

**Leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy in the medical  
scheme administration industry**

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Employee Brand Advocacy (EBA) is the most effective method for cultivating and managing employee relationships within the financial industry, specifically in the medical scheme administration organisations. Nonetheless, the existing research on EBA is not only fragmented across many contexts but it has also been significantly under explored in the financial sector. Furthermore, the leadership theories acknowledge that no single approach to leadership is universally applicable to all situations. Diverse situations and organisational contexts necessitate the chosen leadership styles and actions that are tailored to the follower dynamics (Buyandelger, 2024). However, this theory misses to clarify the relationship between positive EBA and the Leadership Styles (LS) within the medical scheme administration industry. Empirical research has been undertaken in the fields of employee brand advocacy and leadership since their emergence as conceptual constructs.

These constructs have been researched by scholars numerous times; however, there are no studies together in the context of the medical scheme administration industry. A blended leadership style was identified as being appropriate after a review of the literature. Consequently, it was necessary to examine the leadership styles that have a positive impact on employee brand advocacy in this context. The aim was to evaluate the leadership situations that contribute positively to the employees' perceptions of brand advocacy, by identifying the leadership styles that positively influence the phenomena, and by ultimately identifying the optimal conditions that reveal the mutually beneficial behavior of both parties, which are both the employees and the leaders within this industry.

**Methodology:** A qualitative study was chosen for this investigation. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews which enabled the participants to disclose their personal experiences with the phenomena under investigation. This method facilitated the development of open-ended enquiries. The study's respondents were from a variety of organisations, including human capital experts, senior and middle managers, as well as department heads. Their roles and experiences in the medical scheme administration industry were diverse. There were 16 respondents that were interviewed virtually via Microsoft Teams and the data was collected using the qualitative data analysis approach which was instrumental in acquiring a more profound understanding of the diverse experiences of the participants regarding the leadership styles that influence positive employee brand advocacy.

## **Keywords**

Leadership styles, employee brand advocacy, social exchange theory.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

**Name:**           **Millicent Hope Modise**

**Date:**           **4 November 2024**

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### **1.1 Purpose of the study**

Employee advocacy is the act of actively promoting an organisation and its initiatives. Forbes (2018) conducted a study that found that the employees relaying brand messages resulted in 561% engagement, compared to the brand itself. The study also revealed that the companies with employee engagement surpassed those lacking engagement by 202%. Scholars often mention that a company's employees are its dedicated supporters. As a result of this belief, some companies have started to place a tremendous deal of importance on employee advocacy.

Creating value from the management practices and fostering interactions with both employees and customers play a vital role in influencing the efficacy of leadership within the organisations (Azzahra, Savandha & Syarif 2024). Organisations have a responsibility to recognise their leadership's contributions as it is critical for the ultimate success or failure of the organization. Hence, an organisation's leadership style is regarded as one of the most important features influencing the interest and commitment of its employees (Akpapere et al., 2019; Bhargavi & Yaseen, 2016; Obiwuru et al., 2011).

The objective of this exploratory study was to acquire a deeper understanding of the leadership styles that influence positive employee brand advocacy which is advantageous for the establishment of the internal stakeholders in shaping the effectiveness and success of the company (Men & Bowen, 2017). The employee brand advocacy construct has been explored in but is not limited to the hospitality industry (Yao, Konar & Wei, 2024) and in the tourism industry (Akgunduz, Turksoy & Nisar, 2023). A segment of the financial industry which is the medical scheme administration industry has not received much attention hence the need to explore it further.

### **1.2 Context of the study**

In 2022, 15.8% of the people in South Africa had medical aid coverage decreased from the previous year which was 16% (Statista, 2022). This means about 9.7 million individuals had healthcare, leaving 52 million relying on public health services, making up about 84.2% of the population (Statista, 2022). The medical schemes provide members with the access to comprehensive health coverage and there are 35 accredited medical scheme administrators in South Africa, with five administrators who are the biggest and the most dominant in the country (Medicalschemes, 2024). The changes that transpired in the market landscape and the advancement in technology, together with competition are

pushing the companies to transform (Gallo et al., 2019).

The reputation and external relationships of a company are largely influenced by its employees who serve as the communication ambassadors (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Frank (2015) suggests that the employees are reputation builders for the organisations in the current market where experiences are sold over the products or services and internal members can reveal the truth about the company's values and culture. Social media usage is associated with increased brand awareness, recognition, reputation, and revenue growth, as the business experiences expansion and financial gains because of increased popularity in the market (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Gremler et al., 2001; Miles et al., 2011; Schmitt et al., 2011; Springer, 2015; Thelen, 2020). The other side of social media is that it has complicated the workplace by altering the employee's attitudes, behaviour and performance, specifically regarding their well-being (Sakka & Ahammad, n.d.). Employee well-being is a complicated concept which has gained significant attention in recent years, and it links with a key aspect which is employee happiness which is a subjective measure that is influenced by an individual's perceptions and emotions. Sakka and Ahammad (n.d.) state that the concept of work happiness has been intertwined with related terminologies such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job involvement which were used to measure happiness in the earlier years.

Although Thelen and Men's (2020) study emphasises leadership communication as a key factor in encouraging employee advocacy, there is no emphasis on the type of leadership style that the leader may use to foster such. Blaha, Matecius and Kaňakova (2005), in the management theory recognise three main approaches to defining an effective leadership. The authors state that firstly, leadership is based on personal characteristics and traits which are associated to the leadership styles, secondly, leadership is based on the way the leaders use their behaviour to influence others, lastly it is based on the leaders' performance in particular environments. This demonstrates that leadership plays a critical part in employee behaviour, however, there is a gap in the identity of the leadership style. An organisation's leadership style is assumed to influence its success, ultimately affecting its performance (Akpapere et al., 2019).

Improving credibility and reliability is crucial therefore, favorable feedback from the staff members can greatly influence the way the public views an organisation and the services it provides. Having a positive reputation as an employer can help bring in employees and keep them around longer in the company's field of work, therefore there is no requirement to spend on onboarding new employees.

The cultivation of consumer loyalty is crucial for success. Satisfied employees are more likely to provide outstanding customer service, hence improving employee happiness, the retention rates, and customer contentment is key. The presence of an employee image can enhance outcomes, thereby resulting in improved earnings and diminished costs related to customer attrition or negative press.

This research focused on tackling the obstacles faced by the businesses. The medical scheme administration field is frequently plagued by turnover rates that can have effects on the employee morale levels and productivity while also affecting brand advocacy negatively. The industry is complex because of challenges such as increasing healthcare costs, increased burden of disease, medical technology and innovation as well as complicated regulations.

### **1.3 Business need**

In the current digital age, the employees are increasingly considered as brand ambassadors with their online presence directly or indirectly influencing customer perception (Ahmad et al., 2022). The leaders in the organisations are considered as the culture shapers which impacts the way the employees show up in the platforms, therefore, understanding how the leadership styles can influence word of mouth marketing through employee advocacy is important because it translates into a significant competitive advantage. In managing the medical administration operations, the organisations need sustainable capabilities to enhance the member experience with tools that improve the access to benefits and services.

The leader's ability to be effective is influenced by the organisational culture, and whether they buy into it, furthermore, the direction received from the management and their ability to resolve matters also influences the leader's behaviour (Morandi & Cicchetti, 2024). A strong organisational culture is essential for successful employer branding (Williams, 2002; Kaur, Pingle & Jaiswal, 2024).

A leader may influence culture through a range of actions such as giving rewards, giving attention to the employees, employing positive reactions when there is a crisis, as well as engaging good recruitment policies even when they employ new employees or when they promote employees (Morandi & Cicchetti, 2024). South Africa's healthcare industry is encountering hurdles such as the development rate and escalating medical inflation expenses. The industry has witnessed a consolidation of administration companies in the last two decades, thus leading to a drastic 80% decline in the medical schemes and a

decrease in administrators from 37 to six (Medical schemes, 2024). The private sphere where these entities mainly function caters to a certain demographic due to the expenses. Despite these obstacles, the call for healthcare options is on the rise. This request provides opportunities for the companies to increase their market presence.

Managing the company efficiently requires occupying managerial positions with the most valuable employees. It is imperative that the managers lead with the appropriate leadership style to improve performance and manage the organisation effectively. The process of leadership involves affecting people in a dynamic way where the individual can influence a group of people in a specific period, under specific organisational conditions, to get them to participate at their own discretion in the pursuit to achieve the team's objectives (Gallo et al., 2019). As a result of the employees advocating for their organisation, more skilled employees may be attracted to join an organisation therefore, it would recruit suitably skilled individuals (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Wilden et al., 2010).

The intention for the insights of this study was to fill a void in understanding the specific leadership styles that fuel employee advocacy in the financial industry, specifically within the medical scheme administration organisations. This analysis will enrich the understanding of the factors that promote the employee endorsement of a brand within the African medical aid administration industry, and it will also provide valuable recommendations for the organisations seeking to improve their brand image. The study's objective was to provide guidance to the human resource practitioners and leaders to develop leadership programmes that are aimed at fostering employee brand ambassadorship. Furthermore, the study can provide support to the organisations to select and train leaders who are capable of inspiring employees to become vocal brand advocates.

#### **1.4 Theoretical need**

This study expands an understanding of the leadership theory by examining its influence on a specific organisational behaviour within a distinct industry context. This can strengthen employer brand reputation, attract top talent, and increase trust among the customers.

There is evidence that the advocacy behaviour inside an organisation is influenced by the employees' relationships in the organisation and their level of commitment, as these drivers influence advocacy behaviours (Lee & Kim, 2021; Walden & Kingsley Westerman, 2018; Yue, 2021). Organisations should promote Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

(OCB) by actively communicating with and supporting their employees (Walden & Westerman, 2018). The current literature is unclear on how the leadership styles and characteristics influence employee citizenship behaviour which fosters brand advocacy. The study aimed to gather insights from the participants' lived experiences therefore, enhancing the understanding of the leadership behaviors that positively influence the employees of organisations that have a high brand advocacy. Secondly, the study aimed to highlight the leadership styles of the organisations that have a high and positive employee brand advocacy. It also aimed to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on the leadership's role to determine employee attitudes and behaviour beyond the traditional metrics such as performance or satisfaction.

The importance of conducting research in the setting is evident when studying the connection of the leadership styles and its influence on employee brand advocacy in the medical scheme administration industry. Unique challenges such as the compliance and regulatory requirements as well as the complexities of product development are the characteristics that are present in this industry. Investigating the influence of the leadership styles on employee brand advocacy can provide insights for both the practitioners and scholars.

### **1.5 Research problem**

The employees are reliable sources of information about the organisations, and they serve an important role that transcends boundaries by sharing significant news about the organisation with external individuals (Walden et al., 2018). Men (2014) defines this boundary as the "voluntary promotion and defence of a company by an employee". Organisations must promote to their employees what makes them unique and desirable employers by using employer branding conceptualisation to communicate with their employees and retain them as loyal customers (Sharma, 2019).

Organisations should form relationships with employees that result in them having positive connections with the company, such that they will speak positively about them. As a result, some researchers have mentioned that leadership is essential when it comes to delivering brand-aligned experiences by motivating and training employees to create and adapt their own knowledge and skills (Xiong, 2023; Barros-Arrieta & Garcia-Cali, 2021; Buil et al., 2019).

The study was due to the unknown styles of leadership that can successfully foster the employees' attitude and behaviour that contribute positively towards internal branding

(Xiong, 2023). A growing focus on employee brand advocacy has been seen in the fields of public relations, as well as marketing and within the businesses. The studies by Altimeter (2015) and Thelen (2020) revealed that 45% of the digital strategists consider employee advocacy as a top priority which as it has seen an increase of 191% from 2013 to 2015. This heightened interest is due to the high level of trust people have in the information shared by individuals, as opposed to those gathered from other sources (Murray, 1991). According to the studies conducted by The Nielsen Group (2015) and Thelen (2020), it was found that 83% of the respondents from 60 countries were inclined to follow recommendations from friends and acquaintances than trusting messages from corporations, with only 15% percent showing trust in the corporate communications. Employee advocacy's importance is growing; however, it has not received attention in public relations research (Men, 2014).

The study intended to gain insights into the leadership styles that have a positive influence on the employee brand advocacy behaviour of three medical scheme administration organisations in South Africa with substantially different organisational cultures.

The study aimed to achieve certain goals which are:

1. To identify the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry;
2. To pinpoint the drivers of employee brand advocacy;
3. To assess the leadership styles that had the most significant influence on brand advocacy; and
4. To investigate the impact of social exchange on leadership.

The most avid supporters of an organisation are its employees. Therefore, the organisations depend on staff advocacy which is the endorsement of an organisation and its initiatives by its own workers, and they are seen as notable marketing assets (Božac et al., 2017; De Kerpel & Van Kerckhove, 2023). Ngodo (2008) states that the leader and the subordinate influence each other to accomplish organisational goals in a reciprocal process of social influence therefore, this study sought to enhance the understanding of the leadership styles that motivate the employees to be brand ambassadors of their organisations.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This study investigated how the leadership styles can close the gap by enabling the

employees to promote their brands while upholding compliance and professionalism. The medical scheme administrators aiming to excel in a competitive landscape can get essential insights by recognising the leadership styles that foster employee loyalty and facilitate responsible good brand communication (Smith, 2014).

For the organisations to successfully implement a supportive culture that provides a clear direction, there is a need for financial packages that are competitive in the market and beneficial to employees, and the leaders in this industry should lead by example, by demonstrating the desired behaviour, values and attitudes by means of involving the employees in forming a company culture that can lead to increased engagement and create a more positive and productive work environment (Kaur, Pingle & Jaiswal, 2024). In chapter 2 the literature review will be outlined.

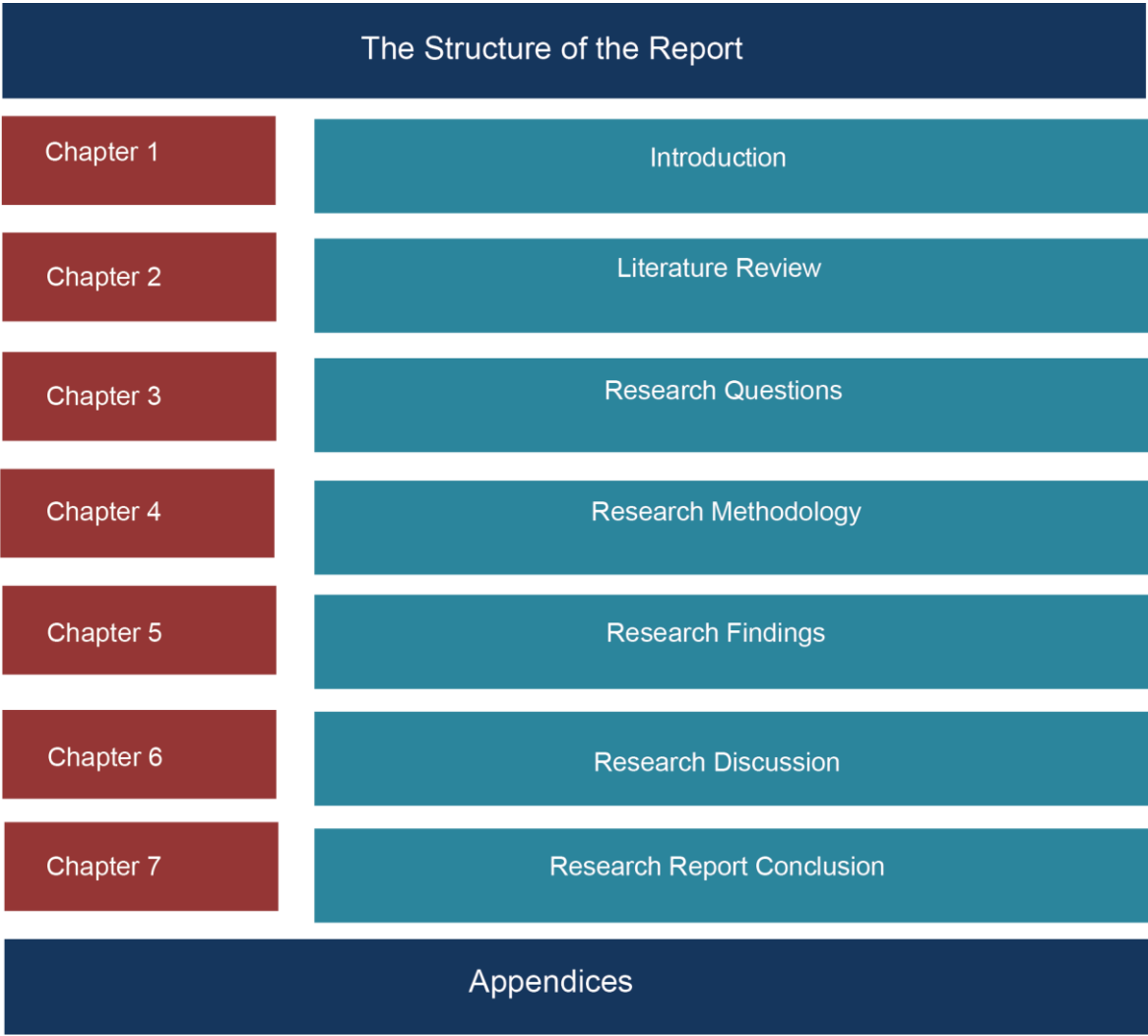


Figure 1.1: The study’s structure

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an introduction and a context to the research issue. Chapter 2 outlines the findings of the literature review to get a deeper understanding of the current research that was applicable to the study's problem. The literature review enabled the researcher to identify the gaps, validate the study topic, and formulate the research questions. The literature review structure is displayed in Figure 2.1 below:

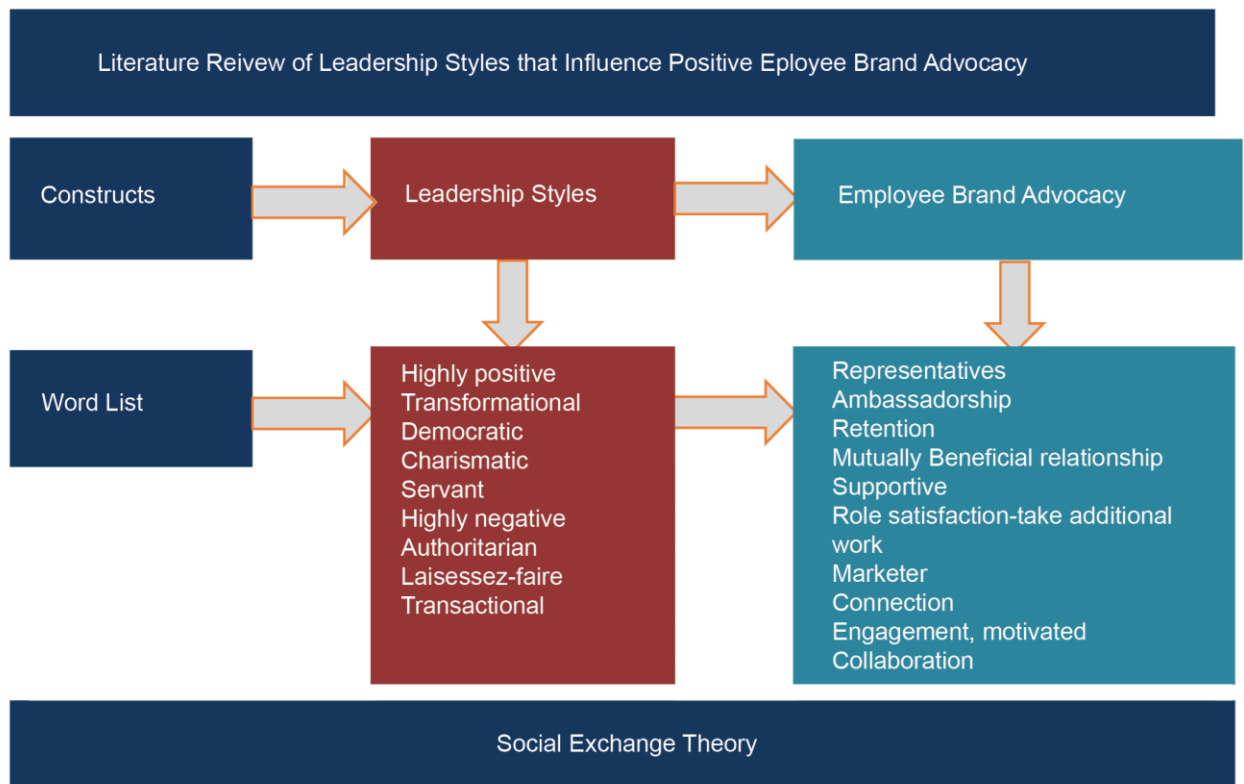


Figure 2.1: Research structure

### 2.2 Leadership

Leadership has been a disputed topic that is hard for the academics to define. Iszatt-White et al. (2018) stated that from the 1970s, various academics have had their own definition of leadership. Iszatt-White. (2018) did a Google search of the word 'leadership' in 2017, and they were presented with roughly 774 000 000 results and on another search of 'define leadership' they had 90 800 000 results which demonstrates that the construct of leadership is continuously evolving. Other scholars define leadership as the exercise of inspiring or motivating others towards achieving a specified goal. Others speak of creating a vision for the future. Throughout the 20th century, the studies on leadership have not

reached an agreement on a definition (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Sofi & Devanadhen, 2015; Xu & Wang, 2008; Bass, 1990). The studies of this phenomenon that were conducted by various authors, have suggested that a dominant paradigm for studying leadership does not exist. In addition, there is little agreement on how to build and apply leadership (Bennis, 2007; Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Vroom & Jago, 2007). As Ngodo (2008) points out, leadership is a way of guiding others. It is the ability to steer affairs in a way that has a positive impact on a group of people's behaviour. Ngodo (2008) states that the leader and subordinate influence each other to accomplish organisational goals in a reciprocal process of social influence. Sun (2002) supports that view by emphasising that a leader is someone who influences others to make better decisions towards obtaining the group's goals.

For this study, the definition of leadership that is referenced is “leadership is a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Iszatt-White et al., 2018) which supports Silva's (2016) definition. Silva (2016) developed a definition that extends beyond Daft's (2011) relationship-based perspective, framing it as the interaction that occurs when individuals have been influenced to accept someone as their leader and they take a position of being a follower to achieve a common goal (Silva, 2016, p. 3). The studies on leadership have made substantial advances in understanding effective leadership styles, such as those that are deemed to be positive such as the authentic, charismatic, empowering, ethical, transformational and the servant leadership styles which have been linked to positive outcomes (Fischer & Sitkin, 2023). On the contrary, the negative leadership styles such as abusive supervision or destructive leadership have been linked with negative consequences, however, a growing number of studies have suggested that the relationship between the leadership styles and outcomes is more complex than previously thought (Fischer & Sitkin, 2023).

Leadership traits, their work experiences, skills and how they manage tasks are essential attributes which enable the leaders to contribute towards the success of the organisation and to also perform their tasks and manage their responsibilities (Morandi & Cicchetti, (2024). The trait theory established in the early 20th century mentioned that all great leaders possess the traits of great men. As part of the trait theory, these characteristics or attributes were examined to discover how these men became so successful (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). A quote by Ken Blanchard captures leadership as “the key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority”. The leadership styles are a derivative of leadership. An individual's leadership style can be described as a form of cross-situational

behavioural consistency. It describes their way of communicating with their subordinates. The leaders use the leadership styles to motivate their followers. Arvonen and Pettersson (1999) assert that various leadership practices yield distinct impacts on organisational outcomes.

Upon the examination of additional modern leadership philosophies, such as value-based leadership, pragmatic leadership, authentic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, ethical leadership, and spiritual leadership, it was determined not to address them in this research report due to their significant overlaps with the transformational and transactional leadership philosophies (Anderson & Sun, 2017). The *ubuntu* leadership style was examined because of the growing *ubuntu* traits in leadership.

The focus has since transitioned from the trait theories regarding leaders, to their behaviours and leadership styles (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). The constraints of these theories prompted the incorporation of situational factors in assessing leadership efficacy. “The situational and contingency theories of leadership facilitated the emergence of context-sensitive leadership” (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000, p. 2). The efficacy of principals relied on their capacity to analyse and comprehend the changing aspects and subtleties of circumstances, along with the implementation of a suitable management manner for each context (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). According to the Trait Theory, the leadership qualities indicate that specific inherent traits set leaders apart from the non-leaders. Characteristics such as intelligence, self-assurance, honesty, and social skills are thought to be naturally present, in the leaders. Behavioral theories emphasise the conduct and actions of the leaders, other than their characteristics. Buyandelger (2024) supports that by analysing the ideas, it enables the leaders to comprehend several methodologies for effectively adapting to different settings.



Figure 2.2: The trait theory (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991)

### **2.3 Leadership styles**

Leadership is not about one individual; it is often a team effort where various leadership theories have focused on how the leaders interact and engage with their teams and how everyone can take part in leadership. Furthermore, the other studies suggest that leadership is not about specific individuals, but it is about how the entire group works together (Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2012). Building on the early studies on distributed leadership, Gronn (2008, 2009); as well as Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012) introduced the concept of hybrid leadership to describe the coexistence of various leadership forms as a single context. Similarly, Collinson and Collinson (2009) propose the notion of blended leadership, aligning with Gronn's (2009) perspective on the combination structure of leadership, which incorporates both the structured and developing roles.

Organisations today rely on the leadership styles of their leaders to succeed, as the role of leaders has changed. Mintzberg (2010) argues that true leaders involve themselves in what they are doing rather than for personal gain, so they engage others with consideration and modesty. Mullins (2000) as cited in Velu, Manxhari, Demiri, and Jahaj (2017) defines the leadership style as "the way in which a manager chooses to behave toward employees as well as how the leadership functions are carried out".

As history has it, many scholars have different definitions of leadership since it is not an easy concept to define (Silva, 2016; Peretomode, 2015). Many definitions and explanations have been propagated as a result (McCleskey, 2014). Leadership consists of the desire to positively impact other people's lives (Mango, 2018). It is bidirectional and involves the leaders and followers (Youssef, 2013) and this is also supported by Northouse (2016) that leadership is a relational aspect with a mutually influenced relationship amongst the leaders and followers aimed at achieving a common goal or completing a specific task.

Various scholars have indicated that there is an overlap and there are more similarities than differences between the way that the managers lead such as transformational leadership which is identical to integrative public leadership as stated by Burns (1978, 2003) who is supported by Sun and Anderson (2012). Ideological and pragmatic leadership are conceptually similar with transformational leadership (Antonakis & House, 2014). Similarly, the transformational leadership component regarding visionary leadership is also a valuable factor of spiritual leadership.

The commonly studied newfound styles of leadership are ideological, pragmatic, servant,

authentic, ethical, spiritual, integrative public, and shared/distributed leadership (Anderson & Sun, 2017). The leaders with charm and originality influence their followers to respond to them and they internalise their goals, values, and beliefs, resulting in the followers wanting to imitate them (Anderson & Sun, 2017). An individual's charisma is their idealised influence, and their inspiration is their ability to articulate a vision that inspires their followers.

The historiometric analysis of 60 historical leaders revealed ideological leadership as a distinct style (Anderson & Sun, 2017). As a result, an ideological leader's vision emphasises the need to maintain personal values and standards as well as the need for social change (Anderson & Sun, 2017). The authors further state that typically, pragmatic leadership focuses on identifying cost-effective solutions to the problems that people and the organisations encounter daily. It is a problem-centred approach.

Democratic leaders value collaboration and shared decision-making. These leaders engage all the team members in defining critical objectives and formulating strategies to realise their objectives. Democratic leadership can be regarded as the style that depends significantly on the leader operating as a facilitator instead of merely providing directives or commands tasks. These leaders strive to cultivate an environment that fosters mutual comprehension. The participative leaders foster organisational development by empowering the workers to contribute to decision-making. Flexibility and accountability facilitate the generation of innovative concepts (Goleman, 2000).

### **2.3.1 Autocratic leadership**

The individuals who practice autocratic leadership styles prioritise performance (Fiaz et al., 2017). The leaders of the organisations lead with absolute command and authority (Harms et al., 2018) which demonstrates that there is one individual that makes the decisions with minimal consultation from the employees. The leaders give instructions to those that they lead and are fully accountable for the delivery (Van Vugt et al., 2004). The autocratic leaders prioritise the implementation of tasks, the solving of business problems and the adherence to deadlines (Van Vugt et al., 2004). There is a lack of balance as the style could be perceived as being distant and cold (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018). The leader is responsible for all the deliverables in the organisation, and takes responsibility for the planning of the work, and the regulatory aspects because they do not trust that their followers would deliver, which would result in negative outcomes for the organisation (Fiaz et al., 2017). This system consists of formalised, centralised processes that are defined and structured, furthermore they are placed to ensure that the followers

do their responsibilities effectively and are compliant with the requirements of the leadership. The same studies suggest that financial incentives are the driving force and motivation for these leaders hence their deliverables and outcomes of the results are linked to financial incentives.

Combe (2014) establishes that the authoritarian leadership style does work well in environments where stringent oversight is required, however, it is not successful in the environments where the followers thrive due to creativity and autonomy. According to Rast et al. (2013), in situations where there is uncertainty, the autocratic leaders are more likely to gain support than those that do not apply the autocratic style which demonstrates that in highly ambiguous situations, autocratic leadership can be successful, therefore the organisation would benefit from a diverse group of leaders.

Autocratic leadership can have both advantages and disadvantages. One of the primary benefits of autocratic leadership is its ability to produce exceptional results in a timely manner (Bârgau, 2015). This method has the advantage of enabling rapid decision-making by allowing the leader to independently oversee the process, thereby eliminating the necessity for lengthy discussions to reach a conclusion. These leaders do have the ability to take control of difficult and challenging situations. On the contrary, when the leaders take decisions without consulting their teams, the long-term negative effects could be the lack of independence by the followers (Khajeh, 2018) since they do not have a voice, which might result in low morale as they feel undervalued (Khajeh, 2018). The followers cannot take ownership of the processes since they are not consulted about the change, therefore, they could resist the changes proposed by these leaders. Fiaz et al. (2017) mention that the lack of diverse voices could be harmful to the organisation because having a few individuals making the decisions without consultation would limit their capacity to grow and be inclusive.

### **2.3.2 Democratic leadership**

These leaders prioritise the individuals within an organisation. This leadership style emphasises interpersonal ties and maintains a robust communication network throughout the organisation (Sotirofski, 2018). This indicates that the employees can participate in and impact the decision-making process (Van Vugt et al., 2004; Freimuth & Svenander 2024), although participation is encouraged, the final decision is taken by the leader (Combe, 2014). The democratic leaders are therefore less authoritarian than the autocratic leaders. When the employees feel trusted and are involved in the structures of the business, this gives them a sense of assurance therefore they increase their levels of

commitment and dedication to their role which enhances creativity, innovation, and autonomy (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018). Combe (2014) asserts that it improves employee happiness which is advantageous for the organisation.

The organisations that are led by democratic leaders have a structure in which the leadership responsibilities are distributed among all the group members, thereby resulting in the leader being perceived as an integral part of the team (Fiaz et al., 2017). The leaders utilise this style to show that they are esteemed contributors and are appreciated (Van Vugt et al., 2004). Moreover, Combe (2014) asserts that the style is advantageous in contexts where the organisations must effectively integrate changes. Democratic leadership is inappropriate in scenarios requiring rapid decision-making (Combe, 2014, p. 158), as it involves consulting all organisational members which can be exceedingly time-consuming. In addition to its effectiveness during transitions, it possesses a further meaningful benefit. It typically involves motivated and devoted personnel who are capable of exerting effort to attain favourable outcomes (Bârgau, 2015; Freimuth & Svenander 2024). The likelihood of the employees feeling empowered and appreciated increases when they are given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes and are trusted, which in turn motivates them to remain engaged in their work and participate actively. This method has the potential to foster a collaborative environment in the workplace. Nevertheless, democratic leadership may face challenges during the decision-making process, which can lead to a precarious steadiness between the empowerment of employees and the preservation of control (Bârgau 2015; Freimuth & Svenander 2024). The leaders must possess the capacity to strike a balance between delegation and control.

The democratic governance leaders employing a democratic leadership style prioritise the individuals within an organisation. Sotirowski (2018) suggests that this leadership style emphasises interpersonal ties and maintains a robust communication network throughout the organisation which indicates that the employees are permitted to participate and affect the decision-making process (Van Vugt et al., 2004, p. 2), although the leader ultimately makes the final decision (Combe, 2014, p. 158). Consequently, the democratic leaders exhibit less authoritarian control compared to the autocratic ones. Furthermore, when the employees see that they are sufficiently trusted to engage in the decision-making processes, their dedication to work and their inventiveness are enhanced (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018; Freimuth & Svenander 2024). The style improves employee happiness which is advantageous for the organisation. The fundamental premise of democratic leadership posits that the individuals thrive in work situations that foster collaboration,

fulfilment, and high performance (Jones et al., 2016). The organisations led by democratic leaders distribute leadership responsibilities across all the group members, thus resulting in the leader being perceived as an integral part of the team (Fiaz et al., 2017).

By demonstrating to the group members that they are valued contributors, the leaders who adopt a democratic leadership style establish themselves as an essential member of the team (Van Vugt et al., 2004). Furthermore, according to Combe (2014), democratic leadership is advantageous in situations where the organisations must effectively assimilate changes.

The decision to implement change has been deliberated democratically inside the organisation, hence reducing resistance. Democratic leadership is inappropriate in scenarios requiring rapid decision-making (Combe, 2014), as it involves consulting all the organisational members, which can be exceedingly time-consuming. In addition to its efficacy during transitions, democratic leadership possesses another significant advantage. It typically involves motivated and loyal employees who are capable of exerting effort to attain favourable outcomes (Bârgau, 2015). This arises from the employees' perception of being trusted and their ability to contribute to organisational decisions which will then often foster a more positive and collaborative work climate. The disadvantage of this leadership style is the inability to make judgements swiftly. The problem for the democratic leaders is striking a balance between exercising control and allowing others to assume leadership (Bârgau, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Transactional leadership**

Even though the authors have highlighted critical missing elements from the two-factor transformational/transactional leadership theory, the evidence shows that there are linkages concerning several leadership styles that are presently being studied, which is challenging and suggests 'construct proliferation' and probably 'concept redundancy' (Howell & Shamir, 2005; Morrow, 1983).

Transactional leadership is characterised by the maintenance of current performance and minimal or gradual improvements in a communal affiliation. This is characterised by the act of rewarding or penalising behaviour. The explicit objectives of defining roles, emphasising tasks and follower expectations, offering rewards, and outlining objectives all have the two-fold effect of filtering a mutually dependent relationship while simultaneously boosting follower compliance and decreasing resistance. Cheng, Yang and Sheu (2014) suggest that "transactional leadership has a positive impact on the

creativity” and entrepreneurial orientation of the middle-managers. Transactional leadership is characterised by an effort of the parties that are willing to trade one thing for another. It can be mutually beneficial between the individuals who partake in this transaction which could encourage the employees to improve on their performance with anticipation that they would be rewarded for their efforts therefore, making it a give and take transaction (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024).

Rewarding or punishing behaviour is indicative of this kind of leadership behaviour. The explicit purpose of outlining goals, defining roles, emphasising duties and follower expectations, as well as rewarding followers is to increase compliance, decrease resistance, and foster a reliance on one another for assistance.

#### **2.3.4 *Servant leadership***

Studies have investigated the leadership approaches that impact how the employees support their organisations. Servant leadership is found to enhance the employees' sense of empowerment and the value they perceive in relationships, with their colleagues, this in turn boosts their support for the organisation (Thelen, 2021). Moreover, servant leadership has an impact on employee advocacy by improving communication satisfaction and the quality of relationships between the employees and the organisation (Thelen, 2021). The leadership practices within activism also play a significant role in influencing employee support for the organisation; and this is influenced by how the employees identify personally with their leaders and the quality of relationships, within the organisation (Yang et al., 2022). When it comes to concerns, the leaders who focus on issues are seen as having a positive impact on employees' support for green initiatives, both directly and indirectly via environmental Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and organisational backing according to Crucke et al. (2021). Also important is the integrity of the leaders in enhancing the bond between the leaders who value concerns and the employees who support initiatives as highlighted by Crucke et al. (2021).

Servant leadership ensures that other people's superior priority needs are met. It focuses on both the development of those who serve and those who are led. The concept of shared or distributed leadership is most often used in the context of multi-industry collaboration. The transformational, democratic or the servant leader enable others to visualise the organisation's future and is influential by exhibiting convincing influences to make others act.

### **2.3.5 Charismatic leadership**

The leaders that surpass their own self-interests, empower and develop followers, as well as articulate visions which benefit the collective and these are known as socialised charismatic leaders. On the other hand, Howell and Shamir (2005) argue that there are charismatic leaders who manipulate their followers to achieve their own goals, and they are authoritative narcissists which is deemed as the "dark side". It is clear from the explosion of the supposedly new leadership styles since 2000 that these theories are not integrated. Due to their characters, these leaders can organise the masses and win them over and eventually obtain their support with great ease (Grabo et al., 2017). The following leaders employ specific signals to persuade their followers and influence them once they have their attention. They can build excitement with their audience by using their physical abilities which include the tone of voice, the physical gestures, as well as the expressions, and they have an ability to use creative and persuasive language that gets their audiences' emotions aroused (Grabo et al., 2017). They have an ability to use their persuasive abilities well. For the leaders to inspire their people to go above and beyond performance standards, they employ symbolic gestures, emotional appeal, and influence methods. They are seen as agents of change who inspire and motivate others to follow them (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014).

### **2.3.6 Transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership is deemed to have a positive effect on the followers as the leader's vision is communicated clearly by these leaders (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024). The leaders apply the value system approach and invest time in shaping the employee's behaviour to be aligned with the organisation. These leaders evoke emotions of inspiration, aspirations, and motivation in their followers. Morandi and Cicchetti (2023) support that these leaders demonstrate citizenship behaviour which is the work engagement that they strive for in their organisations.

### **2.3.7 Empowering leadership**

Empowering leadership is the process of the delegation of power and responsibilities to the followers which motivates the teams, or the followers inspired by the behaviour of the leader (Cheong et al., 2019). The idea of empowering leadership has been developed in accordance with a growing body of positive scholarship. As a result, there are benefits, ethical outcomes, and principles associated with this style and there is an increasing amount of scholarly and professional interest in the efficacy of empowering leadership, especially when it comes to its positive aspects (Cheong et al., 2019).

### **2.3.8 Ubuntu leadership**

In contrast to the leadership models originating from the Western world, *ubuntu* leadership emerges as a concept within the realms of business management effectiveness in society and governance. The explanation of guidance, its impact on values-based leadership through relational methods and its involvement in literature relating to leadership in Africa have garnered significant interest, from scholars in recent times (Lerutla & Steyn, 2021; Pérezts, Russon & Painter, 2020). Its implications in contemporary business settings have not been extensively explored (Ngunjiri 2016). *Ubuntu* embodies values such as humanity, respect, as well as sharing and compassion (Broodryk, 2006). Creff (2004) describes it as a philosophy centered around communal well-being and offering ethical support to the individuals with potential impacts on governance structures. The term "ubuntu," originating from the Bantu Nguni languages and encapsulated in the phrase "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" which translates to "I am because we are" underscores the interconnectedness of individuals in society (Ncube, 2010). Van der Merwe (1996) defines it as recognising and embracing others' humanity in all its forms and expressions. *Ubuntu* is a philosophy of leadership according to Ncube (2010). The author explored these concepts of *ubuntu* to be incorporated within a leadership context in the *ubuntu* definition as there were regarded to be influential (Elkington, 2020). A dedication to environmental sustainability and mutual benefit is the source of the utmost good, in essence by preserving the environment, humanity is guaranteed that the resources required to promote human welfare are available. *Ubuntu* suggests that leadership is a form of stewardship that is intended to benefit all. Metz (2015) as well as Elkington (2020) elucidate that, from a person-centered perspective, leadership as stewardship, suggests that the optimal method to assist an individual in accordance with the ethic of *ubuntu* is to facilitate their evolution into a fulfilled person who engages in a community-focused lifestyle and is concerned for the welfare of others (p. 399).

### **2.3.9 Visionary leadership**

Although the leadership theories have dominated organisational behaviour research, there is a substantial vacuum in the comprehension of the direct impact of specific leadership styles, such as transformational, charismatic, or visionary leadership on organisational effectiveness. Kim et al. (2023) emphasise the significance of visionary leadership in the development of positive team dynamics. They also maintain that the leaders can inspire and motivate the employees to work collaboratively towards organisational objectives by communicating a shared vision that is rooted in social values. However, it is crucial to remember that a vision alone is insufficient. The leaders must

consider the broader implications of their decisions and engage a diverse array of stakeholders in the visioning process. Taylor, Cornelius and Colvin (2014) indicate that additional research is required to verify the assertions that transform organisations. This conclusion is supported by the limited empirical evidence.

Visionary leadership has a key distinction from the other leadership styles which is its approach to vision. These leaders find it essential to communicate a clear, inspiring vision that aligns the organisation's goals with the individual aspirations.

By sharing their personal vision with the employees, it serves as a deep motivator and guide for the employees to understand the organisation's purpose and direction which in return would drive engagement and performance (Taylor, Cornelius & Colvin, 2014). These leaders inspire their employees by providing them with meaningful responsibilities, by fostering their growth, and by articulating a compelling future vision. These leaders prioritise individual development, thereby challenging their teams to attain their full potential, and providing opportunities for growth to achieve extraordinary results.

### **2.3.10      *Leadership styles with positive impact***

The transformational and democratic leadership characteristics inspire and motivate the employees with a clear and shared vision (Zaman & Abbasi, 2020). The leader may empower the employees and encourage them to feel passionate about the company's mission and become vocal advocates. The servant leadership attributes prioritise employee welfare and development and may promote a collaborative and supportive ecosystem (Hughes et al., 2018). It has the potential to contribute to positive brand promotion by cultivating a sense of value and investment in the company's success among the employees. Democratic leadership is characterised by the leader's recognition of the value of employee input and ideas, as well as their commitment to open communication and employee involvement in decision-making.

The employees may feel empowered and take ownership of their work, thus leading to increased brand loyalty and advocacy. This positive impact may lead the employees to have the confidence and be motivated to express themselves by promoting the organisation's brand.

### **2.3.11      *Leadership styles with negative impact***

The authoritarian leadership characteristics rely on strict command and control tactics which adopt the micromanagement of employees (Hughes et al., 2018). The employees

may become disengaged and may even harbor resentment towards the company, therefore, hindering brand advocacy. The *laissez-faire* leadership traits provide minimal direction and leaves the employees to their own devices which lacks clear vision and goals (Wong & Giessner, 2018). This could leave the employees uninformed and unmotivated, thereby leading to a lack of brand connection and advocacy. The transactional leaders are said to focus on short-term goals and rewards for completing tasks and therefore become dependent on a system of rewards and punishments (Pieterse et al., 2010).

## **2.4 Senior and middle management**

Middle management is central in an organisation as it acts as a bridge between the senior managers and the employees. Middle management is a job that is held in a hierarchical organisation that is primarily situated between the "operating core and the apex" (Harding et al., 2014, p. 4) of the hierarchy. Their function is to oversee a particular business unit at an intermediate level that is above the first level of supervision and includes everything below the senior-most strategic management level. They act and implement on the business strategy from senior management which includes importing ideas, suggestions, and insights to both the senior managers and the employees (Harding et al., 2014). There is ambiguity and uncertainty in the positions and the role they perform. Their roles are subjected to changes such as business restructures in the organisation and down-sizing which would cause them anxieties. The roles become routine, and they lose autonomy which results in control over the roles they perform. In certain instances, middle management is oppressed by the senior managers and this behaviour reduces their ability for ethical belief and increases a sense of personal insecurities.

Despite the uncertainty and ambiguity of their position, the middle managers also engage in complex, multifaceted processes of sense-making in their formal relationships with the senior management as well as in lateral, informal relationships in the peer environment (Kempster & Gregory, 2017).

Their intermediary position can be utilised to access concepts from many information sources and facilitate the differentiation and integration of multiple knowledge types. This encompasses the operational knowledge imparted by the supervisors and employees. Concurrently, the intermediate managers distinguish and prioritise various knowledge sources, particularly leveraging the upward relationships with the top managers (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent, 2016).

## **2.5 Brand advocacy**

There is no universal definition of employee advocacy because the field is still in its formative stages. Even though there has not been extensive research on it, “it has become a buzz word” (Men, 2014). Božac et al. (2017) refer to employee advocacy as an employees' promotion of the organisation. Similarly, Schweitzer and Lyons (2008) define employee advocacy as “an act of employees becoming part-time marketers to attract potential customers and employees to an organisation”. Various scholars have similarities in the definition. The definition by Ahmad et al. (2022) states that the employees' advocacy behaviour is an expression of voluntary commitments to their organisations, was used for this study. Men and Yue (2019) highlight that employee advocacy is thought of as an additional role.

Advocates are defined as the employees who actively endorse their organisation and its offerings (Andersson, 2019; Bettencourt & Brown, 2003). The public relations researchers Thelen and Men (2020) emphasise that a key measure of an organisation's bond with its workforce lies in employee advocacy. The leaders and managers are under pressure to cultivate positive employee behaviour as the organisations deal with intensified detachment, thereby increasing destruction, and falseness (Xu et al., 2019). The shareholders look to the employees as corporate ambassadors and brand advocates (Men, 2014).

Earlier studies have predominantly concentrated on the consumers' advocacy behaviour (Jayasimha & Billore, 2016), so it would be beneficial to investigate the employees' advocacy behaviour as well.

In conditions where the employees demonstrate a positive brand advocacy, it is deemed as a competitive advantage for the organisations. The EveryoneSocial study mentioned that “an employee advocacy program can deliver 48% larger deals and drive 16% better win rates” (Kunsman, 2021; Thelen et al., 2022). The perceptions and attitudes by the employees towards the organisation, the employers, and executives, may be affected negatively if they observe their employers and executives acting in ways that contradict the rules and regulations of the organisation. This can lead to the employees following the same path. The employees who are disengaged, do not connect with the company brand and they become disassociated with it. This could increase employee retention and increase the turnover costs for the organisation which could subsequently lead to an unstable workforce as the organisation loses experienced skilled employees. An organisational relationship between the employees and the organisation can be

established by exploring the antecedents of employee advocacy (Thelen & Men, 2020).

There is a rising trend of employee advocacy in the market today; consequently, the companies are finding it necessary to effectively handle it within their structures. Lately, companies have started to see an opportunity to transform the connections utilised by their staff into the companies' representatives where their employees serve as ambassadors for their brand image, in a strategy called employee advocacy, which has been shown to accelerate the growth of the firms with established employee advocacy initiatives and it leads to increased success. The employees from the organisations use social media platforms to communicate positive as well as negative messages and during personal meetings, that the importance of 'assessing, identifying, and fostering the organisational drivers of employee advocacy is greater than ever before', since employee advocacy is considered as an important indicator of an organisation's relationship with the employees, as well as with regards to how the external stakeholders perceive the organisation (Walden et al., 2018; Thelen et al., 2022).

According to Hingemarketing (2024), having a structured employee advocacy initiative speeds up the sales process significantly. Furthermore, around 64% of the advocates involved in a programme acknowledged that employee advocacy plays a role, in attracting and nurturing new business opportunities. Additionally, nearly 45% link the generation of new revenue streams to the employee advocacy efforts. The advantages of employee advocacy go beyond benefiting the company as it has an impact on various aspects. They advocate for themselves positively by showing their support through media channels, with 86% of the advocates in official programmes acknowledging the beneficial effects, on their professional journey (Hingemarketing, 2024). Employee support also plays a role in boosting a company's profits by engaging in programmes designed for employee advocacy which bring two key advantages for business growth. The employee's sense of belonging in their workplace refers to the employee experience of connectedness which is a feeling of being an integral part of the organisation. It goes deeper than identifying with the organisation but rather these employees feel connected to the organisation's values and culture which becomes an integral part of how they relate with the organisation (Cho, Xu, & Boatwright, 2023).

Generally, professional behaviour enhances collaboration in the workplace and leads to an organisation's success, thus boosting business operations. It is perhaps for this reason that the role of the employees in the place of work has developed into a subject of scholar argument in recent years (Ahmad et al., 2022; Siyal et al., 2020).

There are two concepts that have surfaced, the one focuses on employer branding and the other on internal branding. Segesten (1993) says advocacy is a process through which trigger events are recognised, decisions are made, convictions are committed to, and employees accept taking additional work. These concepts need to be explored further to gain insights on how they influence the leadership styles.

Employee branding is where the engagements of the present and future employees exhibit a perception that an organisation is a remarkable workplace (King et al., 2012; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Saini & Jawahar, 2019; Saini et al., 2022; Theurer et al., 2018). For that reason, the focus is on appealing, motivating, and keeping these employees rather than losing them to competitors.

The attitudes and behaviors of the employees can be positively affected by the social exchange relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organisational citizenship behaviour involves advocating for one's employer and striving to do more than what is expected, and the efforts are not officially rewarded (Organ, 1990). The employees feel obliged to behave discretionarily and in a manner that supports the organisation when they have strong views that suggest to them that their organisation appreciates their relationship (Podsakoff et al., 2009; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000).

Besides completing formal work duties for salary and other rewards (Brown & Roloff, 2015), as part of rewarding the organisation for its contribution to the relationship, the individuals can voluntarily be involved in actions that are beyond their job requirements (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Tremblay and Landreville (2015) support that when the employees perceive that they participate in a mutually beneficial relationship with their employer, they may feel unrestricted to participate beyond their defined work responsibilities but go above and beyond what is expected from them. Due to the organisations' support received by the employees, it would lead them to respond by displaying positive brand advocacy (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The development of quality workplace relationships is influenced by a variety of organisational conditions and leadership behaviours (Nahrgang et al., 2009; Tse et al., 2008).

To improve engagement and collaboration while preserving the ethos of the organisation, the organisation should focus on optimising their talent retention strategy. Alongside the enhancement of their retention and incentive strategies, the organisation requires a solution for the onboarding process that improves the experience of the new employees which would reduce the attrition of the new employees and continue to attract new

employees (Discovery Integrated Annual Report, 2023).

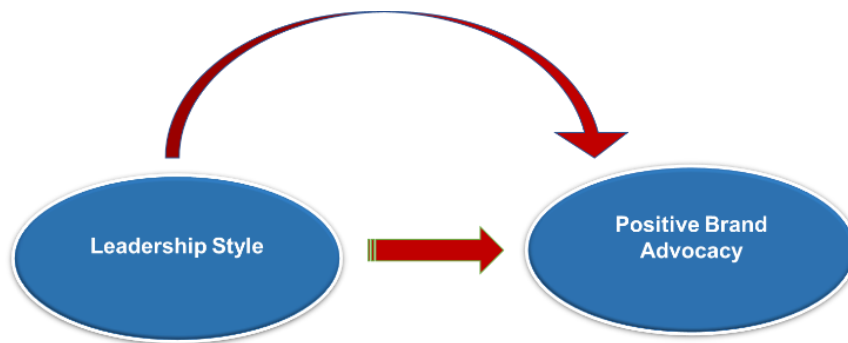


**Figure 2.3: Leadership style that influences positive employee brand advocacy, (created by the author 2024)**

A sense of connection between the employer and the employees can easily make the employees feel at ease in sharing good news or in defending the employer from criticism when they feel connected to the employer (Walden & Westerman, 2018). An employee advocacy's intention is positively correlated with organisational commitment. When highly committed employees positively speak and promote the organisation externally, they are motivated to provide positive views to others, therefore the firms become more than a workplace as they are humanised because they express positive comments about their organisations externally (Walden & Westerman, 2018) therefore, it suggests that a relationship between the leadership styles and brand advocacy does exist.

Leadership is crucial in enabling the organisations to attain their objectives and it shapes the culture and communication inside the workplace (Yukl, 2006). Effective leadership necessitates a combination of talents and attributes, with competencies and communication being especially crucial (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). As a result of this importance placed upon leadership and its communication aspects in both relations and internal communications frameworks (Whitworth, 2011, Yue et al., 2021), the researchers in the field have extensively studied leadership styles. Studies in the past have shown that having leadership plays a role, in promoting behaviours that support advocacy (Hong & Ji, 2022; Men, 2014b; Thelen & Yue, 2021). This study illustrates that when the supervisors use language, they can inspire the employees to take actions that benefit the company, and the employees are more likely to show loyalty to the organisation when the supervisors clearly define job roles and company expectations while fostering relationships (Wirsching et al., 2015; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016). The strong link between the communication from the supervisors

and employee backing is consistent with and demonstrates that this communication approach enhances job satisfaction and commitment to the responsibilities beyond the assigned tasks (Men, 2014b; Yue, 2021).

The organisations are encountering difficulties as an increasing number of employees experience disconnection and depart from their positions while exhibiting loyalty. This imposes pressure on the leaders and managers to cultivate relationships and promote positive behaviours among the employees (Xu et al., 2019). Employee advocacy influences the external perceptions of an organisation which reflects the bond between the organisation and its employees. Therefore, evaluating and nurturing the factors within an organisation that drive employee advocacy has become increasingly crucial in today's context.

## **2.6 Social Exchange Theory**

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) assumes that social life is constituted by a chain of chronological contact involving two parties or more (Mitchell, Cropanzano, & Quisenberry, 2012) and it leads to more beneficial and productive behaviours. It also reduces conflict in the workplace due to the presence of high-quality interactions amongst the employees (Colbert et al., 2004; Liao et al., 2004). There is an appeal from individuals to obtain something when resources are exchanged, and the intention is to exploit benefits and diminish costs (Yan et al., 2016). Furthermore, it improves cooperative work behaviours (Hansen, 1999), performance on the job (Cropanzano et al., 2002), and citizenship behaviours (Masterson et al., 2000; Wayne et al., 1997).

A negotiated exchange relationship is based on bargained and binding arrangements, under which the parties come to an agreement on the conditions of a detached, two-sided exchange (Molm, 2003). By contrast, the mutual interactions are non-negotiated, voluntary, with no particulars on what should be exchanged or by when the exchange should take place. Molm (1994, 2003; as well as Molm et al. (1999; 2000; 2003) indicate that the exchange relationships can be separated into two types: reciprocal relationships and negotiated relationships.

While social exchange takes many forms, most contemporary organisational behaviour models share several characteristics as illustrated below: firstly, the actor's initial interaction is intentional as it aims at a specific person, secondly, a target's mutual response which is applicable on both attitudinal and behavioural action, and thirdly, the development of a relationship. The organisational actors or perpetrators are most often supervisors or co-workers who initiate the social exchange process when they treat a

target individual positively or negatively (Eisenberger et al., 2004; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult et al., 1988; McLean Parks, 1997).

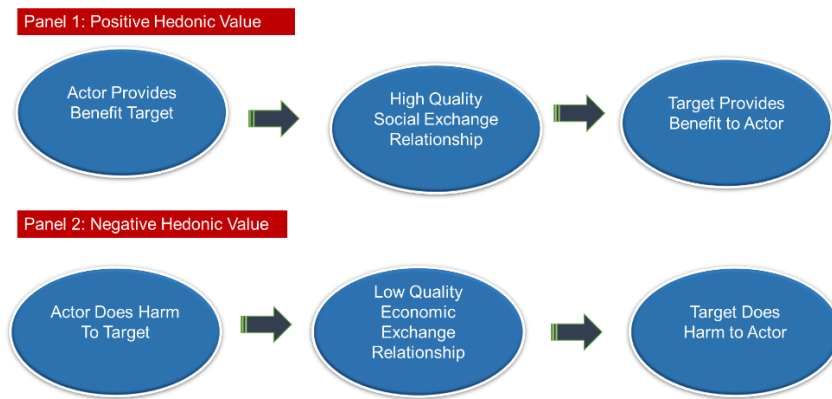


**Figure 2.4: Social exchange model. Recreated from “Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies” (Cropanzano et al., 2017)**

## 2.7 Conclusion

Chapter 2 demonstrated the importance of identifying and obtaining a deeper understanding of the styles of leadership that promote and influence positive employee brand advocacy with the use of the social exchange framework. The key themes identified where that firstly, leadership plays a significant part as an enabler for the organisations to advance in challenging environments (Benmira & Agboola, 2017). Secondly, it has been observed that adaptability in leadership is an essential attribute for the 21st-century leaders to possess in response to an environment that is perpetually evolving and thirdly, when two parties engage in successful interactions, reciprocal relationships tend to develop. It is fundamentally noted that the employer’s benefit from their employees’ efforts beyond them performing their formal duties. Vlachos et al. (2017) emphasise the fundamental role of leadership in shaping the employee attitudes towards the organisation. When the manager’s activities involve authentically motivating and demonstrating long-term commitment, these managers have the ability to foster a positive organisational culture and which would encourage employees to become an extension of the organisation and exercise advocacy and ambassadorship (De Kerpel & Van Kerckhove, 2023).

The validation of the topic and the formulation of the research questions that are addressed in the subsequent chapter were facilitated by the literature review process.

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the existing literature. The insights gained assisted the researcher in validating the theory and formulating the research questions outlined in chapter 3.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The previous section presented an analysis of the applicable literature. The research questions and the literature's use are outlined in this section. To achieve a deeper understanding of the research problem, open-ended, exploratory questions that formed the basis of the research strategy were employed (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The research was conducted in pursuit of providing insight to address the questions below.

#### **Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry?

Establishing an understanding of what the employees perceive as the characteristics of a leader that can influence the employees to become positive brand advocates is fundamental. Zaman and Abbasi (2020) explain that the leader may empower the employees and encourage them to feel passionate about the organisation's mission therefore, becoming vocal advocates. The organisations today rely on the leadership styles of their leaders to succeed, as the role of the leaders has changed (Mintzberg, 2010). According to Meyer and Allen's (1997) studies, there is a positive link between employee tenure and organisational commitment and the author emphasises that the longer-tenured employees tend to be more committed to their organisations, often leading to increased retention. While longer tenure is often associated with increased organisational commitment, according to Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016). Other findings are mixed, while some studies support this positive relationship, the others suggest that tenure may not be a significant predictor of commitment. They further suggest that factors such as personal investment, organisational culture, and leadership can influence the strength of this relationship. Studying this field can help one to understand the ways for the leaders to create an atmosphere in scheme administration organisations at work by looking into how employee happiness connects with the different leadership styles. The managers can use specific strategies to improve overall job happiness and keep the team members satisfied and engaged. This study pinpoints the most effective leadership methods, for building a supportive culture in the administrative teams Buyandelger (2024).

This question explored the leadership styles that exist in the medical scheme administration organisations. The information about the style of leadership that exists was collected from the participants during the interviews.

### **Research Question 2 (RQ2)**

What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this industry?

There are positive and negative leadership styles as mentioned in Chapter two, and some of the leadership styles merge with each other. The question aimed to understand the drivers that lead the employees to adopt a positive brand advocacy behaviour. Social advocacy includes promoting the organisation, recommending it to external individuals, and furthermore the employees feel an obligation to defend the organisation when it is under attack (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Employee happiness goes beyond being content with one's job. It covers various aspects such as the company culture they are a part of and how well they can balance work with their personal life. They also consider the chances they have for progress and learning within the organisation itself. According to the Frederick Herzbergs theory (Herzberg, 2015) with two factors playing a role in creating satisfaction at work, it is not about avoiding dissatisfaction but also about finding fulfillment through things, like recognition and accomplishing goals Buyandelger (2024).

During the interviews, the participants shared their lived experiences of the aspects that drive the employees to become positive brand advocates for their organisations. They also elaborated on the reasons they do not advocate on behalf of their organisation.

### **Research Question 3 (RQ3)**

How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation internally and externally?

The leaders that surpass their own self-interests, empower, develop, and articulate their visions of the future with the employees benefit the organisation in the long term. An employee's perception of the way the organisation invests in building relationships with them can be enhanced by a supervisor's leadership behaviour as well as enabling a culture in which the employees feel empowered by their supervisor.

The participants were requested to reflect on how they promote their organisations and how their coworkers perceive the organisation based on the comments, as well as the discussions that take place and the behaviour from the coworkers.

### **Research Question 4 (RQ4)**

How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?

The social exchanges may lead to individuals benefiting by means of rewards at minimal costs. A negotiated exchange relation is based upon bargained and binding

arrangements, under which the parties come to an agreement on the conditions of a detached, two-sided exchange (Molm 2003). By contrast, the mutual exchanges are non-negotiated, voluntary, with no particulars on what should be exchanged or by when the exchange should take place. Molm (1994; 2003); as well as Molm et al. (1999; 2000; 2003) indicate that the exchange relationships can be separated into two types: reciprocal relationships and negotiated relationships.

The research questions were incorporated into the interview guide. The interviews were conducted using a virtual platform which was MS Teams. They were all recorded and subsequently transcribed.

According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), the research questions and objectives provide clarity on the research topic and provide insights into the data that will be collected. As the research progressed, to ensure that appropriate insights are obtained from the selected population, the resource constraints were monitored closely particularly the two important ones which are time and data.

The research questions discussed in chapter 3 will guide the research methodology in chapter 4 that was applied by the researcher in a quest to find meaning and establish the essence of the individuals' experiences.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

The table outlines the research methodology flow which was applied in collecting the data. The comprehensive details are provided below.

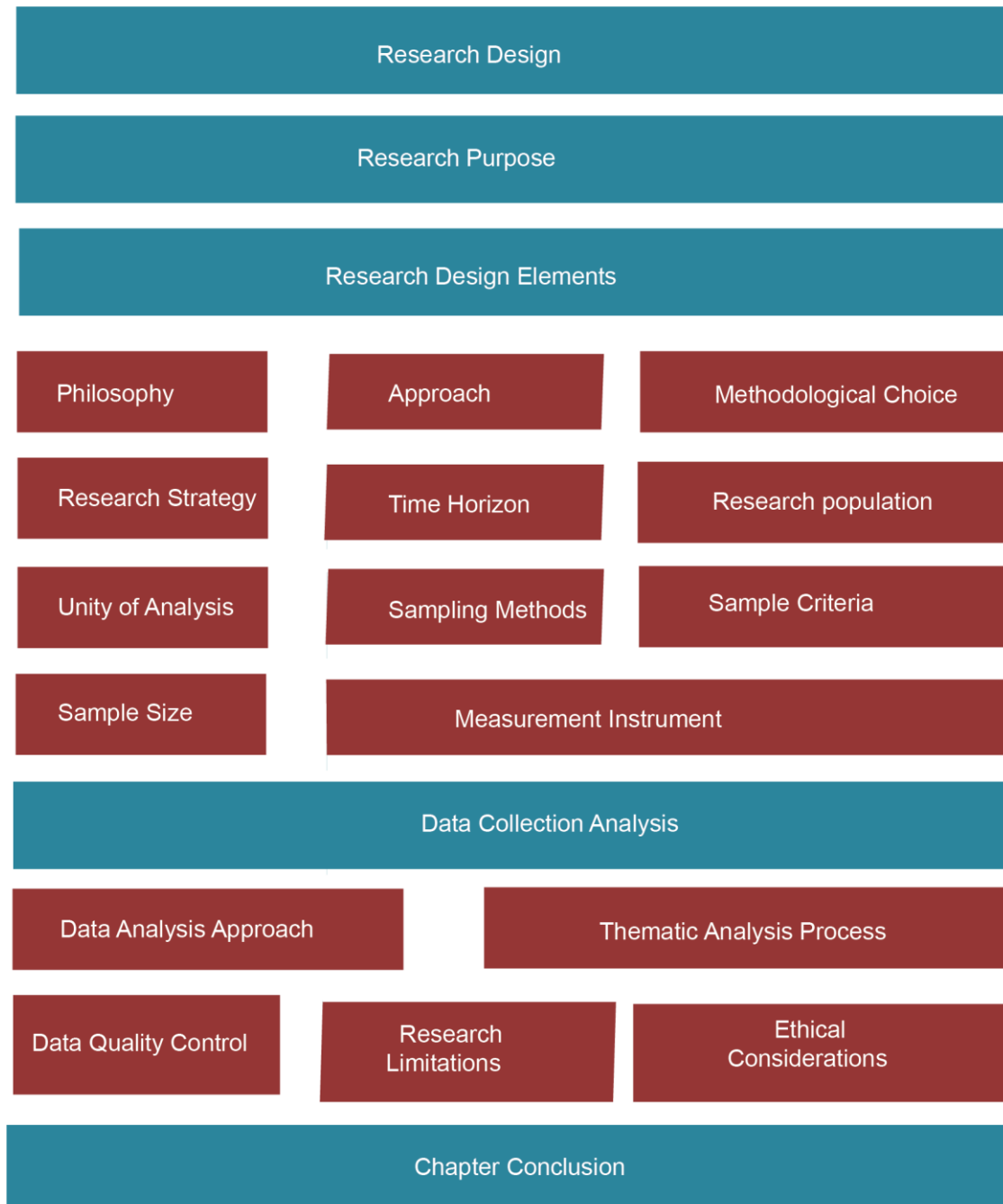


**Figure 4.1: Structure of Chapter 4**

### 4.2 Research design table

The table illustrates the chosen research design which is discussed comprehensively in

the section below. As illustrated on the overview, the right side demonstrates the philosophy that was chosen by the researcher which was interpretivism as it recognised the subjective nature of the individual experiences. The qualitative nature of the research allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the participants' lived experiences and their perceptions about the topic. Their narratives provided the researcher the opportunity to collect and analyse the various stories from the 16 participants which were purposefully selected, and the snowball approach allowed for a diverse group of participants which have different roles in different organisations. By utilising the below research design, the study aimed to obtain insights, experiences and perceptions about the leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy in the medical scheme administration industry. Figure 4.2 below is the research design overview.



**Figure 4.2: Research Design Overview**

### **4.3 Research purpose**

The objective of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of a select group of individuals, specifically the South African employees who work in the medical scheme administration industry. Given that the primary objective was to describe their lived experiences as individuals, the research was exploratory in nature and sought to obtain new insights, whilst allowing new questions to be asked to bring in new perspectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher's quest was to find meaning and establish the essence of the individuals' experiences therefore, a phenomenological method was applied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The candidates have the freedom to respond to the questions anyhow and the research bracketed their own lived experiences to avoid bias and to understand the experiences of the candidates (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **4.4 Research philosophy**

The research's philosophy involves a detailed examination of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions. The research strategy and data acquisition methods are influenced by the same assumptions and beliefs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is expected that the researcher's values, beliefs, and experiences would have an impact on the findings, given their close involvement in the data collection, analysis, and interpretations which is aligned with the interpretivist paradigm and based on the norms and culture and value of the organisation (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher could establish a personal connection with the research topic because of their current and prior professional experiences. Nevertheless, the process followed whilst gathering, examining, and interpreting the data was unduly influenced by any known conscious biases. The researcher's objective in conducting this research study was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within the organisations, with a particular emphasis on the way the leaders articulate their leadership styles and their influence on the employees to adopt positive brand advocacy. This was the appropriate research paradigm for this research problem since the truth is context dependent and socially constructed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The participants were in the comfort of their spaces when the interviews were conducted, which was a comfortable and familiar space for them. The focus was on their experiences which was subjective since everyone's experiences and perceptions differ.

### **4.5 Selected approach**

An inductive theory approach to expand theory from bottom-up which progressed from the

observation stages to the broader theories and meaningful patterns was assumed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research started from a broader generalised perspective which was followed by specific theories. This was appropriate because it proved meaning since there was a quest to find new meaning and insights and it allowed a pliable structure of the research due to the insights from people with various social experiences. It further allowed raw data that was assessed to establish the themes and patterns to build and modify the existing theories (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

#### **4.6 Methodological choices**

The study followed the mono-method which comprised of the qualitative data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Rich data was obtained based on the participants' lived experiences. Semi-structured single interviews were conducted, and non-verbal communication and gestures were observed, and notes were gathered. This allowed for quality data to be obtained (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Creswell, 2002; Easterby et al., 2008; Biggam, 2008). The data was collected using open-ended questions and it was analysed and coded to obtain the themes.

#### **4.7 Research strategy**

The research technique was narrative based, as the researcher collected the stories from the individuals since the interviews were conducted to collect data based on their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A structure was provided for the semi-structured interviews which ensured that the responses to the research question were captured while also allowing for appropriate flexibility and authenticity during the interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2020). Most of the participants were senior leaders with diverse roles, responsibilities, and experiences in their field of work so some questions were modified to focus on the issues to which the participants delivered meaningful comments. However, they had the flexibility to share what they deemed to be meaningful even though it was unrelated to the question. This approach allowed the researcher to retell the narratives of the candidates as part of the collective and collaborative view (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **4.8 Research time horizon**

A cross-sectional time horizon was applied due to resource constraints such as time. The research interviews were conducted with the participants in September 2024.

#### **4.9 Research population**

Saunders and Lewis (2018) state that a population is a comprehensive set of group representatives. This is a potential group of people who form part of the research. For this

study, the population consisted of the individuals who work in a medical scheme administration organisation which is a subset of the financial services industry in South Africa. The focus was on one industry to obtain in-depth insights. The population was a combination of different roles and levels to obtain diverse experiences and insights. Due to the large size of this industry and the time limitations for conducting the research, the population was refined according to specific sample criteria and the size detailed below. The study concentrated on the South African context; however, it may be applied broadly.

#### **4.10 Unit of analysis**

This analysis is a critical factor in the sample selection for the study. The appropriate unit of analysis is essential in the research process to determine the research questions to be formulated (Srnrka & Koeszegi, 2007). The study evaluated the perceptions at an individual level in these organisations. This also afforded the researcher the opportunity to collect data from different levels. This selection was suitable as the employees likely developed the perceptions of their leaders which may have been influenced by the perceptions of their leaders which may influence their approach to how they advocate for their organisation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **4.11 Research sampling method**

Morse (1991; 2015a); Patton (2015); as well as Malterud et al., (2016) expand that the outstanding qualitative analysis is operated from empirical data comprising of rich and assorted interpretations of new views of the experience being studied. The intention was to obtain a wealth of insightful data from the respondents. The purposeful/judgmental sampling was suitable for the study, since the sample of the study was non-probability (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). A variety of sampling techniques were used such as the heterogeneous purposive sampling variety to get diverse perspectives from a variety of individuals from the organisations. Their experiences assisted to obtain an in-depth understanding of what was happening to make a generalisation of the outcomes.

#### **4.12 Sampling criteria**

The criteria was established to refine the sampling parameters (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To be eligible for participation in the research project, the persons were meant to satisfy all the sampling criteria outlined below. The nationality of the participants that were required was South Africans who worked in the medical scheme administration organisations. The research was not gender specific, but it had to demonstrate a diverse group of participants hence there were nine individuals who identified as females and seven individuals who identified as males. They were from a diverse racial heritage which

included Black Africans, Indians, Coloureds, Whites and Chinese people. They all had two things in common, they were from the same industry, which was the medical scheme administration, and they worked for a corporate company.

#### **4.12.1 Sampling size**

A sample that is larger than necessary raises ethical questions about the efficient allocation of resources, including time and financial expenditure. On the contrary, insufficient participant sampling raises ethical and scientific concerns about the adequacy of the acquired data. Consequently, this raises enquiries regarding the “trustworthiness and transferability of the study” (Francis et al., 2010). The timing of data saturation remains uncertain; nonetheless, the sample size was informed by Saunders and Lewis (2012) and targeted 12-18 research interviews. The research comprised of 16 semi-structured interviews. Hennink (2022) notes that saturation can be reached with 9 – 17 interviews. In this study, the saturation was achieved by 16 interviews based on the approach recommended by Guest et al. (2020). The baseline was made with eight interviews comprising of 147 codes, followed by three-run lengths. When it is discovered that conducting further interviews does not produce new information, it demonstrates that saturation has been reached (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher chose to proceed with a total of 16 people, at which point there were comparatively few unique generated codes. The conclusion was made that a saturation point had been achieved at that point.

#### **4.13 Measurement instrument**

The semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate for the exploratory research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Furthermore, to enrich the data, open ended questions were included in the interview guide to establish which leadership styles influenced employee brand advocacy. Virtual interviews were conducted to gather the data (refer to Appendix 4 for the interview guide). The primary consideration in selecting MS Teams was for the convenience of the participants since some resided in different provinces from the researcher, coupled with that was the researcher’s degree of experience and familiarity with using virtual online meeting platforms.

Prior to the participants' interview, all the sample criteria were validated to make sure they aligned with the research topic. The researcher had a strong disposition to learn more about the lived experiences of the participants in relation to the research topic which led to the choosing of the interviews as the technique of data collection (Seidman, 2006). The reviews of documents written by reputable authors are one method of gathering secondary data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The consistency matrix that was used to identify and

match the literature issues that were investigated in the study is provided in Appendix 1.

#### **4.14 Data gathering process**

Upon receipt of the ethical clearance from the Ethical Approval Committee at the GIBS, University of Pretoria, data gathering commenced. A checklist was prepared, and it was used at the interviews. The recruitment of the participants was implemented; and the consent forms were sent out for completion by the participants in Appendix 2. The interviews were scheduled, conducted, recorded, transcribed, and coded. Even though the interviews were virtual, direct observation was done by observing the participants' non-verbal language since the interviews were recorded using videos ability as well. These experiences were documented as the collected data that Saunders and Lewis (2018) mentioned.

##### **Phase 1**

The first phase was the recruitment phase. The researcher started firstly by reaching out to the companies in the medical scheme administration industry because the intention was to do a comparison on a company level of three organisations. The human resource executives of the three organisations were contacted to obtain company consent however, they were not responsive. Upon reflection, the researcher acknowledged that even though there was an existing relationship with the executives from the three companies, it did not mean that they would be receptive about providing company consent. The researcher had to pivot and obtain ethical clearance to conduct the research on an individual level. Therefore, the sample then focused on the individuals that work in the medical scheme administration organisation rather than the organisations. Contact was made with nine individuals in the researcher's circle that work in the companies. This process was time consuming as some individuals were contacted numerous times, and ultimately, only four individuals responded positively.

##### **Phase 2**

Microsoft teams meeting invitations were sent to the participants with a consent form for the signatures. Some of the individuals travelled between provinces and that was challenging due to the meetings getting rescheduled. The participants that were recruited initially based on the researcher's contacts were requested during the interviews by the researcher to provide referrals of individuals that met the criteria. The individuals did provide the referrals, and they were first contacted via WhatsApp or telephonically as an introduction and to position the purpose of the study. The interviews were scheduled and snowballed from there. The respondents availed themselves for the interviews and their responses were very good. A pilot interview was conducted with one participant as a practice interview which served as an important preparation tool because from that interview one learned that it is important to guide the participants as they respond to some questions due to the unfamiliarity of the subject or

due to uncertainty. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity for the researcher to receive constructive feedback from the pilot interview and to improve on the structure of the interview going forward. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that a pilot participant does not get included in the final interview analysis, therefore the pilot interview was not counted in the total number of interviews conducted.

A total of four participants were self-identified by the researcher and 12 plus seven that had to be cancelled were all from the referrals by previously interviewed candidates hence 16 interviews were conducted. There were 23 participants that provided a positive response and consent however, due to the time constraints, seven interviews had to be cancelled, and the interview process was concluded when the researcher conducted 16 interviews.

### **Phase 3**

As the interviews started, the consent for the recording to be done was requested and provided by the candidates. They were reminded of the purpose of the research, as well as the confidentiality and anonymity clauses. Furthermore, they were informed about the identifiers in the data that would be removed for the final project. Initially the duration of the interviews was 60 minutes, however, as the interviews progressed the duration was 50 minutes, and this was a result of the researcher being more comfortable and establishing a better flow with the participants due to the experience gained during the process.

The participants were provided with an opportunity to provide their lived experiences about the leadership styles that exist in their organisations, furthermore they were requested to provide insights on how they market their organisation externally, including the perceptions of their friends and family because of them working for the specific organisations. The questions asked in the interview guide were intended to seek answers and the conclusion by the researcher was that the participants understood the purpose of the study and the questions that were asked.

Due to the interviews being conducted via a video and being audio recorded, to the researcher could observe the individuals' facial expressions, as well as how they said things and their body language. This allowed for 'field' notes to be obtained which either aligned with the participant's response or was in contradiction with it. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions to get more information on the body language without making the individual feel uncomfortable.

#### **4.15 Analysis approach**

The thematic analysis process that was used in the interview process was semi structured. It is "concerned with the identification and analysis of meaning (themes) and constitutes a widely

applicable cost effective and flexible tool for exploratory research” as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Herzog et al. (2019). Furthermore, the tool is helpful to unpack experiences, perceptions and understanding. The themes were established for each question.

The 16 Interviews were conducted using MS Teams and they were all recorded. The transcriptions were downloaded verbatim and cleaned to remove duplications, and to translate words that were in vernacular into English words. A total of three of the transcriptions could not be used due to the participants having strong accents and the words were not recorded correctly on MS Teams therefore, the researcher had to listen to the recording again to correct the transcript. This process was time consuming and needed focus and accuracy. During the interviews, the researcher observed the participants' nonverbal communication, for example one candidate beamed when she was talking about the leadership style of the manager and how this behaviour and his conduct towards her influenced her to promote the organisation to her family and friends.

The transcriptions were loaded on ATLAS.ti for the coding phase. The researcher handled the data themselves from the transcription phase to the coding and analysis phase. The process was time consuming, however, it provided the researcher with an opportunity to work intimately with the data and get a deeper understanding. Furthermore, the data from the observations during the interviews was captured on a spreadsheet and used during the data analysis phase. Coding assisted to uncover the significant themes within the data.

The participants had a good understanding of the topic and therefore gathering more information from them would have resulted in duplication and the information would most likely have been redundant. The size of the participants was adequate to capture the main themes and the subthemes.

The list word included in Chapter 2 was noted whilst analysing the transcripts for coding.

The codes that were generated via the word cloud consisted of key words such as leadership, employees, style, culture, happiness, advocacy, culture, internally, influence and engagement. These were the key words that the empirical data centralised around leadership which showed the alignment with the research.

#### **4.16 Quality controls**

Quality is reported in several different manners (Stenfors et al., 2020). The credibility, dependability, confirmability, and the reliability of the data are key fundamentals therefore, Saunders and Lewis (2018) mention that this can be achieved by applying the triangulation process which was an essential quality measure. Triangulation is the use of two or more

data sources that are independent of data or the data collection methods (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). When conducting qualitative research, the use of empathy with the respondents as an observation strategy was required to provide meaning, significance, and purpose with the respondents. Furthermore, validity and reliability concern credibility (Stiles, 1993). The controls used as stated by Cassell and Symon (2011) were credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

In a quantitative study, credibility is viewed as one of the internal validation tools (Daniel, 2019). The qualitative interviews were conducted to provide in depth insights into the participants' perspectives and lived experiences. One of the crucial steps in this study was mentioned by Jacob and Furgerson (2012) as conducting a pilot interview. It was helpful to refine the interview guide, remove irrelevant questions and it provided the researcher with an opportunity to refine the interview skills and determine if the data collection process via MS teams was suitable for the purpose. The researcher was able to analyse the data and made necessary updates. When conducting qualitative research, the use of empathy with the respondents as an observation strategy is required to provide meaning, significance, and purpose (Stiles, 1993). The controls used as stated by Cassell and Symon (2011) are credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

Cope (2014) mentions that one of the critical components of credibility in qualitative research is triangulation which involves gathering data from two or more sources to confirm or corroborate findings. The researcher applied this method by cross referencing multiple sources of data, such as peer reviewed journals, books, obtaining feedback from the supervisor and sharing data with one of the participants.

#### **4.16.1 Credibility**

The researcher mitigated against potential issues that would arise such as researcher bias since they are a former employee at two of the companies that the participants worked for. The researcher was aware of their own assumptions and biases; therefore, reflexivity was applied to intentionally minimise their influence on the study and they were cautious not to unintentionally impose their own assumptions on the data which could influence the outcome. When data was collected, the ethics requirements were adhered to including the appropriate method of the storing of the data. The transcripts were handled carefully by ensuring that they are labelled correctly and do match with the recordings.

During the analysis phase, the ATLAS.ti software was used for coding data since it is a system that can be trusted.

Whilst validity ensures the accuracy of findings, credibility in qualitative research requires establishing that the results are reliable, they are relevant and consistent with the participant's perspectives (Patton, 2002). Noble and Smith (2015) highlight the importance of integrating strategies to enhance credibility throughout the process. Creswell (2009) states that participant checking involves sharing the final report or themes with the participants for verification to ensure that the findings accurately represent their viewpoints (Loh, 2013; Stacey, 2019,) and the verification process was done with Participant 1.

The researcher focused on the data analysis including the notes that were captured during the interviews on the central phenomenon that was studied which was the leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data, verbatim quotations were included when analysing the findings even though some of the quotations were in contradiction with the main findings.

#### **4.16.2 Dependability**

This refers to the consistency of the research and the extent of which essentially it can be replicated in a similar setting. This is not a snapshot of a particular moment, but it should rather indicate continuing patterns, steps, or trends (Stenfors et al., 2020). It should be easy to replicate the study. The researcher provided detailed information of the data collection and the analysis process which can be verified. Data was collected to a point where no new codes nor themes emerged which was demonstrated in Chapter 5 on Figure 5.2 which is the baseline and run length for saturation. A detailed description of the research context and the participants is documented. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select the participants that are representative of the target population to enhance generalisation. The researcher cross referenced the literature that was used in Chapter 2 with the literature that was used in Chapter 6. To enhance the overall quality of the research, an external editor was used.

#### **4.16.3 Transferability**

It is also described as external validity. The study cannot be generalised however, the findings in one qualitative study could be applied in another context or population according to Stenfors et al. (2020). Even though the studies often produce findings that are rooted in a specific context or environment it is challenging to generalise the findings to another settings. The researcher used a pre-determined and consistent interview guide across all the interviews and provided detailed descriptions of the interviews and observations of the study. The experiences of the participants can assist with the evidence to assess the applicability and integrity of the findings to other settings. The researcher

ensured that the participants had knowledge about the phenomenon under study and represented the target population which was purposive sampling.

#### **4.16.4 Confirmability**

The research finding can be traced back to the data due to the checking and rechecking of the generated data by the researcher (Stenfors et al., 2020). The data was labelled carefully to ensure accuracy. All the interviews were recorded on MS Teams and the transcripts were checked against the recordings to ensure that the findings are grounded on the data from the interviews. Due to the subjective nature of the research and the potential for the data to be interpreted differently, the researcher's analysis was objective since it was supported by the quotations from the interviews with the participants. Furthermore, there was the use of multiple sources to enhance the validity hence triangulation was applied. Even though the interviews were conducted on MS Teams the researcher made notes of the non-verbal language and observations of the environment and behaviour of the participants.

#### **4.16.5 Limitations**

The researcher trained themselves through videos on how to conduct interviews. Even though the limitations might be out of the researcher's control, they do pose a weakness in the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). There has been little longitudinal research in the past, and most research is cross-sectional as stated by Fraizer et al. (2017).

Every study has limitations and for this study the following limitations were encountered:

- The research was a cross-sectional study where data was collected at a specific point in time and the analysis of the data was a snapshot of the population (Fraizer et al., 2017). Due to the time bound, there could be a biasness, and the data collected at another time might produce different results.
- Due to poor network connection, technical difficulties were experienced, and this disrupted the flow of the interviews.
- Due to the diverse nature of the population, some participants had a strong accent that was easily transcribed by MS Teams, but the quality of the transcription was poor therefore, it was time consuming and mentally exhausting to listen to the recording and capture the transcription word for word.
- Inadequate data for appropriate analysis can be a limitation due to the participants not divulging the information that is required due to concerns of bad mouthing the organisation.

- The virtual nature of the interviews meant that during observations, the researcher could only observe what was on the screen but did not have sight of the complete environment and the surrounding of the participants.
- A sample size of 16 participants may not sufficiently represent the wider population which could limit the ability to generalise the findings.

#### **4.16.6 Ethical clearance**

Ethical clearance was obtained before data was collected. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants prior to the interviews. All the data collection was done in an ethical and security safe manner. The privacy and confidentiality of the data was always adhered to. The data was stored in a safe and password protected device.

#### **4.17 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research methodology that was used to address the research questions posed in Chapter 3. The ethical factors were addressed to ensure that the interviews conducted, and the data collected were done with integrity.

Chapter 5 will present the findings and verbatim quotations are cited as evidence and to support the findings. Furthermore, the themes are interpreted by the researcher to address the research questions.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The study explored the leadership styles that influenced employee brand advocacy within the medical scheme administration industry in South Africa, focusing on the individuals' lived experiences from different organisations with notably distinct organisational cultures. The study aimed to achieve the following goals which are firstly; to identify the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry secondly; to pinpoint the drivers of employee brand advocacy and lastly; to assess which leadership styles had the most significant influence on brand advocacy. The investigation was structured around four key research questions, each designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between leadership and employee brand advocacy. The formulated research questions are below.

#### **Research question 1: What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry?**

The question was intended to establish the existing leadership styles that are dominant in the industry. The leadership styles of the participants were also asked and collected as part of the data collection.

#### **Research Question 2: What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this industry?**

The intent was to understand what the candidates regard as the drivers that encourage adopting positive brand advocacy. They were asked a question about the organisation's happiness score and whether they would promote the organisation to other people.

#### **Research Question 3: How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation both internally and externally?**

The question stemmed from the employees' perception about the organisation they work for and the perception of the employees, the stakeholders, their families, and friends about the organisation that they work for. The insights were gathered to understand how the employees' perception about their organisation shape the views of the people in their environment.

#### **Research Question 4: How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?**

The candidates shared their experiences on how empowered they felt by their

organisation and to describe the positive and negative attributes of their leadership to get a sense of what motivates or demotivates them.

## 5.2 Overview of the respondents

The overview of the sample provides the insights on the relevance of the sample, the sample size (Gutterman, 2015), and the relevance of the empirical data alignment compared to the research goals. The interviews were conducted with 16 participants from various organisations in the medical scheme administration industry.

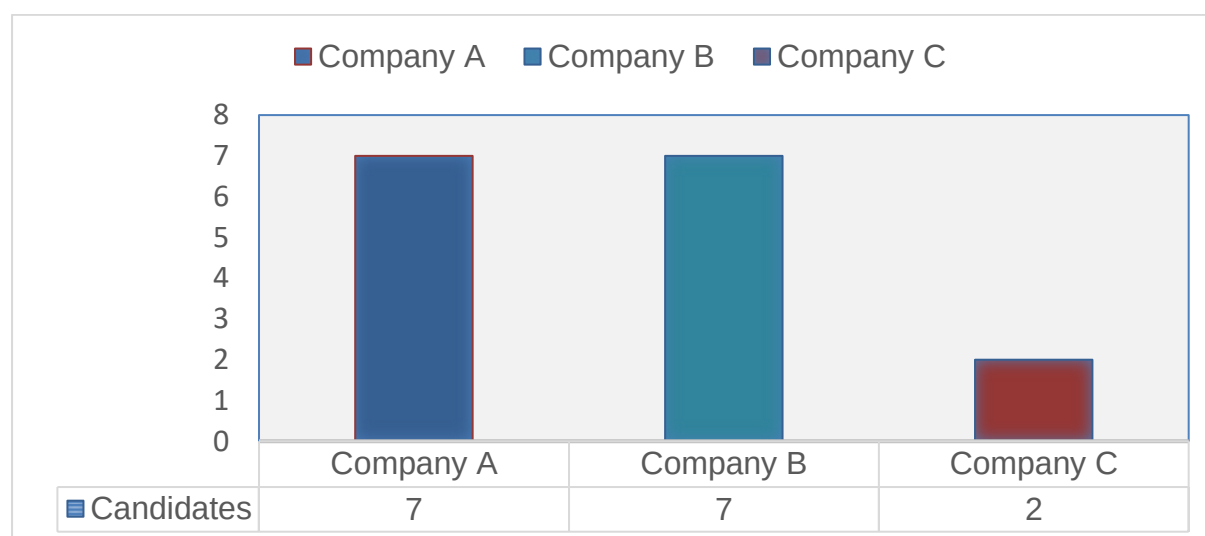


**Figure 5.1: Participants per company**

### 5.2.1 Relevance of the sample size

The sample was purposively sampled (Leedy & Ormord, 2019) and the relevance of the sample was confirmed with the leadership representation, the diversity of the role and the focus on advocacy. Table 5.1 presents the diverse group of individuals occupying various roles within the medical scheme administration industry, each contributing uniquely to the organisational culture and to employee brand advocacy. The profiles were ranked based on the strength of the participant's responses and their roles. The participant's transcriptions were given codes following the order they were coded. Below is the profile, role and sequence of the coding that was done, participant RPT 1 was the first one to be coded.

**Table 5.1: Participants profile**

| Participant ID | Profile                       | Role                    |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| RPT 1          | Chief Audit Executive         | Leadership              |
| RPT 2          | General Manager Human Capital | Leadership              |
| RPT 3          | General Manager - Attorney    | Leadership              |
| RPT 4          | Fund Manager                  | Client Relationship     |
| RPT 5          | Executive Manager             | Leadership              |
| RPT 6          | Senior Finance Manager        | Leadership              |
| RPT 7          | Risk and Compliance Manager   | Brand Advocacy          |
| RPT 8          | Head of Department            | Leadership              |
| RPT 9          | Advanced Specialist           | Leadership              |
| RPT 10         | Registered Nurse              | Contact Centre Services |
| RPT 11         | Scheme Coordinator            | Leadership              |
| RPT 12         | General Manager               | Leadership              |
| RPT 13         | Accountant                    | Woman Rights Advocate   |
| RPT 14         | Head of Wellness              | Employee Wellbeing      |
| RPT 15         | Legal                         | Leadership              |
| RPT 16         | Compliance Manager            | Leadership              |

**Leadership representation:** A significant number of participatory activities include leadership roles such as chief audit executive, general manager and executive manager. These are critical given their potential impact on organisational culture and employee engagement. Focusing on the leadership styles adopted by these individuals, is such that the employees' understanding of the organisation and their commitment towards it is bound to change. They have a broader and diverse view of the environment which shapes how they lead, furthermore they recognise the behaviours that influence the desired results from the employees. These leaders have diverse views, experiences and backgrounds which enriched the data. The leadership has authority and power which is key in influencing the employees to adopt a specific culture. They are also involved in strategy creation such as maintaining a strong and powerful organisational brand and presence in the market.

**Diversity of roles:** In addition to the finance and administrative tasks, compliance and wellness management among others are also part of the multiple responsibilities in the medical scheme administration industry. Each role, besides supporting the effectiveness

of the organisation provides differentiated experience to the employees with respect to the brand. For example, the appointment of a risk and compliance manager and a fund manager suggest that there is a high willingness to manage operational risks and maintain good relationships with the clients, which are the key drivers of the brand. Stakeholder relations is imperative in this industry, therefore the access to client and stakeholder feedback is helpful as it provides the leadership with the opportunity to respond better to their market and meet their expectations.

**Focus on advocacy:** Interestingly, some of these titles directly reference advocating for the brand. In one instance, the risk and compliance manager is responsible for compliance with the brand's standards. Their role is key in safeguarding the brand and the reputation of the organisation because the medical scheme industry is highly regulated and there would be financial and reputational consequences for the organisations that do not comply. The reputational damage is harmful for these organisations since people want to deal with a company that has a good reputation, and whose brand is trusted in the market. This further supports why advocacy needs to be incorporated into the functioning of leadership. The leaders who understand the significance of brand advocacy can create a workplace environment where the employees are motivated to self-advocate their positive attitudes towards the brand.

### **5.2.2 Sample size and saturation**

The research comprised of 16 semi-structured interviews. Hennink (2022) notes that saturation can be reached with 9 – 17 interviews. In this study, the saturation was achieved by 16 interviews based on the approach recommended by Guest et al. (2020). There was a total of 201 codes, the baseline was made with eight interviews comprising of 147 codes, followed by three-run lengths. The first run length comprised of 30 codes which equates to 20.4%, followed by run lengths of two and three with 12 codes each and equivalent to 8.16%. Although the final run length was slightly higher than the 5% recommended by Guest et al. (2020), it was deemed adequate for this study.

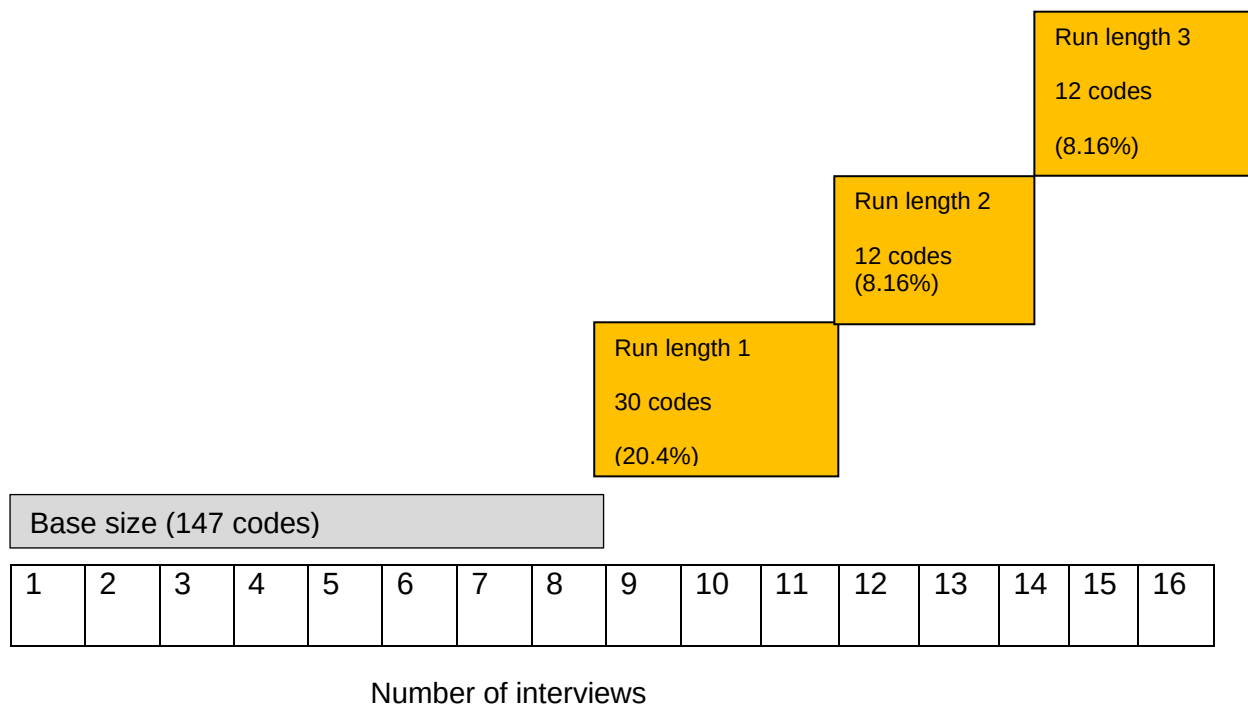


**Figure 5.2: Baseline and run length for saturation**

### 5.2.3 *Relevance of data*

The relevance of data during the coding phase is important. The data was categorised into meaningful units. The relevance of these codes has a direct impact on the analysis and findings of the study.

A visual representation of the transcribed data is shown below on Figure 5.3. The Word Cloud was developed to evaluate how well the empirical data supported the research questions. It is a graphic representation of the frequency of words in the empirical data (Smit & Scherman, 2021). The higher the frequency of the word, the bigger the word on the cloud. The dominant themes and keywords that aligned with the study, such as leadership (style), employees, brand, and advocacy, happiness, culture, and engagement were evident. These key words confirm that the empirical data was centralised around leadership. The word cloud was used as a tool to identify the potential patterns that were discussed by the participants. This contextualised the data in a visually engaging manner.



**Figure 5.3: Word Cloud - Relevance of the empirical data and its alignment with the research**

### 5.3 Exploring the leadership styles in the medical scheme administration industry

**Research Question 1** can be recapped as follows: “What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry?”

This research question aimed to identify the dominant leadership styles that influence experiences, operations, and perceptions within the medical scheme administration industry. The empirical collected data explored the different individual leadership perspectives, which highlight the existence of the plurality of the leadership styles and their importance as well as their influence on employee perception.

Table 5.2 illustrates the findings from the research, and they are linked with the research question above.

**Table 5.2: Exploring leadership styles in the industry**

| Codes                                                                                                                                     | Subthemes                                                                    | Themes                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Democratic style<br>Transactional style<br>Empowering style<br>Autocratic leadership style<br>Ubuntu traits<br>Visionary leadership style | Individual leadership perspectives<br><br>Organisational leadership dynamics | Plural / diverse leadership styles |
| Nurturing milieu<br>Employee fatigue; fluctuating motivation<br>Growth opportunities                                                      | Employee engagement and Well-being                                           | Leadership Influence on perception |

### **5.3.1 *Pluralistic leadership styles***

The codes are ranked from the highest to the lowest frequency order. The participants' responses depicted a nuanced understanding of their own leadership styles. Multiple or pluralistic leadership styles were present in the organisations, including democratic, transactional, empowering, *ubuntu* traits, visionary, and the autocratic styles.

There are illustrations of themes and quotations from the participants on RQ1 which aimed to identify the dominant leadership styles that influence experiences, operations, and perceptions within the medical scheme administration industry.

**Table 5.3: Leadership Styles Participant Responses**

| Theme                                    | Participant                                                                                                                                                                             | Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Importance of a democratic approach      | RPT 1                                                                                                                                                                                   | “I’m very democratic in the sense that I’m a big advocate for self-expression, where I believe the people should be able to express themselves....I think it is premised or underpinned by Ubuntu leadership where, in my sense, is that if as a leader, you are to love your people, you are to care for your people, you are to advocate for their development”. |
|                                          | RPT 7                                                                                                                                                                                   | “So, I would say that I am a democratic leader however, I also believe in putting people first for the collective therefore, I also practice some Ubuntu leadership. In my current role...”.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Findings                                 | This view presents a distinctive leadership style that seeks for every opinion and maintains free discussions that make it comfortable to speak out as a team.                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Theme                                    | Participant                                                                                                                                                                             | Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Transactional aspect to their leadership | RPT 2                                                                                                                                                                                   | “So, you can perhaps say that I am transactional at times I thinks. But I am also then I’m quite hard in terms of the outcomes you want to get”.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                          | RPT 16                                                                                                                                                                                  | “I don’t like to follow up with people or micromanage, but rather to empower them to either understand the current jobs that they are currently working at and as well as to aspire to be more than what they are”.                                                                                                                                                |
| Findings                                 | This duality illustrates that while achieving results is crucial, there is also a recognition of the need to balance this focus with employee empowerment, it was reinforced by RPT 16. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Theme                       | Participant                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Autocratic leadership style | RPT 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | “On the other hand, you do have the autocratic leaders, and I'll tell you why. What makes them a bit autocratic is because they've been doing it for so long that they are very prescriptive in certain instances, kind of things”. |
|                             | RPT 10                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | “It's more of an autocratic leadership. That's what I've observed, although regarding our executives and higher levels”.                                                                                                            |
|                             | RPT 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | “I guess my line manager is a bit of a I don't know how to describe her, maybe I can say she has some micromanagement behaviours where you she wants to know everything that's happening on the hour”.                              |
|                             | RPT 14                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | “Her leadership style is more of an autocratic leadership style to a certain extent, unfortunately it's not working”.                                                                                                               |
| Findings                    | This style was mainly driven by the fact that these leaders have been doing that type of work for a very long time and tend to be prescriptive. Some participants highlighted that this leadership style does not work well. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| Theme                   | Participant | Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ubuntu leadership style | RPT 16      | “So, it is really that open and transparent leadership style, but I think it is premised or underpinned by Ubuntu leadership where, in my sense is that if, as a leader, you are to love your people, you are to care for your people, you are to advocate for their development. All of that can only emanate from a position of humanity where you love them just on the basis that they are human beings, and then everything else then will flow from that right. If you talk about empathy, the fact that you love a person as a human being, then naturally you lend to empathy when they are encountering difficulties”. |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Findings | What was also evident was that there is also growing recognition of the leadership based on the <i>ubuntu</i> traits which is deemed as the <i>ubuntu</i> leadership style. |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Theme                      | Participant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Illustrative Quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blend of leadership styles | RPT 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | "...to the extent that you feel like you are well led, and you're empowered, then you will see the environment as a great opportunity for growth because you're not stifled".                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                            | RPT 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | "I think there's a blend. I think the new lady that came in, she's much more of an empowering sort, she does give off power so they can execute then and on the other hand, you do have the autocratic leader. On the other hand, you do have the autocratic leaders... they've been doing it for so long that they are very prescriptive in certain instances". |
|                            | RPT 12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | "Looking at my GM and I think she's also more democratic. She can be to a certain extent transactional".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Findings                   | This blend of leadership styles fosters an environment where accountability and autonomy coexist, thereby creating a dynamic workplace culture. Some of the participants were very explicit that the collection of different individual leadership styles created a blend of leadership in the organisation based on the organisational leadership dynamics. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

### 5.3.2 Employee engagement and well-being

The responses further highlight the influence of leadership on employee engagement and well-being. **Participant 2** expressed ambivalence, thus reflecting on the challenges of the work environment.

“On some days you kind of feel like you are but some you ask is this all worth it, the working through the night, the grinding and all of that, is it worth it? And then, you know, once I kind of pick myself up from that, then I realise that we I'm part of building something that will outlive me” [RPT 2].

This feeling demonstrates the conflict of loyalty and exhaustion. On the other hand, it also emphasises the importance of what can be derived from the work. **Participant 16** reinforced the positive influence of leadership on employee development.

“Now see opportunities within the company that new leader does not actually only empower the best in you but give you opportunities within the organisation to grow” [RPT 16].

This observation emphasises the importance of supportive leadership in the retention and motivation of employees, particularly when they perceive opportunities for advancement and development within the organisation.

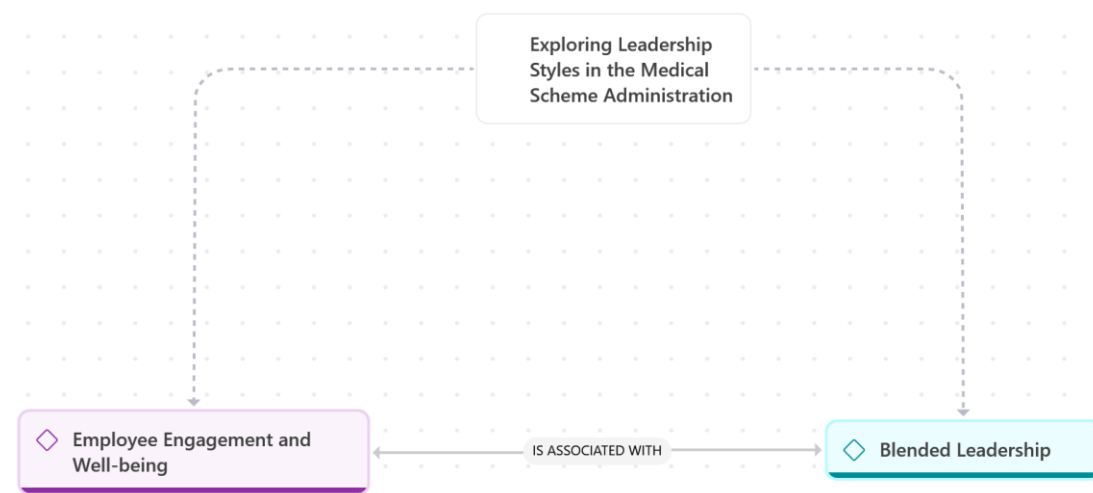


**Figure 5.4: Exploring leadership styles in the industry**

## 5.4 Drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy

**Research Question 2** can be recapped as follows: What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this industry?

This research question aimed to identify the drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy, especially those culminating from the prevailing leadership style and the subsequent employee engagement and wellness themes. The empirical data that was collected focused on the commitment to the organisational vision which results from a brand ambassador mindset, organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones, reinforcing organisational values, and perceptions of organisational support and engagement. In addition, there is the employee happiness metrics, and leadership influence on culture. This analysis examined the leadership aspect in the medical scheme administration industry concerning how the employees engage with the brand and become advocates for it.

The analysis of the responses developed around these themes made it possible to state that the leadership practices are important in cultivating the employees' connection to the organisation, their desire to promote its brand, and the level of their commitment to personal and professional growth.

**Table 5.4: Drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy**

| Codes                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Subthemes                                            | Themes                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand advocacy</li> <li>• Commitment to organisational vision</li> </ul>                                                                                         | Brand ambassador Mindset                             | Commitment to organisational vision  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebration of significant days</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       | Celebrating milestones                               | Organisational relationship building |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for self-expression</li> <li>• Focus on values and culture</li> </ul>                                                                                   | Reinforcing organisational values                    |                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagements</li> <li>• Interactions</li> <li>• Investment in employee relationships</li> <li>• Lack of employee development</li> </ul>                           | Perceptions of organisational support and engagement |                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee feedback mechanisms</li> <li>• Pulse survey</li> <li>• Net Promoter Score (NPS)</li> <li>• Towers Watson survey</li> <li>• Heartbeat surveys</li> </ul> | Feedback and surveys                                 | Employee happiness metrics           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership focus on culture and values</li> <li>• Purpose-driven culture</li> </ul>                                                                              | Driving cultural alignment                           | Leadership Influence on culture      |

#### **5.4.1 Commitment to organisational vision with brand ambassador mindset**

Brand ambassador roles for the employees was a recurring theme in the responses, pointing out the leadership impacts on employee engagement within the company. The respondents noted that they felt a deep connection between the employees and the organisation and looked upon being a brand ambassador with pride.

"So, I am definitely a brand ambassador for the Group on the basis that I feel like its purpose is a noble one" [RPT1].

Another participant reflected on how their perception of leadership affects their connection to the organisation, demonstrating the direct link between leadership and employee engagement.

"I do take cognisance of how the leaders do it, and that determines for me whether I'm connected or not to the organisation" [RPT2].

This mindset drives the employees to advocate for the organisation, thus promoting its mission externally and internally.

#### **5.4.2 Organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones**

The insights obtained from the participants relating to the celebration of organisational milestones and special events demonstrate how recognition and appreciation can significantly affect the morale and engagement of the employees. This helped in building relationships. The celebration of such events creates a culture of enjoyment as belonging and community are created which boosts the general culture of the organisation. One participant pointed out that:

"There are regular events in celebration of days like Women's Month during the month of August" [RPT1].

Such celebrations not only acknowledge the important social causes but also show the employees that their contributions and identities are valued. Another participant emphasised the role of recognition in enhancing employee engagement and nurturing a supportive culture.

"We care about the environment they are in, how we reward them, how we remunerate, how we celebrate people" [RPT2].

This viewpoint strengthens the view that celebration is not only a ritual, but it is also an

embedded part of the culture within the organisation. Moreover, one of the respondents noticed a special event that probably marks a very remarkable occasion in the company's life history and shows a common celebration of the achieved goals.

"When you think about the day one of the businesses on the group was turning 10 years old and they did the event where they got all the staff involved and we all did a five kilometre and three-kilometre walk or run in support" [RPT3].

This event not only celebrated the company's growth but also fostered teamwork and camaraderie among the employees.

#### **5.4.3 Organisational relationship building with reinforcing organisational values**

The participants' views on strengthening the organisational values and the level of leadership effectiveness in the context of the reinforcement of organisational values were highly related. One participant highlighted the role of leadership in promoting a culture of open dialogue and creative input. They expressed this sentiment by stating,

"...the freedom to come up with creative ideas as well as also on the extreme end, the freedom to express your dissenting view..." [RPT1].

This way, the employees are not only empowered but they are also reconciled with the organisation's principles since they feel that their opinions matter. The participants also addressed the proactive measures being taken to refresh and realign organisational values with the company's strategic direction.

"We are looking at a values refresh...part of our strategy refresh...What values drive us?" [RPT2].

This ongoing effort demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that the organisation's values evolve alongside its strategic goals.

Moreover, one of the participants stressed the need to attach one's responsibilities to the goals of the entity, by indicating that the organisational values should also be weaved into the conventional day-to-day workings.

"The other thing that I think our executives are very good at is they really drive through that sense of purpose. It's taking something as simple as if you are working within the facilities space where your job is to make sure we have chairs in the building and understand how that is linked to the main purpose" [RPT4].

This highlights how the effective leaders connect individual contributions to the company's mission, thereby reinforcing the relevance of organisational values in every role.

#### **5.4.4 *Organisational relationship building perceptions of organisational support and engagement***

The insights obtained illustrate a multifaceted landscape in terms of the organisation's commitment to building relationships with its employees. In general, it appears that the company's efficacy and efforts to promote employee engagement and support are perceived in a dichotomous manner. A positive aspect of the previous leadership was emphasised by one participant.

"The previous CEO took time to get to know employees and understand their businesses. The previous CEO was around for three months but he made time to arrange a breakfast session with new employees" **[RPT 14]**.

This effort demonstrates a commitment to relationship-building, as it allowed the employees to engage directly with the leadership, thus fostering a sense of belonging and understanding within the organisation. Additionally, another participant mentioned,

"The company is always encouraging for engagements and interactions both internally and externally" **[RPT 11]**.

This suggests that there are ongoing initiatives that are aimed at promoting communication and connection among the employees, which can contribute to a more cohesive workplace culture. Conversely, not all the employees share this optimistic view. One participant bluntly expressed disappointment, stating,

"No, they don't invest in their employees. There isn't much there for employees. It's basically come do your job and thank you. Bye" **[RPT 10]**.

This remark emphasises a perception of a lack of investment in employee development and support, thereby suggesting that certain employees may feel undervalued and unrecognised. Nevertheless, an additional participant expressed a more optimistic viewpoint, stating,

"There are lot of courses that anyone can take. It varies. The courses vary from the bottom to, you know, the top-level positions" **[RPT 7]**.

This suggests that there are structured opportunities for professional growth available to

the employees, potentially enhancing their skills and career trajectories.

#### **5.4.5 Employee happiness metrics with employee feedback and surveys**

The insights from the participants in a variety of organisations regarding employee feedback and surveys were analysed, revealing a structured approach to exploring employee engagement and satisfaction. Diverse methodologies were implemented by each organisation to collect feedback, with each methodology serving a different purpose and timeline. One participant observed,

"There are two: the first is called VOE voice of employees, and the second one is the pulse survey that we recently did in April of this year" **[RPT1]**.

This initiative facilitated open communication channels between staff and management, thereby allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the employee perspectives.

"We launched the Pulse survey this year.... the intention of it is a dipstick at a point in time. To understand where people are, what the engagement levels are and to understand where there's some areas of concern or dissatisfaction" **[RPT2]**.

This approach emphasised the importance of capturing real-time feedback to identify the areas needing attention.

"So, there is an annual survey called Towers Watson. Everyone knows this. It's the biggest thing that all companies buy and roll out to their companies. They tell us the values across employee happiness, the payment element, the people element, the leadership element, the team element, all of those various categories" **[RPT 13]**.

This comprehensive survey provided invaluable data to inform the decision-making processes. The participants explained that the heartbeat is obtained from the surveys. The participants said this was possible as the survey happened more frequently. This ongoing feedback mechanism allowed the organisations to remain attuned to the changes in employee engagement, thereby ensuring that the emerging issues could be addressed promptly.

"So, we do have surveys which is twice a year. We just had it done and when the results come out, they also get shared with the team and in terms of that we sat around as leadership to identify the key themes" **[RPT 14]**.

The insights from the participants across various organisations underscored a

multifaceted approach to employee feedback and surveys.

#### 5.4.6 Driving cultural alignment

The leadership's ability to align the employees with the organisation's values and culture is another crucial driver of engagement and advocacy. When the employees feel that they belong and that their values align with those of the organisation, they are more likely to remain engaged and advocate for the brand. One participant emphasised the importance of clearly defining the organisational values, which fosters a sense of belonging among the employees.

"Part of identifying that those values and landing those values and being clear on what we stand for as a brand, what is acceptable from a culture perspective, what's not acceptable, that creates a huge sense of belonging" [RPT2].

By creating cultural alignment, the leadership ensures that the employees are not only engaged but they are also motivated to advocate for the brand, both within and outside the organisation. **Figure 5.5** contextualises the drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy.

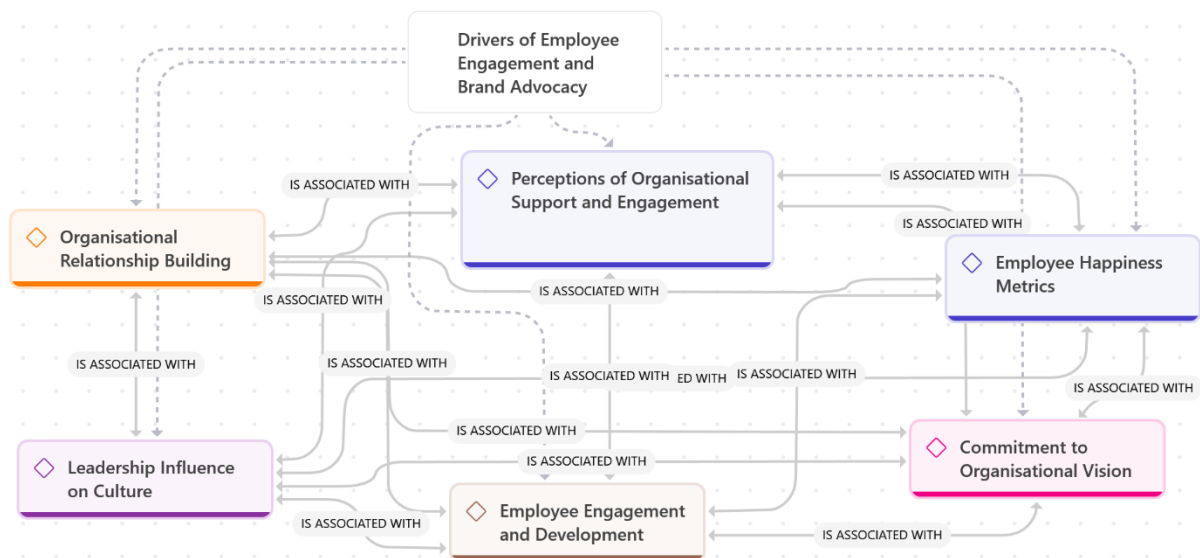


**Figure 5.5: Drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy**

### 5.5 Employee perception and external advocacy

**Research Question 3** can be recapped as follows: How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation both internally and externally?

**Table 5.5: Employee perception and external advocacy**

| Codes                                                                                                                                                                              | Subthemes                                     | Themes                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong advocacy</li> <li>• Mixed perceptions</li> <li>• Positive sentiment</li> </ul>                                                     | Diverse employee sentiments and advocacy      | Individual promotion of the organisation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive family perception</li> <li>• Negative perceptions</li> <li>• Mixed perceptions</li> <li>• Association with excellence</li> </ul> | Family Influence on organisational reputation | Family perceptions and advocacy          |

### **5.5.1 Individual promotion of the organisation**

The insights received from the participants regarding the individual promotion of the organisation depict the underlying feelings of the workers, which are intricate in nature. These perspectives illustrate the delicate mindset that comes with organisational reputation. One participant expressed surprise at the negative conversations that exist within the organisation.

"I have recently learned that there are negative conversations that are shocking.... but I also see people coming back" [RPT3].

This recognition of negative commentary means that a few of the employees would exit the organisation owing to displeasure; however, the presence of some employees who return after leaving suggests that there is something compelling within the organisation that makes them return. Another participant provided a more nuanced view, stating,

"It's mixed, I think. The one half believes that they are not too keen with us; they feel that we can do better for the staff to advocate for the company" [RPT8].

This reflection suggests that while some employees may feel a sense of loyalty or commitment, others are critical of the organisation's efforts in supporting its staff. Additionally, a participant commented on the varying internal sentiments, saying,

"So, internally, it has been a mixed bag; it depends on who you talk to. People who are motivated to work just get their work done, and they speak positively, but those who

have had incidences, those individuals who were not performing according to standard and with the contracts, got terminated. They said it's speaking ill-being" [RPT14].

This perspective highlights that the employee experiences significantly influence the perceptions of the organisation. Conversely, another participant offered a more optimistic perspective.

"I think it's generally positive. I think they associate it with excellence" [RPT15].

This sentiment indicates that some employees recognise the organisation's strengths and believe in its mission and values.

### **5.5.2 *Family perceptions and advocacy***

The insights collected from the participants regarding the family perceptions and advocacy revealed a spectrum of sentiments that influence how the employees view their organisation and how these views are communicated to their families and social circles. One participant expressed a negative perception from their family, stating,

"I think my family is probably negative just because of the amount of time and sacrifice I have to make to get things done" [RPT2].

This reflection highlights a common struggle among the employees who balance professional commitments with family expectations. In contrast, another participant shared a more positive outlook on family perceptions, indicating that the people they spoke to would recommend the company, saying,

"The people I speak to would recommend the company to others to come work here, for example, it's positive, whatever that is happening" [RPT6].

This sentiment suggests that the employees feel proud of some of the aspects of the organisation and are willing to share with their families and friends. Moreover, another participant emphasised the role of personal experience in shaping family perceptions, stating,

"The word of mouth is going to be a positive word of mouth, and when your family and your friends hear positive things about your organisation from you as an ambassador of the organisation" [RPT12].

This perspective highlights the ambassadorial role that the employees play in promoting their organisation. The positive experiences shared by the employees can lead to

favourable perceptions from the family and friends, thereby reinforcing the idea that employee advocacy is critical in shaping the external views of the organisation. Figure 5.6 presents the summary and linkage on employee perception and external advocacy.

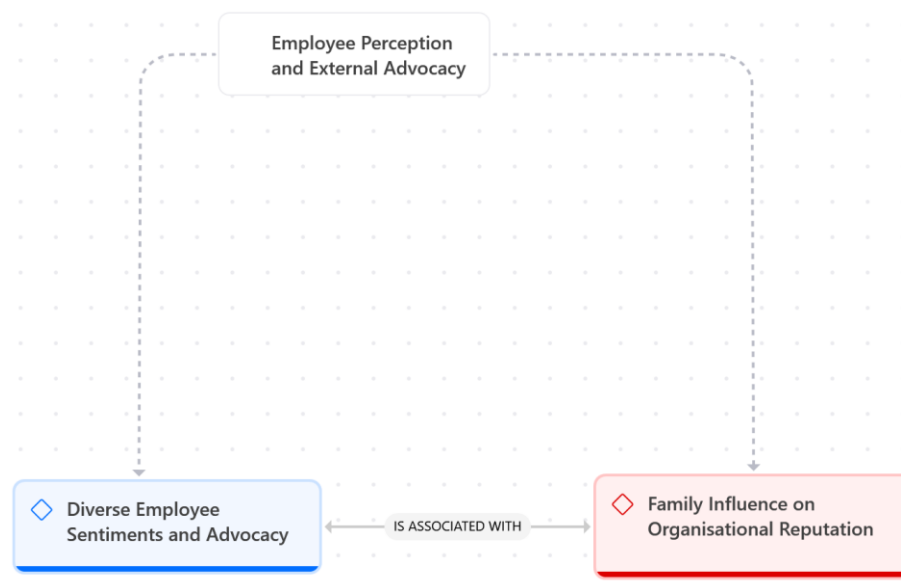


**Figure 5.6: Employee Perception and External Advocacy**

## 5.6 Impact of social exchange on leadership dynamics

**Research Question 4** can be recapped as: How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?

The social exchange theory impacted the leadership dynamics with employee engagement and development, effective leadership practices, and leadership gaps as well as the disconnects (Table 5.6).

**Table 5.6: Impact of social exchange on leadership**

| Codes                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Subthemes                                  | Themes                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decentralised decision-making</li> <li>Disempowerment of employees</li> <li>Empowerment through education</li> <li>Inconsistent support</li> <li>Self-empowerment</li> </ul> | Empowerment of employees                   | Employee engagement and development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trust relationships</li> <li>Transparency and openness</li> </ul>                                                                                                            | Visionary leadership and change management | Effective leadership practices      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of unified leadership</li> <li>Poor communication</li> <li>Frustrating work environment</li> </ul>                                                                      | Communication and empathy deficits         | Leadership gaps and disconnects.    |

### **5.6.1 Empowerment of employees**

The findings related to the empowerment of employees across various organisations revealed a complex landscape where the opportunities for personal and professional growth exist alongside the barriers that may hinder true empowerment. The participants expressed varying degrees of sentiments regarding the extent to which they felt empowered by their organisations. One notable aspect of empowerment that was mentioned by participants was:

"The amount of investment that the organisation made in something as simple as the bursaries where we send people to go study and there's a host of people who are doing their junior degrees on our degrees about 149 interns and in all manner of things" [RPT1].

This investment reflects a commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning, thus providing the employees with the resources they need to advance their education and careers. Another participant acknowledged the availability of growth opportunities within the company, stating,

"There's always opportunities within the company to better yourself" [RPT 11].

This sentiment was echoed by a participant who emphasised the organisation's encouragement for further education.

"Absolutely 100%, and I feel that they always encourage everybody to study further study... where there's a bursary available for a person to empower themselves" [RPT16].

Such initiatives illustrate the organisation's efforts to create personal development and professional growth pathways. However, despite these initiatives, some participants noted the challenges related to accessibility and the engagement with available resources.

"There's a portal with all the information, like the courses one can learn. And then it has all the information as well. But if you don't want to go through it and empower yourself, yes, the platform is there, but if you are already engaging with it, you will feel you're not empowered as well" [RPT 6].

This highlights the necessity of individual initiatives in leveraging organisational resources for personal development. Moreover, some participants expressed concerns about a restrictive environment that may stifle empowerment. One participant articulated this by saying,

"There's a lot of rules that kind of or we work in, and I think people are very scared to step outside of the rule, sometimes even when it's necessary... It creates this kind of leadership stack because one doesn't want to decide" [RPT2].

Such organisational constraints can lead to a culture of caution, where the employees may hesitate to take the initiative or make decisions, undermining their sense of empowerment. Finally, a participant conveyed a contrasting perspective, conveying uncertainty about the level of empowerment that was felt within the organisation.

"I'm not sure if I would say it's empowered because we don't. We do have some support but it's not consistent, so most of the time it would be you work according to your knowledge" [RPT 10].

This suggests that while some support exists, the inconsistency may diminish the overall sense of empowerment among employees.

### **5.6.2 *Effective leadership practices***

The gathered insights highlight key aspects of the effective leadership practices within the organisation, particularly focusing on vision, strategy, and the ability to manage change. The participants emphasised the importance of having a clear vision and well-defined strategies.

"I would say vision and all strategy, I think they do that well" [RPT 15].

This indicates that the leadership is perceived to have a strong grasp of the organisation's direction, which is crucial for aligning the employees with the company's goals. Additionally, effective leadership is characterised by its ability to support the employees during times of change.

"Put to the staff members at ease when there are changes and this brings a form of comfort in knowing that you are informed about the future of the organisation and where it is going" [RPT 11].

This statement underscores the significance of transparent communication and empathy in the leadership practices.

### **5.6.3 *Leadership gaps and disconnects***

The collected insights revealed significant leadership gaps and disconnects within the organisation, particularly regarding the alignment of leadership actions with employee

experiences and communication practices. A participant pointed out,

“They don't do well; I would say really being in tune with the experience of like the lay worker” [RPT 15].

This observation suggests that the leadership may lack a genuine understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by the employees at lower levels. Moreover, the call for improved communication was echoed in another participant's remarks:

“If the company could just get the leadership to sing from one hymn book half the issues would be resolved” [RPT 11].

This statement reflects a desire for unity and coherence in leadership messaging and actions. Figure 5.7 presents the impact of social exchange on leadership.

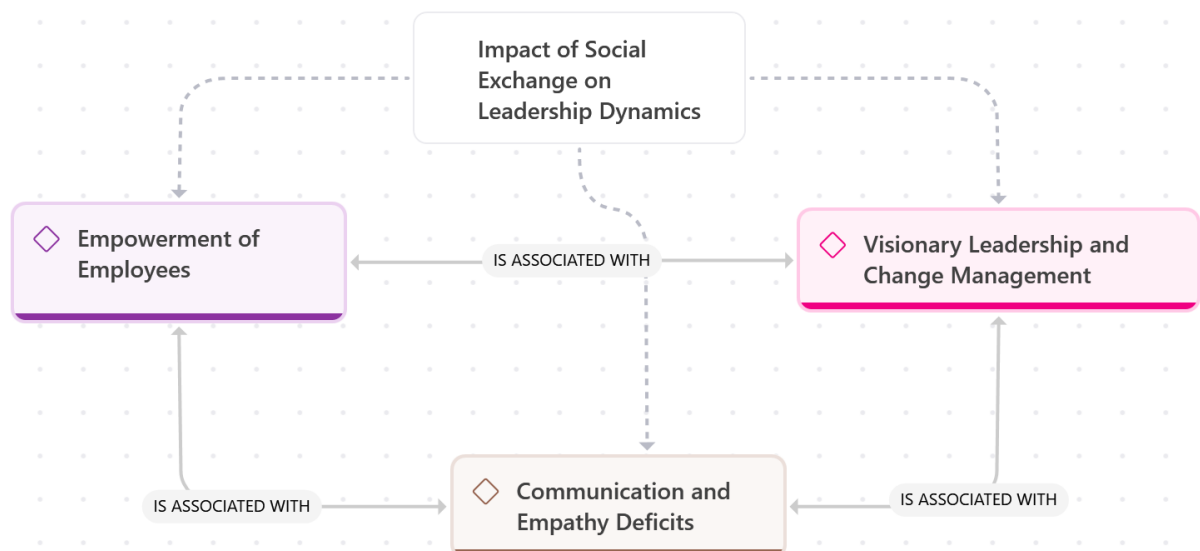


**Figure 5.7: Impact of social exchange on leadership**

## 5.7 Conclusion of the chapter

The results revealed that within the organisations, there are blended leadership styles. The main leadership styles in the organisations were democratic, transactional, empowering, the *ubuntu* traits, visionary, and the autocratic styles. These leadership styles influence employee engagement and well-being. Engagement and well-being play a key role in organisational brand advocacy. The main drivers of brand advocacy were the commitment to the organisational vision which results from a brand ambassador mindset, organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones, reinforcing organisational values, and the perceptions of organisational support and engagement. This together with

the employee happiness metrics, and leadership influence on culture. All this influences the employee perception of the organisation and their external advocacy. The underlying feelings of the workers influence this, some employees may feel a sense of loyalty or commitment, while others would be critical of the organisation's efforts in supporting its staff. Conflicting viewpoints were expressed regarding advocacy and family perception. Among some employees, the difficulty of reconciling professional obligations with family expectations is a widely held perspective. However, some maintained a more optimistic outlook on the perceptions of their family. These findings are discussed in Chapter 6.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the leadership styles that influence positive employee brand advocacy. The objective of this exploratory study was to acquire a deeper understanding of these leadership styles which is advantageous for the establishment of the internal stakeholders in shaping the effectiveness and success of the company (Men & Bowen, 2017) as mentioned in Chapter 1. The study further aimed to achieve the goals which are:

1. To identify the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry;
2. To pinpoint the drivers of employee brand advocacy;
3. To assess which leadership styles had the most significant influence on brand advocacy; and
4. To investigate the impact of the social exchange on leadership.

The qualitative data from the 16 semi structured interviews was analysed to understand the constructs, furthermore the findings were compared to the existing literature to validate the proposed conceptual model. The interviews comprised of 201 codes and the word cloud was used as a visual representation of the transcribed data which was developed to evaluate how the empirical data supported the research questions. The graphic representation of words shows that the higher the frequency of the word, the bigger the word on the cloud. The dominant themes and keywords that aligned with the study, are words such as leadership that was at the first level followed by others at the second level such as styles, employees, brand, advocacy, influence, culture, happiness, internally, information, change and feedback. The cloud supports the fact that the information that came up in the interviews were the themes that are relevant and aligned to the research questions.

### **6.2 Discussion of the results**

#### **6.2.1 *Exploring leadership styles in the medical scheme administration industry***

**Research question 1: What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry?**

The literature has provided an insight that there is generally a plethora of leadership styles that exist and are adopted by organisations. The studies on leadership have made substantial advances in understanding the effective leadership styles, such as those deemed to be

positive such as authentic, charismatic, empowering, ethical, transformational and the servant leadership styles which have been linked to positive outcomes (Fischer & Sitkin, 2023). It is not a simplistic notion that the positive styles always lead to positive outcomes and the negative styles always lead to the negative ones. The findings of the study revealed the codes of the leadership styles that have been applied and utilised in these organisations, and these are the democratic style, transactional style, empowering style, autocratic leadership style, ubuntu traits and the visionary leadership styles.

The subthemes were the individual leadership perspectives and organisational leadership dynamics. The themes that were noted were plural / diverse leadership styles. Noticeably, the findings do indicate that the organisations have a blended, diverse or plural leadership styles.

Gronn (2008; 2009) as well as Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012) support that a collective or plural approach to leadership offers significant benefits. Leadership and the leaders can be found in many places, both within and outside of the organisations. In a world where power is shared, diverse leadership teams, each contributing unique resources and strengths, provide a practical, though not a certain path to achieving the goals.

The participants were asked to name and describe the leadership styles of their executive team. This was important to establish the baseline of the leadership styles that exist in these organisations. In Chapter 2, it was stated that leadership has been a disputed topic, and it is hard for the academics to define (Iszatt-White et al., 2018) which was evident when one participant found it difficult to define the leadership style in their organisation, therefore the researcher had to provide the names and the definition of the leadership styles. All the participants named a dominant leadership style practiced by the leadership, they also stated the type of leadership styles they possessed for example the one participant stated that their leadership style is the democratic one and further stated that he believed that the people he led should be able to express themselves freely, however, he further mentioned that he also applies the *ubuntu* and autocratic leadership style which is a blended or pluralistic leadership style because the style that is applied is situational in certain instances. The participant mentioned that he applied the autocratic leadership style when there is lack of discipline, or when he identified bad habits.

### **6.2.2 Plurality of leadership styles**

The empirical data that was collected in Chapter 5 demonstrated that there were multiple leadership styles that exist in this industry, which shows a spectrum of styles that are

presented in Figure 6.1 exploring the leadership styles in the industry. The findings support that there are contradictory styles that can co-exist in an organisation. The one leader is said to be democratic however, there are to a certain extent autocratic. The other is empowering with a blend of autocratic style. The leadership style that was mentioned the most by the participants was the democratic leadership style. This style could be deemed as being dominant in the medical scheme administration industry.

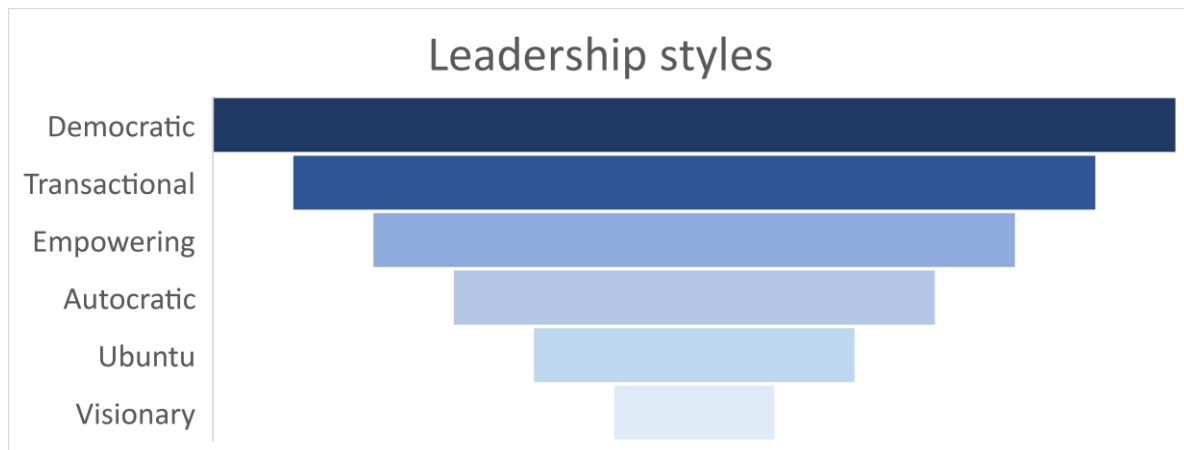


**Figure 6.1: Leadership styles from the highest to the lowest rate of frequency**

The different leadership styles can be applied to respond and address to various situations and challenges that may arise. They allow the leadership to be adaptable to the demands of the clients and the market and to respond effectively. Evidence stated that the visionary leaders share their personal vision with the employees, which serves as a deep motivator and guide for the employees to understand the organisation's purpose and direction which in return would drive engagement and performance (Taylor, Cornelius & Colvin, 2014).

### **6.2.3 Democratic leadership**

In Chapter 2, Sotiropski (2018) mentions that the democratic leaders are characterised as leaders that prioritise the development and well-being of the employees and are committed to having open communication. While the employees are encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes, the ultimate authority remains with the leader. These leaders are known to create a supportive working environment which enhances employee satisfaction, commitment, creativity, engagement and boosts the employee morale which results in the employees contributing positively toward the growth and success of the organisation. They value collaboration and shared decision-making (Goleman, 2000), the finding supported that these views present a distinctive leadership style that seeks for every opinion and maintains free discussions that make it comfortable

to speak out as a team. The study supports that democratic leadership is not suitable in scenarios where there is a demand for quick decisions (Combe, 2014) as it requires consulting everyone involved which can be time consuming. On the contrary transactional leadership makes decisions quickly therefore, more effective in this regard hence the blended model being ideal.

#### **6.2.4 Empowering and ubuntu leadership focused**

The act of an empowering leadership involves the leader sharing power and responsibility with their followers, motivating and inspiring them through their actions (Cheong et al., 2019). The findings established that the empowering leadership style is influenced by positive psychology, which has garnered increasing scholarly and professional attention because of its ethical implications and potential advantages. The leaders want to share their power with others, and they find it liberating to do so. This is not far from the *ubuntu* leadership traits which is growing in recognition. This is a value-based leadership style that embodies values such as humility, respect, sharing and compassion as mentioned by Broodryk (2006). The findings collaborated that the *ubuntu* traits were found to be an important element and underpinned how one views people in general. As a leader one participant alluded that one must love people, care for them, and advocate for their development.

#### **6.2.5 Autocratic leadership**

Autocratic leadership was shown to be prescribed by the leaders that have been in their roles for a long duration, therefore they are prescriptive in how they want things to be done in the workplace. In certain instances, these leaders do not achieve the desired results when applying this approach. The autocratic leaders prioritise performance and apply strong control over their teams (Fiaz et al., 2017). They make decisions independently; they provide clear instructions and hold themselves accountable for the outcomes. This leadership style can be effective in a dynamic environment or during a crisis (Van Vugt et al., 2004). This may limit employee creativity where the employees are micromanaged and they question whether their leader trusts them and their ability to deliver on their own (Fiaz et al., 2017). This centralised approach relies on strict adherence to formalised processes and procedures. Effective leadership is crucial for organisational success since leadership has a direct influence on the organisation flourishing. A leader that is selfless and focused on inspiring and empowering the employees is seen to be adaptable and authentic. Their approach to the leadership role reflects their style and it does impact organisational performance (Mintzberg, 2010).

The findings collaborated with the theory stating that the employees do not thrive in environments where they are micromanaged because there is a lack of engagement, and the employees get told what to do without them having the opportunity to raise their views or opinions, so it is disempowering for them. This results in the employees losing confidence in a leader that is reactionary and makes decisions and acts abruptly. On the contrary, the leaders may opt to be autocratic particularly in instances where the employees demonstrate a lack of discipline or poor work ethic.

The participant immediately related with the visionary leadership style together with two other participants. In Chapter 2, it was stated that a leader that is visionary shares their personal vision with the employees which serves as a deep motivator and guide for the employees to understand the organisation's purpose and direction which in return would drive engagement and performance (Taylor, Cornelius & Colvin, 2014). This view is supported by the finding that stated that trust, transparency, and openness are key to the relationships with the leadership. It was interesting to get the in-depth detail which presented a broader and diverse view of the environment which shaped how the executives led.

#### **6.2.6 Transactional leadership**

The transactional leadership style mentioned in Chapter 2 is characterised by the maintenance of the current performance and minimal or gradual improvements in a communal affiliation and this is characterised by the act of rewarding or penalising behaviour. It can be a mutually beneficial between the individuals who partake in this transaction which could encourage the employees to improve on their performance with anticipation that they would be rewarded for their efforts therefore, making it a give and take transaction (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024). A participant agreed that they can be a transactional leader in certain instances, and they are quite hard in term of the outcomes they want and expect from the employees. The evidence shows that there are linkages concerning several leadership styles that are presently being studied which is challenging and suggests 'construct proliferation' (Howell & Shamir, 2005; Morrow, 1983).

#### **6.2.7 Leadership influence on perception**

The codes generated were nurturing milieu, employee fatigue, fluctuating motivation and growth opportunities. The subthemes were employee engagement and well-being. The theme was leadership influence on perception.

The responses from Chapter 5 further highlighted the influence of leadership on employee engagement and well-being which play a key role in organisational brand advocacy.

Situations such as a challenging work environment were highlighted, however, the participants acknowledged that because they are a part of building something great that will outlive them, they are willing to go through these challenges. The leadership styles mentioned above influence employee well-being and engagement, when the employees feel positive about their work, they are prone to go the extra mile and do what needs to be done to achieve the goal. Creff (2004) describes the *ubuntu* traits as a philosophy that is centered around communal well-being and offers ethical support to the individuals with potential impacts on the governance structures. The evidence from the findings demonstrated that a participant stated how their perception of the leadership style affects their connection to the organisation, which demonstrated a strong link between leadership and employee engagement. The employees who do not feel that the employer invests in their development feel undervalued and unrecognised therefore, these employees do not feel the need to go the extra mile. On the contrary, another employee deemed that their organisation invested in their development by having structured opportunities for professional growth which are available to all, and these opportunities are seen as potential to enhance their skills and career trajectories.

### **6.3 Drivers of employee engagement and brand advocacy**

#### **6.3.1 *Research Question 2: What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this industry?***

This study sought to examine the influence of the leadership styles on staff engagement and brand advocacy within the medical scheme administration sector. The empirical study examined the elements culminating from the prevailing leadership style and the subsequent employee engagement and wellness such as commitment to the organisational vision which results from a brand ambassador mindset, organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones, reinforcing organisational values, and perceptions of organisational support and engagement. In addition, there is the employee happiness metrics, and the leadership's influence on culture. The findings suggest that the proficient leadership strategies can foster a positive work environment, enhance employee engagement, and promote brand advocacy. When the employees feel that they belong and that their values align with those of the organisation, they are more likely to remain engaged and advocate for the brand. The findings stated four themes as seen in Figure 6.2 of employee engagement and brand advocacy which are not working in isolation.



**Figure 6.2: Themes of employee engagement and brand advocacy**

### **6.3.2 Commitment to organisational vision with a brand ambassador mindset**

The brand ambassador roles for the employees were a recurring theme in the responses, pointing out the leadership's impact on employee engagement within the company. The participants supported this view by highlighting the influence of leadership on employee engagement and well-being. The online behaviour of employees is significantly influencing consumer perception, and they are becoming more significant brand ambassadors (Ahmad et al., 2022). Leadership has a substantial impact on corporate culture, which in turn influences the employees' perceptions of the brand. By examining the relationship between employee advocacy and the leadership styles, the businesses can capitalise on their personnel to gain a competitive advantage. Some participants proudly proclaimed themselves as brand ambassadors for their organisations. This was due to how they relate with the purpose and values of the organisation and these values resonate with them personally. Evidently, this mindset drives the employees to advocate for the organisation and promote its mission both internally and externally.

### **6.3.3 Organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones**

Organisational relationship building is associated with leadership influence and culture; therefore, one cannot necessarily build an organisation without having some improved organisational culture. The same also applies where the findings demonstrate that the organisational culture seems to have a connection with employee engagement. This is evidence that the drivers are not stand-alone drivers, however, they are intertwined based on the information that came through from the findings. The employees have a perception of whether their organisation supports them or not, which is done through employee

engagements.

In Chapter 1, the results of a study revealed that the companies with employee engagement surpassed those lacking engagement by 202%, which supports the importance of employee engagements. Morandi and Cicchetti (2023) support that the transformational leaders demonstrate citizenship behaviour which is the work engagement that they strive for in their organisations. The insights from the participants emphasise the importance of commemorating organisational milestones and special events. The insights are supported by evidence that states that employee morale and engagement may be considerably enhanced through these types of gratitude and acknowledgement. Besides completing formal work duties for salary and other rewards (Brown & Roloff, 2015), as part of rewarding the organisation for its contribution to the relationship, the individuals can voluntarily be involved in actions that are beyond their job requirements (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Tremblay and Landreville (2015) also support that when the employees perceive that they participate in a mutually beneficial relationship with their employer, they may feel unrestricted to participate beyond their defined work responsibilities but go above and beyond what is expected from them. Furthermore, these views by the employees form part of an embedded part of the culture within the organisation. One of the respondents noted a special event that probably marks a very remarkable occasion in the company's life history and shows a common celebration of the achieved goals.

A gesture as simple as the Chief Executive Officer arranging a breakfast session with the employees demonstrates their commitment to relationship building as it proves to the new employees that the leadership fosters a sense of belonging from the start of their career there. Another participant supported the view that the leadership encourages engagements with both the internal and external stakeholders.

In other situations, the employees are encouraged to be creative and share their innovative ideas, and these employees do not only feel empowered as alluded by a participant, but they also reconciled with the organisation's principles since they feel that their opinions and ideas matter. This is an ongoing effort by this organisation to demonstrate a commitment to the employees and ensure that the organisation's values evolve alongside its strategic goals. These relationships tend to develop into a reciprocal one as stated by Benmira and Agboola (2017), where the employers' benefit from their employees' efforts beyond their formal duties.

### 6.3.4 Employee happiness metrics with employee feedback and surveys

The participants provided various insights regarding employee feedback and surveys which revealed a structured approach to understanding employee engagement and satisfaction. The initiatives stated in Chapter 5 such as the Voice of Employees (VOE) facilitated open communication channels between the staff and management. Other surveys such as those by Pulse that is done once or twice a year, emphasised the importance of capturing real time feedback to identify areas that require the leadership's attention. Chapter 1 supports that the feedback from the employees can greatly influence how the public views an organisation and the services it provides.

Another survey mentioned in Chapter 5 informs the organisation about the values across the business and the employee happiness scores. These comprehensive surveys provided invaluable data to inform the decision-making processes. These generate an opportunity for the organisation to focus on key themes that are captured by the employees.

### 6.3.5 Driving cultural alignment

Chapter 2 states that the employee's sense of belonging in their workplace refers to the employee's experience of connectedness which is a feeling of being an integral part of the organisation. It goes deeper than identifying with the organisation but rather these employees feel connected to the organisation's values and culture which becomes an integral part of how they relate with the organisation (Cho, Xu, & Boatwright, 2023).

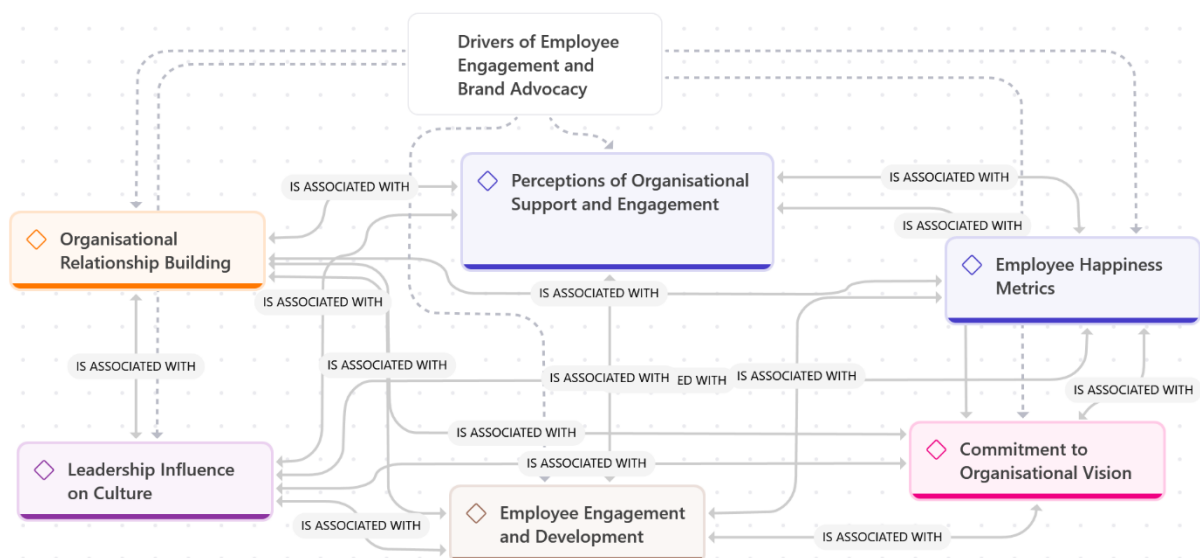


Figure 6.3: Employee engagement

Evidence shows that by creating a cultural alignment, the leadership ensures that the employees are not only engaged but are also motivated to advocate for the brand, both within and outside the organisation. One participant emphasised the importance of clearly defining organisational values, which fosters a sense of belonging among the employees. The drivers of employee engagement are interconnected and work together to drive employee engagement and brand advocacy as illustrated in Figure 6.3.

#### **6.4 Employee perception and external advocacy**

##### **Research Question 3: How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation both internally and externally?**

The insight that the participants provided regarding the individual promotion of the organisation reveals the complex emotions of the employees.

##### **6.4.1 Individual promotion of the organisation and family perceptions**

The delicate mindset that is associated with organisational reputation is exemplified by these perspectives. A participant was taken aback by the existence of negative conversations within the organisation. Walden and Westerman (2018) support that when the highly committed employees positively speak and promote the organisation externally, they are motivated to provide positive views to others, therefore the firms become more than a workplace as they are humanised because they express positive comments about their organisations externally therefore, it suggests that a relationship between the leadership styles and brand advocacy does exist. When the employees share their positive experiences about the organisation it can lead to favourable perceptions from their family members and friends, which reinforces the idea that employee advocacy is critical in shaping the external views of the organisation.

Some insights suggested that there is a spectrum of participants regarding their family perceptions and advocacy sentiments which revealed how the employees view their organisations and how these views are shared and perceived by their families. There were negative sentiments expressed by some family members, and on the contrary, there were positive sentiments expressed by other participants' views. The participants referred their family and friends to come work for the organisation. The Nielsen Group (2015) as well as Thelen's (2020) findings also support these views since it was found that most respondents (83%), from 60 countries are inclined to follow recommendations from friends and acquaintances than to trust messages from the corporations, with only 15% showing trust in the corporate communications. The findings in Chapter 5 reinforce that the

employees that are proud to work for the organisations are happy to refer their friends and colleagues since they had a positive experience with the organisation.

## **6.5 Impact of social exchange on leadership dynamics**

### **6.5.1 Research Question 4: How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?**

The social exchange theory impacted the leadership dynamics with employee engagement and development, effective leadership practices, leadership gaps and disconnects.

### **6.5.2 Empowerment of employees**

The findings of employee empowerment across several organisations uncovered a complicated environment where the potential for personal and professional development coexists with obstacles that may inhibit authentic empowerment. The participants conveyed differing levels of sentiments concerning their perceived empowerment by their organisations. Their organisations invest in bursaries for the employees which encourages a culture of continuous learning. The organisations that have many rules and hierarchical structures make it challenging for the employees to make decisions thereby, creating a leadership stack where decisions are made by the leaders only. Such organisational constraints can lead to a culture of caution, and they stifle creativity and trust which is disempowering for the employees.

### **6.5.3 Effective leadership**

The key aspects of effective leadership were gathered within these organisations. They focused on the vision, strategy, and the ability to manage change which furthermore emphasised the importance of having a clear vision. Chapter 2 states that transformational leadership is deemed to have a positive effect on the followers as the leader's vision is communicated clearly by these leaders (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024). The leaders apply the value system approach and invest time in shaping the employee's behaviour to be aligned with the organisation. This view is supported in Chapter 5 where a participant mentioned that their leadership's strength is how they articulate the vision and strategy to the business and another participant also supported the view that the communication of the vision by the leaders gives the clients relief and comfort. This statement emphasises the importance of transparency, communication, and empathy in the leadership practices. *Ubuntu* leadership was seen as practicing empathy.

#### **6.5.4 Leadership gaps and disconnects**

This insight highlights a strong association of the empowerment of the employees with the desire for clear communication which brings about coherence in leadership messaging and actions. Visionary leadership and change management are associated with the impact they have on the social exchange on leadership dynamics. These leaders inspire their employees by providing them with meaningful responsibilities, thereby fostering their growth, and articulating a compelling future vision. These leaders prioritise individual development, thus challenging their teams to attain their full potential, and provide opportunities for growth to achieve extraordinary results.

The evidence stated that the visionary leaders share their personal vision with the employees, which serves as a deep motivator and guide for the employees to understand the organisation's purpose and direction which in return would drive engagement and performance (Taylor, Cornelius & Colvin, 2014). The culture of innovation is what the one organisation does things, it's a culture of excellence and the values of the organisations.

#### **6.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, employee engagement and well-being are associated with blended leadership styles which are a configuration of many parts even though these might seem contradictory, they work together. What is important to note is that a leadership style that has not played a role such as *ubuntu* leadership is coming up even more frequently. This means that there is an increase of Africanisation within the organisation because *ubuntu* is one of those style which is grounded on the organisation. It embodies values such as, humanity, respect, sharing and compassion as elucidated by Broodryk (2006). Creff (2004) describes it as a philosophy that is centered around communal well-being and offering ethical support to the individuals with potential impacts on the governance structures.

This might be one of the effective styles to build a brand because when organisations build a brand, it is based on compassionate issues which means that when people are having a view where there is higher levels of empathy they can relate. They have a view of who you are based on we are "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" which translates to "I am because we are" which underscores the interconnectedness of individuals, in society (Ncube 2010) and brings about a sense of community therefore, the organisation will be seen as creating a caring brand that is relatable. This is more important for the clients and the external stakeholders, however, when it comes to people that are internal there is a higher interest and impact of the leadership style such as the democratic leadership style because more

and people are interested in being empowered and being part of the engagement and decision-making process to allow them to feel as part of the organisation and grant them a sense of ownership. Notwithstanding that the employees disregard that there is a transactional leadership style because the transactional leader emphasises that when the employees achieve results by performing well, they will get compensated or remunerated accordingly which is one of the advantages. The blended leadership style enables a sense of holistic view to the organisation.

The final chapter concludes the research by synthesising the key findings of the research to effectively answer the research questions that are revisited, summarised and conclusions are drawn. The managerial implications based on the findings are discussed. The recommendations to the various stakeholders are also provided. Furthermore, the research limitations are provided together with the recommendations for future studies.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter 7 of the report discusses the empirical data from the previous scholars, and the implications of the findings. This study sought to examine the leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy by analysing the dominant leadership styles and their influence on the employees' propensity to serve as brand ambassadors. The chosen philosophy was interpretivism which was deemed as being relevant for the study on social phenomena in their natural environment (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) further state that the interpretivism philosophy brings the phenomena under study to the realities of the participants in that culture, in the circumstances and in the context. Leadership is a social phenomenon in the organisational behaviour field.

### **7.2 Key findings per research question**

Various scholars have indicated that the democratic leaders value collaboration and shared decision-making. These leaders engage all the team members in defining critical objectives and formulating strategies to realise their objectives.

#### ***7.2.1 What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration industry?***

The study found that the prevailing leadership styles that are applied in the medical scheme administration industry are the democratic style, the transactional style, the empowering style, the autocratic leadership style, the *ubuntu* traits and the visionary leadership styles which leads to the conclusion that there is a blended or multi leadership styles in these organisations.

The findings show that the transformational and democratic leaders in these organisations inspire and motivate the employees, and they share a clear vision as highlighted by Zaman and Abbasi (2020). They empower the employees and encourage them to feel passionate about the company's mission and become vocal advocates which is supported by the findings that said that the individuals believe that when leading people, one must give them the freedom to express their views and opinions without fear. Ahmad et al. (2022) maintain that the employees' advocacy behaviour is an expression of voluntary commitments to their organisations which reinforces the organisation values and culture. The organisations create a culture of autonomy which influences a positive psychology. Empowering leadership shares power and responsibility with their followers, thereby motivating and inspiring them through their own actions (Cheong et al., 2019). A leader

that is selfless and focused on inspiring and empowering the employees is seen to be adaptable and authentic. Their approach to the leadership role reflects their style and it does impact the organisational performance Mintzberg (2010).

*Ubuntu* is a value-based leadership style that embodies values such as humility, respect, sharing and compassion as mentioned by Broodryk (2006). Post Covid-19, the employees want to demand to work in environments where they feel nurtured, supported, cared for, and valued. This will help to retain them as employees whilst they seek opportunities for advancement and development with the organisation. The servant leader prioritises that the individual's superior needs are met.

Effective leadership is crucial for the organisational success since leadership has a direct influence on the organisation flourishing. The transactional leaders maintain their current performance and minimal or gradual improvements in a communal affiliation, and this is characterised by the act of rewarding or penalising behaviour. However, this can be mutually beneficial between the individuals who partake in this transaction which could encourage the employees to improve on their performance with the anticipation that they would be rewarded for their efforts therefore, making it a give and take transaction (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024). It is also required to ensure that the employees deliver on what is expected of them.

Employee engagement and well-being are positively associated with blended leadership styles which are a configuration of many parts even though these might seem contradictory, they work well together, as a result one might find that even when it comes to the culture of the organisation as well as the brand, they are all driven by this blended leadership style.

### ***7.2.2 What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this industry?***

The empirical study examined the elements culminating from the prevailing leadership style and the subsequent employee engagement and wellness such as the commitment to the organisational vision which results from a brand ambassador mindset, organisational relationship building by celebrating milestones, reinforcing organisational values, and the perceptions of organisational support and engagement. In addition, there is the employee happiness metrics, and leadership influence on culture. The role of the leaders is to ensure that the employees are engaged in their work environment therefore, the leaders that surpass their own self-interests, empower, and develop followers, and

articulate visions which benefit the collective are known as socialised charismatic leaders which are seen as agents of change who inspire and motivate others to follow them (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014).

The employees with high levels of commitment to the organisation tend to become brand ambassadors, as they have the mindset to promote their organisation and place it in good light when in public.

There is a link where the employees that have positive perceptions about the organisation feel connected to its mission and goals. This mindset influences the employees to promote the organisation internally and externally. They are drawn to align their responsibilities to the organisation's goal. The direct lines of communication between the employees and the leadership are viewed as an effort for them to build relationships and have a sense of belonging furthermore, a culture of the organisation goes deeper than identifying with the organisation. The findings were supported by the evidence that the employees need to feel like they are an integral part of the business and are connected to its values. The employees want to feel like they belong, and they are part of the bigger purpose.

### ***7.2.3 How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation both internally and externally?***

The study showed that when the highly committed employees speak positively and promote the organisation externally, they are motivated to provide positive views to others. Therefore, the firms become more than a workplace as they are humanised because they express positive comments about their organisations externally (Walden & Kingsley Westerman, 2018). This therefore suggests that a relationship between the leadership styles and brand advocacy does exist. This view is supported by Smith (2014) that the organisations seeking to compete in a rapidly evolving market might gain valuable insights by identifying the leadership styles that encourage employee loyalty and promote responsible, positive brand communication. This is supported by the finding that the positive experiences shared by the employees can lead to favourable perceptions from family and friends, thus reinforcing the idea that employee advocacy is critical in shaping the external views of the organisation.

Vlachos et al. (2017) emphasise the fundamental role of leadership in shaping the employee attitudes towards the organisation. By attributing the activities to genuine motives and demonstrating long-term commitment, the managers can foster a positive organisational culture and encourage employee advocacy De Kerpel and Van Kerckhove

(2023). This is reinforced by The Nielsen Group (2015; as well as by Thelen (2020) that 83% of the respondents from 60 countries are inclined to follow recommendations from friends and acquaintances.

#### **7.2.4    *How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?***

The social exchange theory impacted the leadership dynamics with employee engagement and development, as there are effective leadership practices and there are leadership gaps and disconnects. People follow the social exchange theory which suggests that individuals weigh the benefits and drawbacks of interactions to get the most out of them. According to SET, in the leadership contexts, the leaders and their followers trade resources such as help and trust back and forth. When the leaders show qualities, such as fairness and kindness; the followers tend to respond with dedication and loyalty. This results, in connections between the leaders and followers thus leading to enhanced results. Additionally SET can clarify the impact of the different leadership approaches which were stated on the findings regarding the employees' support for the brand.

The organisational actors or perpetrators most often are the supervisors or co-workers, and they initiate the social exchange process when they treat a target individual positively or negatively (Eisenberger et al., 2004; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult et al., 1988; McLean Parks, 1997). The findings support that transformational leadership which involves actions such as inspiring and motivating employees as encouraging intellectual growth. The participants stated that this type of leadership cultivated a relationship with employees, furthermore the democratic leaders motivated the employees to work towards the organisation's objectives rather than their own interests. This view is supported in Chapter 5 where a participant mentioned that their leadership's strength is how they articulate the vision and strategy to business and another participant also supported the view that the communication of the vision by the leaders gives the clients relief and comfort. This fosters a shared sense of purpose and dedication among the employees thereby resulting in a level of support for the brand from them.

A leadership strategy based on rewards and sanctions may hinder the development of brand loyalty and employee commitment. The transactional leaders can motivate their team members with incentives; however, fostering loyalty and commitment may be challenging for them in this situation. To enhance brand advocacy inside, the medical scheme administration organisations must prioritise the adoption of leadership training programmes specifically geared to develop blended leadership skills.

### **7.3 Business and management implications**

As stated in Chapter 1 that as a result of the employees advocating for their organisation, more skilled employees may be attracted to join the organisation therefore, it would recruit suitably skilled individuals (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Wilden et al., 2010). The business implications of a blended leadership strategy may become time consuming since there is a requirement to professionally train the leadership and the employees. There should be consideration of investing in the professional development of one's employees which would encourage employee retention and discourage disengagement among the organisation's talented employees by establishing an environment that fosters personal growth, development, and learning.

The blended leadership approach should involve the integration of traditional leadership practices such as the democratic, transactional, autocratic, visionary and the components of the *ubuntu* philosophy. This facilitates the establishment of a work environment that enables the administrators to foster employee engagement and productivity. Internally, the organisations would need to adopt a strong culture of ambassadorship which would assist to create a conducive environment for the employees to apply that even externally, the lack of adoption of the blended leaderships styles would hinder implementation and culture shift.

From the findings, there is a likelihood that the employees who are engaged and content will serve as brand ambassadors and significantly enhance the organisation's favourable reputation. To guarantee the effectiveness of their organisations, there would be a requirement for the business to communicate the purpose and the value for the leadership programme that the management must implement as a combination of the leadership approaches. Since some leaders have been applying the same approach for multiple years, for example a transactional leader may find it challenging to change their leadership styles, therefore a blended model might ease them into the process where they may apply 80% transactional and 20% transformational approaches as a start then progress from there. The leaders would need to be adaptable to the changing work culture. This would create a collaborative environment and encourage the leaders to build strong relationships with the employees where they become completely integrated into the organisation's culture.

### **7.4 Limitations of the study**

In Chapter 4, it was mentioned that even though the limitations might be out of the researcher's control, they do pose a weakness in the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki,

2018). Some of the limitations mentioned in Chapter 4 are included in this section.

- The study was a cross-sectional study where data was collected at a specific point in time and the analysis of the data was a snapshot of the population (Fraizer et al., 2017). Due to the time bound, there could be a biasness, and the data collected at another time might produce different results.
- The researcher not getting all the people that they wanted for the interviews due to availability and time constraints.
- The researcher bias since the researcher is a former employee at two of the companies that the participants worked for before.
- Due to poor network connection, there were technical difficulties that were experienced, and this disrupted the flow of one interview.
- Due to the diverse nature of the population, some participants had a strong accent that was easily transcribed by MS Teams, but the quality of the transcription was poor therefore, it was time consuming and mentally exhausting to listen to the recording and capture the transcription word for word.
- Inadequate data for appropriate analysis can be a limitation due to the participants not divulging the information that is required and restricting their responses due to concerns of bad mouthing the organisation.
- The virtual nature of the interviews meant that during the observations the researcher could only observe what was on the screen but did not have sight of the complete environment and the surrounding of the participants.
- A sample size of 16 participants may not sufficiently represent the wider population which would limit the ability to generalize the findings.
- Due to time constraints, the researcher cancelled the interviews that were scheduled at a later stage.

## **7.5 Suggestions for future studies**

For future studies, it emerged that the word brand should be as big as employee on the word cloud, this inconsistency demonstrates that not enough questions were asked the participants regarding the brand. The future studies can focus on enhancing and focusing on asking questions on the brands. This study identified six drivers, and it would be interesting if one of the studies would investigate the influence of organisational building and culture on the commitment to the organisational vision and employee happiness

because this will give people a more definitive view to say the impact of the one construct and the other. These drivers could be used to understand visually the causes of those drivers and their effects. This study was exploratory in nature as it was a qualitative study therefore it would be valuable to do a descriptive or explanatory or a cause-and-effect study to understand which driver affects the other.

## **7.6 Concluding remarks**

The literature from the theory and the findings from the participants provided new insights into the perspective that the organisations are not as simplified, as the employees are working in a more complex environment where more blended leadership styles would work because the organisations are a microcosm of society, and they shape societies.

The theory suggested that what the employees need might be contradictory to what the organisation is trying to achieve such as a balanced work life schedule which supports the employees to maintain a holistic well-being approach that may contradict the organisation's requirement for a high performing team that would demand long hours at work. The employees require autonomy and a sense of empowerment in the workplace for them to make decisions and take ownership of their deliverables, however, the organisational culture might be one of micromanagement which stifles creativity and initiative.

The organisations need to cultivate a strong workforce of employee advocacy by creating a positive work environment of empowered employees that represent the organisation's brand authentically internally and externally. A blended leadership style would be able to bridge the gap and provide the employees with recognition for their work, as well as encourage them to genuinely share their experiences to help them to develop their personal brands as they promote a culture of authenticity and contribute to the organisation's success whilst keeping a continuous culture of open and honest communication.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

| Research Questions                                                                                                                  | Literature Review                            | Data Collection Tool | Analysis            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Research question 1</b><br>What are the general characteristics that influence the employee to become a positive brand advocate? | Zaman and Abbasi (2020);<br>Mintzberg (2010) | Interview Guide      | Of closed questions |
| <b>Research question 2</b><br>Which leadership styles best influence employee brand advocacy?                                       | (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012)              | Interview Guide      | Of closed questions |
| <b>Research question 3</b><br>Which leadership styles have the most impact on employee brand advocacy in the sector?                | Howell and Shamir (2005)                     | Interview Guide      | Of closed questions |
| <b>Research question 4</b><br>How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?                                   | (Molm 2003)                                  | Interview Guide      | Of closed questions |

## APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

Dear

Re: MBA Research interview

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on the leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy in the medical scheme administration industry. The research is focusing on understanding which leadership styles of the top management influence positive employee brand advocacy and ambassadorship both internally and externally.

The interview is expected to last about an hour. The interview aims to solicit your personal views and opinions on the topic highlighted above. This will help to expand the body of knowledge on this subject area. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time during the process. All data will be reported without identifiers, which means your identity will remain confidential.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or myself. Our details are provided below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Kind Regards,  
Hope M. Modise  
Email: [21751952@mygibs.co.za](mailto:21751952@mygibs.co.za)

Supervisor: Dr. Steven Zwane  
Email: [ZwaneS@gibs.co.za](mailto:ZwaneS@gibs.co.za)

## APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance  
Approved**

Dear Hope Millicent Modise,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.  
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.  
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

## APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy in the medical scheme administration industry

1. **Thank you for attending**
2. **Letter of consent**
3. **Recoding**
4. **Please help point to others**

I am a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science, where I am completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on the **leadership styles that influence employee brand advocacy in the medical scheme administration industry.**

The interview is expected to last about an hour maximum. Participation is voluntary, and the participants can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be reported without identifiers, and anonymity will always be maintained.

The goal of this study is to understand which leadership styles of top management influence positive employee brand advocacy and ambassadorship both internally and externally. We need a rich description of the leadership influence process to provide insights.

| Questions | Employee                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | <b>Could you tell me how long your leadership team has been in their positions for?</b><br><br><b>Your leadership tenure?</b>                                                                                | <b>Research Question 1:</b> What are the prevailing leadership styles within the medical scheme administration sector? |
| 2         | a. <b>Could you tell me what is your leadership style</b> and why?<br><br>b. <b>What do you think is the leadership style</b> of your GM/ executive team and why?<br><br>What do you like about their style? | <b>Research Question 1</b>                                                                                             |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                          |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3</b> | <p>What influence does this leadership have on the way you perceive the organisation?</p> <p><b>Follow up – what I mean is do you see yourself being a brand ambassador for this organisation</b></p> <p><b>Commitment others/stakeholders</b></p> | <b>Research Question 1</b>                                                                                               |
| <b>4</b> | <p>What keeps you in the role and the organisation?</p> <p>Simply put are you buying into the vision of the leadership?</p> <p><b>How</b> does the organisation invest in building relationships with the employees?</p>                           | <b>Research Question 1</b>                                                                                               |
| <b>5</b> | <p>Do you have employee happiness scores and how do you obtain them?</p> <p><b>How often?</b></p> <p><b>How are they cascaded to the employees?</b></p>                                                                                            | <b>Research Question 2:</b> What are the identifying drivers of employee brand advocacy in this sector?                  |
| <b>6</b> | <p>How do the employees speak about the organisation internally and externally?</p> <p>Market the organisation?</p>                                                                                                                                | <b>Research Question 2:</b>                                                                                              |
| <b>7</b> | <p>In a scale of low or high, how do you promote your organisation?</p>                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Research Question 3:</b> How do the employees perceive and promote their organisation both internally and externally? |
| <b>8</b> | <p>Do your family members have a better view of the organisation through you?</p> <p>Do you think they would promote the organisation? Why?</p>                                                                                                    | <b>Research Question 3:</b>                                                                                              |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                       |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 | <p>In your view do the employees feel empowered by their leaders?</p> <p>Anything you would like to highlight about your organisation regarding leadership and brand advocacy?</p> <p><b>What does the leadership do extremely well?</b></p> <p><b>What does the leadership do but it is negative?</b></p> | <p><b>Research Question 4</b> How has the social exchange theory influenced the leadership style?</p> |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## APPENDIX 5: LIST OF CODES GENERATED

| List of codes generated                                 |                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Democratic style                                        | Employee turnover and exit feedback                  |
| <i>Ubuntu</i> leadership                                | Score of six for promotion                           |
| Situational leadership                                  | Need for organisational Improvement                  |
| Hands-off leadership                                    | Negative perception                                  |
| Trust in employee autonomy                              | Need for brand awareness                             |
| Personal connection and well-being                      | Lack of brand awareness                              |
| Advocacy for self-expression                            | Concerns about leadership empowerment                |
| Supportive leadership                                   | Disempowerment of employees                          |
| Sense of affinity                                       | Negative perception of leadership                    |
| Nurturing milieu                                        | Lack of active marketing by the employees            |
| Autocratic leadership                                   | Discretionary effort and engagement                  |
| Democratic style; advocacy for self-expression          | Establishing values and culture                      |
| Connection with organizational ethos                    | Lack of cohesion in brand advocacy                   |
| Brand advocacy                                          | Transparency; goal oriented                          |
| Regular communication                                   | Challenging the status quo                           |
| Employee engagement                                     | Leadership-employee connection; organisational trust |
| Celebration of significant days                         | Person-centered and developmental                    |
| Clarity of communication                                | Developmental                                        |
| Conveying information                                   | Visionary leadership                                 |
| Consistency of information                              | Flexible work arrangement                            |
| Distillation of information                             | Purpose driven leadership culture                    |
| Confidence in buy-in                                    | Belief in leadership and purpose                     |
| Different manifestations of purpose at different levels | Celebrating achievements                             |
| Policy formulation for senior leaders                   | Purpose driven organisation                          |
| Purpose for clinical specialists                        | Feeling supported; Courage to participate            |
| Purpose in call centre roles                            | Mixed perceptions                                    |
| Frequency of employee engagement surveys                | Employee Happiness Metrics                           |
| Internal discussion of results                          | Management report                                    |
| Creation of action plans                                | Pre-Survey engagement and participation              |
| Exco and Board discussion of survey results             | Limited feedback from survey                         |
| Net Promoter Score (NPS)                                | Transformational leadership style                    |
| Acknowledgment of dissent                               | Transformational leadership style                    |
| Strong advocacy                                         | Transparency, approachability, accountability        |
| Relevance to national context                           | Empowering leadership                                |
| Positive perception                                     | Autocratic leadership                                |

|                                                                    |                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Product promotion                                                  | Authenticity                            |
| Industry perception                                                | Employee engagement                     |
| Lack of leadership status                                          | Collaborative problem solving           |
| Investment in people development                                   | Keeping people updated                  |
| Empowerment through skills development                             | Servant leadership style                |
| Decentralized decision-making                                      | Instil ambassadorship                   |
| Need for storytelling                                              | Townhall sessions                       |
| Branding challenges                                                | Questions and answer sessions           |
| Diversification and brand alignment                                | Small focussed meetings                 |
| Clarity of vision and purpose                                      | Charismatic leadership                  |
| Brand identity gap                                                 | Participative leadership                |
| Accessibility, young leadership                                    | Democratic traits                       |
| Experience; maturity in leadership                                 | Visionary leadership                    |
| Performance-driven; people-centric approach                        | Visionary leadership                    |
| Transactional leadership; hard leadership style                    | Impact of race on employee happiness    |
| Maturity in Team Development                                       | Pride in the company                    |
| Trust and maturity; constructive engagement                        | Resilience during Covid                 |
| Leadership visibility; actions vs. words                           | Positive perception                     |
| Leadership accountability; staff perception                        | Access to empowerment resources         |
| Emotional Connection to the organisation                           | Responsibility for self-empowerment     |
| Employee fatigue; motivation fluctuation                           | Leadership encouragement for engagement |
| Leadership transition; strengths and gaps of leadership            | Empowerment as a shared responsibility  |
| Rebuilding trust with stakeholders; executive focus                | Democratic; <i>ubuntu</i> traits        |
| Leadership evolution; role of previous leadership                  | Investment in employee development      |
| Listening strategy; deliberate communication                       | Supportive approach                     |
| Multi-channel communication; employee engagement                   | Flexibility                             |
| Values as cultural foundation; accountability through values       | Delivery-focussed                       |
| Employee feedback mechanisms; pulse and culture surveys            | Brand advocacy                          |
| Cultural alignment; preparing ground for development initiatives   | Growth opportunities                    |
| Employee engagement surveys; leadership feedback loops             | Quarterly engagement surveys            |
| Cultural assessment; addressing negative organisational behaviours | Mixed perceptions                       |
| Frequency of employee surveys                                      | No brand advocacy                       |
| Positive initial survey results                                    | Positive sentiment                      |
| Mixed employee sentiment                                           | Mixed employee sentiment                |
| Scope for improvement                                              | Situational leadership                  |

|                                                    |                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Negative attitude among underperforming employees  | Coaching approach                           |
| Biannual employee surveys                          | Democratic leadership                       |
| Feedback shared with leadership                    | Visionary leadership                        |
| Intervention-focussed                              | Brand advocacy                              |
| Investment in employee relationships               | Job security                                |
| Personal engagement initiatives                    | Information sharing seminars                |
| Positive sentiment                                 | Leadership openness                         |
| Association with excellence                        | Willis Towe Watson survey                   |
| Visionary leadership and strategic thinking        | Annual employee surveys                     |
| Lack of empathy                                    | Bi-weekly heartbeat surveys                 |
| Inadequate attention to employee well-being        | Inconsistent support                        |
| Relaxed; disciplined approach                      | Knowledge-based work                        |
| Empowering over micromanagement                    | Minimal employee support                    |
| Mixed leadership style (autocratic and democratic) | Lack of employee development                |
| Supportive approach                                | Lack of unified leadership                  |
| Empowerment through feedback                       | Poor communication and consultation         |
| Career progression                                 | Frustrating work environment                |
| Value alignment                                    | Autocratic leadership                       |
| Growth opportunities                               | Autocratic leadership                       |
| Ambassadorial role of employees                    | Staff discontentment                        |
| Employee satisfaction                              | Democratic leadership                       |
| Empowerment through education                      | Consultation                                |
| Positive leadership influence                      | Collaborative problem solving               |
| Commitment to ethical decision-making              | Lack of employee engagement                 |
| Dynamic work environment                           | Opportunities for development               |
| Comprehensive evaluation criteria                  | Engagements and interactions                |
| Openness and transparency                          | Facilitation of comfort during change       |
| Trust relationship                                 | Democratic; transactional leadership style  |
| Valuing employees                                  | Positive perception from family and friends |
| Personal energy and likability                     | Role as brand ambassador                    |
| Positive attitude among motivated employees        | Annual employee surveys                     |

## APPENDIX 6: LANGUAGE EDITING



You Write. We Edit. You Love it.

1 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**REF: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES: STUDENT NUMBER 21751952**

I confirm that I have done language editing for Student Number 21751952's research project titled:

**LEADERSHIP STYLES THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY IN THE MEDICAL SCHEME  
ADMINISTRATION INDUSTRY**

The research project now conforms to the University of Pretoria's required language editing standards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Moyo".

Lynn N. Sibanda Moyo

Tel: 011 050 0376

Mobile: 071 989 0983

Email: [lynn@lovetoedit.co.za](mailto:lynn@lovetoedit.co.za)

Member of the [Professional Editors Guild](#)



**Address:** 35 Melba Avenue, Honeydew Ridge South Africa, 2194 | **Telephone:** +27 11 050 0376 | **Email:** [info@lovetoedit.co.za](mailto:info@lovetoedit.co.za) | **Website:** [www.lovetoedit.co.za](http://www.lovetoedit.co.za) | **Registration Number:** 2016/ 425723/ 07

## APPENDIX 7: EDITOR DECLARATION

### EDITOR DECLARATION

I, **NONTOKOZO LYNN MOYO** the **editor** declare that I have only rendered the services as listed and detailed below as contracted by [Student Name] **STUDENT NUMBER 21751952** in her fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters degree at the Gordon Institute of Business, a division of the University of Pretoria.

Detail of type of services rendered to the student (please provide full description, for example: Grammar editing of complete document or Statistical Analysis related to hypotheses):

**Language editing** – Checking of grammar, spellings, syntax, semantics, punctuation

**Referencing** – Checking of in text references, reference list

**Formatting** – Page numbering, list of tables, list of figures, table of contents

FULL NAME:

NONTOKOZO LYNN MOYO

SIGNATURE:



EMAIL ADDRESS:

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071 989 0983