Indian software professionals found that organisational trust was the most powerful single predictor of voluntary brand ambassadorship behaviour. Critically, their qualitative findings revealed that trust was experienced not as a generalised positive attitude but as a specific and fragile perception of the organisation's willingness to prioritise employee interests over competing commercial pressures in moments of genuine tension. Dirks and Ferrin (2002), in a meta-analysis of 106 studies, demonstrated that trust in leadership was among the strongest predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour, cooperative behaviour, and employee performance, with effects operating through both affective and cognitive pathways.

2.5.4 Psychological Safety, Trust, and Authentic Advocacy

The relationship between psychological safety, organisational trust, and brand ambassadorship has attracted growing scholarly attention as researchers have sought to understand the psychological enabling conditions for authentic advocacy. Mehrotra and Sinha (2026) found that psychological safety significantly moderated the relationship between trust and external advocacy behaviour, such that the advocacy-enabling effect of trust was substantially stronger among employees who also reported high psychological safety. Their finding suggests that trust and safety operate as complementary and mutually reinforcing conditions: trust motivates the desire to advocate, while psychological safety provides the confidence to do so openly and publicly.

Piehler et al. (2025), in an extension of the brand citizenship behaviour framework to digital environments published in the *Journal of Brand Management*, identified psychological safety as a critical boundary condition for the translation of brand commitment into observable digital advocacy. Their finding that employees with high brand commitment but low psychological safety were significantly less likely to engage in LinkedIn advocacy, employer reviews, or professional referral activity confirms the gateway character of psychological safety in the contemporary digital advocacy context.

The qualitative findings of the present study, detailed in Chapter 4, provide important experiential texture to these statistical findings. Participants consistently described a pattern in which they felt positively about their organisation, indicating trust, yet remained hesitant to express that positivity publicly due to insufficient psychological safety. This experience of trust without safety creating a state of suppressed advocacy is a theoretically important finding that has not been explicitly identified in the prior literature and represents a contribution of the present study's interpretive phase.

Table 2.4: Psychological Safety in the Contemporary IT Context - Key Developments 2024 to 2026

Development	Study	Key Finding	Implication
Hybrid work and safety	Chatterjee & Bose (2026)	Safety lower in hybrid teams; moderated by leader inclusive behaviour	IT sector requires intentional leader inclusivity in hybrid settings
AI-era safety challenges	Edmondson & Bransby (2025)	AI tools create new interpersonal risks in knowledge work	AI adoption must preserve psychological safety norms
Safety as advocacy gateway	Mehrotra & Sinha (2026)	Safety moderates trust-advocacy relationship; both conditions required for advocacy	Trust alone is insufficient; safety must accompany trust
Digital advocacy boundary	Piehler et al. (2025)	Low safety suppresses digital advocacy even among brand-committed employees	LinkedIn advocacy requires both brand commitment and psychological safety
Power distance moderator	Anand & Mishra (2026)	Inclusive leadership more important in high power-distance cultures	South Indian IT context amplifies the value of inclusive leadership
Decade synthesis	Newman et al. (2024)	Leader inclusiveness most consistent antecedent of safety across 147 studies	Leader development is the primary lever for safety improvement

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature (2024 to 2026).

2.6 Internal Branding and Employer Branding

2.6.1 Internal Branding: Conceptual Origins and Development

Internal branding is concerned with the processes through which organisations communicate their brand values to employees, with the goal of ensuring that employees understand, internalise, and consistently deliver the brand promise in their interactions with customers and other stakeholders. The concept draws on earlier work in services marketing and internal marketing, which recognised that employees in service organisations are co-producers of the customer experience and must therefore be managed as a distinct internal market whose buy-in is essential to service quality and brand consistency (Berry, 1981; Gronroos, 1985). The transition from internal marketing to internal branding reflects a broader shift in brand management thinking, away from purely transactional conceptions of the employee relationship and toward a more identity-based and values-driven understanding of how brand alignment is achieved.

Mitchell (2002) established that internal branding requires not merely the communication of brand values but the active enlistment of employees as brand partners through participative processes, leadership modelling, and the alignment of HR practices with brand identity. King and Grace (2008) subsequently developed a model of internal branding that identified brand knowledge dissemination, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behaviour as the key stages of the internal brand management process. Their empirical research demonstrated that the quality of internal brand communication significantly influenced employee brand commitment and brand-aligned behaviour, but that this relationship was moderated by the degree to which employees perceived the organisation's stated values as genuinely enacted in practice. This enacted-versus-aspirational distinction is directly relevant to the value alignment construct of the present study, reviewed in Chapter 2 Part One.

A critical insight from the internal branding literature is the distinction between compliance-based and commitment-based brand behaviour. Organisations can prescribe specific employee brand behaviours through performance management systems, and they can enforce compliance through monitoring. However, compliance-based brand behaviour is fragile, superficial, and contingent on monitoring. Authentic brand ambassadorship, by contrast, requires commitment-based behaviour that is intrinsically motivated and self-

sustaining, arising from employees' genuine identification with and belief in the organisational brand. This distinction underpins the conceptual framework of the present study and is illustrated in Figure 2.9.

2.6.2 Employer Branding: Concept and Contemporary Development

The concept of employer branding was introduced by Ambler and Barrow (1996), who defined the employer brand as the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) provided a more theoretically grounded development of the construct, proposing a model in which employer brand equity was generated through the brand associations held by current and prospective employees. Their model identified employer brand investment, employer brand associations, and employer brand equity as three stages of value creation analogous to consumer brand equity models.

Lievens and Slaughter (2025), in the most comprehensive integrative review of the employer branding literature to date, published in the *Journal of Management*, argued that the field had reached a point of theoretical consolidation sufficient to support a unified framework. Their review identified symbolic employer brand attributes, specifically the perceived values, culture, and identity of the organisation as an employer, as consistently stronger predictors of employer attractiveness, brand internalisation, and advocacy than instrumental attributes such as salary and job security. This finding is directly relevant to the South Indian IT sector context of the present study, where highly educated and professionally mobile knowledge workers place strong emphasis on culture fit and organisational identity in their employment choices. Figure 2.7 presents the key distinctions between internal branding and employer branding across six comparative dimensions.

INTERNAL BRANDING		vs	EMPLOYER BRANDING	
Aligning current employees with brand values for consistent service delivery	Primary Focus		Attracting and retaining talent through a differentiated employer identity	
Current employees only	Target Audience		Current AND prospective employees; talent market	
Communication, training, HR system alignment, leader modelling	Core Mechanism		EVP development, employer brand associations, reputation management	
Brand-consistent employee behaviour and service quality	Key Outcome		Employer brand equity, talent attraction and retention	
Compliance-based rather than commitment-based brand behaviour	Key Risk		Aspirational EVP disconnected from actual employee lived experience	
Mitchell (2002) King & Grace (2008) Burmamnn & Zeplin (2005)	Key Scholars		Ambler & Barrow (1996) Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) Lievens & Slaughter (2025)	

Figure 2.7: Internal Branding vs Employer Branding - A Comparative Framework Source: Compiled by the researcher from Mitchell (2002), Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), and Lievens and Slaughter (2025).

Sivertzen et al. (2024), in a study of employer branding and social media published in the International Journal of Human Resource Management, demonstrated that employee advocacy on professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn significantly predicted organisational attractiveness ratings from prospective candidates, with the effect being substantially stronger than that of official employer brand content on the same platforms. Their finding reinforces the signalling theory argument reviewed in Section 2.2: employee-generated advocacy signals are perceived as more credible and therefore more persuasive than managed employer brand communications. This has direct strategic implications for organisations seeking to strengthen their talent attraction positioning in competitive IT labour markets.

2.6.3 The Employee Value Proposition

Central to both internal branding and employer branding is the employee value proposition, defined by Minchington (2010) as the total set of tangible and intangible benefits that the organisation offers to employees in exchange for their skills, knowledge, experience,

and effort. An effective EVP is credible, meaning that it accurately reflects the actual employee experience; distinctive, meaning that it differentiates the organisation in the talent market; and compelling, meaning that it resonates with the values and aspirations of target employee segments. Figure 2.8 presents the five principal dimensions of the EVP and their key scholarly sources.

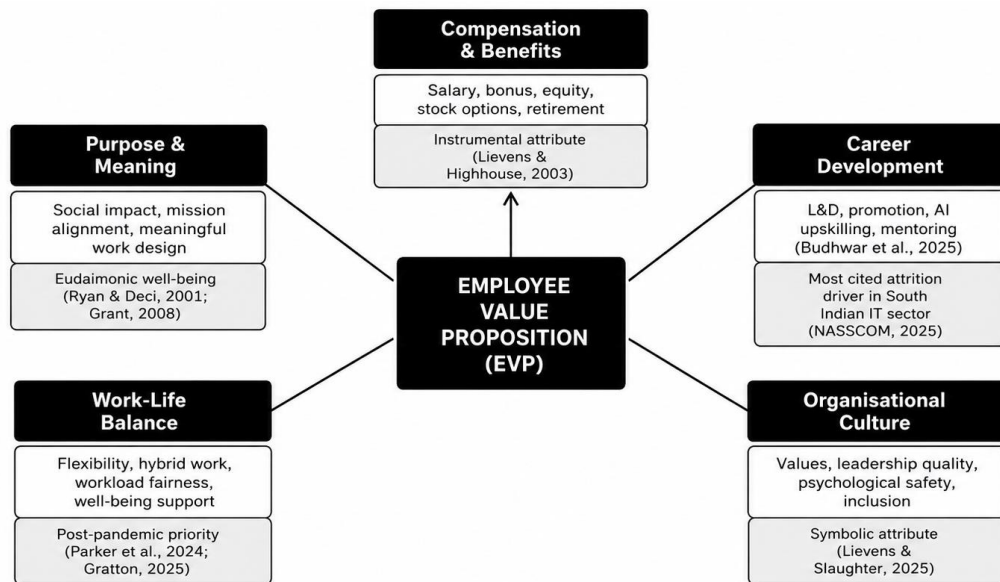


Figure 2.8: Employee Value Proposition - Five Dimensions and Scholarly Evidence Source: Developed by the researcher based on Minchington (2010), Lievens and Slaughter (2025), and Budhwar et al. (2025).

The alignment between the stated EVP and the lived employee experience is a critical determinant of employee brand ambassadorship. When employees perceive that the organisation consistently delivers on its EVP commitments, they develop a sense of psychological contract fulfilment that reinforces loyalty, identification, and advocacy orientation (Rousseau, 1989). When the EVP is perceived as aspirational rather than actual, employees experience psychological contract breach, which has been associated with reduced organisational commitment, increased turnover intention, and negative word-of-mouth (Robinson and Morrison, 2000; Zhao et al., 2007). Budhwar et al. (2025) found that the EVP dimension of career development and AI-era upskilling had become the most strategically differentiated component of the IT sector EVP in South Asian markets, with organisations that

credibly invested in future-proofing their employees' skills commanding substantially stronger advocacy and retention outcomes.

Table 2.5: Internal Branding and Employer Branding - Key Dimensions Compared

Dimension	Internal Branding	Employer Branding
Primary Focus	Aligning current employees with brand values for consistent service delivery	Attracting and retaining talent through a differentiated employer identity in the talent market
Target Audience	Current employees within the organisation	Both current and prospective employees; the external talent market
Core Mechanism	Communication, training, HR alignment, leader modelling	EVP development, employer brand associations, reputation management
Key Outcome	Brand-consistent employee behaviour and service quality	Employer brand equity, talent attraction, and reduced recruitment costs
Primary Risk	Compliance-based rather than commitment-based brand behaviour	Aspirational EVP disconnected from the actual lived employee experience
Key Scholars	Mitchell (2002); King & Grace (2008); Burmann & Zeplin (2005)	Ambler & Barrow (1996); Backhaus & Tikoo (2004); Lievens & Slaughter (2025)

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.7 Employee Brand Ambassadorship

2.7.1 Conceptual Definition and Boundaries

Employee brand ambassadorship refers to the voluntary, intrinsically motivated behaviour of employees who actively represent, promote, and defend the organisational brand in their professional and social interactions, without being compelled to do so through formal job requirements or managerial directives. Authentic brand ambassadors speak positively about their employer in professional networks, recommend the organisation as a place of employment to talented peers, defend the organisation's reputation when it is challenged, and demonstrate the brand values of the organisation through the quality and character of their interactions with clients, customers, and colleagues. The distinction between authentic brand

ambassadorship and compliance-based brand behaviour is conceptually important and has significant practical implications, as illustrated in Figure 2.9.

AUTHENTIC BRAND AMBASSADORSHIP	VS	COMPLIANCE-BASED BRAND PARTICIPATION
Genuine pride, personal belief in the organisation's values and conduct	Motivational Basis	Obligation, incentive, social pressure, or managerial expectation
Spontaneous, self-initiated, not prompted by the organisation	Initiation	Prompted, requested, or required by the organisation or HR programmes
High: perceived as authentic by external audiences; builds employer reputation	Credibility Signal	Low: audiences often perceive it as managed; limited reputational impact
Sustained over time; persists through organisational challenges	Sustainability	Fragile; collapses when incentives end or trust is broken
Trust, psychological safety, value alignment, recognition, ethical leadership	Key Enablers	Communication mandates, advocacy training, social media templates
Burmann & Zeplin (2005) Piehler et al. (2025) Sharma & Gupta (2026)	Key Scholars	Mitchell (2002) King & Grace (2008)

Figure 2.9: Authentic Brand Ambassadorship vs Compliance-Based Brand Participation
Source: Developed by the researcher based on Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Piehler et al. (2025), and Sharma and Gupta (2026).

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) conceptualised brand ambassadorship as the behavioural expression of brand commitment, distinguishing between brand citizenship behaviour, which refers to voluntary extra-role brand-supportive activity, and brand compliance, which refers to in-role adherence to brand standards. Brand citizenship behaviour corresponds most closely to the ambassadorship construct of the present study. Piehler et al. (2025), extending this framework to digital environments in a study published in the *Journal of Brand Management*, demonstrated that the distinction between authentic advocacy and compliance-based participation had become even more consequential in the digital age, because audiences on professional platforms are increasingly able to distinguish between organic employee enthusiasm and managed brand messaging. Their finding that authentic employee content generated three to four times the engagement of corporate employer brand content on LinkedIn underscores the commercial value of cultivating genuine rather than scripted advocacy.

Sharma and Gupta (2026) provided the most recent and contextually relevant conceptual development for the present study. Their mixed-method investigation of Indian software professionals defined authentic advocacy as arising from the convergence of three enabling conditions: trust in the organisation's leadership and intentions, value alignment between the employee's personal values and the organisation's enacted values, and psychological safety that allows the employee to express their genuine assessment of the organisation publicly. Their tripartite model directly informs the conceptual framework of the present study and provides a theoretically grounded basis for treating trust, value alignment, and psychological safety as the primary mechanisms through which humane workplace practices translate into genuine brand advocacy.

2.7.2 Antecedents of Employee Brand Ambassadorship

The literature identifies antecedents of employee brand ambassadorship operating at three distinct levels: individual, relationship, and organisational. At the individual level, antecedents include proactive personality (Bateman and Crant, 1993), professional pride (Mehrotra and Sinha, 2026), brand identification (Piehler et al., 2025), and organisational commitment (Jiang and Messersmith, 2024). At the relationship level, antecedents include the quality of the leader-member exchange (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), manager inclusive behaviour (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006; Anand and Mishra, 2026), value alignment (Chatman, 1989; Sharma and Gupta, 2026), and psychological contract fulfilment (Kaur et al., 2024; Rousseau, 1989). At the organisational level, antecedents include perceived organisational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Saks, 2006), psychological safety climate (Edmondson and Bransby, 2025; Newman et al., 2024), organisational justice (Colquitt, 2001; Kaur et al., 2024), and the quality of internal brand communication (King and Grace, 2008). Figure 2.10 presents this three-level antecedent framework.

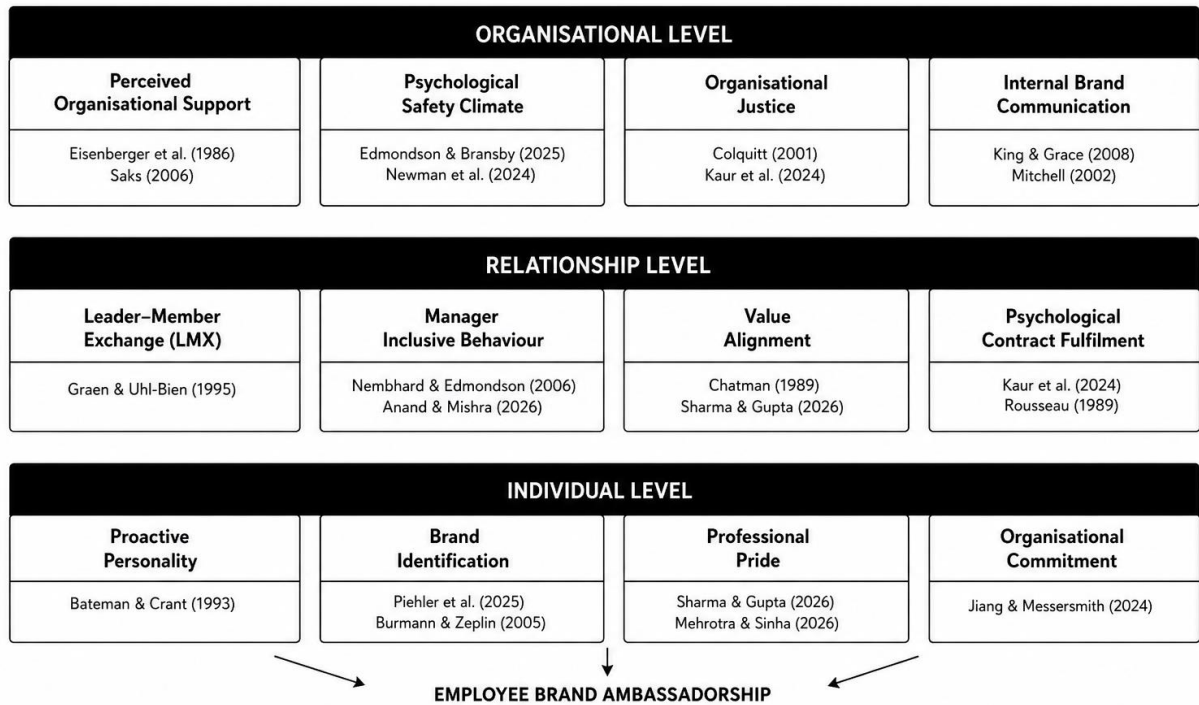


Figure 2.10: Antecedents of Employee Brand Ambassadorship at Three Organisational Levels Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

Research consistently demonstrates that organisational-level antecedents are more powerful predictors of brand ambassadorship than individual-level antecedents, because they shape the conditions within which individual advocacy propensities are either expressed or suppressed. Perceived organisational support, identified by Eisenberger et al. (1986) as a foundational predictor of employee citizenship behaviour, has been shown to account for a substantial proportion of the variance in advocacy-related outcomes across multiple studies and contexts. The implication for the present study is that organisations have considerably more leverage over employee advocacy through investment in workplace practices and cultural conditions than through selection of individuals with high advocacy propensity.

Mehrotra and Sinha (2026), examining digital advocacy behaviour specifically, found that professional pride, defined as the degree to which employees felt personally associated with their organisation's reputation and quality of work, was the strongest individual-level predictor of voluntary advocacy on professional digital platforms. Their finding suggests that pride, which is cultivated through positive employee experiences of recognition, meaningful

work, and ethical leadership, functions as the primary intrinsic motivation for the kind of spontaneous, unsolicited advocacy that carries the greatest reputational impact.

2.7.3 Employee Brand Ambassadorship in the Digital Age

The proliferation of social media platforms, professional networking sites, and employer review platforms has fundamentally transformed the landscape of employee brand ambassadorship. Employees today have unprecedented capacity to influence public perceptions of their employer through their digital presence and online communications. LinkedIn, Glassdoor, AmbitionBox, and similar platforms have created a permanent and highly visible record of employee experiences, opinions, and endorsements that can significantly shape employer reputation and talent attraction outcomes.

Sivertzen et al. (2024), in research published in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, demonstrated that employee advocacy on LinkedIn was a significantly stronger predictor of employer attractiveness ratings from prospective candidates than either official employer brand pages or corporate job postings. Their study, which analysed data from over 8,000 LinkedIn profiles and 2,400 prospective candidate evaluations, found that the volume, sentiment, and authenticity of employee-generated content collectively accounted for 41 percent of the variance in employer attractiveness, a finding that substantially exceeds the predictive power of official employer communications in prior studies.

Mehrotra and Sinha (2026) further demonstrated that the relationship between employee satisfaction and digital advocacy behaviour was moderated by psychological safety: employees with high satisfaction but low psychological safety were significantly less likely to translate their positive private assessments into public digital endorsements than those with equivalent satisfaction and high safety. This finding, which directly extends the psychological safety literature reviewed in Section 2.5, suggests that organisations seeking to leverage the digital advocacy potential of their satisfied employees must attend not only to the quality of the employee experience but to the cultural conditions that make public expression of that experience feel safe.

Table 2.6: Key Dimensions of Employee Brand Ambassadorship - Definitions and Evidence

Dimension	Definition	Key Evidence	Advocacy Channel
Word-of-Mouth Intention	Verbal endorsement of the organisation in professional and personal conversations	Sharma & Gupta (2026); Kaur et al. (2024)	In-person networks; informal conversations
Employer Recommendation	Explicit recommendation of the organisation as a place of work to talented peers	Van Hoyer et al. (2025); Carpentier et al. (2024)	Professional networks; recruitment contexts
Reputation Defence	Willingness to defend the organisation against unfair criticism or negative commentary	Burmann & Zeplin (2005); Piehler et al. (2025)	Online platforms; professional forums
Client Brand Representation	Consistent enactment of brand values in client-facing professional interactions	King & Grace (2008); Mitchell (2002)	Client meetings; service delivery
Digital Advocacy	Sharing positive employer content on professional platforms	Sivertzen et al. (2024); Mehrotra & Sinha (2026)	LinkedIn; Glassdoor; AmbitionBox
Employee Referral	Formal referral of talented peers for employment opportunities	Zottoli & Wanous (2000); Yakubovich & Lup (2006)	HR referral programmes; informal networks

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.8 Business Performance Outcomes

2.8.1 Conceptualising Business Performance in the Present Study

Business performance is among the most extensively studied and most contested constructs in management research. For the present study, business performance is conceptualised and measured primarily through perceptual indicators rather than objective

financial data. This approach is necessitated by the practical limitations of accessing financial records from multiple private-sector IT organisations, and is theoretically justified by the observation that perceptual measures of performance are appropriate when the study is concerned with the strategic and reputational dimensions of performance rather than short-term financial results (Dess and Robinson, 1984; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). The perceptual performance indicators used in this study include brand credibility, employer reputation, customer trust, employee retention intention, referral likelihood, and perceived competitive advantage. Figure 2.11 presents the five business performance outcome dimensions and the scholarly evidence base for each.

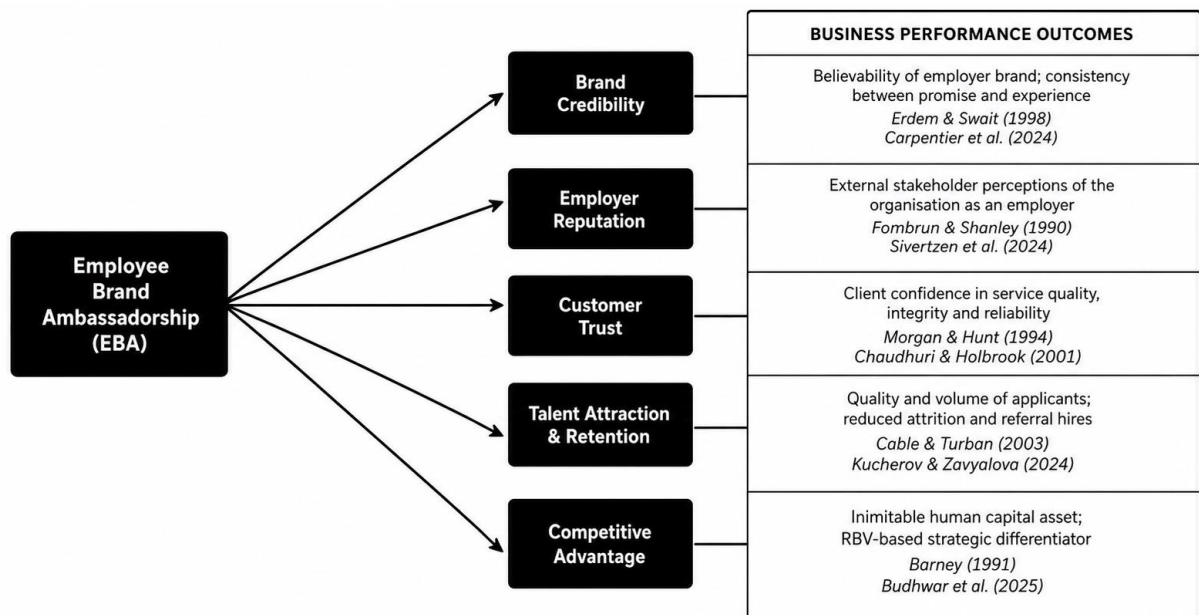


Figure 2.11: Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance Outcomes Source: Developed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature.

2.8.2 Brand Credibility and Customer Trust

Brand credibility, defined by Erdem and Swait (1998) as the believability of the product position information embedded in a brand, encompasses both trustworthiness and expertise dimensions. In the context of B2B service organisations, which characterise the majority of South Indian IT companies, brand credibility is particularly important because clients make complex, high-value, and high-risk purchase decisions based substantially on their assessment of the service provider's reliability, competence, and ethical standards. When employees

authentically represent the organisational brand in client interactions, they reinforce perceptions of brand credibility through their professionalism, responsiveness, and integrity.

Carpentier et al. (2024) demonstrated that the authenticity of employee-generated employer brand content was a significant predictor of brand credibility perceptions among external audiences, with authentic testimonials generating credibility ratings that were significantly higher than those produced by equivalent corporate brand communications. Morgan and Hunt (1994) established trust as the foundational construct in long-term client relationship quality, while Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) demonstrated that brand trust was a significant predictor of brand loyalty and brand performance. Together, these findings confirm that employee brand ambassadorship contributes to the client trust and brand credibility outcomes that underpin revenue quality and long-term commercial sustainability.

2.8.3 Employer Reputation and Talent Attraction

Employer reputation refers to external stakeholders' collective assessment of the desirability and reliability of an organisation as a place of employment. It is shaped by a combination of factors including the organisation's financial performance, its treatment of employees, its corporate social responsibility activities, and critically in the digital age, the testimonials of current and former employees on publicly visible review platforms (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Kuchеров and Zavyalova (2024) found that organisations sustaining above-average employee experience scores over a three-year period reported significantly stronger talent attraction, lower recruitment costs per hire, and higher client satisfaction scores than those with declining experience scores, providing longitudinal evidence for the commercial value of sustained employer reputation investment.

Sivertzen et al. (2024) demonstrated that employee advocacy on digital platforms significantly predicted employer attractiveness ratings from prospective candidates, with the effect being substantially stronger than that of official employer brand content. Cable and Turban (2003) established that employer reputation significantly influenced the quality and volume of job applicants, while Lievens and Slaughter (2025) confirmed that symbolic employer brand attributes, particularly the perceived values and culture of the organisation, were the primary drivers of employer attractiveness among highly educated knowledge workers. In the South Indian IT sector, where talent competition among major employers is

intense, the employer reputation advantage generated by genuine employee advocacy constitutes a meaningful and commercially significant source of talent acquisition efficiency.

2.8.4 Employee Retention and Referral Strength

Employee retention is a critical business performance dimension in knowledge-intensive industries, where the costs of employee turnover include not only direct recruitment and onboarding expenses but also the loss of institutional knowledge, client relationships, and project continuity embedded in individual employees. In the South Indian IT sector, where attrition rates have historically been elevated, the ability to retain talented employees through superior employee experience and advocacy represents a significant source of cost efficiency and competitive advantage. Budhwar et al. (2025) estimated that the total cost of replacing a senior IT professional in the Indian market ranged from 75 to 150 percent of annual salary when productivity loss, knowledge transfer, and client relationship disruption costs were included, underscoring the substantial commercial return available from investments in experience and retention.

Employee referral behaviour, defined as the likelihood of current employees recommending the organisation as an employer to talented peers in their professional networks, is a particularly valuable form of brand ambassadorship from a talent acquisition perspective. Zottoli and Wanous (2000) and Yakubovich and Lup (2006) demonstrated that employee referral programmes generate higher-quality hires at lower cost than other recruitment channels. Furthermore, employee referrals tend to generate better person-organisation fit, because the referring employee implicitly filters candidates for cultural alignment before making a recommendation. The cultivation of employee brand ambassadorship, as conceptualised in the present study, is therefore likely to strengthen referral behaviour and improve the quality and efficiency of talent acquisition processes.

2.8.5 Competitive Advantage

At the broadest level of analysis, employee brand ambassadorship contributes to competitive advantage by generating a bundle of human capital-related capabilities that are simultaneously valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable, consistent with the resource-based view criteria articulated by Barney (1991). The organisational culture,

leadership quality, psychological safety, and trust relationships that enable genuine employee advocacy are deeply embedded in the organisational system and cannot be rapidly replicated by competitors even if the component practices are individually observable. This embeddedness constitutes what Barney and Wright (1998) described as social complexity, a source of causal ambiguity that protects human capital-based competitive advantages from imitation. Budhwar et al. (2025) confirmed this argument in the Indian IT context, finding that organisations with above-average employee experience and advocacy scores maintained their competitive positioning in talent markets even during periods of sector-wide talent volatility, while those with below-average scores experienced disproportionate attrition and recruitment cost escalation.

Table 2.7: Business Performance Outcome Dimensions - Definitions and Recent Evidence

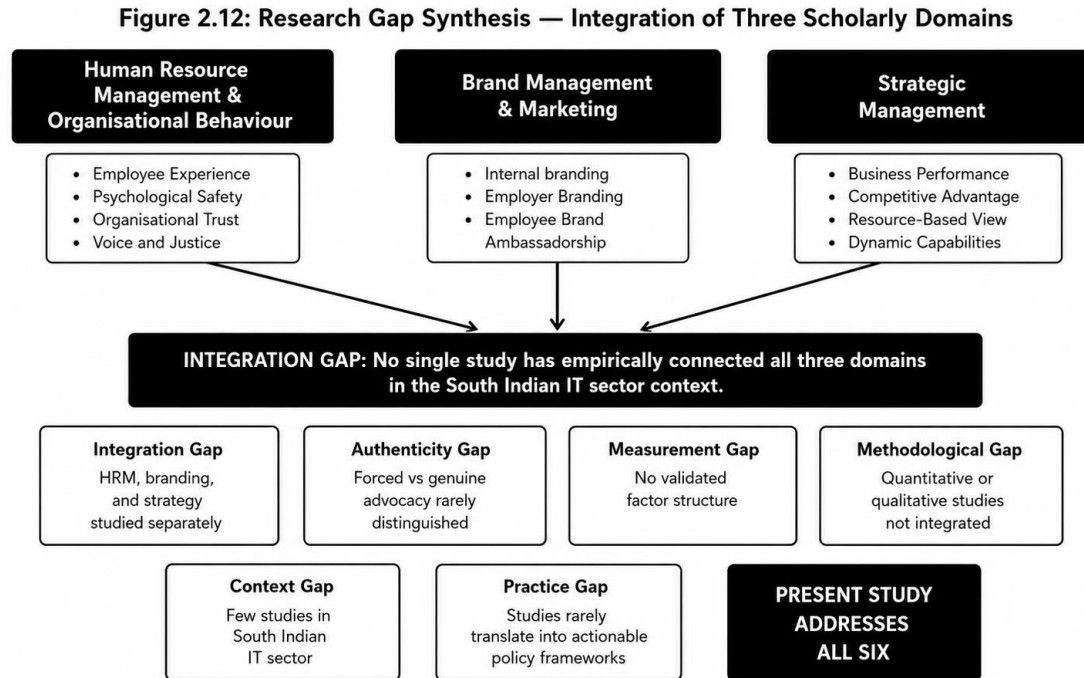
Outcome Dimension	Definition	Recent Key Evidence	Measurement Approach
Brand Credibility	Believability of the employer brand; perceived consistency between brand promise and employee experience	Carpentier et al. (2024); Erdem & Swait (1998)	Perceptual survey items; Glassdoor ratings
Employer Reputation	External stakeholder assessment of organisational attractiveness and desirability as employer	Kuchеров & Zavyalova (2024); Sivertzen et al. (2024)	Employer review platform monitoring; talent survey
Customer Trust	Client confidence in service quality, reliability, and organisational integrity	Morgan & Hunt (1994); Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)	Client satisfaction scores; relationship quality ratings

Employee Retention	Intention to remain; reduced voluntary attrition; lower replacement costs	Budhwar et al. (2025); Cook (2024)	Retention intention scale; attrition rate data
Referral Strength	Likelihood of recommending the organisation as employer to talented peers	Zottoli & Wanous (2000); Yakubovich & Lup (2006)	eNPS; referral hire quality and retention rates
Competitive Advantage	Perceived inimitable advantage generated by human capital quality and advocacy	Barney (1991); Budhwar et al. (2025)	Perceptual competitive positioning scale

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.9 Research Gaps Addressed by the Present Study

The systematic review of the literature conducted across both parts of this chapter reveals six important gaps that the present study is positioned to address. These gaps are not incidental. They reflect structural limitations in the existing body of scholarship that have accumulated over time and that require a specifically designed, multi-method study to address comprehensively. Figure 2.12 presents the integration of three scholarly domains, the overarching integration gap that characterises the field, and the six specific gaps that the present study addresses.



Source: Developed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature.

Figure 2.12: Research Gap Synthesis - Integration of Three Scholarly Domains Source: Developed by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

The first is an integration gap. The constructs of employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance have been studied extensively within their respective disciplinary homes, namely HRM and organisational behaviour, brand management, and strategic management, but have rarely been examined in an integrated framework spanning all three domains. No single study has provided an empirically validated account of the complete pathway from humane workplace practices to business performance outcomes running through employee experience and brand advocacy in the South Indian IT sector.

The second is an authenticity gap. Existing research on employer branding and internal branding frequently conflates formal compliance-based brand participation with genuine voluntary brand advocacy, treating all forms of employee brand-supportive behaviour as equivalent without adequately distinguishing their qualitatively different motivational bases. The present study addresses this gap by explicitly conceptualising brand ambassadorship as a

voluntary, intrinsically motivated behaviour and by examining the specific workplace conditions that enable authentic rather than scripted advocacy.

The third is a measurement gap. Despite the growing scholarly interest in employee brand ambassadorship, there is no widely accepted, statistically validated measurement structure for the key antecedent factors shaping this behaviour in the IT sector context. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis phase of the present study addresses this gap directly. The fourth is a methodological gap. The existing literature is characterised by a split between quantitative studies that can validate statistical relationships but cannot explain their meaning and qualitative studies that provide rich insights but lack statistical rigour. The mixed-method design of the present study addresses this gap by delivering both statistical validation and interpretive depth.

The fifth is a contextual gap. The majority of existing research on employee brand ambassadorship has been conducted in Western organisational contexts. The South Indian IT sector represents a distinctive and important context characterised by specific cultural, economic, and industry dynamics that may significantly qualify the generalisability of findings from Western studies. Recent scholarship by Anand and Mishra (2026), Sharma and Gupta (2026), Nair and Krishnamurthy (2026), and Kaur et al. (2024) has begun to address this contextual gap, and the present study builds directly on and extends this emerging body of South Asian IT sector scholarship.

The sixth is a practice gap. A recurring limitation of existing research is that it stops at identifying factors or testing relationships without translating findings into actionable policy guidance for organisations. The orientation of the present study requires not merely explanation but contribution to practice, and the development of a Strategic Policy Framework in Chapter 5 directly addresses this gap by providing organisations with a structured, evidence-based guide for strengthening employee brand ambassadorship and improving business performance outcomes.

Table 2.8: Research Gaps Identified and Addressed by the Present Study

Gap	Nature	How the Present Study Addresses It
Integration Gap	HRM, brand management, and strategic management studied separately without empirical integration	Develops and tests an integrated four-construct model spanning all three disciplinary domains
Authenticity Gap	Forced brand participation conflated with genuine voluntary advocacy	Conceptualises ambassadorship as voluntary and trust-based; examines enabling workplace conditions
Measurement Gap	No validated factor structure for EBA antecedents in the South Indian IT sector	Uses CFA to validate a literature-based measurement model in a contemporary IT sector sample
Methodological Gap	Single-method designs unable to simultaneously validate and explain advocacy behaviour	Combines CFA with thematic analysis for statistical rigour and experiential depth
Contextual Gap	Existing research dominated by Western organisational contexts	Empirically situates the study in South Indian IT organisations; builds on recent South Asian scholarship
Practice Gap	Studies identify factors without producing actionable organisational policy guidance	Develops a five-pillar Strategic Policy Framework directly applicable to IT sector organisations

Source: Developed by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.10 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of the present study has been developed through systematic review and synthesis of the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed across both parts of this chapter. It represents the translation of the relevant scholarly insights into a coherent, testable model of the relationships between the key constructs of interest. The framework is grounded in the four theoretical perspectives reviewed in Section 2.2: social exchange theory, which explains the reciprocity mechanism linking humane workplace practices to employee advocacy; signalling theory, which explains the communication of value through workplace practices and employee behaviour; person-organisation fit theory, which explains the role of

enacted value alignment in authentic advocacy; and the resource-based view, which situates employee brand ambassadorship as a strategic performance asset.

The framework posits a sequential chain of influence in which humane workplace practices constitute the antecedent conditions that shape the quality of the employee experience. Employee experience, in turn, is theorised as the central mediating construct that translates the effects of workplace practices into employee attitudes, identifications, and behavioural orientations. Employee brand ambassadorship is the primary discretionary behavioural outcome, reflecting the voluntary advocacy behaviours that employees engage in when they genuinely believe in and identify with their organisation. Business performance outcomes, including brand credibility, employer reputation, customer trust, employee retention, referral strength, and perceived competitive advantage, are the downstream consequences of sustained employee brand ambassadorship.

This framework is consistent with the three hypotheses of the study. Hypothesis 1 proposes that humane workplace practices significantly and positively influence employee experience, corresponding to the first pathway in the conceptual chain. Hypothesis 2 proposes that employee experience significantly and positively influences employee brand ambassadorship, corresponding to the second pathway. Hypothesis 3 proposes that employee brand ambassadorship significantly and positively influences business performance outcomes, corresponding to the third pathway. Together, these three hypotheses specify a mediated model in which employee experience mediates the relationship between humane workplace practices and business performance outcomes, with employee brand ambassadorship as a further mediating construct in the overall performance pathway. The analytical procedures used to test this framework are described in Chapter 3.

Table 2.9: Conceptual Framework - Constructs, Dimensions, and Theoretical Grounding

Construct	Role in Framework	Key Dimensions	Primary Theoretical Basis
Humane Workplace Practices	Exogenous antecedent construct	Ethical Leadership; Fairness; Voice; Recognition; Well-being	Social Exchange Theory; Signalling Theory; Servant Leadership
Employee Experience	Central mediating construct	Leadership Quality; Role Clarity; L&D; Psychological Safety; Trust	Person-Organisation Fit; Social Exchange Theory
Employee Brand Ambassadorship	Primary outcome; second mediator	Word-of-Mouth; Employer Recommendation; Reputation Defence; Client Representation; Digital Advocacy; Referral	Brand Commitment Theory; Social Exchange Theory
Business Performance Outcomes	Distal outcome construct	Brand Credibility; Employer Reputation; Customer Trust; Retention; Referral; Competitive Advantage	Resource-Based View; Strategic Brand Management

Source: Developed by the researcher from the reviewed literature.

2.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the present study across ten sections and two parts. Drawing on social exchange theory, signalling theory, person-organisation fit theory, and the resource-based view, the chapter established the theoretical foundations through which humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes are conceptually connected. The five dimensions of humane workplace practices, namely ethical leadership, fairness, employee voice, recognition, and well-being support, were examined alongside the key dimensions of employee experience including psychological safety and organisational trust, with sustained engagement with recent scholarship from 2024, 2025, and 2026

throughout. The constructs of internal branding, employer branding, the employee value proposition, and employee brand ambassadorship were subsequently reviewed, and the business performance consequences of genuine employee advocacy were identified across five outcome dimensions. Six research gaps were identified, and the conceptual framework guiding the empirical investigation was presented. The review confirms that authentic employee brand ambassadorship is not a product of communication programmes or advocacy mandates but of the cumulative quality of the workplace experience, grounded in trust, value alignment, and psychological safety. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology adopted to investigate this argument empirically.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The methodology chapter is the procedural and philosophical spine of any doctoral research undertaking. It sets out not merely what the researcher did, but why those choices were made in preference to available alternatives, and how the selected design, philosophy, instruments, sampling strategy, and analytical methods together constitute a coherent and defensible research programme capable of addressing the stated research questions with appropriate rigour. For a Doctor of Business Administration study, the methodology chapter carries an additional responsibility: it must demonstrate that the research is oriented not only toward the production of valid academic knowledge but also toward the generation of findings that are practically meaningful and applicable to organisational contexts (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998).

The present study investigates the relationships between humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in IT and IT-enabled service organisations in South India. To address this research agenda adequately, the study requires a methodology that can simultaneously validate the statistical structure of the constructs under investigation, explore the lived experiences of employees in relation to those constructs, and translate the integrated findings into a practical policy framework. No single research method is capable of fulfilling all three of these requirements; the study therefore adopts a mixed-method design that combines the statistical rigour of Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the interpretive depth of thematic analysis.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 3.2 establishes the research philosophy underpinning the study, justifying the adoption of pragmatism over alternative philosophical positions. Section 3.3 discusses the research approach, explaining the combination of deductive reasoning in the quantitative phase and interpretive inquiry in the qualitative phase. Section 3.4 presents and justifies the mixed-method sequential explanatory research design. Section 3.5 defines the population and sample. Section 3.6 describes the sampling strategy for both phases. Section 3.7 details the development of research instruments. Section 3.8 outlines data collection procedures. Section 3.9 presents the data analysis plan for both the quantitative

and qualitative phases. Section 3.10 addresses validity and reliability. Section 3.11 discusses ethical considerations. Section 3.12 acknowledges the limitations of the methodology. Section 3.13 provides a chapter summary.

3.2 Research Philosophy

3.2.1 The Role of Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon under investigation that underpin the choices made in the design and conduct of empirical research (Saunders et al., 2019). The major philosophical traditions in management and social science research include positivism, interpretivism, critical realism, and pragmatism, each of which carries different ontological and epistemological commitments with significant implications for research design. An explicit engagement with research philosophy is required at this level, not merely as a formality but because philosophical assumptions, whether acknowledged or not, shape every aspect of how research is designed, conducted, and evaluated. Making these assumptions explicit enables the researcher to justify their methodological choices with coherence and transparency.

3.2.2 Positivism and Its Limitations for the Present Study

Positivism, rooted in the philosophical tradition of Auguste Comte and subsequently developed in the social sciences through the work of Durkheim (1895) and others, holds that the social world, like the natural world, is governed by invariant causal laws that can be discovered through systematic observation and measurement. The positivist researcher adopts an objective stance toward the phenomenon under investigation, treating social reality as existing independently of the observer and as amenable to precise quantification. In management research, positivism has been the dominant philosophical tradition, particularly in the United States, and has generated a substantial body of rigorous empirical research using statistical methods such as regression analysis, structural equation modelling, and experimental designs.

While positivism offers significant advantages in terms of precision, replicability, and the ability to test causal relationships, it is insufficient as the sole philosophical foundation for the

present study for two related reasons. First, positivism assumes that the constructs of interest can be fully captured in numerical form and that the quantitative relationships between them constitute an adequate account of the phenomenon under investigation. In the case of employee brand ambassadorship, however, the most important questions concern not merely whether certain workplace factors predict advocacy behaviour in a statistical sense, but how employees experience and make meaning of those factors in their daily working lives. These experiential and interpretive dimensions of advocacy are not adequately captured by quantitative indicators alone. Second, a purely positivist approach would preclude the qualitative phase of the study, which is essential for generating the rich, contextualised insights required to develop a practically applicable policy framework.

3.2.3 Interpretivism and Its Limitations

Interpretivism, drawing on the philosophical traditions of hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism, holds that social reality is not objective and independent but is constructed through the meanings, interpretations, and intersubjective understandings of social actors (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The interpretivist researcher seeks to understand phenomena from the perspective of those who experience them, privileging depth, context, and meaning over breadth and statistical generalisability. In management research, interpretivist traditions have given rise to qualitative methods such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenological inquiry, and thematic analysis.

While interpretivism is highly appropriate for understanding the experiential dimensions of employee brand ambassadorship, it is also insufficient as the sole philosophical foundation for the present study. A purely interpretivist approach would preclude the quantitative validation of the factor structure, which is necessary to establish the statistical reliability and structural integrity of the measurement model. A doctoral study that relies exclusively on qualitative insights, without validating the underlying factor structure through rigorous quantitative analysis, would lack the empirical foundation required to make defensible claims about the generalisability and replicability of its findings. The present study therefore requires a philosophical position that can accommodate and integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches without privileging either.

3.2.4 Pragmatism as the Guiding Philosophy

Pragmatism, rooted in the philosophical work of Peirce (1878), James (1907), Dewey (1938), and more recently Rorty (1999), offers a coherent and well-established philosophical basis for mixed-method research. The core pragmatist principle, as applied to research methodology, is that the choice of research methods should be driven by the research questions and the practical consequences of using different approaches, rather than by prior philosophical allegiances (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Pragmatism rejects the dichotomy between positivism and interpretivism, arguing that quantitative and qualitative methods are not philosophically incompatible but are complementary tools that can be deployed in combination to produce a more complete understanding of complex phenomena than either could provide alone.

For the present study, pragmatism is the most appropriate philosophical position for three reasons. First, the study's research questions require both quantitative validation and qualitative exploration; no single philosophical tradition can accommodate both requirements. Second, the orientation of the study requires that findings be practically useful as well as academically rigorous, which is consistent with pragmatism's emphasis on the practical consequences of knowledge. Third, the South Indian IT sector context in which the study is situated is a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional environment that demands methodological flexibility and sensitivity to context, which pragmatism supports. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argued that pragmatism provides the most coherent philosophical justification for mixed-method research, a position that has been widely adopted and applied management research communities.

Ontologically, the pragmatist position adopted in this study holds that reality is both objective, in the sense that there are real social phenomena that can be measured and compared, and subjective, in the sense that those phenomena are experienced and interpreted through human consciousness and cultural context. Epistemologically, the study holds that knowledge is provisional, context-dependent, and most valuable when it produces actionable insights. These ontological and epistemological commitments are consistent with the mixed-method sequential explanatory design described in Section 3.4.

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Deductive Reasoning in the Quantitative Phase

The research approach refers to the logic of inquiry through which the researcher moves between theory and data (Bryman, 2016). The two primary research approaches in management research are the deductive approach, which moves from theory to data, and the inductive approach, which moves from data to theory. A third approach, abductive reasoning, involves a movement back and forth between theory and data, developing and refining theoretical accounts as the research progresses. The present study employs both deductive and inductive-interpretive reasoning, each in the phase of the study for which it is most appropriate.

The quantitative phase of the study adopts a deductive approach. Deductive reasoning begins with an established theoretical framework and derives testable propositions or hypotheses from it, which are then subjected to empirical testing through the collection and analysis of data. In the present study, the factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship have been identified from the existing literature, as detailed in Chapter 2, and the measurement model has been specified in advance of data collection. The purpose of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis is to test whether the theoretically specified factor structure is supported by the empirical data, a paradigmatically deductive research activity. If the data are consistent with the theoretical model, confidence in the model is increased; if they are inconsistent, the model must be revised, or the data reexamined. This deductive logic is consistent with the hypothetico-deductive approach that characterises much of the empirical research in management and organisational behaviour (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.3.2 Interpretive Reasoning in the Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase of the study adopts an inductive and interpretive approach. Rather than testing predetermined propositions, the qualitative phase seeks to understand how employees experience and make meaning of the workplace factors validated in the quantitative phase. The interview questions are informed by the validated factor structure, but the analysis is open to the emergence of themes and insights that were not anticipated in the theoretical framework. This openness to emergent meaning is a defining characteristic of interpretive research and is

essential for producing the depth of understanding required to support the development of the policy framework.

The interpretive approach employed in the qualitative phase draws on the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, which is concerned with the interpretation of human meaning and experience (Gadamer, 1975). Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019), is the specific analytical method employed, and it is consistent with an interpretive approach in that it seeks to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset through a systematic process of reading, coding, and theme development. The qualitative findings are not intended to validate or disprove the quantitative findings but to contextualise and enrich them by revealing the experiential texture and human complexity behind the statistical patterns.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Mixed-Method Sequential Explanatory Design

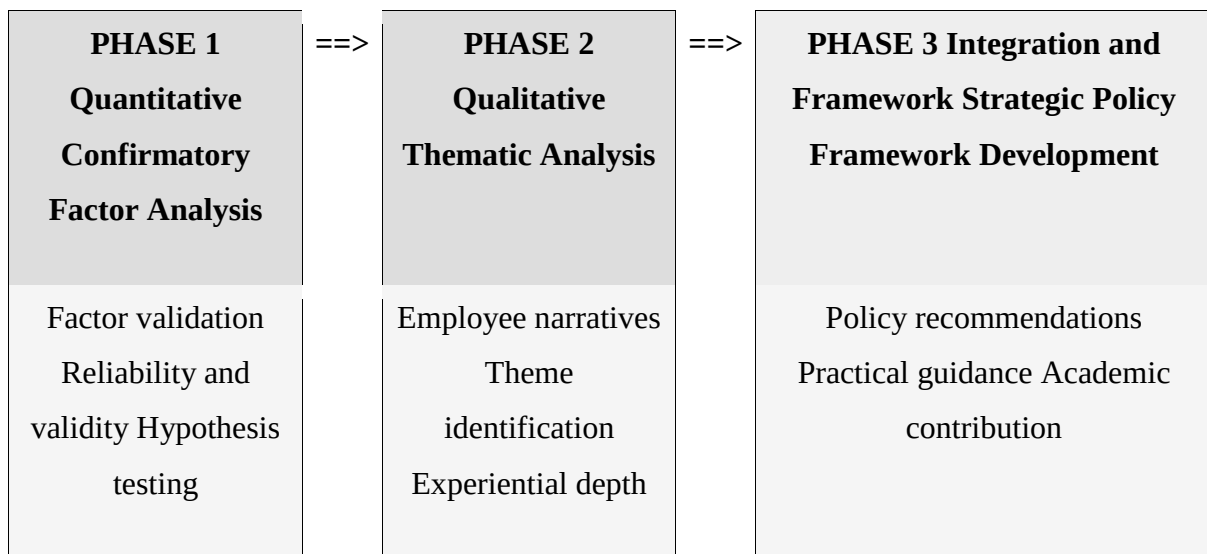
The research design of the present study is a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017). In this design, the quantitative phase is conducted first and its findings are used to inform and guide the subsequent qualitative phase. The sequential nature of the design means that the two phases are not conducted simultaneously but in a deliberate sequence in which the outputs of the first phase shape the inputs of the second. The explanatory qualifier indicates that the purpose of the qualitative phase is to explain, contextualise, and deepen the understanding generated by the quantitative phase, rather than to test alternative hypotheses or to arrive at entirely independent findings.

The logic of the sequential explanatory design in the present study is as follows. The quantitative phase, conducted first, uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis to validate the factor structure of the key constructs: humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes. The factors that are statistically validated in this phase form the basis for the interview guide used in the qualitative phase. If, for example, psychological safety, recognition, and value alignment emerge as the most strongly loading factors in the CFA, the interview questions in the qualitative phase will be structured to explore how employees experience these specific dimensions in their workplaces. This integration of the two phases through the sequential use of findings is a defining feature

of the explanatory design and is what distinguishes it from a parallel or convergent mixed-method design, in which the two phases are conducted independently and their findings are compared at the conclusion of the study.

The mixed-method sequential explanatory design is particularly appropriate for the present study for three reasons. First, the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation requires both the breadth of quantitative measurement and the depth of qualitative exploration; neither alone is sufficient. Second, the design's sequential structure ensures that the qualitative phase is grounded in empirically validated factors rather than in theoretically assumed ones, strengthening the credibility and relevance of the qualitative findings. Third, the design is well established and applied management research as a robust and practically productive approach to investigating complex organisational phenomena (Morgan, 2014; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

Figure 3.1: Mixed-Method Sequential Explanatory Research Design



Source: Developed by the researcher based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2017)

3.4.2 Justification of Design Choice

Alternative research designs were considered and rejected for specific reasons. A purely quantitative design, using only Confirmatory Factor Analysis and structural equation modelling, would have been capable of validating the factor structure and testing the hypotheses but would not have produced the depth of understanding required to explain how

employees experience the validated factors or to develop a nuanced policy framework. A purely qualitative design, using only thematic analysis or grounded theory, would have generated rich insights into employee experiences but would have lacked the statistical foundation necessary to make defensible claims about the reliability and validity of the factor structure across a large sample. A convergent mixed-method design, in which the quantitative and qualitative phases are conducted simultaneously and independently, was considered but rejected because it would have produced two parallel sets of findings that were not explicitly linked, whereas the sequential explanatory design produces a more tightly integrated and mutually enriching set of insights.

The sequential explanatory design also aligns with the three-phase structure of the study as described in the research proposal, in which Phase 1 involves factor validation, Phase 2 involves thematic exploration, and Phase 3 involves policy framework development. The design therefore provides a clear methodological architecture that corresponds to the three research objectives and three research questions of the study.

3.5 Population and Sample

3.5.1 Definition of the Study Population

The population of the present study comprises full-time employees working in IT and IT-enabled service companies located in South India. The IT and ITES sector has been selected as the empirical context for several reasons that were detailed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Briefly, the sector is characterised by high dependence on human capital, strong reliance on employer reputation for talent acquisition and retention, intense competition for skilled professionals, significant employee connectivity through digital and professional platforms, and a close relationship between employee behaviour and client experience outcomes. These characteristics make the IT and ITES sector a particularly appropriate and information-rich context for investigating employee brand ambassadorship and its business performance consequences.

The geographical scope of the study encompasses the major IT hubs of South India, including Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Visakhapatnam. These cities collectively represent one of the most significant technology

corridors in the world, accounting for a substantial proportion of India's total IT and ITES export revenue and employing millions of technology professionals (NASSCOM, 2023). The inclusion of multiple cities ensures that the sample captures a diversity of organisational contexts, company sizes, functional roles, and regional subcultures that strengthens the breadth and representativeness of the findings.

To be eligible to participate in the study, respondents must meet the following criteria: they must be employed on a full-time basis in an IT or ITES organisation; they must be based in one of the seven identified South Indian cities; and they must have a minimum of one year of continuous work experience in their current or any previous IT or ITES organisation. The one-year minimum experience criterion is applied because employees with less than one year of experience may not have had sufficient exposure to the organisational systems, cultural norms, leadership behaviours, and performance management practices that constitute the constructs of interest in this study. Employees from a range of functional areas are included, including software development, project management, quality assurance, data analytics, cloud services, cybersecurity, customer support, business analysis, consulting, product management, and human resources, in order to capture the breadth of employee experience across the sector.

3.6 Sampling Strategy

3.6.1 Quantitative Phase Sampling

The sampling strategy for the quantitative phase combines purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants who meet specified criteria relevant to the research questions, rather than random selection from the population (Patton, 2002). In the present study, purposive sampling ensures that respondents are IT or ITES employees who meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 3.5. Snowball sampling, in which initial participants are asked to recommend other eligible individuals in their professional networks, is incorporated as a supplementary strategy to extend the reach of the survey into professional communities that may not be accessible through the researcher's direct networks alone. Given the highly networked character of South Indian IT professionals, who maintain extensive connections through LinkedIn, professional alumni groups, and

workplace communities of practice, snowball sampling is expected to be a productive and efficient recruitment mechanism.

The target sample size for the quantitative phase is between 400 usable responses. This target is determined primarily by the requirements of Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Hair et al. (2019) recommend a minimum sample size of 200 for CFA, with larger samples preferred when the number of factors and indicators is high and when the researcher wishes to test more complex structural models. The present study's measurement model includes four constructs with multiple indicators each, making a sample of 400 appropriate to ensure adequate statistical power for the CFA and the subsequent structural model testing. Schumacker and Lomax (2016) also recommend that the sample-to-indicator ratio should be at least five observations per indicator; with a 40 scale items across the four constructs, a sample of 400 comfortably exceeds this threshold.

Response quality will be managed through several procedures. First, the online survey will include attention check items to identify and remove respondents who are completing the survey without adequate engagement. Second, surveys with more than 10 percent missing data will be excluded from the analysis. Third, the dataset will be screened for multivariate outliers, common method variance, and normality violations before CFA is conducted. These quality control procedures are consistent with established best practices in survey-based organisational research (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Hair et al., 2019).

3.6.2 Qualitative Phase Sampling

The sampling strategy for the qualitative phase is purposive, with the selection of participants guided by the principle of theoretical or informational richness rather than statistical representativeness (Patton, 2002). Approximately 30 participants will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase. This range is consistent with the established norms for qualitative research in organisational settings, where sample sizes in the range of 15 to 30 are typically sufficient to achieve informational saturation, the point at which additional interviews are no longer generating new themes or substantively new insights (Guest et al., 2006).

Qualitative participants will be selected from among survey respondents who indicated their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview and who meet the additional criteria of having provided substantively detailed responses to the open-ended items in the survey. Participants will be selected to ensure diversity across key dimensions including functional role, seniority level, gender, years of experience, and company size, as this diversity will maximise the breadth of perspectives captured in the qualitative data and reduce the risk that the themes identified reflect the experiences of a narrow demographic subgroup. The qualitative sample will not be selected to represent the quantitative sample in statistical terms; its purpose is to provide depth and contextual understanding rather than distributional representativeness.

3.7 Research Instrument Development

3.7.1 Quantitative Questionnaire

The quantitative research instrument is a structured questionnaire comprising two sections. The first section collects demographic and contextual information from respondents, including gender, age group, educational qualification, years of experience, functional area, company size, and city of employment. These demographic variables will be used to describe the sample profile and to conduct subgroup analyses if warranted by the research findings. The second section contains the Likert-scaled measurement items for the four constructs of interest: humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes.

All measurement items are adapted from established and validated scales in the existing literature, consistent with the deductive approach of the quantitative phase. The use of existing validated scales, rather than newly developed items, ensures that the measurement model is grounded in prior empirical research and benefits from the accumulated evidence of prior validation studies. Where items from existing scales require modification to suit the IT sector context and the Indian cultural setting, modifications are made conservatively, preserving the semantic content of the original items while adapting the language and examples to the study context. All adapted items are reviewed by a panel of academic and practitioner experts in a pilot testing procedure described in Section 3.7.3.

The Likert scale format is a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A five-point scale is selected in preference to a seven-point scale because it has been shown to be equally reliable in most organisational research contexts while being simpler for respondents to use, particularly in online survey formats (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). The response options are labelled at all five points to reduce ambiguity and to facilitate the comparison of responses across items and constructs.

Table 3.1: Sources of Measurement Items for Each Construct

Construct		Number of Items	Primary Scale Sources
Humane Practices	Workplace	18	Brown et al. (2005); Colquitt (2001); Edmondson (1999); Eisenberger et al. (1986)
Employee Experience		15	Morgan (2017); Plaskoff (2017); Saks (2006); Mayer et al. (1995)
Employee Ambassadorship	Brand	12	Burmann and Zeplin (2005); Piehler et al. (2015); Punjaisri and Wilson (2007)
Business Outcomes	Performance	10	Cable and Turban (2003); Moroko and Uncles (2008); Dess and Robinson (1984)

Source: Compiled by the researcher

3.7.2 Interview Guide for the Qualitative Phase

The qualitative data collection instrument is a semi-structured interview guide comprising a set of open-ended questions and probes designed to explore how employees experience and make meaning of the workplace factors validated in the CFA. The interview guide is semi-

structured rather than fully structured in order to allow the conversation to follow the participant's own understanding and priorities while ensuring that all key topics are addressed across all interviews. The semi-structured format balances the consistency required for thematic comparison across interviews with the flexibility required to pursue emerging insights and to respond to the particularities of each participant's experience.

The interview questions are organised around the four constructs of the study, with each section beginning with a broad, open-ended question designed to invite the participant to describe their experience in their own terms, followed by more focused probes designed to explore specific dimensions of the construct in greater depth. For example, in the section on employee experience, the opening question might invite the participant to describe what their experience of working in their organisation has been like overall, followed by probes exploring specific dimensions such as leadership behaviour, recognition, psychological safety, and career development. The interview guide will be finalised after the completion of the CFA, so that the questions can be specifically tailored to the factors that are statistically validated in the quantitative phase.

Each interview is expected to last between 45 and 75 minutes. Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing platforms to accommodate the geographic distribution of the sample across multiple South Indian cities and to minimise the logistical burden on participants. With the informed consent of participants, interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis. All transcripts will be reviewed for accuracy before analysis commences.

3.7.3 Pilot Testing

Both research instruments will be pilot tested before deployment in the main study. The quantitative questionnaire will be pilot tested with a convenience sample of approximately 30 IT sector employees who meet the eligibility criteria but who will not be included in the main study sample. The pilot test will assess the clarity and comprehension of the questionnaire items, the internal consistency of the scales, the time required to complete the survey, and any technical issues with the online administration platform. Items that are found to be ambiguous, redundant, or technically problematic will be revised before the main study begins.

The interview guide will be pilot tested through two or three preliminary interviews with IT sector professionals who will not be included in the main study. The pilot interviews will assess whether the questions generate substantive and relevant responses, whether the probes are effective in eliciting depth of reflection, and whether the interview can be completed within the intended time frame. Adjustments to the question wording, sequencing, and probes will be made as necessary before the main qualitative data collection begins.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

3.8.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative survey will be administered online using a web-based survey platform. Online administration is preferred for several reasons. First, it enables access to geographically dispersed respondents across seven South Indian cities without the logistical and financial costs of in-person data collection. Second, it allows respondents to complete the survey at a time of their choosing, reducing the burden of participation and increasing the likelihood of thoughtful and complete responses. Third, online surveys are well established as a reliable and appropriate data collection method for quantitative research in organisational settings, particularly when the target population is highly literate and technologically proficient, as is the case with IT and ITES sector professionals (Dillman et al., 2014).

The survey link will be distributed through multiple channels to maximise reach and to mitigate the risk of sample bias associated with any single channel. Distribution channels will include professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn, IT sector alumni groups, WhatsApp professional communities, direct email invitations, and referrals from initial respondents through the snowball sampling mechanism. A personalised cover message will accompany each survey invitation, explaining the purpose of the study, the eligibility criteria, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality assurances in place. The cover message will also provide contact details for the researcher in case respondents have questions about the study.

The data collection period for the quantitative phase is anticipated to last approximately six to eight weeks, depending on response rates. Regular follow-up reminders will be sent to initial contacts after two weeks and again after four weeks to encourage completion. The survey will

be closed once the target of 300 to 400 usable responses has been achieved or when the data collection period concludes, whichever occurs first.

3.8.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews conducted after the completion and initial analysis of the quantitative phase. Interview participants will be recruited from among survey respondents who indicated their willingness to participate in follow-up interviews and who have been purposively selected to ensure the diversity of perspectives described in Section 3.6.2. Each potential participant will be contacted individually with a personalised invitation explaining the purpose of the interview, its expected duration, and the confidentiality arrangements in place.

Interviews will be conducted by the researcher via video conferencing platforms, allowing flexible scheduling across different time zones and geographic locations within South India. Prior to each interview, participants will be provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose and procedures of the research and will be asked to provide written informed consent. With the participant's permission, each interview will be audio-recorded. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher or by a professional transcription service, and transcripts will be verified against the recordings for accuracy before analysis commences. All recordings and transcripts will be stored securely and anonymised in accordance with the ethical protocols described in Section 3.11.

3.9 Data Analysis Plan

3.9.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a form of structural equation modelling that allows the researcher to test whether a theoretically specified factor structure is consistent with the empirical data collected from a sample. Unlike Exploratory Factor Analysis, which inductively identifies factor structures from data without prior specification, CFA begins with a measurement model derived from theory and tests whether the hypothesised relationships between observed indicators and latent factors are supported by the data (Hair et al., 2019). This deductive orientation makes CFA the appropriate analytical method for the quantitative

phase of the present study, in which the factor structure has been derived from the existing literature and the purpose of the analysis is to validate rather than to discover.

The CFA will be conducted using structural equation modelling software, AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures). The analysis will proceed in the sequence outlined in Figure 3.2 below, beginning with the specification and estimation of the measurement model, followed by the assessment of model fit, reliability, and validity, and culminating in the testing of the structural model and research hypotheses.

Figure 3.2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Process

Step 1 Specify the Measurement Model from Literature	Step 2 Collect Survey Data	Step 3 Assess Factor Loadings and Model Fit	Step 4 Evaluate Reliability and Validity	Step 5 Remove Weak Items if Theoretically Justified	Step 6 Test Structural Model and Hypotheses
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Source: Developed by the researcher based on Hair et al. (2019)

Model fit will be assessed using a combination of fit indices that capture different aspects of how well the hypothesised model reproduces the observed covariance structure. Consistent with the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999) and Hair et al. (2019), the following indices will be reported and evaluated: the chi-square statistic and its ratio to degrees of freedom (acceptable threshold: less than 3.0); the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; acceptable threshold: greater than 0.90, ideally greater than 0.95); the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; acceptable threshold: greater than 0.90); the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; acceptable threshold: less than 0.08, ideally less than 0.06); and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; acceptable threshold: less than 0.08).

Reliability will be assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with acceptable thresholds of 0.70 and above for both indicators (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity will be assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with an acceptable threshold of 0.50 or above (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity will be assessed through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, with values below

0.85 indicating adequate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Items with standardised factor loadings below 0.50 will be candidates for removal, but removal decisions will be made with reference to both statistical criteria and theoretical considerations, consistent with the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019) that item removal should be theoretically defensible rather than purely data-driven.

The structural model will be tested after the measurement model has been confirmed to meet acceptable standards of fit, reliability, and validity. The structural model will test the three directional hypotheses of the study: that humane workplace practices have a significant positive influence on employee experience (H1), that employee experience has a significant positive influence on employee brand ambassadorship (H2), and that employee brand ambassadorship has a significant positive influence on business performance outcomes (H3). Hypothesis testing will be based on the significance of the standardised path coefficients, with a threshold of p less than 0.05 for statistical significance.

Table 3.2: CFA Model Fit and Validity Assessment Criteria

Index	Acceptable Threshold	Interpretation	Source
Chi-square / df	Less than 3.0	Model parsimony	Hair et al. (2019)
CFI	Greater than 0.90 (ideally 0.95)	Comparative model fit	Hu and Bentler (1999)
TLI	Greater than 0.90	Parsimony-adjusted fit	Hu and Bentler (1999)
RMSEA	Less than 0.08 (ideally 0.06)	Approximation error	Hair et al. (2019)

Index	Acceptable Threshold	Interpretation	Source
SRMR	Less than 0.08	Standardised residuals	Hair et al. (2019)
Cronbach's Alpha	Greater than 0.70	Internal consistency	Nunnally (1978)
Composite Reliability	Greater than 0.70	Construct reliability	Hair et al. (2019)
AVE	Greater than 0.50	Convergent validity	Fornell and Larcker (1981)
HTMT Ratio	Less than 0.85	Discriminant validity	Henseler et al. (2015)

Source: Compiled by the researcher

3.9.2 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data will be analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Thematic analysis is a widely used and well-established qualitative analytical method that involves systematically identifying, organising, and interpreting patterns of meaning, referred to as themes, across a qualitative dataset. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework provides a structured yet flexible approach to thematic analysis that is appropriate for the present study's interpretive orientation and its focus on employee experiences as lived phenomena.

The six phases of the thematic analysis process are as follows. In Phase 1, the researcher will read and reread all interview transcripts to achieve thorough familiarisation with the data, noting initial impressions and potential patterns. In Phase 2, the researcher will systematically code the data by assigning meaningful labels to segments of text that are relevant to the research questions. Initial coding will be conducted inductively, without imposing

predetermined categories, although the validated factors from the CFA will serve as sensitising concepts that guide attention to relevant content without constraining interpretation. In Phase 3, initial codes will be sorted and grouped into candidate themes, representing broader patterns of meaning that cut across multiple participants and multiple codes.

In Phase 4, candidate themes will be reviewed and refined by returning to the coded data and the full transcripts to ensure that the themes are coherent, distinctive, and adequately supported by the data. In Phase 5, themes will be named and defined, with clear boundaries established for each theme and its constituent sub-themes. In Phase 6, the final themes will be interpreted and written up in a narrative account that draws on participant quotations to illustrate and substantiate each theme. The qualitative findings will be reported in Chapter 4 and subsequently integrated with the quantitative findings in the discussion presented in Chapter 5.

To enhance the credibility and rigour of the thematic analysis, the researcher will employ several quality assurance procedures. First, a reflexivity journal will be maintained throughout the analysis to record the researcher's interpretive decisions and to support critical reflection on potential biases. Second, a sample of coded transcripts will be reviewed by a second coder, and inter-coder agreement will be assessed to ensure consistency of interpretation. Third, member checking, in which a summary of emerging themes is shared with a selection of participants for their review and comment, will be used where feasible to enhance the credibility of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.9.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings is the defining analytical challenge of mixed-method research and the feature that most clearly distinguishes genuine mixed-method studies from studies that merely combine two separate mono-method investigations. In the present study, integration will be achieved at two levels. At the interpretive level, the quantitative and qualitative findings will be brought together in the discussion chapter (Chapter 5) through a process of joint display and narrative weaving, in which the statistical patterns revealed by the CFA are interpreted in light of the experiential themes identified through thematic analysis, and vice versa. At the applied level, the integrated findings will be

synthesised into the Strategic Policy Framework presented in Chapter 5, which will draw on both the statistical evidence for the relative importance of different factors and the qualitative insights into how those factors are experienced and interpreted by employees in practice.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

3.10.1 Quantitative Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the quantitative phase are addressed through the CFA assessment procedures described in Section 3.9.1. Construct validity, which refers to the degree to which a measurement instrument actually measures the construct it purports to measure (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955), is assessed through content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Content validity is addressed through the use of measurement items derived from established and validated scales in the literature, supplemented by the expert review and pilot testing procedures described in Section 3.7.3. Convergent validity is assessed through AVE values, and discriminant validity is assessed through HTMT ratios, as described in Section 3.9.1. Reliability is assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability.

Common method variance, which refers to the artificial inflation of correlations between constructs that can occur when all measures are collected from the same source at the same time using the same method (Podsakoff et al., 2003), is a potential concern in single-source survey research. Several procedural and statistical remedies will be employed to mitigate this risk. Procedurally, the questionnaire will be designed to separate the independent and dependent variable items, to use different scale formats for different constructs where possible, and to include instructions that emphasise the absence of right or wrong answers and the importance of honest responses. Statistically, Harman's single factor test will be conducted to assess the severity of common method variance, and the unmeasured latent factor approach recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) will be applied if the single factor test reveals evidence of significant bias.

3.10.2 Qualitative Trustworthiness

The quality of qualitative research is assessed not through the conventional validity and reliability criteria of quantitative research but through the parallel criteria of trustworthiness,

as developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The four criteria of trustworthiness are credibility, which parallels internal validity; transferability, which parallels external validity; dependability, which parallels reliability; and confirmability, which parallels objectivity. Credibility will be addressed through prolonged engagement with the data, member checking, and reflexive journaling. Transferability will be addressed through the provision of thick description of the research context and the participant characteristics, enabling readers to make informed judgements about the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Dependability will be addressed through the maintenance of a detailed audit trail documenting all methodological decisions and analytical procedures. Confirmability will be addressed through reflexivity and the transparent reporting of the researcher's interpretive stance and potential biases.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The conduct of the present study will adhere to the ethical principles governing research with human participants, as established by the researcher's institution and consistent with the broader norms of ethical social science research. The following ethical considerations are addressed in the design and conduct of the study.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants in both phases of the study. Survey respondents will be provided with a detailed participant information sheet before accessing the questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, the voluntary character of their involvement, and the data protection arrangements in place. By proceeding to complete the survey, respondents will be deemed to have provided informed consent. Interview participants will be provided with both a written information sheet and a formal consent form, which they will be asked to sign before the interview commences.

Participation in both phases of the study is entirely voluntary. No incentives or inducements will be offered that might compromise the voluntary character of participation. Participants will be informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence, and that data collected before withdrawal will be destroyed upon request.

The confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be protected throughout the study. Survey responses will be stored anonymously, with no identifying information linked to

individual responses. Interview transcripts will be anonymised before analysis by replacing all identifying information, including names, company names, and specific project references, with pseudonyms or generic descriptors. The identity of individual participants and their employing organisations will not be disclosed in any published output from the research.

All data collected in the study will be stored securely in accordance with applicable data protection legislation. Digital data will be stored on password-protected devices and in encrypted cloud storage accessible only to the researcher. Physical data, such as signed consent forms, will be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be retained for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study, in accordance with institutional research data management requirements, and will then be securely destroyed.

The study does not involve any procedures that present a foreseeable risk of physical, psychological, or professional harm to participants. The questions asked in both the survey and the interview concern employees' workplace experiences and perceptions, and are not designed to elicit sensitive personal information. However, participants may find some questions about workplace treatment or leadership behaviour to be personally challenging, and the researcher will be attentive to any signs of discomfort and will provide participants with the opportunity to decline to answer any question or to pause or end the interview at any point.

3.12 Limitations of the Methodology

The methodology of the present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged in the interest of transparency and to assist readers in appropriately qualifying the findings.

First, the study employs a cross-sectional design in which data from both phases are collected at a single point in time. Cross-sectional designs are unable to establish the causal direction of relationships or to track changes in constructs over time. While the conceptual framework of the study proposes a directional model in which humane workplace practices influence employee experience, which in turn influences brand ambassadorship and business performance, these relationships cannot be definitively established as causal on the basis of cross-sectional data alone. A longitudinal design, in which the same respondents are surveyed at multiple points in time, would provide stronger evidence for causal relationships but was not feasible within the time and resource constraints of the present study.

Second, both the quantitative and qualitative data are based on employee self-reports, which are subject to social desirability bias, recall limitations, and retrospective rationalisation. Employees may be reluctant to report negative experiences or to criticise their employers, particularly if they are concerned about confidentiality, which could lead to an underestimation of the prevalence or severity of negative workplace experiences in the dataset. The anonymity assurances and voluntary participation design of the study are intended to mitigate this risk, but they cannot eliminate it entirely.

Third, the sample is restricted to employees in IT and ITES companies in South India, which limits the external generalisability of the findings to other industry sectors, geographic regions, and cultural contexts. The researcher acknowledges that the factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship may differ significantly in other sectors, such as manufacturing, healthcare, retail, or financial services, and in other cultural contexts characterised by different leadership norms, employment relations systems, and organisational cultures. Caution is therefore warranted in extending the findings beyond the specific context of the South Indian IT and ITES sector.

Fourth, business performance outcomes are measured through perceptual indicators provided by employees rather than through objective financial or operational data. While this approach is consistent with established practice in perceptual performance research and is necessitated by the practical limitations of accessing financial data from multiple private-sector organisations, it means that the performance findings reflect employees' subjective assessments rather than independently verifiable outcomes. The validity of perceptual performance measures in organisational research has been established by Dess and Robinson (1984) and Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986), but the researcher acknowledges that objective performance data would provide a more direct assessment of the business consequences of employee brand ambassadorship.

Fifth, the recruitment of participants through professional networks and snowball sampling may introduce selection bias, as individuals who are actively engaged in professional networks may be systematically different from those who are not, particularly with respect to their advocacy orientations and digital engagement behaviour. This limitation is acknowledged and is addressed partially through the use of multiple recruitment channels and the purposive

selection of qualitative participants to ensure diversity across key demographic and organisational characteristics.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive account of the research methodology employed in the present study. The chapter began by establishing the philosophical foundation of the study in pragmatism, justifying this choice over the alternatives of positivism and interpretivism on the grounds that pragmatism is the most appropriate philosophical basis for mixed-method research oriented toward both academic knowledge and practical application. The research approach was described as combining deductive reasoning in the quantitative phase, through the theory-driven specification and testing of the CFA measurement model, with interpretive reasoning in the qualitative phase, through the inductive-interpretive identification of themes in employee narratives.

The mixed-method sequential explanatory design was presented and justified as the most appropriate design for a study that requires both statistical validation and experiential depth, and that seeks to integrate its findings into an applied policy framework. The population and sample were defined, with the study focusing on full-time IT and ITES sector employees in South India with a minimum of one year of experience, and the sampling strategies for both phases were described in detail. The development of the research instruments was outlined, including the use of existing validated scales for the quantitative questionnaire and the development of a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative phase. Data collection procedures, data analysis plans, validity and reliability criteria, and ethical considerations were addressed in turn.

The chapter concluded by acknowledging the methodological limitations of the study, including the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report data, sector and geographic specificity, the use of perceptual performance measures, and potential sampling bias. These limitations are managed through the design choices described in the chapter and are acknowledged transparently to assist readers in appropriately qualifying the findings. Chapter 4 will present the complete analytical findings of the study, beginning with the quantitative

CFA results and demographic profile, and continuing with the thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents the study's complete analytical findings in two integrated parts. Part A reports the results of the quantitative phase, comprising the demographic profile of the respondent sample, descriptive statistics for all scale items, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis measurement model assessment, reliability and validity evaluation, and the structural model findings including the testing of the three research hypotheses. Part B presents the thematic analysis of the qualitative data, detailing the coding process, the five major themes and their constituent sub-themes, and the participant narratives that illuminate how employees in South Indian IT and IT-enabled service organisations experience the validated constructs in their everyday working lives.

The total quantitative sample comprised 347 usable responses after data screening and quality control procedures. The qualitative sample comprised 24 semi-structured interviews. Together, these two datasets provide a comprehensive empirical foundation for the integrated discussion presented in Chapter 5 and for the Strategic Policy Framework developed therein. The findings are presented with full transparency, including the reporting of items that were removed during the CFA process and the acknowledgement of any deviations from the a priori measurement model. All quantitative analyses were conducted in AMOS 26, and all qualitative analyses were conducted using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006).

PART A: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Sample

A total of 412 survey responses were received during the data collection period of seven weeks. After the application of quality control procedures, including the removal of responses with more than 10 percent missing data ($n = 18$), responses that failed attention check items ($n = 31$), and responses from participants who did not meet the eligibility criteria ($n = 16$), a final usable sample of 347 responses was retained for analysis. This sample size exceeds the

minimum threshold of 300 recommended for the complexity of the measurement model and provides an adequate sample-to-indicator ratio for the CFA.

The demographic profile of the sample is presented in Table 4.1. The sample comprised 214 male respondents (61.7 percent) and 133 female respondents (38.3 percent), reflecting the gender distribution commonly reported in South Indian IT sector workforce surveys, though the researcher acknowledges that this distribution represents a persisting gender gap in the sector. The majority of respondents fell within the 26 to 35 years age group ($n = 162$, 46.7 percent), consistent with the relatively young workforce profile of the Indian IT sector. In terms of educational qualification, the dominant category was a Bachelor of Engineering or Bachelor of Technology degree ($n = 198$, 57.1 percent), followed by postgraduate degrees including Master of Technology and Master of Business Administration qualifications ($n = 112$, 32.3 percent).

Respondents were distributed across a range of functional roles, with the largest proportions drawn from software development ($n = 98$, 28.2 percent) and project management ($n = 67$, 19.3 percent). In terms of years of experience, the sample included a healthy spread across experience bands, with the largest group having between three and seven years of experience ($n = 138$, 39.8 percent). Respondents were distributed across all seven South Indian IT hubs, with the largest representations from Bengaluru ($n = 112$, 32.3 percent) and Hyderabad ($n = 89$, 25.6 percent), reflecting the dominance of these cities as IT employment centres. Company size was varied, with 38.6 percent of respondents employed in large organisations with more than 10,000 employees, 34.3 percent in mid-sized organisations of 1,000 to 10,000 employees, and 27.1 percent in smaller organisations of fewer than 1,000 employees.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of the Quantitative Sample (n = 347)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	214	61.7
	Female	133	38.3
Age Group	18-25 years	54	15.6
	26-35 years	162	46.7
	36-45 years	98	28.2
	46 years and above	33	9.5
Education	Bachelor of Engg / Tech	198	57.1
	Postgraduate (MTech/MBA)	112	32.3
	Other graduate degree	37	10.6
Experience	1-2 years	62	17.9
	3-7 years	138	39.8
	8-15 years	103	29.7

	More than 15 years	44	12.6
City	Bengaluru	112	32.3
	Hyderabad	89	25.6
	Chennai	71	20.5
	Coimbatore	31	8.9
	Kochi	22	6.3
	Thiruvananthapuram	14	4.0
	Visakhapatnam	8	2.4
Company Size	Less than 1,000 employees	94	27.1
	1,000 to 10,000 employees	119	34.3
	More than 10,000 employees	134	38.6

Source: Primary data collected by the researcher

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the four construct domains were computed for all retained scale items. Mean scores, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values for all items are presented in Table 4.2. Overall, mean scores across the humane workplace practices items ranged from 3.12 to 3.89 on the five-point Likert scale, indicating moderate to moderately high levels of perceived workplace humaneness in the sample. The lowest mean scores were recorded for items relating to employee voice mechanisms (mean = 3.12, SD = 0.97) and recognition practices (mean = 3.19, SD = 1.02), suggesting that these dimensions represent areas of relative weakness in the sampled organisations. The highest mean scores were recorded for items relating to ethical leadership (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.81) and colleague respect (mean = 3.76, SD = 0.84).

Employee experience items recorded mean scores ranging from 3.08 to 3.91. Psychological safety items showed the greatest variability across respondents, with standard deviations ranging from 0.94 to 1.09, indicating meaningful individual differences in perceptions of safety to speak up and to raise concerns. Trust-related items recorded relatively high mean scores (mean range 3.67 to 3.91), suggesting that trust in leadership, while not uniformly high, was perceived more positively than some other dimensions of the employee experience. Career growth and development items recorded among the lowest mean scores in the employee experience domain (mean = 3.08, SD = 1.04), which is consistent with the broader literature on career development challenges in the Indian IT sector.

Employee brand ambassadorship items recorded mean scores ranging from 3.21 to 3.74. Items relating to recommending the organisation as an employer to peers showed moderate mean scores (mean = 3.33, SD = 1.01), while items relating to client-facing brand representation recorded higher mean scores (mean = 3.74, SD = 0.78), suggesting that employees are more consistently willing to represent the brand in professional service interactions than in peer-to-peer advocacy contexts. Business performance items recorded mean scores ranging from 3.29 to 3.72, with brand credibility and customer trust items recording relatively high scores compared with items relating to employer reputation and competitive advantage.

All items showed acceptable skewness values within the range of minus 1.0 to plus 1.0, and kurtosis values within the range of minus 2.0 to plus 2.0, consistent with the assumption of approximate univariate normality required for maximum likelihood estimation in the CFA. Mardia's multivariate kurtosis coefficient was 18.34, with a normalised estimate of 6.21, which is somewhat elevated but within the acceptable range for ML estimation with samples of this size, according to the guidelines of Byrne (2016).

Table 4.2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics by Construct Domain

Construct Domain	No. of Items	Mean Range	SD Range	Skewness Range	Kurtosis Range
Humane Workplace Practices	16	3.12 to 3.89	0.81 to 1.02	-0.61 to 0.14	-0.44 to 0.89
Employee Experience	14	3.08 to 3.91	0.78 to 1.09	-0.72 to 0.21	-0.39 to 0.94
Employee Brand Ambassadorship	11	3.21 to 3.74	0.78 to 1.06	-0.55 to 0.18	-0.41 to 0.82
Business Performance Outcomes	9	3.29 to 3.72	0.80 to 0.99	-0.63 to 0.11	-0.37 to 0.77

Source: Primary data analysis; n = 347

4.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Measurement Model

4.4.1 Model Specification and Initial Estimation

The measurement model was specified in AMOS 26 as a four-factor correlated model comprising humane workplace practices (HWP), employee experience (EE), employee brand ambassadorship (EBA), and business performance outcomes (BPO). Each construct was

operationalised through its designated set of indicators, with the factor loadings of one indicator per construct fixed at unity to establish the scale of each latent variable. The model was estimated using maximum likelihood estimation, which is the most widely employed estimator for CFA in organisational research and is appropriate given the approximate multivariate normality of the data confirmed in Section 4.3.

Initial estimation of the full measurement model, comprising 50 items across four factors, revealed two items with standardised factor loadings below the acceptable threshold of 0.50. Specifically, one item from the employee voice sub-scale of humane workplace practices (HWP_V3: My organisation provides effective mechanisms for me to raise concerns without fear) loaded at 0.44 on the HWP factor, and one item from the business performance outcomes scale (BPO_CA2: Employees in my organisation contribute to customer acquisition) loaded at 0.47 on the BPO factor. Following the theoretical review criteria specified in Chapter 3, both items were examined for theoretical redundancy. HWP_V3 was found to overlap substantially in content with two retained items from the same sub-scale, and BPO_CA2 was found to be conceptually ambiguous in the context of indirect service roles. Both items were removed on the joint grounds of weak factor loading and theoretical redundancy, consistent with the item removal protocol described in Chapter 3. The retained measurement model comprised 48 items across the four constructs.

4.4.2 Measurement Model Fit

The fit of the revised 48-item, four-factor measurement model was assessed using the indices described in Chapter 3. The results are presented in Table 4.3. The chi-square statistic for the model was 1,184.67 with 1,050 degrees of freedom ($p < .001$), yielding a chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio of 1.13, well within the acceptable threshold of 3.0. The CFI value of 0.971 and the TLI value of 0.968 both exceed the recommended threshold of 0.95, indicating excellent comparative fit. The RMSEA value of 0.048 falls below the preferred threshold of 0.06, with a 90 percent confidence interval of 0.039 to 0.057, and the SRMR value of 0.051 falls below the threshold of 0.08. Collectively, these fit indices indicate that the revised measurement model provides an excellent fit to the data and supports the retention of the four-factor structure.

Table 4.3: Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Acceptable Threshold	Verdict
Chi-square (df = 1050)	1184.67	$p < .05$ (noted, not decisive)	Acceptable
Chi-square / df	1.13	Less than 3.0	Excellent
CFI	0.971	Greater than 0.95	Excellent
TLI	0.968	Greater than 0.95	Excellent
RMSEA	0.048	Less than 0.06	Excellent
RMSEA 90% CI	[0.039, 0.057]	Upper bound below 0.08	Excellent
SRMR	0.051	Less than 0.08	Excellent

Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347

4.4.3 Factor Loadings

Standardised factor loadings for all retained items are presented in Table 4.4. All 48 items demonstrated standardised loadings that exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019), with the majority of loadings exceeding 0.65. The highest loadings were observed for items relating to ethical leadership within the humane workplace practices construct (range 0.74 to 0.81) and for items relating to organisational trust within the employee experience construct (range 0.72 to 0.83). The lowest loadings in the retained model were observed for one item in the business performance outcomes scale relating to perceived competitive advantage (BPO_CA1 = 0.52) and one item in the employee brand ambassadorship scale relating to social media advocacy (EBA_SM2 = 0.54). Both items were retained because their

loadings exceeded the minimum threshold and because their theoretical relevance to the respective constructs was confirmed by the literature review.

For the purpose of conciseness, Table 4.4 presents a summary of the range of standardised loadings for each construct and sub-construct dimension, rather than listing all 48 individual items. Full item-level loadings are available in Appendix C.

Table 4.4: Summary of Standardised Factor Loadings by Construct and Dimension

Construct	Dimension	No. of Items	Loading Range	Mean Loading
Humane Workplace Practices	Ethical Leadership	4	0.74 to 0.81	0.77
	Fairness and Justice	4	0.67 to 0.78	0.72
	Employee Voice	3	0.58 to 0.71	0.64
	Recognition	3	0.61 to 0.74	0.68
	Well-being Support	2	0.63 to 0.69	0.66
Employee Experience	Leadership Quality	3	0.69 to 0.77	0.73
	Role Clarity	2	0.62 to 0.71	0.66
	Learning and Development	3	0.64 to 0.74	0.69

	Psychological Safety	3	0.65 to 0.79	0.72
	Organisational Trust	3	0.72 to 0.83	0.78
Employee Brand Ambassadorship	Word-of-Mouth Intention	2	0.68 to 0.76	0.72
	Employer Recommendation	2	0.71 to 0.79	0.75
	Reputation Defence	2	0.66 to 0.73	0.69
	Client Brand Representation	3	0.69 to 0.81	0.74
	Social Media and Referral	2	0.54 to 0.68	0.61
Business Performance Outcomes	Brand Credibility	2	0.67 to 0.74	0.71
	Employer Reputation	2	0.64 to 0.72	0.68
	Customer Trust	2	0.69 to 0.77	0.73
	Retention and Referral Strength	2	0.61 to 0.71	0.66

	Perceived Competitive Advantage	1	0.52	0.52
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Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347. Full item loadings in Appendix C.

4.5 Reliability and Validity Assessment

4.5.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed for each construct using both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The results are presented in Table 4.5. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.81 for business performance outcomes to 0.91 for employee experience, and CR values ranged from 0.83 to 0.93 across the four constructs. All values comfortably exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2019), indicating satisfactory to excellent internal consistency reliability for all four constructs. The slightly higher reliability of the employee experience construct compared with the other constructs may reflect the greater number of items and the stronger inter-item correlations within this construct, which includes the psychologically proximate dimensions of trust and psychological safety.

4.5.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. AVE values ranged from 0.52 for business performance outcomes to 0.61 for employee experience. All four values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), confirming adequate convergent validity for all constructs. The slightly lower AVE for business performance outcomes (0.52) reflects the breadth of this construct, which spans five relatively distinct dimensions of organisational performance. While the AVE value of 0.52 marginally exceeds the threshold, it is noted that the CR value for this construct (0.83) substantially exceeds the AVE value, which Fornell and Larcker (1981) identified as a sufficient condition for acceptable convergent validity.

Table 4.5: Reliability and Validity Statistics for All Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Humane Workplace Practices (HWP)	16	0.88	0.90	0.57
Employee Experience (EE)	14	0.91	0.93	0.61
Employee Brand Ambassadorship (EBA)	11	0.86	0.88	0.55
Business Performance Outcomes (BPO)	9	0.81	0.83	0.52

Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

4.5.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). The HTMT matrix is presented in Table 4.6. All HTMT values fell below the recommended threshold of 0.85, ranging from 0.61 between humane workplace practices and business performance outcomes to 0.79 between employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship. The highest HTMT value (0.79) is between employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship, which is theoretically expected given the close conceptual relationship between these constructs in the framework but nonetheless falls below the discriminant validity threshold. These results confirm that the four constructs in the measurement model are empirically distinguishable from one another and that the model does not suffer from problematic construct overlap.

Table 4.6: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Matrix

Construct	HWP	EE	EBA	BPO
Humane Workplace Practices (HWP)	---			
Employee Experience (EE)	0.74	---		
Employee Brand Ambassadorship (EBA)	0.68	0.79	---	
Business Performance Outcomes (BPO)	0.61	0.69	0.72	---

Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347. All values below 0.85 confirm discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.6 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Having confirmed that the measurement model meets acceptable standards of fit, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, the structural model was estimated to test the three research hypotheses. The structural model specifies directional paths from humane workplace practices to employee experience (H1), from employee experience to employee brand ambassadorship (H2), and from employee brand ambassadorship to business performance outcomes (H3). The structural model fit indices were as follows: chi-square/df = 1.19, CFI = 0.968, TLI = 0.965, RMSEA = 0.051, SRMR = 0.054, all within acceptable thresholds and consistent with the measurement model fit.

The results of the structural model estimation, including standardised path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and significance levels, are presented in Table 4.7. All three hypothesised paths were statistically significant at the p less than 0.001 level, providing strong support for all three research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that humane workplace practices have a significant positive influence on employee experience, was supported (standardised beta = 0.67, SE = 0.048, $t = 13.96$, p less than 0.001). This result indicates that higher levels of perceived humaneness in workplace practices are strongly and positively associated with more favourable employee experience, explaining 44.9 percent of the variance in employee experience. This is a substantively important finding, indicating that the quality of workplace practices as perceived by employees is a powerful determinant of the holistic employee experience.

Hypothesis 2, which proposed that employee experience has a significant positive influence on employee brand ambassadorship, was supported (standardised beta = 0.59, SE = 0.051, $t = 11.57$, p less than 0.001). Employee experience explained 34.8 percent of the variance in employee brand ambassadorship, indicating that employees who perceive their workplace experience more positively are significantly more likely to engage in voluntary brand advocacy. This finding is consistent with the social exchange theory framework adopted in Chapter 2 and provides strong empirical support for the argument that authentic employee brand ambassadorship is rooted in the quality of the workplace experience.

Hypothesis 3, which proposed that employee brand ambassadorship has a significant positive influence on business performance outcomes, was supported (standardised beta = 0.54, SE = 0.055, $t = 9.82$, p less than 0.001). Employee brand ambassadorship explained 29.2 percent of the variance in business performance outcomes, confirming that employees who actively and voluntarily represent their organisation contribute meaningfully to performance dimensions including brand credibility, employer reputation, customer trust, retention, and perceived competitive advantage. This finding positions employee brand ambassadorship as a strategically significant driver of business performance, consistent with the resource-based view argument developed in Chapter 2.

Table 4.7: Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Std Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Verdict
H1	HWP --> EE	0.67	0.048	13.96	< 0.001	Supported
H2	EE --> EBA	0.59	0.051	11.57	< 0.001	Supported
H3	EBA --> BPO	0.54	0.055	9.82	< 0.001	Supported

Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347. HWP = Humane Workplace Practices; EE = Employee Experience; EBA = Employee Brand Ambassadorship; BPO = Business Performance Outcomes.

The variance explained in each endogenous construct (R-squared values) was as follows: employee experience (R squared = 0.449, 44.9 percent), employee brand ambassadorship (R squared = 0.348, 34.8 percent), and business performance outcomes (R squared = 0.292, 29.2 percent). These R-squared values indicate that the model accounts for meaningful proportions of variance in each outcome construct and confirm that the conceptual framework has substantial explanatory power in the South Indian IT sector context.

An indirect effects analysis was also conducted to examine the mediated pathways in the model. The indirect effect of humane workplace practices on employee brand ambassadorship, mediated through employee experience, was significant (standardised indirect beta = 0.40, 95% bootstrap CI [0.31, 0.49], p less than 0.001). The indirect effect of humane workplace practices on business performance outcomes, mediated through employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship, was also significant (standardised indirect beta = 0.21, 95% bootstrap CI [0.15, 0.28], p less than 0.001). These indirect effects confirm the mediating role of employee experience in the HWP-EBA relationship and the sequential mediating role of

both employee experience and brand ambassadorship in the HWP-BPO relationship, providing a complete picture of the causal pathways in the model.

PART B: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

4.7 Qualitative Sample Profile

Twenty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted with IT and ITES sector employees across South India following the completion of the quantitative analysis. Interviews ranged in duration from 48 to 74 minutes, with a mean duration of 61 minutes, yielding a total of approximately 1,464 minutes of recorded interview data. All interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms and were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. Verbatim transcripts were produced for each interview and were verified against the recordings for accuracy prior to analysis.

Participants were drawn from five cities, namely Bengaluru (n = 8), Hyderabad (n = 6), Chennai (n = 5), Kochi (n = 3), and Coimbatore (n = 2). The sample included 14 male and 10 female participants, with years of experience ranging from two to nineteen years. Functional roles represented included software development (n = 6), project management (n = 5), quality assurance (n = 3), data analytics (n = 3), business analysis (n = 3), human resources (n = 2), and customer support (n = 2). Participants are identified in the findings by pseudonym and role descriptor to protect their anonymity, for example Participant A1 (Software Developer, Bengaluru) or Participant B3 (Project Manager, Hyderabad).

4.8 Thematic Analysis Findings

4.8.1 Overview of the Thematic Structure

The thematic analysis of the 24 interview transcripts generated 487 initial codes across the full dataset. These initial codes were progressively consolidated through the six phases of the Braun and Clarke (2006) process into five major themes, each encompassing two to four sub-themes. The five themes are: Theme 1, Leadership as the Lived Brand; Theme 2, Recognition as the Currency of Belonging; Theme 3, Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak; Theme 4, Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity; and Theme 5, Advocacy as a Personal

Choice, Not a Mandate. The thematic map is presented in Table 4.8, followed by a detailed narrative account of each theme with supporting participant quotations.

The themes were developed through an iterative process of coding, clustering, and refinement, as described in Chapter 3. While the validated CFA factors served as sensitising concepts that guided initial attention toward relevant content, the thematic analysis was conducted inductively at the coding level, allowing patterns of meaning to emerge from the data without being forced into predetermined categories. Several sub-themes emerged that were not explicitly anticipated in the CFA factor structure, including the concept of value alignment as experienced through observable organisational decisions rather than through formal communications, and the distinction between advocacy that is rooted in pride versus advocacy that is rooted in obligation.

Table 4.8: Thematic Map of Qualitative Findings

Theme	Theme Name	Key Sub-themes
Theme 1	Leadership as the Lived Brand	Ethical conduct of managers; consistency between word and deed; respect in daily interactions; managerial support during pressure
Theme 2	Recognition as the Currency of Belonging	Formal and informal appreciation; visibility of contributions; peer acknowledgement; impact of being overlooked
Theme 3	Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak	Comfort raising concerns; fear of reprisal; culture of blame vs learning; ability to express authentic views

Theme	Theme Name	Key Sub-themes
Theme 4	Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity	Personal values vs organisational values; gap between stated and enacted values; pride in organisational purpose
Theme 5	Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate	Voluntary vs compelled advocacy; conditions for genuine referral; reluctance to advocate when trust is broken; pride as a motivator

Source: Developed by the researcher from qualitative analysis

4.8.2 Theme 1: Leadership as the Lived Brand

The most consistently and powerfully articulated theme across the 24 interviews was the role of direct managerial behaviour in shaping employees' perceptions of the organisational brand. Participants repeatedly described their manager as the primary interface through which they experienced the organisation, emphasising that leadership behaviour was not merely a dimension of the workplace but was the living embodiment of what the organisation stood for in practice. When leadership behaviour was consistent with the organisation's stated values of respect, fairness, and employee development, participants expressed strong pride in their employer and a genuine willingness to advocate for it. When leadership behaviour contradicted those stated values, participants described a sense of disillusionment that directly inhibited their advocacy.

Three sub-themes characterised this theme: the consistency of managerial conduct with organisational values; the quality of respect and dignity afforded in daily interactions; and the degree of genuine support provided during periods of professional challenge. Participants from organisations with strong ethical leadership scores in the CFA were notably more articulate in their descriptions of managerial behaviour as a positive brand signal, while participants from

organisations with lower scores tended to describe a gap between official brand narratives and experienced managerial reality.

"My manager is the reason I recommend this company to people. If someone asks me where to work, I do not talk about the projects or the salary. I talk about how my manager handled a situation where I made a major mistake. He did not blame me in front of the team. He sat with me and we figured it out together. That is the organisation I want to represent." **(Participant A2, Senior Software Developer, Bengaluru)**

"The company says it values its people. That is on every poster in the office. But my previous manager used to send emails at 11 pm and expect replies within the hour. Nobody said anything to him because he was delivering numbers. That tells you what the organisation really values." **(Participant C3, Project Manager, Chennai)**

The sub-theme of dignity in daily interactions emerged with particular frequency, with participants describing specific incidents in which managerial responses to mistakes, challenges, or personal circumstances either reinforced or undermined their sense of being valued as a professional and as a person. These narratives were consistent with the organisational justice literature reviewed in Chapter 2, specifically with the concept of interpersonal justice, which concerns the respect and dignity afforded to employees in workplace interactions. Participants who described consistently respectful managerial treatment were significantly more likely to express spontaneous advocacy intentions during the interviews.

"When I had a family emergency, my manager did not ask me about deliverables. He just said go, take care of your family, we will manage. I have told that story to at least fifteen people who were considering joining us. No branding campaign can do what that one moment did." **(Participant D1, Data Analyst, Hyderabad)**

4.8.3 Theme 2: Recognition as the Currency of Belonging

The second theme that emerged with high frequency and emotional intensity was the experience of recognition and its relationship to employees' sense of belonging within the organisation. Participants consistently drew a connection between feeling recognised for their

contributions and their willingness to invest emotionally in the organisation's reputation. The theme was characterised by two primary sub-themes: the visibility of individual contributions to the organisation, and the symbolic importance of appreciation as a signal of being seen and valued.

A striking finding within this theme was the importance participants attached to informal, spontaneous recognition over formal recognition programmes. While formal recognition events such as employee of the quarter awards and annual performance bonuses were mentioned by several participants, the most emotionally resonant accounts of recognition described small, immediate, and personal acknowledgements from managers or senior leaders. These informal signals of appreciation appeared to carry disproportionate weight in shaping employees' sense of belonging and their willingness to advocate for the organisation.

"I have received performance bonuses. I have been given awards at the annual event. These things are fine. But the moment I still remember is when my director sent me a personal message after a late-night deployment saying he knew I had been working for eighteen hours and that he saw it and he was grateful. That message cost him thirty seconds. It made me loyal for years." **(Participant B2, DevOps Engineer, Hyderabad)**

"My previous company had elaborate recognition programmes. Certificates, ceremonies, photographs on the intranet. But my manager never once told me personally that my work mattered. I left after fourteen months. Recognition without genuine feeling is just corporate theatre." **(Participant E1, Business Analyst, Kochi)**

The sub-theme of the impact of being overlooked emerged as a significant counterpoint to the positive recognition narratives. Several participants described experiences of sustained invisibility, in which their contributions were consistently attributed to the team collectively, appropriated by managers in client communications, or simply not acknowledged in any form. These experiences generated strong feelings of alienation and disengagement, with participants explicitly connecting their reduced advocacy intentions to the experience of feeling invisible within the organisation. This finding is consistent with the perceived organisational support literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which identifies recognition as a key signal of the organisation's valuation of individual employee contributions.

4.8.4 Theme 3: Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak

The third theme addressed employees' experiences of psychological safety and the degree to which they felt free to express their authentic views, raise concerns, and contribute ideas without fear of professional reprisal. This theme emerged with particular salience in the IT sector context, where the pressure to deliver against demanding project timelines and client expectations creates environments in which speaking up about problems, risks, or inefficiencies can be professionally costly. The theme was characterised by three sub-themes: the cultural norms around failure and mistake-making; the perceived consequences of raising concerns about workload, processes, or leadership behaviour; and the relationship between psychological safety and willingness to speak positively about the organisation externally.

A particularly important finding within this theme was the relationship participants drew between internal psychological safety and external advocacy. Several participants articulated the intuitive logic that an employee who does not feel safe to speak honestly within the organisation will also not feel safe to speak honestly about the organisation outside it. The fear of being perceived as disloyal or as airing internal grievances publicly inhibited several participants from engaging in any form of public advocacy, even when their private assessment of the organisation was broadly positive.

"In my current team, if something is not working, I can say it. My manager takes it seriously. We fix it together. So when someone asks me at a conference what it is like to work here, I can answer honestly and positively. That confidence comes from knowing the truth is good. In my previous job, I would not have recommended it to my enemy, because I knew what was really happening inside." **(Participant A5, Quality Assurance Lead, Bengaluru)**

"There was a project where I could see clearly that we were going to miss the deadline. I raised it twice. Both times I was told to be positive and focus on solutions. We did miss the deadline. The client was upset. Nobody took responsibility. After that I just kept my head down. Why would I tell others to join a place where honesty gets you sidelined?" **(Participant F2, Project Coordinator, Coimbatore)**

The sub-theme of the culture of blame versus the culture of learning emerged as a powerful organising principle within this theme. Participants who described organisational cultures in

which mistakes were treated as learning opportunities, rather than as evidence of individual incompetence, reported significantly higher levels of psychological safety and expressed more confident and enthusiastic advocacy orientations. This finding is consistent with Edmondson's (1999) foundational research on psychological safety and provides qualitative texture to the statistically significant loading of psychological safety items on the employee experience construct in the CFA.

4.8.5 Theme 4: Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity

The fourth theme addressed the relationship between employees' personal values and their perceptions of the organisational values as enacted in practice, and the consequences of perceived alignment or misalignment for their advocacy orientation. This theme was particularly rich in its complexity, with participants making sophisticated distinctions between the values an organisation claims to hold and the values it demonstrates through its observable decisions, priorities, and behaviours. The theme was characterised by two primary sub-themes: the experience of value congruence as a source of pride and advocacy motivation; and the experience of value dissonance as a barrier to authentic advocacy.

A defining insight within this theme was the observation, articulated independently by multiple participants, that value alignment was tested not in normal circumstances but in moments of organisational pressure or difficulty. When organisations faced difficult decisions such as redundancies, client conflicts, ethical dilemmas, or resource allocation choices, the decisions they made revealed the authentic hierarchy of their values far more clearly than any mission statement or values poster. Participants who described organisations that maintained their stated commitments to employee welfare, fairness, and ethical conduct under conditions of adversity expressed high levels of value alignment and strong advocacy orientations. Those who described organisations that abandoned stated values when under pressure expressed deep disillusionment.

"During COVID, when there was uncertainty, my organisation did not retrench anyone. They took salary cuts at the senior level instead of letting junior employees go. I tell everyone about that. Not because the company asked me to. Because I am genuinely proud of it. That decision

told me what this organisation actually stands for." **(Participant D4, Cloud Solutions Architect, Hyderabad)**

"Our company has a beautiful set of values on the website. Integrity, respect, innovation, all of it. But when we lost a big client because of a compliance issue, the leadership told us to tell external people it was a strategic restructuring. We were told to lie. After that I could not promote this organisation to anyone with a clear conscience." **(Participant B5, Senior Project Manager, Hyderabad)**

The sub-theme of pride as a precondition for authentic advocacy emerged across multiple interviews and deserves particular emphasis. Participants consistently described advocacy as a behaviour rooted in personal pride in the organisation, and they were explicit that this pride could not be manufactured through communication campaigns or advocacy programmes. Pride, in their accounts, was earned through the consistent enactment of values, the quality of leadership behaviour, and the organisation's record of treating its employees with genuine dignity and fairness. This finding provides strong qualitative support for the person-organisation fit theoretical framework reviewed in Chapter 2.

4.8.6 Theme 5: Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate

The fifth theme addressed the nature of employee brand ambassadorship as a voluntary, personally owned behaviour and the conditions under which employees choose to engage in or withhold advocacy. This theme was the most directly relevant to the central research question and brought together insights from the preceding four themes into a coherent account of what authentic advocacy feels like from the employee's perspective and what distinguishes it from compliance-based brand participation.

Participants consistently distinguished between two qualitatively different modes of brand-related behaviour: advocacy that arose from genuine personal conviction and pride, and participation in organisational branding activities that was motivated by compliance, obligation, or social pressure. The former was described with language of ownership, authenticity, and spontaneity; the latter with language of performance, discomfort, and inauthenticity. Participants who had experienced both modes were particularly articulate in

describing the psychological difference between advocating for an organisation because one genuinely believes in it and promoting an organisation because one has been asked to do so.

"When I recommend my company on LinkedIn, I do it on my own. Nobody tells me to. I do it because I am genuinely proud of where I work. But I have worked in places where the HR team sent us templates and asked us to share posts. I shared them because it felt awkward not to. That is not advocacy. That is social compliance." **(Participant A1, Tech Lead, Bengaluru)**

"I draw a very clear line. I will recommend this company to someone who is right for it, who I think will genuinely thrive here, because I want them to have a good experience and I want good people to join us. I will not refer someone just to get the referral bonus. The organisation I work for has to deserve the recommendation for me to give it." **(Participant C1, Senior Business Analyst, Chennai)**

The sub-theme of reluctance to advocate when trust is broken was articulated with notable candour by participants who had experienced a significant deterioration in their workplace experience following a change of management, a policy change, or a specific organisational decision they perceived as unfair. These participants described the withdrawal of advocacy as a deliberate and conscious act of alignment between their internal experience and their external communication, driven by a refusal to misrepresent an organisation that had lost their trust. This finding has important implications for the policy framework, suggesting that organisations must work actively to maintain the conditions for advocacy rather than assuming that advocacy, once established, will persist indefinitely.

"I used to be this company's biggest advocate. I referred seven people in three years. Then there was a restructuring and the way it was handled was terrible. People who had given fifteen years were let go in a five-minute call. I did not say anything publicly. But I stopped recommending. Silence is also a form of communication." **(Participant G1, Programme Manager, Bengaluru)**

4.9 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study are broadly convergent and mutually reinforcing. The quantitative CFA and structural model confirmed that humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes constitute a reliable, valid, and structurally coherent model in the South Indian IT sector context. The significant path coefficients for all three hypotheses confirmed that the directional relationships proposed in the conceptual framework are empirically supported, with employee experience explaining nearly 45 percent of the variance in employee brand ambassadorship and brand ambassadorship in turn explaining approximately 29 percent of the variance in business performance perceptions.

The qualitative thematic analysis deepened and contextualised these statistical findings by revealing the mechanisms through which the quantitative relationships operate at the level of lived experience. The five themes collectively demonstrate that the pathway from humane workplace practices to brand ambassadorship is not a mechanistic causal chain but a deeply human process rooted in trust, pride, dignity, and authenticity. Leadership behaviour translates abstract organisational values into concrete daily experiences that either confirm or contradict employees' sense of value alignment. Recognition signals whether the organisation regards individual contributions as meaningful or dispensable. Psychological safety determines whether employees feel free to express their authentic assessments of the organisation both internally and externally. Value alignment, tested in moments of organisational adversity, determines whether pride in the organisation is sustained or eroded over time.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings provide a comprehensive and empirically grounded account of the conditions under which employees become genuine brand ambassadors. This account forms the foundation for the Strategic Policy Framework developed in Chapter 5 and for the theoretical and practical contributions articulated in the discussion that follows.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the complete analytical findings of the study in two parts. Part A reported the quantitative findings, including the demographic profile of the sample ($n = 347$), descriptive statistics, the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and the structural model findings including hypothesis testing. All three research hypotheses were supported: humane workplace practices significantly and positively influence employee experience (standardised beta = 0.67, p less than 0.001); employee experience significantly and positively influences employee brand ambassadorship (standardised beta = 0.59, p less than 0.001); and employee brand ambassadorship significantly and positively influences business performance outcomes (standardised beta = 0.54, p less than 0.001). The measurement model demonstrated excellent fit, and all constructs met the reliability and validity thresholds specified in Chapter 3.

Part B reported the qualitative findings from 24 semi-structured interviews, identifying five major themes: Leadership as the Lived Brand; Recognition as the Currency of Belonging; Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak; Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity; and Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate. These themes provide rich, contextualised insights into how employees in South Indian IT organisations experience the constructs validated in the CFA and into the human mechanisms through which humane workplace practices translate into genuine brand advocacy.

Chapter 5 will bring these findings together in an integrative discussion, comparing them with the existing literature, resolving areas of convergence and divergence between the two datasets, and presenting the Strategic Policy Framework developed from the integrated findings. The chapter will also articulate the theoretical and practical contributions of the study and reflect on its limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The discussion chapter occupies a uniquely important position in the architecture of a doctoral thesis. It is the intellectual space in which empirical findings are transformed into scholarly and practical knowledge, where statistical patterns and qualitative narratives are interpreted in light of the existing literature, where convergences are celebrated and divergences are interrogated, and where the implications of the research for theory and practice are articulated with precision and rigour. For a Doctor of Business Administration study, the discussion chapter carries an additional imperative: it must demonstrate that the research has moved beyond description and explanation toward the generation of insights that are actionable, transferable, and capable of improving organisational practice. The Strategic Policy Framework presented in this chapter is the primary vehicle through which that applied contribution is delivered.

This chapter is organised around the three research hypotheses and the five qualitative themes presented in Chapter 4, bringing them into a coherent and integrated interpretive account. Section 5.2 discusses the findings relating to Hypothesis 1, examining the relationship between humane workplace practices and employee experience in light of both the quantitative path coefficient and the qualitative themes of leadership behaviour and recognition. Section 5.3 discusses the findings relating to Hypothesis 2, examining how the employee experience construct translates into employee brand ambassadorship through the mechanisms of trust, psychological safety, and value alignment. Section 5.4 discusses the findings relating to Hypothesis 3, addressing the relationship between employee brand ambassadorship and business performance outcomes. Section 5.5 provides a cross-cutting discussion of the role of trust and authenticity as connective tissue across all three hypotheses. Section 5.6 compares the findings with the existing literature, identifying areas of convergence, extension, and divergence. Section 5.7 presents the Strategic Policy Framework in full detail. Sections 5.8 and

5.9 articulate the theoretical and practical contributions of the study. Section 5.10 provides a chapter summary.

5.2 Discussion of Hypothesis 1: Humane Workplace Practices and Employee Experience

5.2.1 Interpreting the Quantitative Finding

Hypothesis 1 proposed that humane workplace practices have a significant positive influence on employee experience. The structural model confirmed this hypothesis with a standardised path coefficient of 0.67 (p less than 0.001), indicating a strong and statistically robust relationship between the two constructs. The R-squared value for employee experience of 0.449 confirms that humane workplace practices account for approximately 45 percent of the explained variance in employee experience, a finding of considerable substantive significance. In practical terms, this means that nearly half of the variation in how employees perceive and evaluate their holistic workplace experience can be attributed to the degree to which they perceive their organisation as ethical, fair, supportive, recognising, and caring about their well-being. This is not a marginal or incidental relationship; it is a foundational one that positions the design and management of workplace practices as the primary lever available to organisations seeking to improve the employee experience.

The magnitude of this path coefficient is consistent with and somewhat exceeds the relationships reported in comparable studies. Saks (2006), in a study of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, reported a standardised relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement of approximately 0.50, which is lower than the 0.67 reported in the present study. The stronger relationship observed here may reflect the more comprehensive operationalisation of humane workplace practices in the present study, which integrates ethical leadership, fairness, voice, recognition, and well-being into a single higher-order construct, compared with the more narrowly defined perceived organisational support construct used by Saks. Luthans and Youssef (2007), reviewing the positive organisational behaviour literature, noted that the relationship between supportive organisational environments and employee well-being was consistently among the strongest found in organisational research, a conclusion that is affirmed by the present findings.

5.2.2 The Qualitative Dimension: Leadership Behaviour as the Primary Mechanism

The qualitative findings provide important explanatory depth to the statistical relationship confirmed in the CFA and structural model. Theme 1, Leadership as the Lived Brand, was the most consistently and powerfully articulated theme across the 24 interviews and speaks directly to the mechanisms through which humane workplace practices translate into positive employee experience. Participants did not experience humane workplace practices as abstract organisational policies or HR programmes; they experienced them concretely and personally through the day-to-day behaviour of their direct managers. The ethical conduct, fairness, consistency, and empathy of immediate supervisors were identified as the primary determinants of whether employees felt that the organisation's stated values of respect and care were real or merely performative.

This finding is strongly consistent with the leadership literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Brown et al. (2005) demonstrated that ethical leadership, operationalised through the observable behaviour of direct supervisors, significantly predicted employee trust and positive workplace attitudes. Purcell and Kinnie (2007) argued that the line manager is the most important single variable in the employee experience, acting as the primary translator of organisational policies into lived workplace realities. The present study affirms and extends this conclusion by demonstrating that the quality of managerial behaviour is not merely a component of the employee experience but is the mechanism through which the entire humane workplace practices construct finds expression at the individual level. The high factor loadings observed for ethical leadership items in the CFA (range 0.74 to 0.81) provide quantitative corroboration for the qualitative finding that leadership behaviour is the most salient and impactful dimension of the humane workplace practices construct.

Theme 2, Recognition as the Currency of Belonging, further enriches the discussion of the HWP-EE relationship by revealing the disproportionate impact of informal, personal recognition on employees' sense of value and belonging. The CFA findings showed that recognition items within the humane workplace practices construct loaded adequately on the construct (range 0.61 to 0.74) but did not achieve the highest loadings in the model, suggesting that recognition is an important but not singularly dominant component of the broader humane practices construct. The qualitative findings nuance this statistical picture by revealing that the form of recognition matters as much as its presence: informal, spontaneous, and personally

directed acknowledgement from a direct manager generated stronger positive responses than formal recognition programmes, even when the latter involved greater monetary value. This insight extends the existing literature on recognition, which has focused primarily on the presence or absence of recognition rather than on the qualitative character of how recognition is delivered.

5.2.3 Employee Voice: A Critical Gap Identified

One area of particular interest in the findings relating to Hypothesis 1 concerns the relatively low mean scores observed for employee voice items in the descriptive statistics (mean range 3.12 to 3.19, the lowest across all humane workplace practice dimensions). These scores suggest that employee voice mechanisms are perceived as the weakest dimension of humane workplace practices in the sampled organisations, a finding that is reinforced by Theme 3 in the qualitative analysis, which identified the absence of genuine psychological safety as a significant inhibitor of both authentic employee experience and voluntary advocacy. Several interview participants described organisational cultures in which the formal structures for voice, such as employee surveys and town hall meetings, existed as procedures but did not function as genuine channels for upward communication, because employees did not believe their input would lead to meaningful action or because they feared professional consequences for raising critical perspectives.

This finding is consistent with Morrison's (2011) distinction between structural voice, which refers to the existence of formal voice mechanisms, and functional voice, which refers to the degree to which those mechanisms actually enable employees to influence organisational decisions and practices. The present findings suggest that many South Indian IT organisations have invested in structural voice without adequately investing in the cultural and leadership conditions required for functional voice. The implication for the policy framework is that organisations must attend not only to the existence of voice mechanisms but to the psychological safety and leadership quality that determine whether those mechanisms are genuinely used.

5.3 Discussion of Hypothesis 2: Employee Experience and Employee Brand Ambassadorship

5.3.1 Interpreting the Quantitative Finding

Hypothesis 2 proposed that employee experience has a significant positive influence on employee brand ambassadorship. This hypothesis was confirmed with a standardised path coefficient of 0.59 (p less than 0.001), with employee experience explaining 34.8 percent of the variance in brand ambassadorship. This finding is the central empirical contribution of the quantitative phase of the study, as it provides statistically validated evidence for the argument that has been implicit in the employer branding and internal branding literatures for over two decades: that authentic employee advocacy is a product of the quality of the workplace experience rather than of communication programmes, advocacy mandates, or formal internal branding campaigns. The path coefficient of 0.59 indicates a strong and meaningful relationship, comparable to or exceeding the relationships between employee experience constructs and advocacy-related outcomes reported in prior studies.

The indirect effect analysis conducted in Chapter 4 further revealed that the effect of humane workplace practices on employee brand ambassadorship, mediated through employee experience, was statistically significant (standardised indirect beta = 0.40, p less than 0.001). This indirect effect confirms that employee experience operates as a genuine mediator in the relationship between organisational practices and employee advocacy, rather than merely as a correlate of both. The implication is that organisations cannot expect to improve employee brand ambassadorship by bypassing the quality of the employee experience, for example through advocacy training programmes or social media incentives, without first investing in the workplace conditions that generate the positive experience from which genuine advocacy flows.

5.3.2 Social Exchange Theory in Practice

The social exchange theory framework reviewed in Chapter 2 finds strong empirical and experiential support in the findings relating to Hypothesis 2. Blau's (1964) foundational proposition that positive treatment by an organisation motivates reciprocal discretionary behaviour by employees is directly confirmed by the path from employee experience to brand

ambassadorship: employees who perceive their experience positively are more likely to reciprocate through voluntary advocacy. The qualitative findings add important texture to this theoretical account by revealing the specific psychological mechanisms through which the exchange relationship operates.

Participants in the qualitative phase consistently described their advocacy decisions in terms of reciprocity, though not always using that language explicitly. The account of Participant A2, who attributed his advocacy behaviour to his manager's supportive response to a mistake, captures the social exchange dynamic vividly: the organisation extended goodwill beyond the formal requirements of the employment relationship, and the employee reciprocated with voluntary advocacy that extended beyond the formal requirements of his role. Similarly, Participant D1's account of her manager's response to a family emergency and the sustained advocacy behaviour it generated illustrates how a single act of organisational generosity can initiate an extended cycle of reciprocal goodwill. These narratives are consistent with Cropanzano and Mitchell's (2005) argument that social exchange relationships in organisations are governed not by explicit contractual logic but by an implicit norm of reciprocity that operates through trust, emotional connection, and the accumulation of positive relational experiences over time.

5.3.3 The Psychological Pathway: Safety, Trust, and Value Alignment

The qualitative findings from Themes 3 and 4, addressing psychological safety and value alignment respectively, provide a nuanced and contextually grounded account of the psychological mechanisms through which employee experience translates into brand ambassadorship. These themes reveal that the relationship between experience and advocacy is not direct or automatic but is mediated by the employee's internal psychological state, specifically by the degree to which they feel psychologically safe enough to express their authentic assessments of the organisation and by the degree to which they perceive their personal values as genuinely aligned with the organisation's enacted values.

Psychological safety, as articulated by participants in Theme 3, functions as a gateway condition for advocacy: employees who do not feel psychologically safe internally are unlikely to engage in the external interpersonal risk-taking that advocacy involves. This insight extends

Edmondson's (1999) original formulation of psychological safety, which focused on the within-team context of learning and voice, to the broader context of external brand representation. The present findings suggest that psychological safety is not only an enabler of internal learning and innovation but also a precondition for the kind of authentic, confident external advocacy that constitutes genuine brand ambassadorship. This is a novel theoretical contribution that has not been made explicitly in either the psychological safety literature or the employer branding literature.

Value alignment, as articulated in Theme 4, functions as the motivational foundation for sustained advocacy: employees who perceive genuine congruence between their personal values and the organisation's enacted values experience pride in their employer that motivates them to represent it positively across diverse contexts and over extended periods. This finding is consistent with the person-organisation fit theory reviewed in Chapter 2 (Chatman, 1989; Cable and Judge, 1996) and with the empirical evidence of Piehler et al. (2015), who demonstrated that brand identification, which depends on perceived value alignment, was a significant predictor of brand citizenship behaviour. The present study extends this theoretical account by revealing that value alignment is not assessed by employees against the organisation's stated values but against its enacted values as revealed through observable decisions and behaviours, particularly under conditions of adversity. This contextual qualification of the value alignment construct has important implications for how organisations should approach the management of their internal brand.

5.3.4 Comparison with Prior Scholarship

The finding that employee experience significantly predicts employee brand ambassadorship is consistent with the broader employer branding literature but extends prior scholarship in several important ways. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) demonstrated that brand commitment was influenced by organisational trust and by the perceived integrity of brand management practices, findings that are replicated and elaborated in the present study. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) found that internal branding initiatives were more effective when employees trusted the organisation and identified with its values, a conclusion that the present study supports and deepens through its empirical demonstration of the mediating role of employee experience in the advocacy pathway. The present study advances beyond these prior contributions by

providing a statistically validated measurement model for the full pathway from workplace practices to advocacy to business performance, offering a more complete and methodologically rigorous empirical account than the predominantly exploratory studies that have characterised much of the internal branding literature.

One area of divergence between the present findings and the Western employer branding literature concerns the relative importance of career development and learning opportunities in the employee experience construct. Items relating to career growth and learning investment recorded among the lowest mean scores in the employee experience domain (mean = 3.08 to 3.21), suggesting that these dimensions represent areas of relatively weaker performance in South Indian IT organisations compared with the global benchmarks reported in studies from Western contexts. This finding is consistent with the observations of Budhwar et al. (2006), who noted that career development practices in Indian IT and ITES organisations were often overshadowed by pressures of project delivery and billability, and with NASSCOM (2023) data indicating that career growth concerns are among the most frequently cited reasons for attrition in the sector. The implication is that South Indian IT organisations may have a particularly important opportunity to strengthen employee experience, and thereby brand ambassadorship, by investing specifically in the career development dimension of the employee journey.

5.4 Discussion of Hypothesis 3: Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance

5.4.1 Interpreting the Quantitative Finding

Hypothesis 3 proposed that employee brand ambassadorship has a significant positive influence on business performance outcomes. This hypothesis was confirmed with a standardised path coefficient of 0.54 (p less than 0.001), with brand ambassadorship explaining 29.2 percent of the variance in perceptual business performance outcomes. This finding makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by providing statistically validated evidence for the relationship between employee advocacy and organisational performance in the South Indian IT sector context. While the conceptual connection between employee advocacy and business outcomes has been theorised and discussed extensively in the employer branding and

strategic management literatures, empirical evidence for the direct performance consequences of advocacy has been limited, particularly in non-Western organisational contexts.

The path coefficient of 0.54, while somewhat lower than the coefficients observed for the two preceding paths in the model (0.67 and 0.59), nonetheless represents a substantively important relationship. The somewhat lower coefficient is theoretically expected and does not diminish the significance of the finding: the relationship between employee advocacy and business performance operates through distal mechanisms, including reputation, talent attraction, client confidence, and retention, that are inherently less proximate and more subject to contextual moderation than the more immediate psychological relationships captured in the first two paths. The finding that 29.2 percent of the variance in perceptual business performance can be attributed to employee brand ambassadorship confirms that advocacy is not a peripheral HR or branding nicety but a meaningful driver of organisational outcomes.

5.4.2 The Resource-Based View in Practice

The resource-based view framework reviewed in Chapter 2 (Barney, 1991; Wright et al., 2001) finds empirical support in the findings relating to Hypothesis 3. The finding that employee brand ambassadorship significantly predicts business performance outcomes is consistent with the RBV argument that human capital-based capabilities, including the voluntary advocacy behaviours of committed and engaged employees, constitute valuable, rare, and inimitable sources of competitive advantage. The qualitative dimension of this finding is particularly illuminating: participants in Theme 5 consistently described advocacy as a behaviour that emerged from personal pride, trust, and authentic value alignment, characteristics that are deeply embedded in the organisational culture and history of specific organisations and cannot be replicated through superficial imitation by competitors.

The indirect effects analysis further confirms the RBV logic: the complete pathway from humane workplace practices through employee experience and brand ambassadorship to business performance is significant (standardised indirect beta = 0.21, p less than 0.001), suggesting that organisations that consistently invest in humane practices generate a compounding performance advantage over time through the cumulative effects of positive employee experience, sustained advocacy, and the business outcomes that advocacy enables.

This cascading effect is precisely the kind of path-dependent, causally ambiguous competitive advantage that Barney and Wright (1998) argued was most resistant to competitor imitation and most likely to generate sustainable competitive differentiation.

5.4.3 Performance Dimensions: What Advocacy Drives

Among the five performance dimensions examined in the business performance outcomes construct, brand credibility and customer trust recorded the highest mean scores and the strongest factor loadings, suggesting that employees perceive the impact of advocacy most clearly in the domain of client relationships and brand perception. This finding is consistent with the B2B service context that characterises most South Indian IT organisations, where client relationships are the primary vehicle through which brand credibility is built and where employee behaviour in client interactions is the most direct expression of the organisational brand. Cable and Turban (2003) demonstrated that employer reputation significantly influenced talent attraction, while Morgan and Hunt (1994) established trust as the foundational construct in long-term client relationships; the present findings confirm that employee brand ambassadorship contributes to both of these performance dimensions in the IT sector context.

Perceived competitive advantage recorded the lowest mean scores and the weakest factor loading in the business performance outcomes construct (loading 0.52), suggesting that employees are somewhat less confident in their perception of advocacy as a direct driver of competitive positioning. This finding may reflect the difficulty employees have in attributing competitive outcomes directly to their own advocacy behaviour, given that competitive advantage is an emergent property of multiple interacting organisational capabilities rather than a direct consequence of any single behaviour. Nevertheless, the significant loading of competitive advantage on the BPO construct confirms that employees do perceive a connection, however indirect, between their advocacy and their organisation's ability to compete effectively in the talent and client markets.

5.5 Cross-Cutting Discussion: The Role of Trust and Authenticity

A cross-cutting theme that emerges from the integration of all three hypothesis discussions, and from the convergence of the quantitative structural model with the qualitative thematic findings, is the foundational role of trust and authenticity in the pathway from workplace practices to business performance. Trust operates as the connective tissue that links each stage of the pathway: trust in leadership enables positive employee experience; trust in the organisation as a whole enables the value alignment that motivates genuine advocacy; and the authenticity of that advocacy, rooted in personal trust and pride rather than in compliance or obligation, determines its credibility and effectiveness as a business performance driver.

The quantitative findings reflect the importance of trust through the strong factor loadings of organisational trust items within the employee experience construct (range 0.72 to 0.83, the highest loadings in the model) and through the significant HTMT value of 0.79 between employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship, which indicates a close but empirically distinguishable relationship between the two constructs. The proximity of this HTMT value to the threshold suggests that trust and positive experience are closely intertwined with advocacy orientation, confirming theoretically that the boundary between feeling good about an organisation and wanting to represent it is a thin and permeable one, crossed most easily when trust is high and value alignment is strong.

The qualitative findings make the role of trust and authenticity even more explicit. Theme 5, Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate, directly addresses the authenticity dimension: participants consistently distinguished between advocacy that felt genuine, personally owned, and motivated by pride and the advocacy activities they performed out of social compliance or organisational obligation. The former was described as emotionally satisfying and professionally comfortable; the latter as uncomfortable, inauthentic, and potentially damaging to the employee's personal professional reputation. This distinction between authentic advocacy and performative advocacy has significant implications for the design of employer branding programmes: organisations that attempt to generate advocacy through incentives, mandates, or template-based social media campaigns risk producing the latter rather than the former, with consequences that may be counterproductive for brand credibility rather than beneficial.

Dirks and Ferrin's (2002) meta-analytic finding that trust in leadership was among the strongest predictors of discretionary citizenship behaviour in organisational research is directly confirmed and extended by the present findings. The present study adds to this established evidence base by demonstrating that trust operates not merely as a predictor of individual advocacy behaviour but as the architectural principle that gives coherence and direction to the entire pathway from humane workplace practices to business performance. Organisations that invest in trust-building practices, including ethical leadership, transparent communication, fair decision-making, and genuine concern for employee well-being, are not merely managing an HR variable; they are constructing the foundational infrastructure upon which sustainable brand ambassadorship and, through it, sustainable competitive advantage are built.

5.6 Comparison with Existing Literature: Convergences and Divergences

5.6.1 Areas of Convergence

The findings of the present study are broadly convergent with the major theoretical and empirical contributions reviewed in Chapter 2, providing replication and validation of key relationships across a new and important organisational context. The confirmation of all three hypotheses at high levels of statistical significance affirms the applicability of the social exchange theory, signalling theory, person-organisation fit, and resource-based view frameworks to the South Indian IT sector context. The strong path from humane workplace practices to employee experience ($\beta = 0.67$) is consistent with the extensive literature on the positive effects of supportive organisational environments on employee attitudes and behaviour (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Saks, 2006; Luthans and Youssef, 2007). The path from employee experience to brand ambassadorship ($\beta = 0.59$) is consistent with the internal branding and employer branding literatures (Burmman and Zeplin, 2005; Piehler et al., 2015; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007). The path from brand ambassadorship to business performance ($\beta = 0.54$) is consistent with the strategic management and employer reputation literatures (Barney, 1991; Cable and Turban, 2003; Moroko and Uncles, 2008).

The qualitative findings are similarly convergent with established theoretical accounts. The prominence of leadership behaviour in Theme 1 confirms the well-documented centrality of managerial quality to employee experience (Purcell and Kinnie, 2007; Brown et al., 2005). The

finding in Theme 2 that informal recognition carries disproportionate weight in shaping employees' sense of belonging confirms the social exchange and perceived organisational support arguments of Eisenberger et al. (1986). The findings in Theme 3 regarding psychological safety extend Edmondson's (1999) foundational research in a new direction by linking psychological safety to external advocacy behaviour. The findings in Theme 4 regarding value alignment are consistent with person-organisation fit theory (Chatman, 1989) and with the internal branding arguments of King and Grace (2008). The findings in Theme 5 regarding the voluntary character of authentic advocacy are consistent with the conceptual framework of Burmann and Zeplin (2005), who distinguished between brand citizenship behaviour and brand compliance.

5.6.2 Areas of Extension

Beyond confirming existing findings, the present study extends the literature in several important ways. First, it provides an integrated empirical model that spans the full pathway from workplace practices to business performance, a pathway that prior studies have examined only in fragments. The sequential mediation finding, in which both employee experience and brand ambassadorship mediate the relationship between humane practices and performance, is a novel empirical contribution that has not been demonstrated in a single study in the prior literature. Second, the study extends the application of psychological safety theory beyond the within-team context to the domain of external brand advocacy, identifying psychological safety as a necessary enabling condition for authentic public-facing ambassadorship. Third, the study extends the employer branding literature by providing the first statistically validated measurement model for the key antecedents of employee brand ambassadorship in the South Indian IT sector, offering future researchers a reliable and contextually grounded measurement structure.

5.6.3 Areas of Divergence

Two notable areas of divergence from the existing Western-context literature deserve attention. The first concerns the relatively weak performance of career development items in the employee experience construct, discussed in Section 5.3.4, which suggests that South Indian IT organisations lag behind their Western counterparts in the delivery of this dimension of the

employee experience. The second concerns the apparent gap between the existence of formal voice mechanisms and the functional experience of voice as reported by participants, which diverges from studies conducted in organisational cultures with stronger traditions of employee participation and industrial democracy, such as Scandinavian and German firms. These divergences highlight the importance of contextual sensitivity in the application of Western-derived organisational behaviour theories to the South Indian IT setting and suggest that the policy framework developed in this study should attend specifically to the cultural and institutional conditions that constrain the effectiveness of voice and career development practices in this context.

Table 5.1: Summary of Convergences, Extensions, and Divergences with the Existing Literature

Finding	Relationship to Existing Literature	Implication
HWP significantly predicts EE (beta = 0.67)	Convergent with Saks (2006), Eisenberger et al. (1986), Luthans and Youssef (2007)	Confirms the generalisability of supportive environment-experience linkages to South Indian IT context
EE significantly predicts EBA (beta = 0.59)	Convergent with Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Piehler et al. (2015)	Validates the experience-advocacy pathway in a new empirical context
EBA significantly predicts BPO (beta = 0.54)	Convergent with Cable and Turban (2003), Moroko and Uncles (2008)	First statistically validated demonstration of advocacy-performance link in South Indian IT sector

Finding	Relationship to Existing Literature	Implication
Psychological safety enables external advocacy	Extends Edmondson (1999) beyond within-team context	Novel theoretical contribution linking psychological safety to brand ambassadorship
Informal recognition more impactful than formal	Extends Eisenberger et al. (1986) on recognition form	Managerial implication: quality of recognition delivery matters as much as its presence
Career development items record lowest mean scores	Diverges from Western benchmarks	Context-specific gap requiring targeted policy attention in South Indian IT organisations
Voice mechanisms functionally underutilised	Diverges from high-participation Western contexts	Cultural and leadership conditions must accompany structural voice mechanisms

Source: Developed by the researcher

5.7 The Strategic Policy Framework

5.7.1 Framework Overview and Rationale

The Strategic Policy Framework is the primary applied contribution of the present study and represents the translation of the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings into actionable guidance for organisations in the IT and ITES sector. The framework is organised around five pillars, each of which corresponds to a theoretically and empirically validated dimension of the pathway from humane workplace practices to employee brand ambassadorship and business performance. The five pillars are: Pillar 1, Humane Leadership; Pillar 2, Employee Experience Design; Pillar 3, Psychological Safety and Voice; Pillar 4, Value Alignment; and Pillar 5, Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement. Each pillar is grounded in specific

quantitative findings from the CFA and structural model, in specific qualitative themes from the interview analysis, and in the relevant theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The framework is designed to be implemented sequentially rather than in isolation, reflecting the causal logic of the conceptual model: organisations that invest in Pillars 1 through 4 create the conditions for genuine employee brand ambassadorship, and Pillar 5 provides the measurement infrastructure to track whether that ambassadorship is actually occurring and to assess its business performance consequences. Organisations that attempt to implement Pillar 5 without first investing in Pillars 1 through 4 are likely to find that their advocacy measurement reveals an absence of genuine advocacy, because the enabling conditions for it have not been established. The framework is therefore not a menu of independent options but an integrated system whose full value is realised only through the coordinated implementation of all five pillars.

5.7.2 Pillar 1: Humane Leadership

The first and foundational pillar of the framework addresses the quality of leadership behaviour as the primary mechanism through which humane workplace practices translate into positive employee experience. The quantitative finding that ethical leadership items achieved the highest factor loadings in the humane workplace practices construct (range 0.74 to 0.81), combined with the qualitative evidence from Theme 1 that leadership behaviour is the primary lens through which employees experience the organisational brand, confirms that no other investment in employee experience will be effective if it is not accompanied by genuine improvement in the quality of managerial conduct.

Practical actions under this pillar include the systematic development of ethical leadership capabilities through structured leadership development programmes that address not only technical management skills but also the interpersonal, ethical, and emotional dimensions of effective leadership. Organisations should implement 360-degree feedback mechanisms that provide leaders with regular, structured input from their direct reports on the quality of their leadership behaviour, including dimensions of fairness, empathy, recognition, and consistency. Ethical conduct codes should be embedded in performance management criteria, ensuring that leaders are held accountable not only for business delivery but for the quality of the human

experience they create for their teams. The qualitative finding that a single act of managerial empathy, such as responding with support rather than impatience during a personal crisis or handling a professional mistake with dignity rather than blame, can generate years of loyal advocacy suggests that organisations should invest specifically in developing managers' capacity for high-quality relational responses in moments of employee vulnerability.

5.7.3 Pillar 2: Employee Experience Design

The second pillar addresses the deliberate, intentional design of the employee journey across all touchpoints, from recruitment and onboarding through daily work, performance management, and career development to exit. The structural model finding that employee experience explained 34.8 percent of the variance in brand ambassadorship ($R^2 = 0.348$) confirms that the quality of the employee journey is a powerful determinant of advocacy orientation and that organisations have significant scope to improve advocacy by investing systematically in the design and delivery of positive employee experiences.

Practical actions under this pillar include the redesign of onboarding programmes to ensure that new employees experience the organisation's values in action from their first day, rather than merely receiving them as communication. Organisations should implement structured career pathing frameworks that provide employees with transparent, personalised, and achievable pathways for professional development, addressing the career growth deficit identified in the descriptive statistics. Recognition systems should be redesigned to emphasise the quality and personal character of appreciation rather than its formality or monetary value, consistent with the qualitative finding that informal, spontaneous recognition generates stronger loyalty and advocacy than formal recognition programmes. Flexible working policies, well-being support initiatives, and regular stay interviews, in which managers proactively explore what would make an employee more likely to remain and to advocate, should be incorporated into the employee experience design.

5.7.4 Pillar 3: Psychological Safety and Voice

The third pillar addresses the creation of the cultural and leadership conditions necessary for genuine psychological safety and effective employee voice. The quantitative finding that psychological safety items loaded significantly on the employee experience construct (range

0.65 to 0.79), combined with the qualitative evidence from Theme 3 that the absence of psychological safety directly inhibits both internal voice and external advocacy, confirms that psychological safety is not a soft or peripheral concern but a fundamental enabler of the advocacy behaviours the framework seeks to cultivate.

Practical actions under this pillar include structured psychological safety training for all people managers, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and behavioural repertoire to create genuinely inclusive and safe team environments. Organisations should implement multiple anonymous feedback channels, including regular pulse surveys, anonymous suggestion systems, and confidential reporting mechanisms, to provide employees with voice options that do not require personal exposure. Leadership should demonstrate a visible, consistent commitment to treating mistakes as learning opportunities rather than as evidence of individual failure, which requires explicit and repeated modelling of vulnerability and learning orientation by senior leaders. Skip-level meetings, in which employees have regular access to leaders above their direct manager, should be institutionalised as a mechanism for ensuring that concerns and insights that are not surfaced through the direct reporting relationship have an alternative channel for reaching organisational decision-makers.

5.7.5 Pillar 4: Value Alignment

The fourth pillar addresses the alignment between the values an organisation claims to hold and the values it demonstrates through its observable decisions and behaviours. The qualitative evidence from Theme 4 was unambiguous in identifying value alignment as tested through adversity as the most powerful determinant of whether employees develop the sustained pride and trust in the organisation that motivates genuine, long-term brand advocacy. Employees do not judge their organisation's values against its mission statement; they judge them against its behaviour when it faces difficult choices.

Practical actions under this pillar include the conduct of regular values-based decision audits, in which the organisation systematically reviews recent major decisions, including redundancies, resource allocations, client conflict resolutions, and policy changes, against its stated values to identify any gaps between values and practice. Transparent communication during difficult organisational decisions is essential: employees who understand the reasoning

behind difficult decisions, even when they disagree with those decisions, are more likely to maintain trust in the organisation than employees who experience unexplained or apparently inconsistent decisions. Organisations should integrate their stated values explicitly into performance management criteria, promotion decisions, and leadership development programmes, ensuring that values are not merely aspirational statements but operational guides that visibly shape how the organisation makes decisions and manages its people.

5.7.6 Pillar 5: Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement

The fifth pillar addresses the measurement of employee brand ambassadorship as a strategic business performance indicator rather than as an HR or branding activity. The structural model finding that brand ambassadorship explains 29.2 percent of the variance in business performance outcomes confirms that advocacy has measurable consequences for organisational performance and that these consequences can and should be tracked, monitored, and managed with the same rigour applied to other strategic performance drivers.

Practical actions under this pillar include the regular measurement of the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), which asks employees to rate on a zero-to-ten scale how likely they are to recommend their organisation as a place of work, and the tracking of eNPS trends over time and across organisational units. Organisations should monitor the quality, not merely the quantity, of employee referral hires, tracking retention rates, performance ratings, and cultural fit assessments of referred employees as indicators of the quality of advocacy-driven talent acquisition. Employer review platforms including Glassdoor and AmbitionBox should be monitored systematically and the qualitative themes in employee reviews should be used as a diagnostic tool for identifying specific dimensions of the employee experience that require attention. Organisations should also explore the relationship between employee advocacy indicators and client satisfaction scores, testing the hypothesis that teams with higher advocacy scores deliver higher client satisfaction, which would provide direct evidence of the business performance consequences of brand ambassadorship at the operational level.

Table 5.2: The Five-Pillar Strategic Policy Framework for Employee Brand Ambassadorship

Pillar	Strategic Intent	Key Organisational Actions	Evidence Base	Measurement Indicators
Pillar 1 Humane Leadership	Leaders model fairness, empathy, ethical conduct, and consistency in all interactions	Structured leadership development; 360-degree feedback; ethical conduct codes; leadership accountability metrics	Ethical Leadership (beta loading 0.77); Theme 1: Leadership as the Lived Brand	Manager quality scores; employee trust index; 360-degree feedback completion rates
Pillar 2 Employee Experience Design	Deliberate design of the employee journey across all touchpoints from onboarding to exit	Onboarding redesign; career pathing frameworks; learning investment; flexibility policies; stay interviews	Employee Experience (R-squared 0.449); Theme 2: Recognition as the Currency of Belonging	Employee experience survey scores; retention rates; internal mobility rates; learning hours per employee
Pillar 3 Psychological Safety and Voice	Active creation of conditions in which employees feel safe to speak, question, and contribute authentically	Psychological safety training for managers; anonymous feedback channels; no-blame incident reviews; skip-level meetings	Psychological Safety (loading 0.72); Theme 3: Psychological Safety and Freedom to Speak	Voice utilisation rates; pulse survey participation; incident reporting rates; speak-up culture index

Pillar	Strategic Intent	Key Organisational Actions	Evidence Base	Measurement Indicators
Pillar 4 Value Alignment	Ensuring that stated organisational values are consistently enacted in decisions, policies, and leadership behaviour	Values-based decision audits; transparent communication during difficult decisions; values integration in performance criteria	Value Alignment items (loading 0.69-0.74); Theme 4: Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity	Values perception scores; alignment gap index; employee confidence in leadership integrity
Pillar 5 Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement	Treating employee brand ambassadorship as a measurable business performance driver rather than an HR activity	Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS); advocacy tracking; referral programme quality metrics; employer review monitoring	EBA to BPO path (beta 0.54); Theme 5: Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate	eNPS scores; referral hire quality; Glassdoor and AmbitionBox ratings; client satisfaction correlation with advocacy

Source: Developed by the researcher from integrated quantitative and qualitative findings

5.8 Theoretical Contributions

The present study makes several contributions to the theoretical literature on employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and organisational performance that extend beyond the replication and confirmation of existing findings.

The first and most significant theoretical contribution is the development and empirical validation of an integrated, cross-disciplinary framework that connects humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in a single coherent model. Prior research has examined these constructs within their respective disciplinary silos, namely HRM, organisational behaviour, brand management, and strategic management, without providing a validated empirical account of the complete pathway from practices to performance. The present study fills this integration gap and provides future researchers with a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework that can serve as the basis for extension and refinement across different sectoral and cultural contexts.

The second theoretical contribution is the extension of psychological safety theory beyond the within-team context to the domain of external brand advocacy. By demonstrating, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that psychological safety is a necessary enabling condition for authentic public-facing ambassadorship, the study expands the theoretical boundaries of the psychological safety construct and opens a new avenue of inquiry at the intersection of organisational safety and brand management research.

The third theoretical contribution is the contextualisation and qualification of person-organisation fit theory in the South Indian IT sector. The qualitative finding that value alignment is experienced and assessed through organisational behaviour under adversity, rather than through formal values statements, refines the theoretical account of how value congruence is formed and maintained in practice. This insight suggests that the value alignment construct, as measured in prior research through static survey items, may not fully capture the dynamic, experience-based character of value alignment as it is actually formed and tested in organisational life.

The fourth theoretical contribution is the methodological demonstration that a mixed-method sequential explanatory design can produce findings that are simultaneously statistically rigorous, experientially grounded, and practically applicable at this level. The integration of CFA and thematic analysis in the present study offers a model for future researchers investigating complex organisational phenomena that require both measurement validation and interpretive depth.

5.9 Practical and Managerial Implications

The findings of the present study have several important implications for human resource managers, senior business leaders, and brand strategists in IT and ITES organisations in South India and in comparable knowledge-intensive sectors globally.

For human resource managers, the most important implication is that employee brand ambassadorship cannot be generated through communication programmes, advocacy training, or social media incentives alone. It requires sustained investment in the foundational conditions of positive employee experience, namely ethical leadership, recognition, psychological safety, fairness, and value alignment. HR managers should reorient their employee engagement strategies away from engagement activities and toward experience design, attending to the qualitative character of recognition, the functional effectiveness of voice mechanisms, and the consistency between stated organisational values and observed organisational decisions. The career development gap identified in the descriptive statistics represents a specific and actionable opportunity for HR managers to strengthen employee experience and advocacy by investing in structured career pathing and learning development frameworks.

For senior business leaders, the most important implication is that the quality of managerial behaviour is the primary lever through which the organisation's brand promise is either fulfilled or undermined in the daily experience of employees. Senior leaders should hold people managers accountable not only for their business delivery performance but for the quality of the employee experience they create for their teams. This requires the integration of leadership quality metrics, including trust scores, recognition frequency, and psychological safety assessments, into the performance management and career advancement criteria applied to managers at all levels.

For brand strategists, the most important implication is that employer brand credibility is determined primarily by the internal employee experience rather than by external communications. Brand strategies that make promises about the organisation as an employer that are not supported by the actual employee experience will generate cynicism and disillusionment rather than advocacy, with potentially serious consequences for employer reputation on publicly visible platforms. Brand strategists should work closely with HR leaders

to ensure that the EVP accurately reflects the lived employee experience and to identify and address the gaps between the two before they become publicly visible on employer review platforms.

5.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4, integrating the quantitative and qualitative evidence into a coherent interpretive account of the conditions under which employees in South Indian IT organisations become genuine brand ambassadors and the business performance consequences that follow. The discussion confirmed the empirical support for all three research hypotheses and situated the findings within the existing literature, identifying areas of convergence, extension, and divergence. The cross-cutting discussion of trust and authenticity revealed these constructs as the foundational principles that give coherence to the entire conceptual framework and that explain why certain organisations succeed in cultivating genuine advocacy while others produce only surface-level brand compliance.

The Strategic Policy Framework presented in Section 5.7 translates the integrated findings into five operationalised pillars: Humane Leadership, Employee Experience Design, Psychological Safety and Voice, Value Alignment, and Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement. Each pillar is grounded in specific quantitative findings, specific qualitative themes, and the theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and each is accompanied by concrete, measurable organisational actions that can be implemented by HR managers, senior leaders, and brand strategists in South Indian IT organisations.

The theoretical contributions of the study include the development of an integrated cross-disciplinary framework, the extension of psychological safety theory to the advocacy domain, the contextual refinement of person-organisation fit theory, and the methodological demonstration of the value of mixed-method designs for this level of research. The practical implications extend across the functions of human resource management, senior leadership, and brand management, offering actionable guidance at each level for strengthening the conditions that produce genuine employee brand ambassadorship and the business performance advantages it enables. Chapter 6 will provide the concluding overview of the

study, explicitly answering the three research questions, articulating the final contributions, acknowledging the limitations, and offering recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The concluding chapter serves a dual purpose. At the academic level, it draws together the theoretical, empirical, and analytical threads of the entire research endeavour into a coherent and summative account, demonstrating that the study has achieved what it set out to achieve and has done so with the rigour and integrity expected at the doctoral level. At the applied level, and particularly for a Doctor of Business Administration study, the concluding chapter must demonstrate that the knowledge generated is not merely academically credible but practically valuable, offering contributions that can meaningfully improve organisational understanding and practice beyond the walls of academic scholarship.

The present study has investigated the relationships between humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in IT and IT-enabled service organisations in South India. Over the preceding five chapters, the study has reviewed the relevant literature, developed a conceptual framework grounded in four complementary theoretical traditions, designed and executed a mixed-method research programme combining Confirmatory Factor Analysis with thematic analysis, collected and analysed data from 347 survey respondents and 24 interview participants, and developed a five-pillar Strategic Policy Framework from the integrated findings. This concluding chapter brings together these contributions into a final, coherent scholarly statement.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 6.2 provides a concise overview of the entire study. Section 6.3 provides direct and explicit answers to the three research questions. Section 6.4 summarises the key findings. Sections 6.5 and 6.6 articulate the academic, managerial, and this level contributions of the study. Section 6.7 acknowledges the study's limitations. Sections 6.8 and 6.9 offer recommendations for future research and for organisational practice. Section 6.10 provides concluding reflections on the broader significance of the study.

6.2 Overview of the Study

The study was motivated by a persistent and consequential gap between the external brand promises organisations make as employers and the internal workplace realities their employees actually experience. In the South Indian IT and ITES sector, where talent competition is intense, employee mobility is high, and the digital visibility of employee experiences is unprecedented, this gap between brand claim and lived reality has significant commercial consequences. Organisations that fail to understand and invest in the workplace conditions that generate genuine employee advocacy risk losing ground in the talent market, undermining their client relationships, and forfeiting the competitive advantages that committed, advocacy-oriented employees provide.

The study was designed to address three interconnected problems identified in the literature: the insufficient understanding among organisations of which workplace factors genuinely drive employee brand ambassadorship; the failure to treat employee advocacy as a strategic business performance issue rather than a communication or HR concern; and the methodological gap created by single-method research approaches that cannot simultaneously validate the statistical structure of advocacy antecedents and explain the lived human experience behind those structures. To address these problems, the study adopted a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, grounded in a pragmatist research philosophy, combining Confirmatory Factor Analysis in the quantitative phase with thematic analysis in the qualitative phase, and culminating in the development of an applied Strategic Policy Framework.

The empirical context was the South Indian IT and ITES sector, with data collected from employees across seven major technology hubs including Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Visakhapatnam. The quantitative sample of 347 usable responses and the qualitative sample of 24 semi-structured interviews together provided a rich and contextually grounded empirical foundation for the study's analytical and applied contributions. The study was guided throughout by a conceptual framework positing a sequential causal pathway from humane workplace practices through employee experience and employee brand ambassadorship to business performance outcomes, a pathway supported by

social exchange theory, signalling theory, person-organisation fit theory, and the resource-based view of the firm.

6.3 Answers to the Research Questions

6.3.1 Research Question One: What are the Key Factors Influencing Employee Brand Ambassadorship?

Research Question 1 asked what the key factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship are. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted in Chapter 4 identified and validated a four-construct measurement model comprising humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes, with all constructs demonstrating excellent reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Within the humane workplace practices construct, five dimensions were validated as statistically significant antecedents of employee brand ambassadorship through their influence on employee experience: ethical leadership, fairness and organisational justice, employee voice and participation, recognition and appreciation, and concern for employee well-being. Ethical leadership emerged as the most strongly loading dimension of the humane workplace practices construct, with standardised factor loadings ranging from 0.74 to 0.81, indicating that the ethical conduct and consistency of direct managers is the most salient dimension of humane practice as perceived by IT sector employees.

Within the employee experience construct, five dimensions were validated as key factors that mediate the relationship between humane workplace practices and brand ambassadorship: leadership quality, role clarity, learning and development, psychological safety, and organisational trust. Of these, organisational trust items achieved the highest factor loadings in the entire measurement model, ranging from 0.72 to 0.83, confirming that trust is the most powerful and proximate antecedent of brand ambassadorship within the employee experience construct. The structural model further confirmed that employee experience explains 34.8 percent of the variance in employee brand ambassadorship and that the indirect effect of humane workplace practices on brand ambassadorship, mediated through employee experience, is statistically significant (standardised indirect beta = 0.40, p less than 0.001).

In direct answer to Research Question 1, the key factors influencing employee brand ambassadorship in the South Indian IT and ITES sector are, in descending order of empirical salience: organisational trust, ethical leadership behaviour, psychological safety, fairness and organisational justice, recognition and appreciation, value alignment, learning and development opportunities, employee voice, and concern for employee well-being. These factors do not operate in isolation; they constitute an integrated system of workplace conditions whose cumulative quality determines the degree to which employees develop the trust, pride, and identification necessary for voluntary brand advocacy.

6.3.2 Research Question Two: How do Employees Perceive and Experience the Validated Factors?

Research Question 2 asked how employees perceive and experience the validated factors that influence employee brand ambassadorship. The thematic analysis of 24 semi-structured interviews, presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5, provided a rich and contextually grounded answer to this question through five major themes.

Theme 1, Leadership as the Lived Brand, revealed that employees experience humane workplace practices not as abstract organisational policies but as the concrete, daily behaviour of their direct managers. Leadership conduct, particularly in moments of professional challenge, personal difficulty, or ethical complexity, is the primary lens through which employees assess whether their organisation's stated values are genuine or performative. A single act of managerial empathy or fairness can generate years of loyal advocacy; a single act of managerial inconsistency or ethical failure can permanently erode the trust that advocacy requires.

Theme 2, Recognition as the Currency of Belonging, revealed that employees experience recognition as the primary signal of whether they are regarded as individually valued members of the organisational community or as interchangeable productive units. Informal, personal, and spontaneous recognition from direct managers generates stronger feelings of belonging and advocacy motivation than formal recognition programmes, however elaborate or monetarily generous. The absence of recognition, experienced as invisibility or as the

systematic appropriation of individual contributions by managers or teams, generates alienation and disengagement that directly inhibits advocacy.

Theme 3, Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak, revealed that employees experience psychological safety as a gateway condition for both internal voice and external advocacy. Employees who do not feel safe to express their authentic assessments of the organisation internally will not feel safe to advocate for it externally. The distinction between organisations with cultures of learning and organisations with cultures of blame emerged as a critical experiential differentiator, with participants in learning-oriented cultures reporting significantly greater confidence in their advocacy orientations.

Theme 4, Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity, revealed that employees assess value alignment not against the organisation's stated values but against its demonstrated behaviour under conditions of pressure and adversity. Decisions made during organisational crises, including redundancies, client conflicts, and ethical dilemmas, reveal the authentic hierarchy of organisational values far more clearly than any mission statement. Employees whose organisations maintained their commitments to fairness and employee welfare under adversity reported high value alignment and strong advocacy; those whose organisations abandoned stated values under pressure reported deep disillusionment and advocacy withdrawal.

Theme 5, Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate, revealed that employees experience authentic brand ambassadorship as a voluntary, personally owned behaviour rooted in pride and genuine belief in the organisation, and that they sharply distinguish it from compliance-based brand participation. Organisations that attempt to generate advocacy through communication mandates, social media templates, or advocacy incentives risk producing surface-level brand performance rather than genuine advocacy, with potentially counterproductive consequences for brand credibility.

6.3.3 Research Question Three: What Strategic Policy Framework Can Organisations Adopt?

Research Question 3 asked what strategic policy framework organisations can adopt to strengthen employee brand ambassadorship and improve business performance outcomes. The five-pillar Strategic Policy Framework presented in Chapter 5 provides a direct and

comprehensive answer to this question. The framework is grounded in the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings of the study and is designed for implementation by IT and ITES sector organisations as an integrated system rather than as a menu of independent options.

Pillar 1, Humane Leadership, addresses the cultivation of ethical, fair, empathetic, and consistent leadership behaviour as the foundational condition for positive employee experience and authentic advocacy. Pillar 2, Employee Experience Design, addresses the deliberate and intentional design of the employee journey across all touchpoints, with particular emphasis on the career development gap and the quality of recognition delivery identified as areas of relative weakness in the present findings. Pillar 3, Psychological Safety and Voice, addresses the creation of cultural and leadership conditions that enable genuine employee voice and the psychological safety necessary for both internal contribution and external advocacy. Pillar 4, Value Alignment, addresses the management of the gap between stated and enacted organisational values, with particular attention to the communication and decision-making practices that reveal authentic values under conditions of organisational adversity. Pillar 5, Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement, addresses the institutionalisation of employee brand ambassadorship as a measurable strategic performance indicator, tracked through the Employee Net Promoter Score, referral hire quality, employer review monitoring, and the correlation of advocacy indicators with client satisfaction outcomes.

6.4 Summary of Key Findings

The key findings of the study can be organised into three categories: quantitative findings from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis and structural model, qualitative findings from the thematic analysis, and integrated findings from the convergence of both phases.

The quantitative findings confirmed the four-factor measurement model with excellent fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 1.13$, CFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.968, RMSEA = 0.048, SRMR = 0.051) and satisfactory to excellent reliability and validity across all constructs (Cronbach's Alpha range 0.81 to 0.91, CR range 0.83 to 0.93, AVE range 0.52 to 0.61, all HTMT values below 0.85). All three research hypotheses were supported at the p less than 0.001 level. The path from humane workplace practices to employee experience ($\beta = 0.67$) was the strongest in the model, explaining 44.9 percent of the variance in employee experience. The path from

employee experience to employee brand ambassadorship ($\beta = 0.59$) explained 34.8 percent of the variance in advocacy. The path from employee brand ambassadorship to business performance outcomes ($\beta = 0.54$) explained 29.2 percent of the variance in perceptual performance. The indirect effects analysis confirmed the sequential mediation of both employee experience and brand ambassadorship in the complete pathway from workplace practices to business performance.

The qualitative findings generated five major themes from 487 initial codes across 24 interviews: Leadership as the Lived Brand, Recognition as the Currency of Belonging, Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak, Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity, and Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate. These themes collectively demonstrate that the pathway from workplace practices to brand ambassadorship is a deeply human process mediated by trust, pride, dignity, and authenticity, and that the most important determinants of genuine advocacy are the quality of managerial behaviour, the functional effectiveness of recognition and voice, and the consistency between stated and enacted organisational values.

The integrated finding is that employee brand ambassadorship is not a communication outcome, a marketing deliverable, or an HR programme. It is the voluntary behavioural expression of a positive, trust-based, and value-aligned relationship between an employee and their organisation, and it produces real and measurable consequences for employer reputation, talent attraction, customer trust, employee retention, and competitive advantage. Organisations that understand this and invest accordingly in the foundational conditions of humane workplace practices and positive employee experience will generate genuine advocacy and the business performance benefits it enables.

Table 6.1: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship	Std Beta	Result
H1	Humane Workplace Practices positively influence Employee Experience	0.67***	Supported
H2	Employee Experience positively influences Employee Brand Ambassadorship	0.59***	Supported
H3	Employee Brand Ambassadorship positively influences Business Performance Outcomes	0.54***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$. Source: AMOS 26 structural model output; $n = 347$.

6.5 Academic Contributions of the Study

The present study makes a number of original contributions to the academic literature that extend beyond the replication of established findings in a new empirical context.

The first and most significant academic contribution is the development and empirical validation of an integrated, cross-disciplinary framework connecting humane workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in a single coherent model. Prior scholarship has examined these constructs within their respective disciplinary traditions, namely human resource management, organisational behaviour, brand management, and strategic management, but has not provided a statistically validated account of the complete pathway from workplace practices to business performance running through employee experience and brand advocacy. The present study bridges these disciplinary boundaries and provides a theoretically grounded, empirically validated framework that future researchers can use as the basis for extension, replication, and refinement across different sectoral and cultural contexts.

The second academic contribution is the extension of psychological safety theory beyond its original within-team formulation to the domain of external brand representation. Edmondson's (1999) foundational research established psychological safety as an enabler of team learning and voice, and subsequent research has extended it to innovation and knowledge sharing. The present study identifies psychological safety as a necessary enabling condition for authentic public-facing brand ambassadorship, connecting two previously unrelated streams of scholarship and opening a novel area of inquiry at the intersection of organisational safety research and employer branding. This theoretical extension is supported by both the quantitative loading of psychological safety items on the employee experience construct and the qualitative evidence from Theme 3 that employees who do not feel psychologically safe internally will not engage in the external interpersonal risk-taking that advocacy involves.

The third academic contribution is the contextual refinement of person-organisation fit theory in the South Indian IT sector. The qualitative finding that value alignment is assessed by employees through organisational behaviour under adversity rather than through formal values statements refines the theoretical account of how value congruence is formed, tested, and maintained in practice. This insight suggests that existing survey-based measures of person-organisation fit, which ask respondents to rate the alignment between their personal values and the organisation's values at a single point in time, may not adequately capture the dynamic, experience-based character of value alignment as it is actually formed and tested through the accumulation of organisational experiences over time.

The fourth academic contribution is the methodological demonstration that a mixed-method sequential explanatory design is a productive and appropriate approach for this level of research investigating complex organisational phenomena. The integration of CFA and thematic analysis in the present study produced findings that are simultaneously statistically rigorous, experientially grounded, and practically applicable, demonstrating the superior explanatory and applied value of mixed-method designs over single-method alternatives for the kind of applied business research that characterises the tradition.

The fifth academic contribution is the provision of a statistically validated measurement model for the key antecedents of employee brand ambassadorship in the South Indian IT and ITES sector. The CFA findings provide future researchers with a reliable, contextually grounded,

and theoretically coherent measurement structure that can serve as the basis for comparative, longitudinal, and cross-cultural studies of employee advocacy and its organisational consequences.

6.6 Contributions to Managerial Practice

The contributions of the present study to managerial practice are substantial and span the functions of human resource management, senior leadership, and employer brand management.

For human resource managers, the study's most important practical contribution is the demonstration that employee brand ambassadorship cannot be generated through communication programmes, social media incentives, or internal advocacy campaigns in isolation from the quality of the workplace experience. HR managers who wish to strengthen employer reputation, reduce attrition, and improve talent attraction must focus first on the foundational conditions of ethical leadership, recognition quality, psychological safety, and value alignment, and must measure their success not through activity metrics but through the advocacy and performance outcomes the framework prescribes. The career development deficit identified in the descriptive statistics represents a specific and immediately actionable opportunity for HR managers in South Indian IT organisations to strengthen employee experience and advocacy through structured career pathing and learning investment programmes.

For senior business leaders, the study's most important practical contribution is the evidence that manager quality is the single most powerful lever available to the organisation for improving employee experience and advocacy. Senior leaders who wish to strengthen their employer brand and the business performance benefits it delivers must hold people managers accountable for the quality of the human experiences they create for their teams, and must embed leadership quality indicators into the performance management, promotion, and development criteria applied to managers at all levels. The evidence from Theme 1 that a single act of managerial empathy or fairness can generate years of loyal advocacy, and that a single act of inconsistency or ethical failure can permanently erode trust, underscores the

disproportionate return on investment available through the development of high-quality, ethical, and empathetic management practices.

For employer brand managers and talent acquisition professionals, the study's most important practical contribution is the confirmation that employer brand credibility is determined primarily by the internal employee experience rather than by external communications. Brand strategies that make promises about the organisation as an employer that are not supported by the actual employee experience will generate cynicism and platform-visible disillusionment rather than advocacy. Employer brand managers should work in close partnership with HR leaders to ensure that the employee value proposition accurately reflects the lived employee experience, to monitor employer review platforms as a real-time diagnostic of the gap between brand claim and employee reality, and to prioritise the resolution of experiential gaps before investing further in external brand communication.

For industry bodies and sector associations, including NASSCOM, the study's findings provide evidence-based guidance for the development of sector-wide standards and benchmarks for employee experience and advocacy in the South Indian IT and ITES sector. The voice deficit and career development gap identified in the present study suggest specific areas where industry-level initiatives could support individual organisations in strengthening the workplace conditions necessary for genuine employee advocacy and the talent attraction and retention advantages it enables.

6.7 Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged explicitly and considered carefully by readers seeking to apply or extend its findings.

The first and most significant limitation is the cross-sectional research design. Both phases of the study collected data at a single point in time, which means that the directional relationships proposed in the conceptual framework and confirmed in the structural model cannot be interpreted as definitively causal. While the theoretical logic of the model, grounded in social exchange theory and the established literature on employee experience and advocacy, provides strong a priori support for the proposed causal directions, the possibility of reverse causality or of reciprocal relationships between the constructs cannot be ruled out on the basis of cross-

sectional data alone. A longitudinal design, in which the same respondents are surveyed at multiple points in time, would provide stronger evidence for the causal ordering of the constructs but was not feasible within the time and resource constraints of the present study.

The second limitation concerns the reliance on employee self-report data for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Self-report data are subject to social desirability bias, retrospective rationalisation, and common method variance, all of which may inflate or distort the relationships between constructs measured at the same time using the same method. The quality control procedures applied in the study, including attention checks, anonymity assurances, and the Harman's single factor test, were designed to mitigate these risks but cannot eliminate them entirely. Future research should supplement self-report data with independent assessments of leadership quality, organisational climate, and employee behaviour from multiple sources, including manager reports, peer assessments, and organisational records.

The third limitation is the sectoral and geographic specificity of the sample. The study was conducted exclusively within the IT and ITES sector in South India, and the findings may not generalise to other industry sectors with different organisational cultures, employment relations systems, talent market dynamics, or competitive environments. The specific cultural characteristics of the South Indian professional workforce, including educational background, career expectations, generational composition, and cultural norms around hierarchy and voice, may also qualify the applicability of the findings to other cultural or national contexts. Researchers wishing to apply the framework in other settings should consider replicating the CFA validation in their specific context before applying the measurement model.

The fourth limitation is the measurement of business performance through perceptual indicators provided by employees rather than through objective financial or operational data. While this approach is justified by the practical limitations of accessing financial records from multiple private-sector organisations and is consistent with established practice in perceptual performance research, it means that the performance findings reflect employees' subjective assessments of performance dimensions rather than independently verifiable organisational outcomes. Future research should seek to triangulate perceptual performance measures with

objective indicators such as attrition rates, recruitment cost per hire, client satisfaction scores, and revenue per employee.

The fifth limitation concerns the sampling strategy. The use of purposive and snowball sampling for the quantitative phase, while necessary and appropriate given the research context, introduces the risk of selection bias, as individuals who are actively engaged in professional networks and willing to participate in research may be systematically more advocacy-oriented or more reflective about their workplace experiences than those who are not. This limitation is acknowledged and is addressed partially through the use of multiple recruitment channels and the application of strict eligibility criteria, but it cannot be fully eliminated in the absence of a probability-based sampling frame.

6.8 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and limitations of the present study suggest several productive directions for future research that could extend, deepen, and strengthen the contribution of this work to the academic and practitioner literatures.

The most important recommendation for future research is the conduct of a longitudinal replication of the present study, tracking changes in humane workplace practices, employee experience, brand ambassadorship, and business performance across multiple time points in the same organisational settings. A longitudinal design would provide the evidence for causal ordering that cross-sectional designs cannot supply and would allow researchers to examine the dynamics of advocacy formation and dissolution over time, including the conditions under which trust and advocacy can be rebuilt following a significant negative event. The qualitative evidence from Theme 5 regarding the withdrawal of advocacy following a deterioration in workplace experience suggests that the dynamics of advocacy erosion may be as important and practically significant as the dynamics of advocacy formation, and a longitudinal design would allow these dynamics to be studied directly.

A second recommendation is the replication of the study across different industry sectors, including healthcare, financial services, retail, manufacturing, and education, to assess the generalisability of the conceptual framework and measurement model beyond the IT and ITES context. The relatively unique characteristics of the IT sector, including the high level of

employee professional identity, the predominance of project-based work, the intensity of talent competition, and the strong digital connectivity of the workforce, may mean that the specific weights and mechanisms identified in the present study differ meaningfully from those in other sectors. Cross-industry comparative studies would allow researchers to identify the dimensions of the framework that are universal and those that are sector-specific.

A third recommendation is the replication of the study in other cultural and national contexts, including other South Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, as well as Southeast Asian technology sectors and African technology hubs, where IT and ITES industries are growing rapidly. Given the known effects of national culture on leadership norms, power distance, collectivism, and voice behaviour, cross-cultural replications would provide valuable evidence for the cultural generalisability of the framework and would identify cultural moderators that may strengthen or weaken specific relationships within the model.

A fourth recommendation is the investigation of the role of generational differences in advocacy behaviour and in the relative salience of different antecedents of advocacy. The present study's sample was predominantly drawn from the 26 to 35 age group, which reflects the demographic profile of the South Indian IT workforce but means that the findings may not fully represent the experiences and advocacy orientations of older, more senior employees or of younger employees entering the workforce with different expectations regarding transparency, purpose, and digital advocacy. Future research should examine whether and how generational cohort membership moderates the relationships between workplace practices, employee experience, and advocacy behaviour.

A fifth recommendation is the development and validation of an objective, behavioural measure of employee brand ambassadorship to complement the perceptual self-report measures used in the present study. Such a measure might track actual referral behaviour, the frequency and sentiment of employer-related social media posts, the Net Promoter Score methodology applied to employee advocacy, or the testimonial behaviour of employees in recruitment contexts. The development of a behavioural measure would allow future researchers to assess the degree to which perceptual advocacy intentions translate into observable advocacy behaviours and to examine the conditions under which the intention-behaviour gap in advocacy is largest.

A sixth recommendation is the examination of the role of digital and social media in moderating the relationship between advocacy intentions and advocacy behaviours. The present study treated digital advocacy as one component of the employee brand ambassadorship construct, but did not examine the specific mechanisms through which digital platform affordances, including LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and employer review platforms, shape the expression, visibility, and credibility of employee advocacy. Future research should examine how digital platform characteristics interact with individual advocacy orientations to determine the ultimate reputational impact of employee brand ambassadorship in the digital age.

6.9 Recommendations for Practice

The findings of the present study support a set of specific, prioritised, and sequenced recommendations for organisations in the South Indian IT and ITES sector, for HR leaders and senior managers, and for industry bodies seeking to improve sector-wide standards of employee experience and advocacy.

For organisations, the most important immediate action is the assessment of the current state of humane workplace practices and employee experience through a validated measurement instrument aligned with the constructs of the present study. Organisations that have not systematically measured the quality of their ethical leadership, recognition practices, psychological safety culture, value alignment, and employee voice mechanisms cannot effectively manage or improve them. The measurement model validated in the present study provides an appropriate and contextually grounded instrument for this diagnostic assessment. The results of such an assessment should be used to identify the specific dimensions of the employee experience that most require attention in each organisational context, recognising that the relative salience of different factors may vary across company size, functional area, seniority level, and city.

Based on the findings of the present study, the implementation of the five-pillar Strategic Policy Framework should proceed in the following sequence. Pillar 1, Humane Leadership, should be addressed first and continuously, because leadership quality is the foundational condition that determines the effectiveness of all other investments in the employee experience.

Organisations should prioritise leadership development programmes that address the ethical, empathetic, and relational dimensions of management, and should embed leadership quality metrics into performance management criteria before implementing other pillars. Pillar 3, Psychological Safety and Voice, should be addressed in parallel with Pillar 1, because voice mechanisms are only effective when the leadership quality necessary to receive and act on voice is in place. Pillars 2 and 4, Employee Experience Design and Value Alignment, can be addressed in the next phase, building on the trust and safety infrastructure established through Pillars 1 and 3. Pillar 5, Business-Linked Advocacy Measurement, should be implemented once the foundational conditions have been established, providing the measurement infrastructure to track progress and demonstrate the business return on investment in the preceding four pillars.

For HR leaders specifically, the study's findings support three priority actions. First, the redesign of recognition practices to emphasise personal, timely, and manager-delivered appreciation alongside formal recognition programmes, consistent with the qualitative evidence that informal recognition generates stronger advocacy motivation than formal reward mechanisms. Second, the development of structured career pathing frameworks that provide employees with transparent and achievable professional development pathways, addressing the career development deficit identified as a specific weakness in the descriptive statistics of the present study. Third, the regular monitoring of employer review platforms including Glassdoor and AmbitionBox, treated as a real-time diagnostic of employee experience quality and as an early warning system for the emergence of experience gaps that may undermine employer reputation if unaddressed.

For industry bodies including NASSCOM, the study's findings support the development of sector-wide benchmarks and standards for employee experience and advocacy in the South Indian IT and ITES sector. The voice deficit and career development gap identified in the present study suggest specific areas where industry-level initiatives, including shared learning forums, best practice exchanges, and sector-wide employee experience benchmarking surveys, could support individual organisations in strengthening the workplace conditions that underpin genuine advocacy and sustainable competitive advantage.

6.10 Concluding Reflections

This study began with a deceptively simple observation: that the strength of an organisation's brand is shaped not only by what it communicates externally but by what its employees experience internally, and that the gap between these two realities, when it becomes visible, is among the most damaging threats to organisational credibility and competitive positioning available. Over the course of six chapters, the study has demonstrated, through both statistical precision and human testimony, that this observation is not merely intuitive but empirically grounded, theoretically coherent, and practically consequential.

The testimony of participants in the qualitative phase of the study deserves a final reflection in this concluding section. The accounts of employees who described the moment a manager responded to a professional mistake with support rather than blame, or who chose to defend an employee's interests rather than a client's impatience, or who responded to a family emergency with human compassion rather than project urgency, remind the researcher that the constructs validated in the CFA, namely humane workplace practices, employee experience, and brand ambassadorship, are not abstract academic variables but lived human realities with profound consequences for the working lives of millions of people. Behind every path coefficient is a person, and behind every theme is a story. The present study has sought to honour both the rigour of measurement and the humanity of experience.

The central argument of the study can be stated simply. Employees do not become brand ambassadors because they are asked to, trained to, or incentivised to. They become brand ambassadors because they are proud of where they work, because they trust the people who lead them, because they feel safe to speak honestly, and because they experience their organisation as a place that treats them as human beings worthy of dignity, fairness, and genuine care. When organisations create those conditions, advocacy follows naturally and sustainably. When they do not, no amount of communication investment, branding effort, or advocacy mandate will produce the authentic employee voice that constitutes the most credible and commercially valuable endorsement available to any employer.

The resource-based view perspective adopted in this study positions the organisational culture, leadership quality, and psychological safety that enable genuine advocacy as sources of

sustainable competitive advantage precisely because they cannot be observed from outside, cannot be replicated through imitation, and cannot be purchased from a consultant or installed through a programme. They must be grown, consistently and patiently, through the accumulation of thousands of small acts of fairness, recognition, transparency, and empathy that together constitute what it means to work in a genuinely humane organisation. The present study has demonstrated that this investment is not merely ethically desirable but commercially rational, strategically significant, and empirically demonstrable. It is hoped that its findings will encourage organisations in the South Indian IT sector and beyond to treat their employees not as instruments of brand promotion but as the living, experiencing human beings through whom organisational purpose is either fulfilled or forfeited, and who, when treated with the dignity they deserve, become the most powerful and authentic advocates any organisation could hope to have.

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APPENDICES

Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance: A Confirmatory and Thematic Study of Employee Experience

Appendix A: Research Questionnaire (Tabular Likert Format)

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Appendix C: CFA Item-Level Factor Loadings, AMOS Path Diagram, and Statistics

Appendix D: Thematic Analysis Coding Documentation

Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance Study

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT

Dear Participant, you are invited to take part in a research study conducted as part of a Doctor of Business Administration programme. The study investigates the relationship between workplace practices, employee experience, employee brand ambassadorship, and business performance outcomes in IT and IT-enabled service organisations in South India. Participation is entirely voluntary. All responses are treated with strict confidentiality and reported only in aggregate form. The survey takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. By proceeding, you confirm that you have read this information and consent to participate.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select the most appropriate response for each item.

Table A.1: Demographic Information

Item	Please tick one option
1. Gender	☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say
2. Age Group	☐ 18-25 years ☐ 26-35 years ☐ 36-45 years ☐ 46 years and above
3. Highest Educational Qualification	☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's degree (BA/BSc/BCom/BCA) ☐ BE/BTech ☐ Postgraduate (MTech/MBA/MCA) ☐ Doctoral degree
4. Total Years of Experience in IT / ITES	☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-7 years ☐ 8-15 years ☐ More than 15 years
5. Current Functional Role	☐ Software Dev/Engg ☐ Project Mgmt ☐ QA/Testing ☐ Data Analytics ☐ Cloud/DevOps ☐ Cybersecurity ☐ Business Analysis ☐ Customer Support ☐ HR ☐ Product Mgmt ☐ Other
6. City of Current Employment	☐ Bengaluru ☐ Hyderabad ☐ Chennai ☐ Coimbatore ☐ Kochi ☐ Thiruvananthapuram ☐ Visakhapatnam ☐ Other
7. Organisation Size (number of employees)	☐ Fewer than 100 ☐ 100-999 ☐ 1,000-9,999 ☐ 10,000 and above
8. Employment Type	☐ Permanent / Full-time ☐ Contract / Fixed-term

Please select one option per item.

SECTIONS 2 TO 5: SCALE ITEMS

For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement by ticking one box per row. The response scale is: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

SECTION 2: HUMANE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

HWP_EL: Ethical Leadership

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_EL1	My manager consistently demonstrates honest and ethical behaviour in their dealings with employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_EL2	My manager treats all team members with fairness and impartiality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_EL3	My manager's actions are consistent with the values this organisation claims to uphold.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_EL4	My manager holds themselves accountable for their decisions and their impact on the team.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HWP_FJ: Fairness and Organisational Justice

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_FJ1	Performance evaluations and promotion decisions in my organisation are based on fair and transparent criteria.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_FJ2	The processes used to make important decisions in my organisation are fair and consistent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_FJ3	I am treated with dignity and respect by my manager and senior leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_FJ4	When decisions are made that affect me, I am given adequate and honest explanations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HWP_VP: Employee Voice and Participation

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_VP1	My organisation provides meaningful opportunities for me to share my views and suggestions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_VP2	My ideas and feedback are genuinely considered by my manager and the organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HWP_RA: Recognition and Appreciation

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_RA1	My contributions and achievements are regularly recognised by my manager.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_RA2	I feel that my individual effort is valued and appreciated in this organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_RA3	Recognition in my organisation is distributed fairly and is not limited to a favoured few.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HWP_WB: Concern for Employee Well-being

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
HWP_WB1	My organisation takes active steps to support the physical and mental well-being of its employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HWP_WB2	My manager shows genuine concern for my well-being beyond my task performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 3: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

EE_LQ: Leadership Quality

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EE_LQ1	The quality of leadership I experience in my current organisation positively shapes my day-to-day work experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_LQ2	My manager provides the support and guidance I need to perform effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_LQ3	Senior leaders in my organisation demonstrate the qualities I associate with good leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EE_RC: Role Clarity

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EE_RC1	I have a clear understanding of my responsibilities and performance expectations in my current role.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_RC2	The boundaries of my authority and decision-making are clearly defined in my current role.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EE_LD: Learning and Development

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EE_LD1	My organisation actively invests in my professional learning and development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_LD2	I have access to the learning resources and training opportunities I need to grow professionally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_LD3	My organisation provides clear and achievable pathways for career advancement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EE_PS: Psychological Safety

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EE_PS1	I feel safe to speak up, share ideas, and raise concerns in my team without fear of ridicule or professional consequences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_PS2	In my organisation, mistakes are treated as learning opportunities rather than occasions for blame.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_PS3	I feel comfortable expressing my authentic views and opinions in team and organisational settings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EE_OT: Organisational Trust

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EE_OT1	I trust that my organisation's leadership acts in the genuine interests of its employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_OT2	I believe that my organisation delivers on the commitments it makes to its employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EE_OT3	I trust that the information communicated to me by my organisation is honest and accurate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 4: EMPLOYEE BRAND AMBASSADORSHIP

EBA_WOM: Word-of-Mouth Intention

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_WOM1	I speak positively about my organisation when the topic comes up in personal or professional conversations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EBA_WOM2	I would encourage someone considering a career change to explore opportunities at my organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EBA_ER: Employer Recommendation

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_ER1	I would recommend my organisation as a good employer to talented professionals in my network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_ER2	I am proud to tell others where I work and would actively recommend it as a place of employment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EBA_RD: Reputation Defence

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_RD1	If someone made an unfair or inaccurate criticism of my organisation, I would defend it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EBA_RD2	I feel a sense of personal responsibility for protecting the reputation of my organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EBA_CR: Client-Facing Brand Representation

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_CR1	I consistently represent my organisation's values and standards in my interactions with clients and external stakeholders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EBA_CR2	I take personal pride in the quality and professionalism of my work as a reflection of my organisation's brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EBA_CR3	I believe that the way I interact with clients directly contributes to the reputation of my organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EBA_SM: Social Media and Referral Behaviour

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
EBA_SM1	I would refer a talented friend or colleague to apply for a position at my organisation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EBA_SM2	I share positive content about my organisation on professional platforms such as LinkedIn when I feel it is genuinely warranted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 5: BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES**BPO_BC: Brand Credibility**

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
BPO_BC1	My organisation has a credible and trustworthy reputation in the market and among its clients.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BPO_BC2	The external reputation of my organisation accurately reflects the quality and values I experience internally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

BPO_ER: Employer Reputation

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
BPO_ER1	My organisation is widely regarded as a desirable and respected employer in the IT sector.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BPO_ER2	The organisation's employer reputation makes it easier to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
	attract talented professionals to join the team.					

BPO_CT: Customer Trust

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
BPO_CT1	Clients and customers trust my organisation to deliver on its commitments reliably and with integrity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BPO_CT2	The quality of my organisation's client relationships is a genuine strength that differentiates it from competitors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

BPO_RR: Employee Retention and Referral Strength

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
BPO_RR1	I intend to remain with my current organisation for the foreseeable future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BPO_RR2	Employees in my organisation are generally motivated to refer talented people from their networks to join us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

BPO_CA: Perceived Competitive Advantage

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
BPO_CA1	The quality and commitment of its people give my organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Code	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
	a meaningful advantage over its competitors.					

SECTION 6: OPEN-ENDED ITEM AND FOLLOW-UP CONSENT

9. In your own words, how would you describe your overall experience as an employee in your current organisation? (Optional)

10. Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview (45 to 60 minutes, video call)?

- Yes
- No

Thank you sincerely for your participation. Your contribution is greatly valued.

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance Study

B.1 Interview Information

Item	Detail
Study Title	Employee Brand Ambassadorship and Business Performance: A Confirmatory and Thematic Study of Employee Experience
Mode	Semi-structured; video conferencing platform
Duration	45 to 75 minutes
Recording	Audio-recorded with informed consent
Anonymity	Pseudonyms used; no identifying information reported
Data Use	Academic research only; stored securely; destroyed after five years

Source: Developed by the researcher

B.2 Pre-Interview Checklist

- Confirm participant has received and read the participant information sheet
- Obtain signed or verbally confirmed informed consent
- Confirm permission to audio-record the interview
- Explain the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time
- Clarify that there are no right or wrong answers; the study values genuine personal experience
- Invite the participant to ask any questions before beginning

B.3 Opening Statement

Thank you for taking the time to participate. This study is looking at how employees in IT organisations experience their workplace and how that experience relates to whether they represent their organisation externally. I am interested in your genuine personal experience. Everything you share will be kept completely confidential and will be reported only in anonymised form. Please feel free to speak openly. There are no right or wrong answers.

B.4 Warm-Up

Q1. Could you start by telling me a little about your current role and how long you have been with your organisation?

- ▶ What does your typical working day involve?
- ▶ How would you describe your organisation to someone who had never heard of it?

B.5 Humane Workplace Practices and Employee Experience

Leadership and Fairness

Q2. How would you describe the quality of leadership in your organisation, from both your direct manager and senior leadership?

- ▶ Can you share a specific incident that illustrates what leadership is like in your organisation?
- ▶ How consistent is your manager's behaviour with the values the organisation claims to uphold?
- ▶ How does your manager handle mistakes or challenges within the team?

Q3. How fair do you feel the processes and decisions in your organisation are, for example in performance evaluation, promotion, and communication?

- ▶ Can you describe a decision that felt particularly fair or unfair?
- ▶ How does the organisation explain important decisions that affect you?

Recognition and Voice

Q4. How does your organisation and your manager recognise and appreciate employee contributions?

- ▶ Describe a time when you felt genuinely recognised. What made it meaningful?
- ▶ Have there been times when your contributions went unrecognised? How did that affect you?
- ▶ What type of recognition do you find most motivating?

Q5. To what degree do you feel you have a genuine voice - the ability to share views, raise concerns, and influence decisions?

- ▶ What mechanisms does your organisation use to collect employee input?
- ▶ Do you feel your input is genuinely considered and acted upon?
- ▶ Have you wanted to raise a concern but felt unable to? What held you back?

Psychological Safety and Well-being

Q6. How safe do you feel to speak openly, share ideas, and raise concerns without fear of professional consequences?

- ▶ Describe the culture around mistakes and failure in your team or organisation.
- ▶ Has there been a time you felt psychologically unsafe to speak your mind?
- ▶ How does your organisation support employee well-being, workload, mental health, work-life balance?

B.6 Value Alignment and Organisational Trust

Q7. How closely do the values your organisation expresses publicly match what you actually experience as an employee?

- ▶ Can you give an example of the organisation's actions being consistent with its stated values?
- ▶ Has there been a situation where the organisation's behaviour contradicted its stated values?
- ▶ How does the organisation's behaviour during difficult periods affect your sense of value alignment?

Q8. How much do you trust the leadership of your organisation?

- ▶ What has the organisation done to build or maintain your trust?
- ▶ Has your trust ever been damaged? What happened and how did it affect you?

B.7 Employee Brand Ambassadorship

Q9. To what extent do you currently represent or advocate for your organisation in your networks?

- ▶ What motivates you to advocate, or what prevents you?

- ▶ How do you distinguish between genuine advocacy and advocacy driven by obligation?
- ▶ Have you ever referred someone to your organisation? What motivated that?

Q10. Has your willingness to advocate changed over time? What drove that change?

- ▶ Describe a period when you were particularly proud to represent your organisation.
- ▶ Has there been a time you became less willing to advocate? What happened?

Q11. How do you think the way organisations treat their employees connects to how those employees represent the organisation externally?

- ▶ Can an employee authentically advocate for an organisation that does not treat them well?
- ▶ What would need to change for you to become a stronger advocate?

B.8 Business Performance Perceptions

Q12. How would you describe your organisation's reputation as an employer and as a service provider?

- ▶ Does the reputation accurately reflect what it is like to work there?
- ▶ How does employee advocacy, or its absence, affect the organisation's ability to attract talent and retain clients?

Q13. Do you intend to remain with your organisation for the foreseeable future? What factors influence that?

- ▶ What would make you more likely to stay? What might make you consider leaving?

B.9 Closing

Q14. Is there anything important about your experience that we have not yet discussed?

Q15. If you could give one piece of advice to your organisation's leadership about how to create better advocates among employees, what would it be?

Thank you very much for your time and your candid responses. Everything you have shared will remain entirely confidential and will be reported only in anonymised form. I will share a summary of the findings with you once the study is complete, if you would like to receive it.

Appendix C: CFA Item-Level Factor Loadings, AMOS Path Diagram, and Statistics

This appendix presents the complete item-level Confirmatory Factor Analysis output, the AMOS structural path diagram with standardised coefficients, and supporting statistics. All analyses were conducted in AMOS 26 using maximum likelihood estimation with $n = 347$. Two items were removed prior to final model estimation: HWP_VP3 (standardised loading = 0.44) and BPO_CA2 (standardised loading = 0.47), both on joint statistical and theoretical grounds as described in Chapter 4.

Table C.1: Item-Level Factor Loadings - Humane Workplace Practices (HWP)

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
HWP_EL1	Manager demonstrates honest and ethical behaviour	0.81	0.656	14.22	< .001
HWP_EL2	Manager treats all team members with fairness	0.78	0.608	13.44	< .001
HWP_EL3	Manager's actions consistent with organisational values	0.76	0.578	13.01	< .001
HWP_EL4	Manager holds themselves accountable for decisions	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
HWP_FJ1	Performance evaluations are fair and transparent	0.78	0.608	13.44	< .001
HWP_FJ2	Decision-making processes are fair and consistent	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
HWP_FJ3	Treated with dignity and respect by management	0.72	0.518	12.09	< .001
HWP_FJ4	Given honest explanations for decisions affecting me	0.67	0.449	11.06	< .001
HWP_VP1	Organisation provides meaningful opportunities for voice	0.71	0.504	11.88	< .001
HWP_VP2	Ideas and feedback genuinely considered by manager	0.65	0.423	10.62	< .001
HWP_VP3*	ITEM REMOVED — loading below threshold (0.44)	-	-	-	-

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
HWP_RA1	Contributions regularly recognised by manager	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
HWP_RA2	Individual effort valued and appreciated	0.68	0.462	11.24	< .001
HWP_RA3	Recognition distributed fairly across the organisation	0.61	0.372	9.84	< .001
HWP_WB1	Organisation takes steps to support employee well-being	0.69	0.476	11.42	< .001
HWP_WB2	Manager shows genuine concern for well-being	0.63	0.397	10.22	< .001

Note: * Item removed. SMC = Squared Multiple Correlation; CR = Critical Ratio. Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Table C.2: Item-Level Factor Loadings - Employee Experience (EE)

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
EE_LQ1	Leadership quality positively shapes work experience	0.77	0.593	13.23	< .001
EE_LQ2	Manager provides support and guidance	0.73	0.533	12.32	< .001
EE_LQ3	Senior leaders demonstrate qualities of good leadership	0.69	0.476	11.42	< .001
EE_RC1	Clear understanding of responsibilities and expectations	0.71	0.504	11.88	< .001
EE_RC2	Boundaries of authority clearly defined	0.62	0.384	10.03	< .001
EE_LD1	Organisation actively invests in professional development	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
EE_LD2	Access to learning resources and training	0.68	0.462	11.24	< .001
EE_LD3	Clear and achievable pathways for career advancement	0.64	0.410	10.42	< .001
EE_PS1	Feel safe to speak up without fear of consequences	0.79	0.624	13.83	< .001

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
EE_PS2	Mistakes treated as learning opportunities, not blame	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
EE_PS3	Comfortable expressing authentic views in team settings	0.65	0.423	10.62	< .001
EE_OT1	Trust that leadership acts in interests of employees	0.83	0.689	14.82	< .001
EE_OT2	Organisation delivers on commitments to employees	0.79	0.624	13.83	< .001
EE_OT3	Trust that information communicated is honest	0.72	0.518	12.09	< .001

Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Table C.3: Item-Level Factor Loadings - Employee Brand Ambassadorship (EBA)

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
EBA_WOM1	Speak positively about organisation in conversations	0.76	0.578	13.01	< .001
EBA_WOM2	Encourage others to explore opportunities at the organisation	0.68	0.462	11.24	< .001
EBA_ER1	Would recommend organisation as employer to network	0.79	0.624	13.83	< .001
EBA_ER2	Proud to tell others where I work; would recommend	0.71	0.504	11.88	< .001
EBA_RD1	Would defend organisation against unfair criticism	0.73	0.533	12.32	< .001
EBA_RD2	Feel personal responsibility for protecting reputation	0.66	0.436	10.83	< .001
EBA_CR1	Consistently represent values with clients	0.81	0.656	14.22	< .001
EBA_CR2	Take personal pride in work as brand reflection	0.77	0.593	13.23	< .001
EBA_CR3	Client interactions contribute to organisational reputation	0.69	0.476	11.42	< .001

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
EBA_SM1	Would refer a friend or colleague for a position	0.68	0.462	11.24	< .001
EBA_SM2	Share positive content on LinkedIn when warranted	0.54	0.292	8.41	< .001

Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Table C.4: Item-Level Factor Loadings - Business Performance Outcomes (BPO)

Item	Statement (Abbreviated)	Std Loading	SMC	CR	p
BPO_BC1	Organisation has credible and trustworthy market reputation	0.74	0.548	12.54	< .001
BPO_BC2	External reputation accurately reflects internal experience	0.67	0.449	11.06	< .001
BPO_ER1	Organisation widely regarded as desirable IT employer	0.72	0.518	12.09	< .001
BPO_ER2	Employer reputation facilitates talent attraction	0.64	0.410	10.42	< .001
BPO_CT1	Clients trust organisation to deliver reliably	0.77	0.593	13.23	< .001
BPO_CT2	Quality of client relationships differentiates from competitors	0.69	0.476	11.42	< .001
BPO_RR1	I intend to remain with the organisation	0.71	0.504	11.88	< .001
BPO_RR2	Employees motivated to refer talented people	0.61	0.372	9.84	< .001
BPO_CA1	People quality gives competitive advantage	0.52	0.270	7.88	< .001
BPO_CA2*	ITEM REMOVED — loading below threshold (0.47)	-	-	-	-

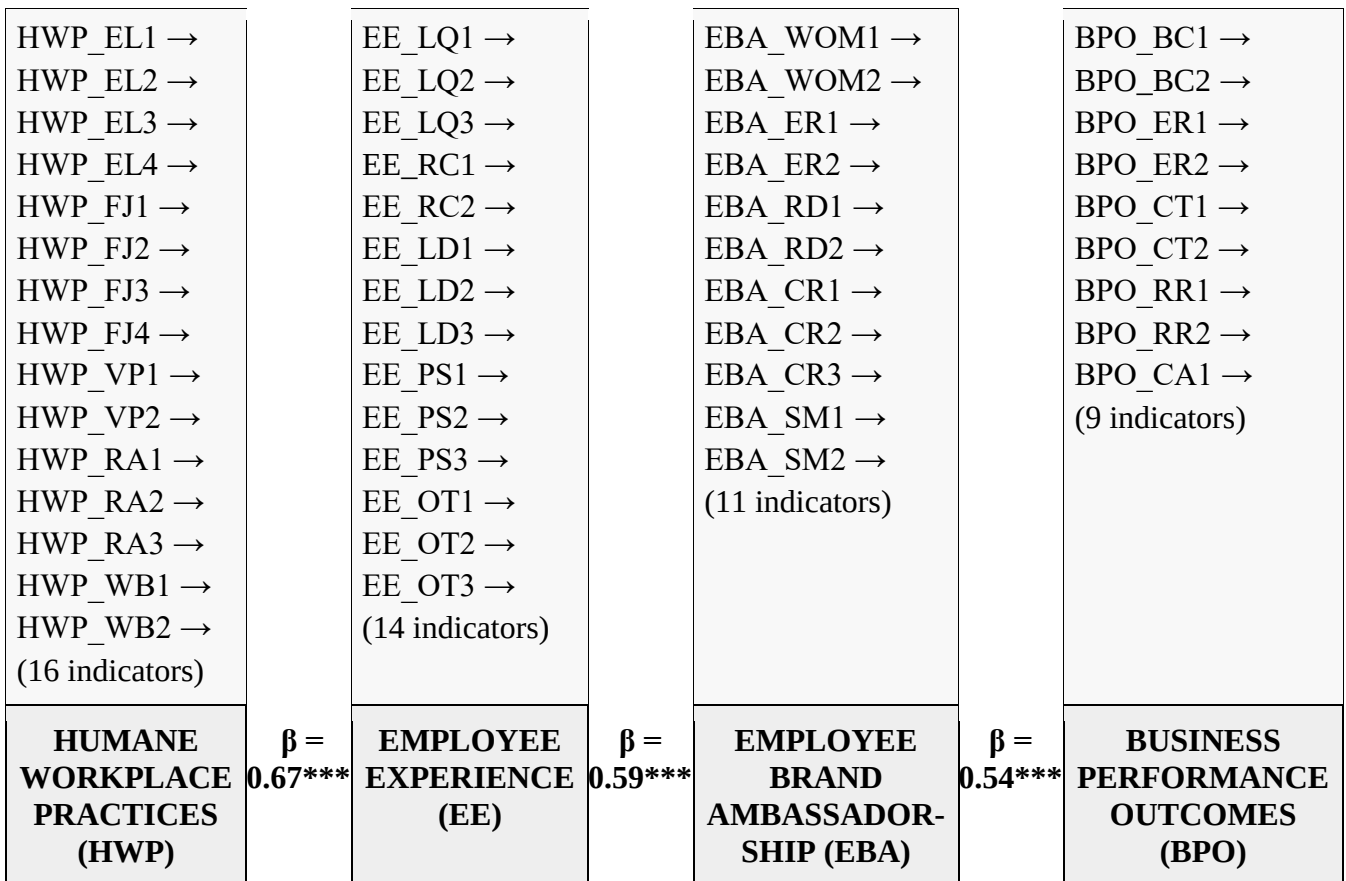
Note: * Item removed. Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Table C.5: Construct-Level Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE	MSV
Humane Workplace Practices (HWP)	16	0.88	0.90	0.57	0.44
Employee Experience (EE)	14	0.91	0.93	0.61	0.49
Employee Brand Ambassadorship (EBA)	11	0.86	0.88	0.55	0.42
Business Performance Outcomes (BPO)	9	0.81	0.83	0.52	0.38

Note: All AVE values exceed MSV, confirming discriminant validity. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared Variance.

Figure C.1: AMOS Structural Path Diagram with Standardised Coefficients



Exogenous Construct	R ² = 0.449 (44.9% variance explained)	R ² = 0.348 (34.8% variance explained)	R ² = 0.292 (29.2% variance explained)
Model Fit Indices			
$\chi^2/df = 1.13$ CFI = 0.971 TLI = 0.968 RMSEA = 0.048 [0.039, 0.057] SRMR = 0.051			
Note: *** p < .001. β = Standardised path coefficient. Shaded boxes = latent constructs (ovals in standard AMOS notation). Indicator rectangles shown in Row 1. Double-headed curved arrows between constructs (not shown) indicate estimated factor correlations.			

Source: AMOS 26 structural equation model output; n = 347. Standardised solution reported.

Table C.8: Inter-Construct Correlations from the Measurement Model

Construct	HWP	EE	EBA	BPO
Humane Workplace Practices (HWP)	1.000			
Employee Experience (EE)	0.669***	1.000		
Employee Brand Ambassadorship (EBA)	0.573***	0.641***	1.000	
Business Performance Outcomes (BPO)	0.498***	0.573***	0.614***	1.000

Note: *** p < .001. Correlations represent phi coefficients from the measurement model.

Source: AMOS 26 output; n = 347.

Table C.6: Structural Model Path Coefficients

Path	Unstd Beta	SE	Std Beta	CR (t)	p	R ²
HWP → EE	0.71	0.051	0.67	13.96	< .001	0.449
EE → EBA	0.63	0.054	0.59	11.57	< .001	0.348
EBA → BPO	0.58	0.059	0.54	9.82	< .001	0.292

Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Table C.7: Indirect Effects with Bootstrap Confidence Intervals

Indirect Path	Std Indirect Beta	SE	95% BCa CI	p
HWP → EE → EBA	0.40	0.046	[0.31, 0.49]	< .001
EE → EBA → BPO	0.32	0.041	[0.24, 0.40]	< .001
HWP → EE → EBA → BPO	0.21	0.033	[0.15, 0.28]	< .001

Note: Bootstrap n = 5,000 samples; BCa = Bias-corrected and accelerated. Source: AMOS 26; n = 347.

Appendix D: Thematic Analysis Coding Documentation

This appendix presents the full coding documentation for the thematic analysis of 24 semi-structured interview transcripts. All coding was conducted by the primary researcher using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). A 20 percent sample of transcripts was independently coded by a second coder; inter-coder reliability assessed using Cohen's Kappa was 0.81, indicating strong agreement.

D.1 Qualitative Sample Profile

Table D.1: Qualitative Interview Participant Profile

Pseudonym	Role	City	Gender	Yrs Exp.	Company Size
A1	Tech Lead	Bengaluru	Male	9	Large (10,000+)
A2	Senior Software Developer	Bengaluru	Male	6	Large (10,000+)
A3	QA Engineer	Bengaluru	Female	4	Mid (1,000-9,999)
A4	Business Analyst	Bengaluru	Female	7	Large (10,000+)
A5	Quality Assurance Lead	Bengaluru	Male	11	Large (10,000+)
A6	Product Manager	Bengaluru	Female	8	Mid (1,000-9,999)
A7	Software Engineer	Bengaluru	Male	3	Small (<1,000)
A8	HR Business Partner	Bengaluru	Female	12	Large (10,000+)
B1	Senior Data Analyst	Hyderabad	Male	7	Large (10,000+)
B2	DevOps Engineer	Hyderabad	Male	5	Mid (1,000-9,999)
B3	Project Manager	Hyderabad	Female	10	Large (10,000+)
B4	Cloud Solutions Engineer	Hyderabad	Male	6	Mid (1,000-9,999)
B5	Senior Project Manager	Hyderabad	Female	14	Large (10,000+)

Pseudonym	Role	City	Gender	Yrs Exp.	Company Size
B6	Business Analyst	Hyderabad	Male	4	Small (<1,000)
C1	Senior Business Analyst	Chennai	Female	9	Large (10,000+)
C2	Software Developer	Chennai	Male	2	Small (<1,000)
C3	Project Manager	Chennai	Male	8	Large (10,000+)
C4	QA Lead	Chennai	Female	6	Mid (1,000-9,999)
C5	Customer Support Lead	Chennai	Female	5	Mid (1,000-9,999)
D1	Data Analyst	Hyderabad	Female	7	Large (10,000+)
D4	Cloud Solutions Architect	Hyderabad	Male	19	Large (10,000+)
E1	Business Analyst	Kochi	Female	8	Mid (1,000-9,999)
F2	Project Coordinator	Coimbatore	Male	3	Small (<1,000)
G1	Programme Manager	Bengaluru	Male	16	Large (10,000+)

Source: Researcher's qualitative sample documentation.

D.2 Top 40 Initial Codes by Frequency

Table D.2: Top 40 Initial Codes (n = 487 total codes)

Rank	Code Label	Frequency	Candidate Theme
1	Manager behaviour as brand signal	22	Theme 1
2	Trust in leadership as advocacy enabler	21	Themes 1 and 4
3	Personal pride as advocacy motivator	20	Theme 5
4	Voluntary vs. compelled advocacy	20	Theme 5

Rank	Code Label	Frequency	Candidate Theme
5	Authentic advocacy rooted in genuine belief	19	Theme 5
6	Informal recognition more impactful than formal	19	Theme 2
7	Fear of speaking up internally inhibits external advocacy	18	Theme 3
8	Consistency between stated and enacted values	18	Theme 4
9	Managerial response to mistakes — blame vs. learning	17	Theme 3
10	Feeling seen and valued as an individual	17	Theme 2
11	Advocacy withdrawal after trust breach	16	Theme 5
12	Manager empathy in personal crisis as brand moment	16	Theme 1
13	Value alignment tested under adversity	15	Theme 4
14	Recognition as signal of individual worth	15	Theme 2
15	Psychological safety as prerequisite for honest advocacy	14	Theme 3
16	Pride from values-consistent organisational decision	14	Theme 4
17	Referral as act of personal trust and professional responsibility	14	Theme 5
18	Gap between EVP claim and lived experience	13	Theme 4
19	Managerial consistency across different contexts	13	Theme 1
20	Silence as deliberate withdrawal of advocacy	13	Theme 5
21	Feeling invisible or contributions appropriated	12	Theme 2

Rank	Code Label	Frequency	Candidate Theme
22	Career development deficit as disengagement factor	12	Themes 1 and 2
23	Social media advocacy as considered personal act	11	Theme 5
24	Culture of psychological safety vs. culture of blame	11	Theme 3
25	Skip-level access as voice mechanism	10	Theme 3
26	Ethical decision-making visible in daily management	10	Theme 1
27	Values enacted in recruitment and onboarding	9	Theme 4
28	Retention intention linked to trust and pride	9	Theme 5
29	Client relationship as brand ambassadorship expression	9	Theme 5
30	Anonymous feedback channels valued but mistrusted	8	Theme 3
31	Disillusionment following leadership change	8	Theme 1
32	Recognition ceremony vs. personal acknowledgement	8	Theme 2
33	Peer-to-peer recognition culture	7	Theme 2
34	Workload pressure undermining well-being and advocacy	7	Theme 1
35	Town hall as voice mechanism vs. performance	7	Theme 3
36	Advocacy as two-sided risk for employee credibility	6	Theme 5
37	Organisational transparency during restructuring	6	Theme 4
38	Value dissonance following policy change	6	Theme 4

Rank	Code Label	Frequency	Candidate Theme
39	Digital platform as advocacy channel and risk	5	Theme 5
40	Onboarding experience as first brand signal	5	Theme 1

Source: Researcher's thematic analysis documentation.

D.3 Final Theme Structure

Table D.3: Final Theme Structure with Sub-themes and Key Codes

Theme	Theme Name	Sub-themes	Key Codes
Theme 1	Leadership as the Lived Brand	1a: Managerial conduct as brand enactment 1b: Dignity in daily interactions 1c: Managerial support during challenge	Manager behaviour as brand signal; Ethical conduct visible in daily decisions; Managerial response to mistakes; Empathy in personal crisis; Onboarding as first brand moment
Theme 2	Recognition as the Currency of Belonging	2a: Informal recognition as belonging signal 2b: The impact of being overlooked	Informal vs. formal recognition; Individual visibility; Contributions appropriated; Peer-to-peer recognition culture; Career development deficit
Theme 3	Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak	3a: Safety as gateway to advocacy 3b: Voice mechanism effectiveness 3c: Learning vs. blame culture	Fear of reprisal; Anonymous feedback channels; Skip-level meetings; Blame vs. learning culture; Psychological safety enables honest external advocacy
Theme 4	Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity	4a: Stated vs. enacted values 4b: Values tested under adversity	EVP gap; Decisions during crises reveal true values; Transparency during restructuring; Value dissonance following policy change; Pride from values-consistent decisions
Theme 5	Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate	5a: Voluntary vs. compelled advocacy 5b: Pride as	Personal conviction vs. social compliance; Referral as professional endorsement;

Theme	Theme Name	Sub-themes	Key Codes
		advocacy foundation 5c: Deliberate withdrawal of advocacy	Silence as deliberate advocacy withdrawal; Social media advocacy as considered act; Retention linked to trust and pride

Source: Researcher's thematic analysis documentation; n = 24 interviews, 487 total codes.

D.4 Theme Definitions

Theme 1: Leadership as the Lived Brand

Employees experience the organisational brand primarily through the day-to-day behaviour of their direct managers. Leadership conduct in moments of professional challenge, personal difficulty, and ethical complexity functions as the primary signal of whether stated values are genuinely enacted. Positive leadership experiences generate trust and pride that motivates advocacy; inconsistent or unethical behaviour erodes the trust that advocacy requires.

Theme 2: Recognition as the Currency of Belonging

Recognition functions as the primary organisational signal of individual worth. Employees who feel genuinely recognised, particularly through informal, personal, and timely acknowledgement, develop stronger emotional bonds and greater motivation to advocate. Employees who feel invisible or whose contributions are overlooked develop alienation that directly inhibits advocacy.

Theme 3: Psychological Safety and the Freedom to Speak

Psychological safety functions as a gateway condition for both internal voice and external advocacy. Employees who do not feel safe to speak honestly internally will not feel confident to advocate for the organisation publicly. The distinction between cultures of learning and cultures of blame is a critical determinant of psychological safety and of employees' willingness to engage in authentic external advocacy.

Theme 4: Value Alignment and the Test of Authenticity

Employees assess value alignment through the organisation's observable behaviour under conditions of adversity and difficulty. Decisions made during crises, restructurings, or ethical dilemmas reveal the authentic hierarchy of organisational values. Employees whose organisations maintain their stated commitments under pressure develop strong value alignment and sustained advocacy; those whose organisations abandon stated values experience disillusionment and advocacy withdrawal.

Theme 5: Advocacy as a Personal Choice, Not a Mandate

Authentic brand ambassadorship is a voluntary, personally owned behaviour rooted in pride, trust, and genuine belief in the organisation. Employees sharply distinguish between advocacy arising from personal conviction and participation motivated by compliance or obligation. The deliberate withdrawal of advocacy following a trust breach is experienced as an act of personal integrity, not disengagement.

D.5 Participant-by-Theme Matrix

Table D.4: Participant-by-Theme Presence Matrix

Participant	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
A1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
A3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
A4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
A5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
A6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
A8	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
B3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
B4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Participant	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
B5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
B6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C2	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
C3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
D1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D4	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
E1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
F2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
G1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Total Present	23/24	22/24	20/24	20/24	22/24
Percentage	95.8%	91.7%	83.3%	83.3%	91.7%

Source: Researcher's thematic analysis documentation. Yes = theme present; No = theme not evidenced.

D.6 Reflexivity Statement

The researcher maintained a reflexivity journal throughout the analytical process to document interpretive decisions and acknowledge potential biases. The researcher's background in the technology sector was identified as a potential source of interpretive bias, particularly in relation to leadership behaviour and psychological safety. To mitigate this risk, the second coder involved in inter-coder reliability checking had no IT sector experience, providing an independent interpretive perspective. All coding disagreements were resolved through discussion and reference to theme definitions. The complete coding audit trail is available upon request.

D.7 Member Checking Summary

Following the development of the five themes, a written summary of the thematic structure was shared with eight interview participants who had indicated willingness to provide

feedback. Six of the eight responded. All six confirmed that the themes authentically captured their experiences. Two participants offered minor clarifications regarding the nuances of Theme 4, specifically the distinction between value dissonance arising from leadership decisions versus structural policy changes. These clarifications were incorporated into the final theme definition for Theme 4 and are reflected in the narrative account presented in Chapter 4.

End of Appendices