

Employees who walk the brand talk: Linking brand-centered HRM to organizational citizenship behavior

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Abstract

Drawing on social identity theory, this study examines the relationship between brand-centered human resource management practices (BCHRMPs) and employee branding and, subsequently, the influence of employee branding on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). It further examines the mediating role of employee branding in the relationship between BCHRMPs and OCB and the moderating role of organizational culture in the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. Using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, data were collected from 167 professionals working in the telecommunications sector. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The findings show that BCHRMPs are positively associated with employee branding, which, in turn, is positively associated with OCB. Employee branding also mediates the relationship between BCHRMPs and OCB, highlighting its importance as a mechanism linking BCHRMPs with discretionary employee behavior. However, organizational culture does not significantly moderate the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. The study extends existing research by positioning employee branding as a mechanism through which BCHRMPs contribute to OCB, thereby demonstrating their relevance beyond brand-specific employee outcomes. It further refines the boundary conditions of BCHRMPs by showing that organizational culture does not necessarily strengthen their influence on employee branding.

Keywords: Employee branding, Brand-centered human resource management practices, Organizational citizenship behavior, Organizational culture, PLS-SEM, Telecommunications sector.

Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has become a central concern for both organizational scholars and practitioners because of its important role in organizational functioning and effectiveness (Ahlawat and Garg, 2025; Das, 2026; Saputra et al., 2026). Employees often contribute voluntarily by helping colleagues, taking initiative, sharing responsibilities, and supporting the organization when such efforts are not explicitly required or rewarded (Organ, 2018). The importance of OCB is evident in its wide-ranging consequences for both employees and organizations, including higher performance, stronger organizational commitment, lower turnover and absenteeism, greater productivity and organizational effectiveness, improved service quality, and higher customer satisfaction (Das, 2026; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Given its relevance to both employees and organizations, understanding what encourages employees to engage in OCB remains an important scholarly focus in organizational behavior and human resource management (HRM) research.

Employee branding has emerged as an important means through which organizations can shape employees' attitudes and behaviors in line with organizational values and expectations (Edwin et al., 2026; Miles and Mangold, 2004). It involves the internalization of the organization's desired brand image, which employees subsequently project through their behaviors toward customers and other organizational constituents (Miles and Mangold, 2004). As brand values become internalized, they can guide employees' work-related decisions and encourage behaviors that are consistent with what the organization represents. Importantly, such internalization can extend beyond prescribed role requirements and encourage discretionary behaviors that support the organization and its brand (Morhart et al., 2009). Recent evidence shows that internal brand management can promote brand-related citizenship behaviors (Edwin et al., 2026; Rehman and Salleh, 2019). Recognizing this potential, understanding how organizations can foster employee branding and encourage OCB becomes particularly important.

Recent research demonstrates that brand-centered human resource management practices (BCHRMPs) can strengthen the alignment between employees' personal values and organizational brand values and encourage brand-supportive behaviors (Liu et al., 2026). HRM practices facilitate the communication and reinforcement of brand values among employees and their subsequent translation into brand-consistent attitudes and behaviors (King and Grace, 2010; Miles and Mangold, 2004). BCHRMPs align these practices with the values and behavioral expectations associated with the organizational brand (Chiang et al., 2018). More specifically, they embed brand considerations into recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, communication, and reward practices, thereby helping employees understand the brand and the behaviors expected in delivering its promise (Chiang et al., 2018). BCHRMPs can thus facilitate the internalization and enactment of the desired brand identity, providing a foundation for employee branding and, ultimately, favorable employee and organizational outcomes. Despite these advances, important gaps remain in understanding how and under what organizational conditions BCHRMPs translate into broader employee behaviors.

The present study examines the effects of BCHRMPs on employee branding and of employee branding on OCB. It also tests employee branding as a mediator and

organizational culture as a moderator. Existing research has predominantly examined brand-specific mechanisms and outcomes, linking BCHRMPs and related internal branding practices with constructs such as brand psychological ownership, person–brand fit, brand commitment, employee brand support, and brand citizenship behavior (Chang et al., 2012; Chiang et al., 2018; Dahle and Urstad, 2022; Rehman and Salleh, 2019). Comparatively less attention has been given to employee branding as a mechanism through which BCHRMPs may extend beyond brand-specific outcomes to foster OCB. Barros-Arrieta et al. (2024) emphasize collaboration between HRM and marketing departments in implementing internal branding and call for empirical examination of its constituent processes, including BCHRMPs, across industries and organizational settings. Thus, the present study responds to this call and addresses the identified gap by examining employee branding as a mechanism through which BCHRMPs contribute to OCB.

Moreover, although prior research recognizes that employee responses to branding initiatives are shaped by the broader organizational and relational context (Dahle and Urstad, 2022), the role of organizational culture in shaping the effectiveness of BCHRMPs in fostering employee branding remains underexplored. Organizational culture has frequently been examined as a boundary condition in relationships involving employee attitudes, organizational practices, knowledge processes, and performance outcomes (Saha and Kumar, 2018; Rohim and Budhiasa, 2019; Chong and Duan, 2026). Harrison and Bazzy (2017) argue that organizational culture should be treated as an integral consideration in strategic HRM research and call for further investigation of the culture–HRM relationship. Nevertheless, little is known about whether organizational culture conditions the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. Addressing this gap and responding to the call for further research by Harrison and Bazzy (2017), the present study examines organizational culture as a moderator of the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding.

In achieving study objectives, the present study makes two important contributions. First, it positions employee branding as a mediating mechanism linking BCHRMPs with OCB, thereby explaining how BCHRMPs may translate into discretionary employee behavior (e.g., OCB). Second, it introduces organizational culture as a boundary condition in the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding, offering a more contextualized understanding of when such practices are more likely to foster the internalization and enactment of the organizational brand. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical insights into how organizations can effectively use BCHRMPs to strengthen employee branding and foster OCB, while creating an organizational culture that supports these processes.

The remainder of the paper presents the theoretical background and hypotheses, methodology, results, discussion, and implications, followed by limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This study's theoretical model is grounded in Social Identity Theory (SIT), which suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership

(Tajfel, 1978; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). In organizational settings, employees can similarly develop a sense of self based on their membership in and association with the organization and what it represents (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because BHRMPs communicate and reinforce the values, identity, and behavioral expectations associated with the organizational brand. Consistent exposure to these brand-related signals can encourage employees to internalize the desired brand image and reflect it in their workplace behaviors, thereby fostering employee branding. As employees increasingly internalize and enact what the organization represents, they may also be more inclined to engage in discretionary behaviors that support the organization, as reflected in OCB.

This identity-based explanation provides a direct theoretical anchor for OCB, as employees who define themselves through their organizational membership are more likely to undertake discretionary actions that benefit the organization and its members. Thus, OCB is understood here as an expression of organizational identification rather than an exchange-based response to favorable treatment. Organizational culture can further shape this process by reinforcing shared values and norms and creating an environment in which employees more readily internalize the brand-related signals conveyed through BHRMPs. Accordingly, SIT provides a coherent theoretical foundation for explaining how BHRMPs relate to OCB through employee branding and why BHRMPs' influence on employee branding may depend on organizational culture.

BHRMPs and Employee Branding

BHRMPs are increasingly recognized as an important means of aligning employees with an organization's brand values and fostering greater congruence between employees and the brand (Chiang et al., 2018; Dahle and Urstad, 2022; Rehman and Salleh, 2019). They reflect how HR practices align with the organization's brand values and behavioral expectations, particularly through recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward systems (Dhiman and Arora, 2022). For instance, brand-centered recruitment and selection can attract employees whose values align with the brand, while training and development can strengthen employees' understanding and ability to deliver the brand promise. Similarly, brand-oriented performance management and rewards can reinforce behaviors that are consistent with the desired brand (Chiang et al., 2018). These practices matter because employees play a central role in communicating and delivering the brand through their interactions with customers and other stakeholders (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2016). Accordingly, integrating brand considerations into HR practices can help translate organizational brand values into employees' everyday attitudes and behaviors.

From the perspective of SIT (Tajfel, 1978; Ashforth and Mael, 1989), organizational practices can provide identity-related cues that shape how employees understand and define their relationship with the organization. By consistently communicating and reinforcing brand values, BHRMPs can facilitate employees' internalization of the desired brand identity, thereby strengthening employee branding. Thus, we hypothesized that:

- H1** BHRMPs are positively associated with employee branding, with greater perceptions of BHRMPs corresponding to stronger employee branding.

Employee Branding and OCB

Employee branding involves the internalization of the organization's desired brand image and its subsequent projection through employees' behaviors toward organizational stakeholders (Miles and Mangold, 2004). When employees internalize brand values, these values can guide their workplace decisions and encourage behaviors consistent with what the organization represents (Morhart et al., 2009). Importantly, such internalization can extend beyond formally prescribed roles and encourage discretionary behaviors that support the organization and its brand (Morhart et al., 2009; Rehman and Salleh, 2019). This behavioral orientation closely corresponds with OCB, which captures voluntary contributions beyond formal job requirements that support effective organizational functioning (Henderson et al., 2019; Organ, 2018). This aligns with the SIT perspective, suggesting that employees who internalize what their organization represents are more likely to regard organizationally supportive behaviors as consistent with their own values and sense of self. Employee branding may therefore provide an important basis for translating employees' internalization of the organizational brand into broader discretionary contributions reflected in OCB. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

- H2** Employee branding is positively associated with OCB, with stronger employee branding corresponding to higher levels of OCB.

Mediating Effect of Employee Branding

BCHRMPs are designed to align HR systems with organizational brand values and encourage employees to understand and enact the behaviors associated with the brand (Chang et al., 2012; Chiang et al., 2018; Rehman and Salleh, 2019). However, the influence of such practices on employee behavior may depend on the extent to which employees internalize the brand messages embedded in these practices. Employee branding provides this explanatory mechanism because it reflects the process through which employees internalize the desired brand image and subsequently project it through their behavior (Miles and Mangold, 2004). Prior research supports this underlying logic, showing that BCHRMPs can strengthen employees' alignment and attachment to the brand and subsequently encourage discretionary brand-supportive behaviors (Chang et al., 2012; Chiang et al., 2018). From an SIT lens, BCHRMPs provide identity-relevant cues about what the organization represents, while employee branding reflects employees' internalization and enactment of those cues. Once internalized, these brand values can guide employees toward voluntary behaviors that support the broader organization, including OCB. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

- H3** Employee branding mediates the relationship between BCHRMPs and OCB.

Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions that guide how employees think and behave within an organization (Carmeli, 2004; Robbins and Judge, 2022). It provides employees with a common understanding of what the organization represents and how its members are expected to act (Schultz and Hatch, 2006; Sharma and Verma, 2022). Organizational culture can therefore shape how

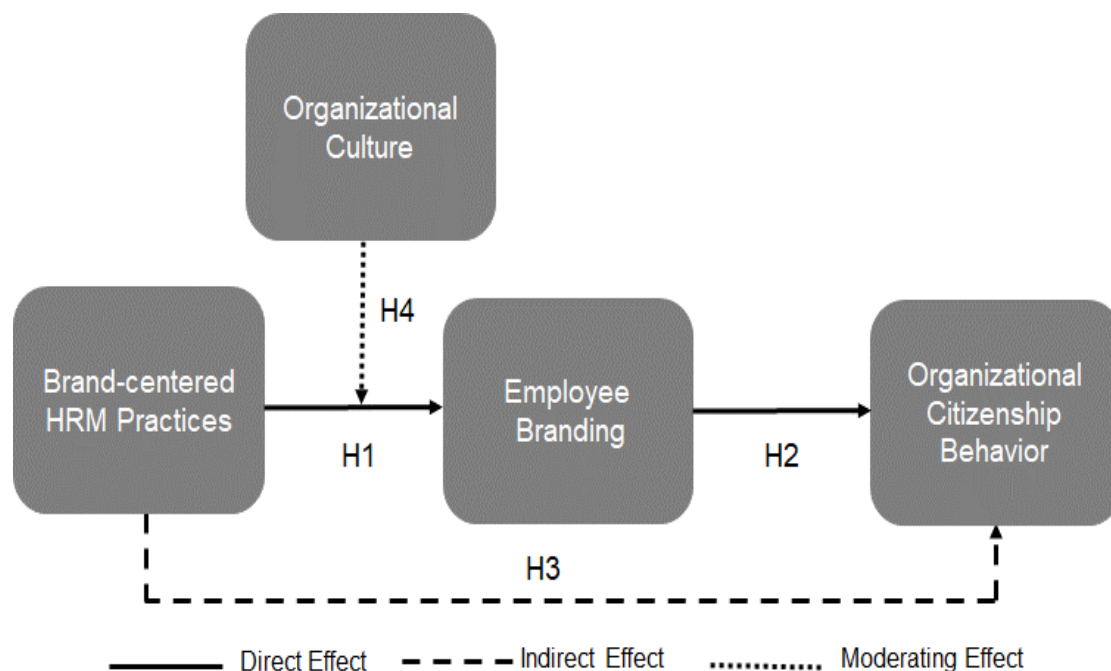
employees interpret and respond to HR practices. Harrison and Bazzy (2017) conceptualize organizational culture as an important boundary condition in strategic HRM, arguing that the effectiveness of HR practices partly depends on the cultural context in which they are implemented.

In the context of BCHRMPs, a supportive culture characterized by mentoring, participation, mutual trust, teamwork, and employee development may enhance employees' receptiveness to the brand values embedded in recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and reward practices. Such cultural conditions reinforce the credibility and relevance of these practices, making employees more likely to internalize the organization's brand values and express them through their behavior. Conversely, when these supportive cultural conditions are weak, brand-related HR practices may appear disconnected from employees' everyday workplace experiences, thereby limiting their influence on employee branding.

From an SIT viewpoint, a supportive and cohesive organizational culture strengthens employees' sense of belonging and provides a social context in which organizational values acquire shared meaning. When the brand values conveyed through BCHRMPs are reinforced by trust, participation, teamwork, and supportive workplace relationships, employees are more likely to incorporate these values into their organizational identity and act in ways that reflect the desired brand image. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H4** Organizational culture positively moderates the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Methodology

Context

Pakistan's telecommunications sector operates within a rapidly developing digital economy and plays an important role in supporting the country's connectivity and broader digital transformation. Recent developments demonstrate the growing significance of Pakistan's ICT environment, with the country's ICT Development Index score increasing from 56.4 in 2025 to 67.7 in 2026, representing a 20% relative improvement (Press Information Department, 2026). Pakistan's ICT exports also reached US\$4.6 billion in FY2025–26, further reflecting the growing economic and international significance of the country's broader technology sector (Business Insider, 2026). Importantly, Pakistan's telecommunications sector has generated approximately 200,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities since the introduction of 3G and 4G services (Amin, 2023), highlighting its substantial contribution to national employment. The scale of employment associated with the sector means that employees' conduct has important implications for service delivery, customer experience, and organizational reputation. In this competitive and service-oriented sector, organizational success therefore depends not only on employees fulfilling their prescribed responsibilities but also on their willingness to undertake discretionary behaviors that support colleagues, customers, and the wider organization. Consequently, OCB and employees' willingness to understand and positively represent the organizational brand are particularly relevant to telecommunications organizations seeking to enhance their effectiveness and competitive position.

Measures

BCHRMPs were measured using a thirteen-item scale adapted from Chiang et al. (2018), originally designed for supervisors. BCHRMPs are HRM practices designed to embed organizational brand values into employee management and promote brand-consistent attitudes and behaviors (Chiang et al., 2018). Minor modifications were made to align items with employees' context. A sample item is "My organization considers personal traits of applicants to recruit employees with person-brand fit." The composite reliability of the scale was 0.958 in the present study.

Employee branding was measured using a five-item scale developed for the present study on the basis of Miles and Mangold's (2004) definition. They define employee branding as "the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents" (p. 68). Existing employee branding measures (e.g., Sharma and Verma, 2022) have provided valuable assessments. However, they do not capture employees' internalization of the desired brand image, their motivation to represent it, and its projection through their interactions with others. The present study therefore developed five items to reflect and measure these complementary dimensions of employee branding. The initial item pool was reviewed by three experts, who assessed the clarity, relevance, and consistency of the items with the conceptual definition. The authors made minor wording refinements in response to their feedback. A sample item is "My organization's brand values guide my actions at work." The scale achieved a composite reliability of 0.900 in the present study.

OCB was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from the short-form scale developed by Henderson et al. (2019), derived from the original measure by Williams and Anderson (1991). OCB refers to discretionary employee behaviors that contribute to the effective functioning of the organization by supporting the social and psychological context in which work is performed (Organ, 1988; Henderson et al., 2019). A sample item is “I took a personal interest in other employees.” The composite reliability of the scale was 0.857 in the present study.

Organizational culture was measured using a four-item scale adapted from Adeshola et al. (2022). Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that characterize how an organization operates and how its members interact. In the present study, organizational culture is operationalized as a supportive, clan-oriented culture. A sample item is “The management style in the company is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.” The scale achieved a composite reliability of 0.946.

A complete list of items is provided in the appendix. The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure employees’ responses, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The survey was pretested before the main data collection with six telecommunications professionals from the target population. The pretest aimed to identify errors and questions respondents might find confusing, ambiguous, difficult to understand, or uncomfortable to answer (Kumar et al., 2013). We observed respondents while they filled out the survey and then asked for their opinions and suggestions. We made no changes because they understood the items clearly.

Sampling and Data Collection

Given the absence of a publicly available sampling frame containing employees working in Pakistan’s telecommunications sector, a probability-based sampling approach was not practically feasible (Cooper and Schindler, 2011; Memon et al., 2023). Accordingly, the study employed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques that are particularly useful when researchers need to identify participants who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was first employed to ensure that participation was restricted to respondents who could provide informed responses regarding the organizational phenomena examined in the study (Memon et al., 2025). Three eligibility criteria were established prior to data collection. Participants were required to: (1) possess at least an undergraduate degree, (2) have a minimum of one year of work experience, and (3) be currently employed in Pakistan’s telecommunications sector. The educational criterion was introduced to maintain a relatively comparable professional respondent profile, while the minimum tenure criterion ensured sufficient exposure to organizational practices.

Participant recruitment began by identifying an initial pool of eligible respondents through *LinkedIn* and the researchers’ personal and professional networks. The use of professional networking platforms has increasingly provided researchers with access to populations that may otherwise be difficult to reach through conventional sampling approaches (Jehanzeb et al., 2025; Zia et al., 2025). The researchers approached prospective respondents online and assessed their eligibility before sharing the questionnaire. After completing the survey, these initial participants served as seeds for the snowball sampling process and were invited to circulate the survey among other

professionals in their networks who met the same eligibility requirements (Ting et al., 2025). Combining purposive and snowball procedures therefore served two complementary purposes: purposive sampling helped align respondent characteristics with the study population, while snowball sampling facilitated wider access to eligible telecommunications employees beyond the researchers' immediate networks.

Data were collected electronically using a structured questionnaire administered through *Google Forms*, an approach that facilitates efficient and geographically dispersed survey data collection while allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience (Memon et al., 2026). Before accessing the survey, prospective participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to discontinue participation at any stage before submitting their responses (Saunders et al., 2023). Respondents were informed that completion and submission of the questionnaire were treated as an indication of informed consent to participate in the study.

Initially, we received 181 completed responses. Before the main data analysis, we systematically screened all responses against the predefined inclusion criteria. We excluded 14 responses because they did not meet one or more eligibility requirements (e.g., less than one year of experience), showed evidence of straight-lining, or both. This screening process yielded a final usable sample of 167 responses, which was used for the final analyses.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using *G*Power* to assess the adequacy of the sample size (Faul et al., 2009). Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, statistical power of 0.80, and three predictors, the analysis indicated a minimum required sample size of 77. The final sample of 167 exceeded this requirement, confirming its adequacy for estimating the proposed model. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents (n=167)

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	79.0
	Female	35	21.0
Age	20-30	105	63.0
	31-41	50	30.0
	42-52	12	7.0
Tenure	Below 1 year	0	0.0
	1-3 years	77	46.0
	4-6 years	55	33.0
	6-10 years	35	21.0
Education	Undergraduate	138	83.0
	Postgraduate	29	17.0

The majority of respondents were male (79.0%), consistent with the low female labor force participation in Pakistan (World Bank, 2024). Most respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years (63.0%). In terms of organizational tenure, 46.0% had one to

three years of experience, followed by 33.0% with four to six years and 21.0% with six to ten years. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents held an undergraduate degree (83.0%), while 17.0% had a postgraduate qualification.

Common Method Bias

Given that data for all study variables were collected from the same respondents using a single survey, several procedural remedies were incorporated a priori into the research design to minimize the potential for common method bias (CMB) (Jordan and Troth, 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2012, 2024). First, the introductory page of the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study and assured respondents of the anonymity of their responses. This procedure was intended to reduce concerns about the measurement context and evaluation apprehension, thereby limiting respondents' motivation to modify their answers in a socially desirable or consistent manner (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Second, each section of the questionnaire contained clear and concise instructions to facilitate accurate responding and reduce potential ambiguity in interpreting the questions. Third, the questionnaire was structured so that the presentation of the measures did not mirror the sequence of relationships specified in the conceptual model. This provided a degree of proximal separation among the focal constructs and reduced the likelihood that respondents could readily infer the hypothesized relationships and adjust their responses accordingly (Podsakoff et al., 2012, 2024). To clarify, we did not rely on post-hoc statistical tests to address CMB. Although such tests may provide an indication of potential method-related bias, they cannot reduce or eliminate bias that may already have been introduced during the measurement and data collection process (Memon et al., 2023). We therefore placed greater emphasis on addressing potential sources of CMB at the research design stage through appropriate procedural remedies.

Results

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), using SmartPLS 4.0 (Ringle et al., 2024), was employed to test the hypothesized model. PLS-SEM was appropriate because the study examines an HRM phenomenon involving employees' perceptions and behavioral responses, and its use has increasingly been advocated in HRM research (see Ringle et al., 2020; Hauff et al., 2025). The analysis followed a two-stage procedure. In the first stage, the measurement model was assessed by examining internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. In the second stage, the structural model was evaluated based on the path coefficients, their significance and confidence intervals, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect size (f^2).

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed to establish the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity of the constructs. Composite reliability (CR) was used to assess internal consistency reliability, with values above 0.70 considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017). As reported in Table 2, the CR values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold: BCHRMPs (0.958), employee branding (0.900), organizational culture (0.946), and OCB (0.857). These results therefore demonstrate

satisfactory internal consistency reliability across all constructs.

Convergent validity was assessed using the outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Generally, outer loadings of 0.708 or higher are preferred, while an AVE above 0.50 indicates that a construct explains more than half of the variance in its items (Ramayah et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 2, most items demonstrated satisfactory loadings, although a few items had loadings below the recommended 0.708 threshold. Items with loadings below 0.708 were retained because their removal was not expected to improve composite reliability or AVE, while retaining them preserved the content coverage of the original measures. The AVE values were 0.642 for BCHRMPs, 0.644 for employee branding, 0.814 for organizational culture, and 0.502 for OCB. Thus, all constructs exceeded the minimum AVE threshold of 0.50, providing support for convergent validity. Table 2 presents the outer loadings, composite reliability, and AVE values for all constructs.

Table 2: Factor loadings, convergent validity and internal consistency reliability

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR (ρ_c)
BCHRMPs	BHRM1	0.595	0.642	0.958
	BHRM10	0.769		
	BHRM11	0.900		
	BHRM12	0.880		
	BHRM13	0.840		
	BHRM2	0.597		
	BHRM3	0.607		
	BHRM4	0.835		
	BHRM5	0.826		
	BHRM6	0.870		
	BHRM7	0.884		
	BHRM8	0.851		
	BHRM9	0.862		
Employee Branding	EB1	0.817	0.644	0.900
	EB2	0.832		
	EB3	0.724		
	EB4	0.790		
	EB5	0.843		
Organizational Culture	OC1	0.912	0.814	0.946
	OC2	0.909		
	OC3	0.889		
	OC4	0.898		
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	OCB1	0.790	0.502	0.857
	OCB2	0.771		
	OCB3	0.741		
	OCB4	0.719		
	OCB5	0.586		
	OCB6	0.618		

Notes: BCHRMPs = brand-centered human resource management practices

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). An HTMT value below 0.85 indicates that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another (Kline, 2011). As reported in Table 3, the HTMT values ranged from 0.473 to 0.723, and therefore remained below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). In addition, none of the corresponding confidence intervals included a value of 1.00, providing further support for discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. BCHRMPs				
2. Employee Branding	0.723 [0.630, 0.811]			
3. Organizational Culture	0.612 [0.471, 0.738]	0.670 [0.482, 0.826]		
4. OCB	0.473 [0.334, 0.624]	0.638 [0.389, 0.848]	0.618 [0.461, 0.751]	

Notes: DV is established at HTMT.85 (Henseler et al., 2015); BCHRMPs = Brand-centered Human Resource Management Practices; OCB = Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Multicollinearity

Before assessing the structural model, we examined collinearity among the predictor constructs using the variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values below 3.3 generally indicate the absence of critical collinearity concerns (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006). The results showed that all VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 3.3, indicating that collinearity was not a concern in the structural model.

Structural Model

The structural model was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was performed in SmartPLS 4.0 to estimate the significance of the direct, indirect, and moderating effects (Hair et al., 2017). The results show that BCHRMPs have a significant positive effect on employee branding (H1: $\beta = 0.481$, $t = 4.555$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Employee branding also has a significant positive effect on OCB (H2: $\beta = 0.547$, $t = 5.542$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2.

The mediating role of employee branding was assessed by examining the significance of the indirect effect through bootstrapping (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The results revealed a significant positive indirect effect of BCHRMPs on OCB through employee branding (H3: $\beta = 0.263$, $t = 6.461$, $p < 0.001$), with the confidence interval excluding zero [0.189, 0.352]. Thus, H3 was supported, confirming the mediating role of employee branding. Finally, the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding was not significant (H4: $\beta = 0.031$, $t = 0.439$, $p = 0.330$), with the confidence interval including zero. Therefore, H4 was not supported. Overall, H1, H2, and H3 were supported, whereas H4 was not supported. The results of the structural model assessment are presented in Table 4.

In addition to assessing the significance of the hypothesized relationships, the explanatory power of the structural model was examined using the R^2 (Hair et al., 2017). The results show that the model explains approximately 54% of the variance in employee branding ($R^2 = 0.535$) and about 30% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = 0.299$). These results demonstrate that the proposed model explains a meaningful proportion of variance in both endogenous constructs.

Table 4: Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Beta	STDEV	t	LL	UL	Decision
H1: BCHRMPs → EB	0.481	0.106	4.555	0.313	0.658	Supported
H2: EB → OCB	0.547	0.099	5.542	0.346	0.685	Supported
H3: BCHRMPs → EB → OCB	0.263	0.041	6.461	0.189	0.352	Supported
H4: OC*BCHRMPs → EB	0.031	0.070	0.439	-0.093	0.136	NS

Notes: BCHRMPs = Brand-centered Human Resource Management Practices; EB = Employee Branding; OCB = Organizational Citizenship Behavior; OC = Organizational Culture; LL = Lower Limit Confidence Intervals, UL = Upper Limit Confidence Intervals; NS = Not Supported

The effect size (f^2) was also assessed to determine the contribution of each predictor construct to the explanatory power of its respective endogenous construct (Ramayah et al., 2018). Following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The results show that BCHRMPs had a medium effect on employee branding ($f^2 = 0.327$), whereas employee branding had a large effect on OCB ($f^2 = 0.427$). In contrast, organizational culture had almost no moderating effect on the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding ($f^2 = 0.002$), which is consistent with the non-significant moderation result reported earlier.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of BCHRMPs in fostering employee branding, the subsequent effect of employee branding on OCB, and the moderating role of organizational culture in the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. The findings provide support for H1, demonstrating that BCHRMPs are positively associated with employee branding. This finding suggests that HR practices deliberately aligned with the organizational brand can play an important role in shaping how employees understand, internalize, and represent the brand in their workplace behavior. When HR practices communicate what the organization stands for and reinforce brand-related expectations, employees are more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the desired brand values and behave in ways consistent with those values. This finding is consistent with Chiang et al. (2018), who demonstrated that BCHRMPs contribute to favorable employee brand-related attitudes and behaviors and emphasized the importance of employees internalizing organizational brand values. The present finding extends this reasoning to the telecommunications context, suggesting that BCHRMPs are relevant beyond the hospitality setting examined by Chiang et al. (2018). More importantly, the finding reinforces HRM's role as an internal system through which an organization's intended brand is translated into employees' understanding and enactment of that brand.

The findings also provide support for H2, showing that employee branding is positively associated with OCB. This finding suggests that the implications of employee branding may extend beyond employees' representation of the organizational brand to their broader discretionary behavior within the organization. Employees who understand and internalize what their organization represents are more likely to align themselves with its values and interests, which may encourage them to contribute beyond their formally prescribed job responsibilities. Such contributions can be reflected in citizenship behaviors, including voluntarily assisting colleagues and undertaking activities that support the effective functioning of the organization. This finding is broadly consistent with related employee branding research showing that employee-brand relationships can encourage discretionary brand-supportive behaviors. For example, Dhiman and Arora (2022) found that dimensions of employee branding contribute to employees' brand citizenship behavior, while related internal-branding research has similarly shown that employees' stronger psychological connection with the organizational brand is associated with citizenship behaviors directed toward supporting that brand (Chang et al., 2012). The present study therefore extends this line of research by showing that employee branding is associated not only with brand-specific citizenship behavior, but also with OCB more generally. Thus, the behavioral consequences of employee branding may extend beyond employees' explicit brand-related roles and manifest in discretionary contributions that benefit the organization and its members.

The findings further support H3 by demonstrating that employee branding mediates the relationship between BCHRMPs and OCB. This finding provides insight into the mechanism through which BCHRMPs can translate into discretionary employee behavior. BCHRMPs are designed to communicate and reinforce the organization's brand values through HR practices (Chiang et al., 2018), but the existence of such practices alone does not necessarily ensure that employees will subsequently engage in behaviors beyond their formal job requirements. Rather, the findings suggest that their behavioral influence operates through employees' responses to the organizational brand. When employees are exposed to BCHRMPs that consistently communicate and reinforce the desired brand, they are more likely to embrace and enact the brand in their own behavior, which, in turn, is associated with greater willingness to engage in OCB. This finding complements previous research demonstrating that BCHRMPs can shape employees' brand-related attitudes and behaviors (Chang et al., 2012; Chiang et al., 2018) and that employee branding can encourage discretionary brand-supportive behavior (Dhiman and Arora, 2022). More importantly, the mediating role of employee branding indicates that the influence of BCHRMPs on OCB unfolds through an important employee-level process. BCHRMPs provide the organizational basis for reinforcing the desired brand values, while employee branding captures employees' responses to these efforts, which can subsequently translate into discretionary behaviors such as OCB.

Contrary to expectations, the findings did not support H4, as organizational culture did not moderate the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. This finding suggests that the positive association between BCHRMPs and employee branding does not vary significantly according to the level of organizational culture. Although organizational culture is generally considered important in shaping employees' understanding of organizational values and expected behaviors (Glisson, 2015; Bogale and Debela, 2024; Mohammed et al., 2025), the present findings indicate that it does

not necessarily strengthen the influence of BCHRMPs on employee branding. One possible explanation is that BCHRMPs are designed to align human resource policies and practices with the organization's brand values and facilitate employees' internalization of those values (Chiang et al., 2018). When these practices consistently communicate and reinforce brand values, their influence on employee branding may be less dependent on reinforcement from the broader organizational culture. This interpretation is also consistent with internal branding research suggesting that internal branding activities help communicate and embed brand values among employees and encourage behavior that is aligned with the organizational brand (Sujchaphong et al., 2015).

The sectoral context may offer an additional perspective on this finding. The telecommunications industry is characterized by rapid technological and operational change, requiring organizations to continuously adapt their business models and HR practices (Kargas and Tsokos, 2020). In such an environment, BCHRMPs may provide employees with relatively direct and consistent guidance regarding organizational brand values and expectations, potentially reducing the extent to which their influence on employee branding depends on the broader organizational culture.

The nonsignificant moderating effect is also consistent with some previous research suggesting that organizational culture does not uniformly operate as a boundary condition across different employee-related relationships. For example, Yiing and Ahmad (2009) found that organizational culture did not significantly moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance. More recently, Jung et al. (2024) similarly reported that school organizational culture did not significantly moderate the relationship between job stress and burnout. These findings suggest that the moderating influence of organizational culture may be contingent on the particular organizational process and employee outcome under consideration.

Nevertheless, the unexpected findings should not be interpreted as evidence that organizational culture is unimportant for employee branding. Rather, it indicates that, within the present sample, organizational culture did not significantly alter the strength of the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. This finding therefore points to the need for further research to examine whether other organizational conditions may be more consequential in determining when BCHRMPs are most effective in fostering employee branding.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on BCHRMPs and employee branding in several ways. First, it expands the behavioral scope of BCHRMPs by linking them to employee outcomes beyond those explicitly directed toward the organizational brand. Existing research has largely examined the role of BCHRMPs in shaping brand-related attitudes and behaviors, including person–brand fit, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior (Chang et al., 2012; Chiang et al., 2018). Building on this research, the present study demonstrates that BCHRMPs are also relevant to broader discretionary behavior (e.g., OCB), with employee branding providing an important mechanism through which this relationship unfolds.

Second, the study contributes to the long-standing debate surrounding the “black box”

between HRM practices and employee outcomes by identifying employee branding as an additional explanatory mechanism (see Jiang et al., 2013; Messersmith et al., 2011). Although HRM research has examined a range of mediating mechanisms (Boxall et al., 2011), comparatively little attention has been given to employee branding as a mechanism explaining how HR practices translate into employee behavior. By establishing employee branding as a mediator between BCHRMPs and OCB, the present study brings a brand-related employee mechanism into the HRM–behavior relationship, contributing to the broader HRM–performance “black box” debate.

Lastly, the study adds to the understanding of the boundary conditions surrounding the effectiveness of BCHRMPs by examining the moderating role of organizational culture. Contrary to the proposed argument, organizational culture did not strengthen the relationship between BCHRMPs and employee branding. This finding is theoretically relevant because it challenges the assumption that a favorable organizational culture necessarily enhances the effectiveness of HR practices in shaping employee responses. Instead, the findings suggest that the influence of BCHRMPs on employee branding may not necessarily depend on the broader cultural context. Thus, the contribution lies not in establishing organizational culture as an enabling condition, but in clarifying the limits of its role as a boundary condition in the BCHRMPs–employee branding relationship.

Limitations and Future Directions

Like all empirical research, this study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted among employees in the telecommunications sector in Pakistan. Sectoral and national characteristics may shape how HR practices are implemented and how employees respond to organizational branding efforts. The findings should therefore be generalized beyond this context with caution. Future research could examine the proposed relationships across different industries and countries, particularly settings that vary in customer contact, brand visibility, and institutional environment.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, with all focal variables measured at a single point in time. This design limits conclusions regarding temporal ordering. Future studies could therefore employ time-lagged or longitudinal designs to examine whether BCHRMPs lead to changes in employee branding over time and whether these changes subsequently translate into OCB.

Third, the study focused specifically on employee branding as the mechanism linking BCHRMPs with OCB. While this focus allowed the study to establish the theoretical relevance of employee branding within the HRM–behavior relationship, it does not rule out the possibility that other employee-level mechanisms operate alongside it. Future research could therefore examine employee branding alongside established mechanisms, such as work engagement, organizational commitment, and organizational identification, to determine whether it adds explanatory value beyond these more conventional pathways. Researchers could also examine whether employee branding mediates the effects of BCHRMPs on other theoretically relevant outcomes, including turnover intentions, employee loyalty, innovative work behavior, and performance.

Moreover, the nonsignificant moderating effect of organizational culture raises an

important question regarding the conditions under which BCHRMPs are more or less effective in fostering employee branding. More importantly, researchers could examine other theoretically grounded boundary conditions that may influence employees' responses to BCHRMPs. For example, brand-oriented leadership, internal brand communication, managerial support, and consistency in communicating brand values across organizational practices may provide more proximal conditions under which BCHRMPs translate into employee branding and other outcomes. Given the increasing digitalization of HRM, future research could also consider technology-related boundary conditions, such as digital HR capability, digital workplace maturity, or employees' digital readiness. Such research would advance a more precise understanding of when and under what conditions BCHRMPs are most effective.

Practical Implications for Asian Business

The findings offer several practical implications for organizations seeking to strengthen employee branding and encourage OCB. First, managers should recognize that BCHRMPs can serve as an important means of translating the organizational brand into employees' day-to-day experiences and behavior. Rather than treating branding primarily as a marketing responsibility, organizations should embed their brand values across key HR practices. Recruitment and selection can be used to attract individuals whose expectations are compatible with the organizational brand, while onboarding and training can strengthen employees' understanding of what the brand represents and how it should be reflected in their work. Performance management, recognition, and compensation practices can further reinforce behaviors that are consistent with these values.

Second, the mediating role of employee branding has important implications for how organizations manage BCHRMPs. The findings suggest that introducing BCHRMPs alone may not be sufficient; managers also need to consider whether employees actually understand and enact the brand values these practices are intended to convey. Organizations should therefore provide consistent opportunities for employees to learn about the brand, understand its relevance to their roles, and translate its values into workplace behavior. Coordination between HR and marketing can be particularly useful in this regard, as it can help ensure consistency between the brand communicated externally and the employment experience created internally.

Third, the nonsignificant moderating effect of organizational culture carries an important managerial message. Organizations should not assume that a favorable culture will automatically strengthen the influence of BCHRMPs on employee branding. Although maintaining a supportive organizational culture remains valuable for many aspects of organizational functioning, the present findings suggest that it cannot substitute for well-designed and consistently implemented BCHRMPs. Managers seeking to strengthen employee branding should therefore give direct attention to how brand values are incorporated into HR policies and communicated through HR practices rather than relying on the broader organizational culture to reinforce these efforts.

Finally, managers can use digital and AI-enabled HR tools to make BCHRMPs more timely, tailored, and consistent across the employee lifecycle. For example, AI-

supported recruitment platforms can communicate the organization's values and employment proposition consistently to prospective employees, while onboarding systems, interactive learning modules, and HR chatbots can provide employees with role-specific guidance on how those values should be reflected in everyday work. Managers can also use aggregated employee-feedback data to identify where employees do not clearly understand brand expectations and then revise training, communication, or recognition practices accordingly. These initiatives can strengthen employee branding by helping employees internalize the desired brand image and enact it in their interactions with customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Employees who understand what the organization represents may be more willing to undertake discretionary actions that support colleagues, protect organizational interests, and contribute beyond their formal roles.

Declarations

1. The first two authors (Warda Faisal Khan and Mumtaz Ali Memon) should be considered joint first authors due to their equal contributions throughout the research process, from conceptualization to final submission.
2. The authors disclose that *ChatGPT* (GPT-5, developed by OpenAI) was used to improve clarity, readability, formatting consistency, and reference formatting in accordance with the journal's requirements. It was also used to cross-check the consistency of statistical values reported in the manuscript text against the corresponding results presented in the tables. In addition, one of the authors used the professional version of *Grammarly* to enhance grammar, readability, and stylistic consistency. The authors carefully reviewed and verified all references and statistical results, approved the final manuscript, and take full responsibility for its content. All intellectual contributions, analytical decisions, interpretations, and theoretical developments are solely those of the authors.

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Appendix: Survey Items

Brand-Centered HRM

1. My company compensates employees for providing brand-related creativity and information.
2. When employees display behaviors fostering brand value, my company gives employees formal rewards.
3. When the market share of the brand enhances, my company rewards employees who participate in brand-related activities.
4. My company makes newcomers understand brand-related values and spirit through training.
5. My company often transmits brand-related values through a formal communication platform.
6. My company makes personal values and behaviors of employees consistent with brand values through training courses.
7. My company considers personal traits of applicants to recruit employees with person-brand fit.
8. My company considers personal values of applicants to recruit employees with person-brand fit.
9. My company considers employees' brand-oriented behaviors in the process of evaluation.
10. The brand image may help my company recruit appropriate employees while recruiting newcomers.
11. My company makes employees compare their behaviors with a brand-related standard via self-evaluation or colleague-evaluation.
12. My company focuses on cultivating brand-related talents.
13. My company often communicates brand-related spirit, content, and value while developing new products or services.

Employee Branding

1. I personally believe in the values represented by my company's brand.
2. The brand image my company seeks to convey has become part of how I approach my work.
3. My company's brand values guide my actions at work.
4. I am motivated to represent my company in a manner consistent with its desired brand image.
5. When interacting with customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders, my behavior reflects the image my company seeks to convey.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

1. I help others with heavy workloads.

2. I assist my supervisor with his/her work.
3. I take a personal interest in other employees.
4. My attendance at work is above the norm.
5. I give advance notice when I am unable to come to work.
6. I conserve and protect organizational property.

Organizational Culture

1. The leadership in my company is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.
2. The management style in my company is characterized by teamwork, consensus and participation.
3. The “glue” that holds the company together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to the company runs high.
4. The company defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.



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