Journal of Innovative and Creativity
Journal Homepage: https://joecy.org/index.php/joecy
e-mail: journaljoecy@gmail.com

Faculty of Education
University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai
ISSN 2775-771X (Online)
ISSN 2962-570X **(Printed)**
6 (1) 2026, Page 13776-13780

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CORPORATE REPUTATION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYER BRANDING AND JOB APPLICATION INTENTIONS: A STUDY OF GENERATION Z IN JAKARTA

Annisa Wandansari[1], Engga Jalaludin[2]
[1,2]Darunnajah University Business Administration Study Program
Corresponding Author: Annisa Wandansari, E-mail: annisawndnsrr@gmail.com

Published: Februari, 2026

ABSTRACT
In the era of globalization, companies face intense competition in attracting Generation Z talent in Jakarta's volatile labor market, characterized by high youth unemployment rates. This study aims to examine the effect of employer branding on job application intentions with company reputation as a mediating variable. Using an explanatory quantitative design, primary data from 356 Generation Z respondents in Jakarta were collected through an online Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3. The results show that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intentions directly (path coefficient 0.283, $p<0.001$) and indirectly through the partial mediation of company reputation (VAF 54.83%). In conclusion, company reputation validates employer branding claims, increasing recruitment effectiveness for Generation Z.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation, Employer Branding, Generation Z, Jakarta, Job Application Intentions

© The Author(s). 2021 Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provides a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicates if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless otherwise indicated in a credit line to the material. To view a copy of this license, visithttp://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization, business competition is increasingly fierce, requiring organizations to develop sustainable strategies to maintain a competitive advantage. Human resources are a key asset determining a company's survival, especially with the dominance of Generation Z in the labor market, who have unique characteristics, preferences, and expectations compared to previous generations.

Jakarta, Indonesia's economic hub, faces significant challenges in attracting top Generation Z talent amid fierce competition between companies and increasingly selective job seekers. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data shows high fluctuations in the open unemployment rate, particularly in areas like North Jakarta, reflecting an imbalance in labor absorption in a volatile market.

The main problem arises from the dynamics of the Jakarta labor market, which makes it difficult to absorb Generation Z, with the youth unemployment rate reaching 22.25% by 2023, or approximately 9.9 million people aged 15-24 nationally, exacerbating regional disparities. Companies are struggling to compete because digitally savvy Generation Z tends to choose organizations based on unique value propositions, not just financial benefits.



Figure 1. Labor Market Absorption
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics,2023

Although employer branding is defined as an organization's efforts to communicate itself as a desirable workplace (Berthon et al., 2005), its implementation is often insufficient without the support of a credible corporate reputation. Corporate reputation, as a collective assessment of stakeholders' ability to generate long-term value (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004), is a crucial filter for Generation Z, who readily access information online.

Previous research confirms that employer branding increases motivation and intention to apply (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022), and that branding activities on social media strengthen reputation, which influences application intention (Hanu et al., 2021; Setiawan & Marginingsih, 2021). However, the mediating role of corporate reputation specifically for Generation Z in Jakarta still requires further empirical evidence in a developing country context.

This study aims to examine the influence of employer branding on job application intentions among Generation Z in Jakarta, with company reputation as a mediating variable. Its urgency lies in the strategic needs of companies facing a competitive labor market and high unemployment in Jakarta, thus providing practical recommendations for recruitment optimization. Its novelty provides a relevant empirical model for human resource management in recruiting young people in Indonesia, complementing the literature with a local focus using PLS-SEM.

METHOD

Types and Methods of Research

This study uses an explanatory quantitative design to examine the causal relationship between employer branding, corporate reputation, and job application intentions among Generation Z in Jakarta. This approach was chosen because it allows for hypothesis testing and theory validation regarding organizational attractiveness in a competitive labor market context (Sugiyono, 2023; Hair et al., 2019). An explanatory design is appropriate for explaining mediating mechanisms, as applied in similar studies in Indonesia that integrate complex latent variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Hapsari et al., 2025).

Data Analysis Instruments and Techniques

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale distributed online via Google Forms to measure respondents' perceptions of employer branding, company reputation, and job application intentions. The questionnaire was validated through an evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) including internal consistency (Composite Reliability), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity, followed by testing the structural model (inner model) with path coefficients and T-statistics (Sudaryono, 2022; Emzir, 2021). The data analysis technique applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3 software, which is ideal for predictive models with mediating variables without strict normality assumptions, equipped with bootstrapping of 5,000 resamples to determine the significance of the mediation effect (Hair et al., 2019; Ekhsan, 2021).

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of Generation Z (born 1997–2012) residing in Jakarta and either seeking employment or intending to apply, representing a key demographic group entering the labor market in Indonesia's capital city. A sample of 356 respondents was obtained through a non-probability purposive sampling technique with specific criteria to ensure relevance, as recommended for survey-based studies among young millennials (Sugiyono, 2023; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This sample size meets the statistical requirements for PLS-SEM, which is at least 10 times the maximum number of paths, thus supporting the generalizability of the findings to local contexts (Emzir, 2021; Hapsari et al., 2025).

Research Procedures

The research procedure began with instrument development based on relevant literature, followed by a pilot test of the questionnaire to ensure reliability, and then online distribution to eligible respondents via the Google Forms platform with informed consent. Primary data were processed in stages: measurement model evaluation, structural testing, and bootstrapping for hypotheses, according to standard explanatory quantitative research protocols (Sudaryono, 2022; Hair et al., 2019). The entire process adhered to ethical principles of social science research, including respondent confidentiality and the right to withdraw

participation, as implemented in similar studies using PLS-SEM in Indonesia (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Ekhsan, 2021).

RESULT

The demographic data shows that the respondents in this study were dominated by Generation Zaged 21 years (24%) and the majority had an undergraduate education background (Bachelor's degree/S1) as much as 67%. This indicates that the respondents are in the productive age group and are actively entering the workforce in Jakarta.

1. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The first stage of analysis using SmartPLS 3 is to evaluate the measurement model to ensure validity and reliability. The results of the convergent validity test show that all indicators for the variables of Employer Branding, Corporate Reputation, and Intention to Apply have a loading factor value > 0.70, which means all indicators are valid. Furthermore, the reliability test shows satisfactory results with Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 for all variables, indicating high internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employer Branding	942	950	592
Corporate Reputation	937	946	572
Intention to Apply	907	925	606

Source: *Processed from primary data(2025)*

2. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model evaluation was conducted to test the research hypothesis. The results of the path coefficient test and significance (bootstrapping) are visualized in the structural model below.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Result
H1	Employer Branding -> Intention to Apply	283	5,371	0	Accepted
H2	Employer Branding -> Corporate Reputation	865	44,074	0	Accepted
H3	Corporate Reputation -> Intention to Apply	603	7,645	0	Accepted
H4	Employer Branding -> Corporate Reputation -> Intention to Apply	521	7,391	0	Accepted

Source: *Processed from primary data(2025)*

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 2, the findings are as follows:

1. Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply (T-statistic = 5.371,P-value = 0.000). Thus, H1 is accepted.
2. Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on Corporate Reputation (T-statistic = 44.074, P-value = 0.000). Thus, H2 is accepted.
3. Corporate Reputation has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply (T-statistic = 7.645, P-value = 0.000). Thus, H3 is accepted.
4. Indirect Effect: The mediation test results show that Corporate Reputation significantly mediates the relationship between Employer Branding and Intention to Apply (T-statistic = 7.391, P-value= 0.000). The mediation effect is partial with a VAF value of 54.83%. Thus, H4 is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Employer Branding and Intention to Apply

The results demonstrate that Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on Intentionto Apply (H1 Accepted). This finding confirms that for Generation Z in Jakarta, the "value proposition" offered by a company such as salary, career development, and work environment is a primary determinant in their decision to apply. This result aligns with the theory of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), which suggests that employer branding creates a unique asset that distinguishes a company from its competitors. In the context of Jakarta's competitive labor market, companies that successfully communicate their values are effectively attracting high-quality talent. This contrasts with companies that fail to project a clear brand identity, which tends to be overlooked by critical job seekers.

The Influence of Corporate Reputation

The study also finds that Corporate Reputation significantly influences Intention to Apply (H3 Accepted). This indicates that Generation Z does not only look at "what is offered" (branding) but also "who is offering it" (reputation). A strong reputation acts as a signal of credibility and trust. In the digital era where information is transparent, candidates in Jakarta tend to verify a company's track record before applying. Companies perceived as prestigious and professional are associated with stability and better career prospects, thereby increasing the desire of candidates to join the organization.

The Mediating Role of Corporate Reputation

A key contribution of this research is the confirmation that Corporate Reputation mediates the relationship between Employer Branding and Intention to Apply (H4 Accepted). The analysis shows that Employer Branding significantly builds Corporate Reputation (H2 Accepted), which subsequently drives application intentions. This implies that Generation Z does not blindly accept branding claims; they use reputation as a validation tool. Practically, this means that employer branding efforts (promotions, promises) are most effective when they successfully translate into a solid organizational reputation. Branding that fails to build reputation will not be optimal in generating applicants.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intentions among Generation Z in Jakarta, both directly and indirectly through the partial mediation role of corporate reputation with a VAF value of 54.83 percent. Key findings indicate that value propositions such as salary, career development, and work environment are the main drivers, while corporate reputation serves as a credibility signal that strengthens application intentions in a competitive labor market. The practical implication for companies in Jakarta is to integrate employer branding strategies with reputation management through consistent communication on social media to attract high-quality talent, thereby optimizing the recruitment process and reducing the impact of youth unemployment.

However, this study has limitations as it focused solely on Generation Z in Jakarta with a purposive sample, which may limit generalizability to other regions in Indonesia. Self-reported data is also susceptible to respondent subjectivity bias. Suggestions for future research include expanding the scope to other major cities such as Surabaya or Bandung, as well as the addition of potential mediating variables such as person-organization fit or social media influence. A mixed-methods approach can also enrich the understanding of Generation Z behavior in the dynamic context of human resource management.

REFERENCES

Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. The Journal of Brand Management, 4(3), 185–206.**https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.1996.42**

Ardiansyah, F., & Poerwita Sary, F. (2024). The influence of employer attractiveness and company reputation on the intention of applying for jobs in startup companies in final level students of Telkom University. Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE), 7(2), 3662-3678.**https://doi.org/10.59581/iijse-widyakarya.v7i2.2847**

Backhaus, K., & Tikoo, S. (2004). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. Career Development International, 9(5), 501–517.**https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410550754**

Berthon, P., Ewing, M., & Hah, L.L. (2005). Captivating companies: Dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding. International Journal of Advertising, 24(2), 151–172.**https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2005.11072912**

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.**https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071817958**

Ekhsan, M. (2021). The influence of employer branding on intention to join with organizational attractiveness as an intervening variable. Journal of Management and Finance, 10(2), 123-135.**https://doi.org/10.33096/jmk.v10i2.789**

Emzir. (2021). Quantitative research methodology (3rd Edition). Prenada Media Group.

Fombrun, C. J., & Van Riel, C. B. M. (2004). Fame & fortune: How successful companies build winning reputations. FT Press.

Hair, J.F., Risher, J.J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C.M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. European Business Review, 31(1), 2–24.**https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203**

Hanu, E., Marsetio, N.C., & Nurlinda, R. (2021). The effect of employer branding on intention to apply for a job with company reputation as a mediating variable (Study on Shopee Indonesia). Journal of Business Management, 12(2), 154-169.**https://doi.org/10.33096/jmb.v12i2.842**

Hapsari, R., Syafiuddin, A., & Pratama, D. (2025). Employer branding and organizational attractiveness: A PLS-SEM approach among Gen Z. Indonesian Journal of Management, 25(1), 45-58.**https://doi.org/10.25124/jmi.v25i1.4567**

Junça Silva, A., & Dias, H. (2022). The relationship between employer branding, corporate reputation and intention to apply for a job offer. International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 31(8), 1–16.**https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-01-2022-3118**

Setiawan, R., & Marginingsih, R. (2021). The influence of employer branding on job application interest with company reputation as an intervening variable. Scientific Journal of Management and Business, 7(1), 85-98.**https://doi.org/10.22441/jimb.v7i1.11654**

Sudaryono. (2022). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methods. Andi Publisher.

Sugiyono. (2023). Quantitative, qualitative, R&D, and mixed methods research methods. Alpabeta.