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THE INFLUENCE OF E-RECRUITMENT ON THE INTENTION OF GEN Z TO APPLY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examines how e-recruitment and employer branding influence Gen Z's job application intentions in Indonesian SOEs, filling a gap in research on employer branding's mediating role.
Background	This study aims to answer the extent to which e-recruitment affects the intention to apply through the mediating role of employer branding.
Methodology	This study employed a quantitative approach. Data collection was facilitated by questionnaires disseminated to 300 new graduates interested in applying to state-owned companies in Indonesia. The collected data were then analyzed using the SEM-PLS technique, supported by SmartPLS 4.0 software.
Contribution	This research provides a theoretical contribution to the literature on the intention to apply among Generation Z, especially in the context of state-owned enterprises in Indonesia. This research also provides practical implications for state-owned enterprises to increase their attractiveness as employers.

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Findings	The study's findings indicated that e-recruitment significantly influences employer branding but does not directly impact the intention to apply. However, employer branding plays a crucial role as it significantly affects the intention to apply. Moreover, employer branding also acts as a significant mediating factor in the relationship between e-recruitment and the intention to apply, further strengthening the indirect impact of e-recruitment on potential applicants' intentions.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Indonesian state-owned enterprises are advised to strengthen their employer branding strategies that are creative and in line with the preferences of Gen Z, as well as to ensure transparency and responsiveness in the e-recruitment process to increase their attractiveness as a workplace of choice.
Recommendations for Researchers	Future researchers are encouraged to explore additional variables that influence intention to apply, such as the role of digital technology and social media. Comparison of various sectors and generations can also yield valuable insights and offer a more comprehensive perspective.
Impact on Society	The findings of this study contribute to improving the competitiveness of the Generation Z labor force and assist state-owned enterprises in Indonesia in their efforts to attract a greater number of young professionals, thereby reducing youth-based unemployment within the Indonesian workforce.
Future Research	Future research could explore the role of employer branding in various industry contexts further and include longitudinal analysis to observe changes in Generation Z's preferences for employment.
Keywords	employer branding, e-recruitment, intention to apply, Gen Z, state-owned enterprises

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian labor market is undergoing a notable shift with the entry of Generation Z (Gen Z), which now constitutes the predominant segment of the workforce. Born between 1997 and 2012, this generation is gradually replacing the millennial generation as the dominant workforce. Gen Z constituted approximately 30.1% of Indonesia's total population in 2024, signifying their significance within the labor market (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024). However, the substantial influx of Gen Z members into the labor market has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the absorption capacity of the existing workforce, resulting in a rising unemployment rate among these demographics. There are currently 10 million young people (Generation Z) in Indonesia who are unemployed (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024). It is important to note that each generation exhibits distinct expectations, aspirations, values, and behaviors within the work environment. This variation in expectations, aspirations, values, and behaviors affects each generation's preferences for job and work environment selection, thereby creating a novel challenge for human resource management practices within organizations.

This phenomenon is also reflected in the Joint Recruitment of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which indicates that SOEs are increasingly attracting young job seekers, including members of Gen Z. In 2022, the number of applicants reached more than 1.2 million people competing for 2,700 positions in over 56 SOEs, indicating a high level of enthusiasm from the younger generation (Gen Z). This trend has persisted into 2023, with a further surge in applicants, reaching over 2 million individuals seeking employment opportunities in various SOEs. This substantial year-over-year increase in applicants underscores the heightened interest among the younger generation (Gen Z) in pursuing

employment opportunities within Indonesia's SOEs. This phenomenon is also a challenge for Indonesian SOEs to continue to improve their corporate reputation and pay attention to the changing preferences of the new generation, especially Gen Z, who increasingly prefer the stable and structured work environment offered by SOEs (Binekasri, 2023).

The intention to apply for a job, also referred to as the intention to apply, is the process by which a candidate expresses interest in joining a company by demonstrating curiosity about the available positions within the organization (Wijaya et al., 2023). This process involves collecting information about the company, learning about vacant positions, and submitting job application documents to the desired company (Barber, 1998). The theory of planned behavior posits that intentions are shaped by two factors: an individual's attitude toward the behavior to be exhibited and society's subjective norms in evaluating the acceptability of that behavior (Ajzen, 1985). In the context of applying for a job, a candidate's attitude is influenced by their evaluation of the information provided by prospective companies in job advertisements from both individual and social perspectives (Barber, 1998; Erlinda & Safitri, 2020) – the more positive an individual's evaluation of the information, the greater their intention. Consequently, company information plays a pivotal role in fostering candidates' intentions to apply for a job. This information can be found in e-recruitment and company branding. Prior studies have underscored the necessity for further research into the factors that influence job seekers' intention to apply (Ouyang et al., 2021; Rynes et al., 1991; Williamson et al., 2010). The intention is a strong predictor of actual behavior (Gomes & Neves, 2010).

The significant number of applicants for positions in Indonesian SOEs substantiates the appeal of SOEs as a career option for recent graduates. Research conducted by the Career Center Research Team at Andalas University and the Tanoto Foundation in 2022 revealed that SOEs emerged as the preferred workplace for Gen Z, with 27.57% of respondents selecting SOEs as their top choice after civil servants. State-owned companies offer several advantages, including job security, opportunities for growth, and competitive salaries and benefits, which are particularly appealing to younger generations. This phenomenon is particularly salient in the context of Indonesian SOEs, as they must compete to recruit dynamic and competent young talent amidst technological developments and changing workplace preferences influenced by this generation's values.

This generation is characterized by its ambitious nature and propensity to seek opportunities after a year of employment to achieve their professional goals. As digital natives, Gen Z places significant emphasis on employer branding and transparent recruitment processes facilitated by digital platforms (e-recruitment). Furthermore, compensation that is commensurate with their expectations is a crucial factor in their decision-making process when considering a job offer. The significance of employer branding and e-recruitment, particularly in the context of state-owned companies in Indonesia, possessing a stable image and reputation in both the public and private sectors, is a salient phenomenon that merits further investigation. However, it is imperative to determine whether these factors, namely employer branding and e-recruitment, exert a substantial influence on Gen Z's inclination to apply to state-owned companies in Indonesia, particularly considering the intensely competitive nature of the contemporary job market.

In addressing the challenges associated with recruitment and unemployment among Gen Z, companies would be wise to consider a more strategic approach to attract the attention of this demographic. Employer branding constitutes a strategy that can be employed to develop a distinctive company image, thereby setting the company apart from its competitors (Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023). A well-managed employer branding strategy has been shown to increase the number of job applicants, reduce turnover rates, and maintain employee engagement (Bhasin et al., 2019; Dabirian et al., 2017; Elbendary et al., 2023). Furthermore, employer branding can attract prospective employees and influence their attitudes and behaviors. Applicants often prioritize aligning with their personal values when selecting a workplace, a tendency particularly evident among Gen Z, known for their stringent workplace criteria (Chew & Chan, 2008; Hanu et al., 2021; Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023). The factors most considered by applicants when selecting a job in an Indonesian SOE company are salary and

benefits (78%), career opportunities (60%), and environment and culture (53%) (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024). This indicates that the employer branding of SOEs is sufficiently robust to attract the most qualified candidates. This assertion is further substantiated by prior research findings that demonstrate employer branding exerts a positive and significant influence on the intention to apply for a job (Elbendary et al., 2023; Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Junça Silva & Dias, 2023; Samoliuk et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2023).

Gen Z is characterized by its familiarity with the Internet's pervasive presence in various aspects of life. Electronic recruitment, also known as e-recruitment, signifies a novel approach that leverages information technology in the recruitment process (Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023). This paradigm shift enables companies to disseminate job vacancies through online platforms, while applicants can seamlessly submit applications via the Internet. This method is particularly well-suited to the preferences of Gen Z, a demographic known for its inclination towards individuality and its preference for expeditious and practical solutions. The accessibility of factual information, which is subject to regular monitoring, and the provision of a wide array of job-related data serve to enhance the appeal of e-recruitment to job seekers, thereby increasing their propensity to apply (Muthuveloo et al., 2017; Sabha, 2018). The present study concentrates on the phenomenon of e-recruitment in the context of recruitment processes facilitated by company websites. Given the strong attachment of Gen Z to the digital realm, it is imperative to understand their perceptions of e-recruitment, particularly website-based recruitment, to help companies optimize the recruitment process through these platforms. Prior studies have demonstrated that e-recruitment exerts a positive influence on candidate intentions to apply for a position (Ekanayaka & Gamage, 2019; Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023; Luyanage & Galhena, 2014; Muthuveloo et al., 2017). However, Wijaya et al. (2023) found that e-recruitment is unable to significantly predict the intention of the millennial generation to apply for a job at an e-grocery company.

Previous research has shown the importance of employer branding and e-recruitment in attracting quality employees. Despite the rise in Gen Z applicants, little research examines how employer branding mediates e-recruitment's effect on application intention, particularly in SOEs. Therefore, this study examines how e-recruitment and employer branding influence Gen Z's job application intentions in Indonesian SOEs while filling a gap in research on employer branding's mediating role.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

INTENTION TO APPLY

According to the research by Lestari and Manggiasih (2023), the term "intention to apply" encompasses the entire spectrum of actions, from the initial information retrieval to the final decision-making stage. Conversely, Ajzen (1991) delineates intention as a distinct awareness of inclination or repudiation preceding the execution of an action, thereby serving as a predictor of subsequent behavioral engagement. The term "intention" signifies a distinct state of awareness delineated by a clear determination of either inclination or repudiation before the undertaking of an action. This notion serves as a reliable predictor of the propensity for future behavioral engagement. Barber and Roehling (1993) posit that job application intention is associated with personal interest.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's intention is influenced by two primary factors: their attitude toward the action to be performed and the subjective norms of society in evaluating the acceptability of the action (Ajzen, 1985). Within the context of job applications, candidates' attitudes are shaped by their perceptions of the information provided by companies in job advertisements, considering both individual and social perspectives (Barber, 1998; Erlinda & Safitri, 2020). An individual's positive assessment of the information influences their intention to apply. Consequently, the quality of the information provided by companies is of paramount significance in fostering candidates' intentions to apply for a position. This information can be obtained through e-recruitment and employer branding strategies.

E-RECRUITMENT

E-recruitment is a coordinated and systematic recruitment process that utilizes internet-based technology to facilitate communication between companies and potential candidates (AbdulKareem et al., 2024). According to Abia and Brown (2020, as cited in Wijaya et al. 2023), e-recruitment employs technology to enhance the efficiency of the recruitment process, reduce financial expenditures, and augment administrative effectiveness. Research by Hardiansyah et al. (2023) underscores that the utilization of such software is designed to attract potential applicants through web-based media. Meanwhile, Hegazy and Elsayed (2022) expound e-recruitment as the application of Internet technology in various stages of recruitment, including the dissemination of job vacancy information, the collection of resumes, the conducting of online interviews, and the electronic evaluation of prospective employees.

E-recruitment is an online job recruitment process that takes place through social media, employment platforms, and company websites (e.g., LinkedIn, JobStreet, indeed, Glassdoor, etc.). In the context of Gen Z's intention to apply, e-recruitment is a very relevant platform because this generation is very familiar with digital technology. These platforms offer a comprehensive view of available positions, detailed employment benefits, and the ability to submit job applications and resumes. Conversely, commercial job boards serve as virtual marketplaces where employers and job seekers can connect (Kucherov & Tsybova, 2022; Parry & Wilson, 2009). The efficacy of this approach has been demonstrated by the observation of positive outcomes, including cost savings, enhanced usability for both applicants and employers, an expanded candidate pool, and a streamlined recruitment process (Kucherov & Tsybova, 2022). Moreover, e-recruitment constitutes a critical component of contemporary recruitment strategies, thereby augmenting employer branding.

The increasing use of technology among job seekers is another contributing factor to the effectiveness of e-recruitment in stimulating application intentions. This is because the transparent, efficient, and modern recruitment process through e-recruitment reflects an organization's adaptation to technological advances, thereby reinforcing employer branding, as evidenced by Lestari and Manggiasih (2023). This finding aligns with the research conducted by Hardiansyah et al. (2023), who asserts that e-recruitment significantly enhances the interest of Gen Z in applying for jobs (El-Menawy & Saleh, 2023; Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Geofanny & Faraz, 2023). Consequently, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H1:** E-recruitment has a significant effect on the intention to apply among Gen Z in state-owned enterprises in Indonesia.
- H2:** E-recruitment has a significant effect on employer branding among Gen Z in state-owned enterprises in Indonesia.

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding is a long-term strategic process that aims to manage knowledge about the organization and the perceptions of employees and potential employees towards the organization (Sullivan, 2004; Tien Thanh et al., 2024). According to Ambler and Barrow (1996, as cited in Junça Silva & Dias, 2023), the process plays a role in positioning the organization within the labor market. Furthermore, employer branding fosters the development of a favorable reputation and positions it as an appealing and desirable workplace. The strategic application of organizational advantages to foster loyalty is a critical component of employer branding, ensuring the successful retention of employees (Evrina & Wulansari, 2023; Soeling et al., 2022; Winarno et al., 2022).

Maxwell and Knox (2009, as cited in Elbendary et al., 2023) posit that a robust employer brand can foster application intentions if the organization is perceived as successful, its products and services are esteemed, and it is regarded as an optimal workplace. Prospective employees also exhibit a heightened interest in applying to organizations with robust employer branding (Elbendary et al., 2023; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Willie et al., 2008). Biswas and Suar (2016, as cited in Elbendary et al.,

2023) further posit that an employer brand can serve as a competitive advantage due to its capacity to retain existing talent and attract new talent. Organizations with a robust strategy will modify their policies and practices to benefit employees, thereby reinforcing the employer brand and enhancing performance (Pangarso et al., 2022). Numerous credible studies demonstrate that employer branding can effectively support recruitment activities. According to Dyer (2007, as cited in Elbendary et al., 2023), as many as 75% of companies that implement employer branding find it useful in attracting applicants. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that employer branding can enhance the quantity and caliber of prospective job applicants (Elbendary et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2015).

Prior studies have demonstrated that employer branding exerts a positive and significant impact on intention to apply, functioning both directly and indirectly as a mediating variable. Research conducted by Verma et al. (2024) supports this assertion, noting a positive effect of employer branding on intention to apply. This finding has been replicated in several subsequent studies, which include Gen Z as a research unit (Ekhsan et al., 2022; Elbendary et al., 2023; Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Evrina & Wulansari, 2023; Geofanny & Faraz, 2023; Junça Silva & Dias, 2023; Kurniawan & Prameka, 2022; Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023; Purborini & Basid, 2022). Consequently, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H3:** Employer branding has a significant effect on the intention to apply among Gen Z in state-owned enterprises in Indonesia.
- H4:** Employer branding is significant in mediating the effect between e-recruitment and intention to apply among Gen Z in state-owned enterprises in Indonesia.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A comprehensive literature review and a thorough examination of related research have been conducted and documented. This research aims to ascertain the validity of a proposed hypothesis. To facilitate comprehension of the research framework, authors have developed a conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1.

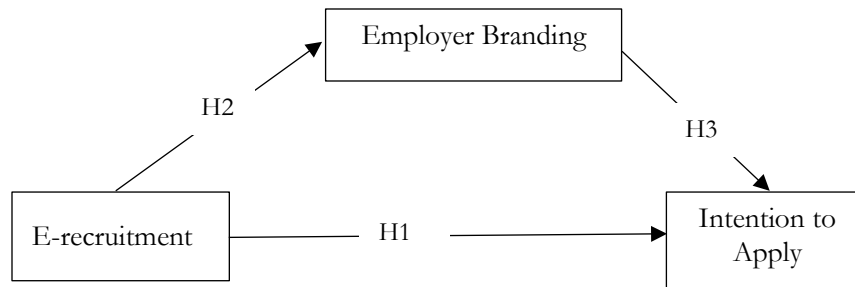


Figure 1. Research framework

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research uses an empirical approach to examine the relationship between e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply in the context of state-owned companies in Indonesia. This study used a survey design, with data collection conducted through distributing questionnaires to 300 respondents. Participants are Gen Z individuals, ages 18-27, who are beginning to enter the workforce. To ensure the representativeness of the sample and the validity of subsequent findings, respondents were selected based on several criteria. Specifically, respondents had to fulfill the following criteria: they were recent graduates or job seekers looking for work, interested in working for a state-owned company, and had experience using or being involved in an electronic recruitment process. Participants were limited to recent graduates aged 18-27 to align with studies showing Gen

Z's distinct job-seeking behaviors (Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023). The sample size of this study was determined using a non-probability sampling technique. This approach was adopted to ensure that only individuals were actively seeking employment in SOEs to ensure relevance to the research objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The sample size of 300 respondents was determined based on calculations using the Bernoulli formula with a 95% confidence level, which is commonly used in social research with the SEM-PLS analysis method to determine the number of representative samples from a large population (Majdina et al., 2024). However, to mitigate potential bias, a validation process was conducted by filtering out inappropriate or incomplete responses. The questionnaire used in this study used a Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree) to measure respondents' responses to the research variables. The source of measurement instruments includes research by Berthon et al. (2005) for employer branding, AbdulKareem et al. (2024) for e-recruitment, and Gomes and Neves (2011) for intention to apply. Some questionnaire items underwent adjustments to fit the research context. This research analysis includes a multifaceted examination of e-recruitment as the independent variable, employer branding as the mediating variable, and intention to apply as the dependent variable. A survey instrument consisting of a detailed questionnaire was developed based on previous research. The questions included in the research questionnaire and their supporting sources are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Study questionnaire items

Variable	Dimensions	Items	Source
E-recruitment (ER)	Transparency	ER1: The e-recruitment platform provides clear and detailed information on job requirements and organizational expectations.	AbdulKareem et al. (2024)
		ER2: Communication/interaction from employers through the e-recruitment platform is direct and informative.	
		ER3: Accessing information on the status of job applications through the e-recruitment system is easy.	
	Cost reduction	ER4: The use of e-recruitment platforms can save costs compared to traditional job search methods. (Save on transportation costs, printing of CVs and cover letters, etc.).	
	Perceived ease of use	ER5: The e-recruitment platform makes the job application process easy.	
		ER6: Navigation and other features in the e-recruitment web are easy to use.	
	Platform trust	ER7: The e-recruitment platform keeps personal information confidential and secure.	
		ER8: The e-recruitment platform creates transparency that fosters trust between employers and job seekers.	
	Participation	ER9: I am more motivated/excited to apply for a job position when using an e-recruitment platform because it is simple.	
		ER10: I feel e-recruitment encourages me to explore more job opportunities.	
		ER11: I feel the e-recruitment platform makes it easier for me to find and apply for jobs that match my skills.	

The Influence of E-Recruitment on The Intention of Gen Z to Apply

Variable	Dimensions	Items	Source
	Efficiency	ER12: E-recruitment platforms are more efficient in finding and applying for jobs compared to traditional methods. ER13: E-recruitment facilitates communication between employers and job seekers.	
Employer branding (EB)	Value of interest	EB1: The state-owned company provides a pleasant working environment.	Berthon et al. (2005)
		EB2: State-owned companies encourage employee creativity in developing new ideas.	
		EB3: State-owned companies offer opportunities to work on innovative and challenging projects.	
	Social value	EB4: State-owned companies have a friendly and supportive work atmosphere (feeling comfortable, valued, and supported by coworkers and management).	
		EB5: Social relations with coworkers in state-owned companies are very positive.	
	Economic value	EB6: State-owned companies provide above-average basic salaries.	
		EB7: State-owned companies offer excellent job stability.	
		EB8: State-owned companies provide very attractive compensation packages (basic salary, allowances, bonuses, insurance, etc.).	
		EB9: State-owned companies provide attractive promotion opportunities (an opportunity to move up or get a higher position in the company).	
	Value of development	EB10: The state-owned company offers attractive career development and skills enhancement (Training and Development, Mentoring and Coaching, Promotion Opportunities, Challenging Projects, and Continuous Learning).	
		EB11: The state-owned company provides training and learning that is beneficial for employees' future career development.	
	Application value	EB12: State-owned companies provide opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a good working environment.	
		EB13: The state-owned company provides opportunities for employees to be more involved.	
Intention to apply (IA)	Intention to apply for a job	IA1: I am interested in applying for a job at an Indonesian state-owned company.	Gomes and Neves (2011)
		IA2: I am preparing myself to apply for a job at an Indonesian state-owned company.	
	Intention to pursue a job	IA3: I am motivated (willing) to follow the entire selection process at an Indonesian state-owned company.	
		IA4: I have a strong desire to work in an Indonesian state-owned company.	

Variable	Dimensions	Items	Source
	Intention to accept a job	IA5: I prepare myself to fill job vacancies in Indonesian state-owned companies.	

Data analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS, with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. SEM-PLS was selected due to its ability to analyze complex relationships between latent variables with small-to-medium sample sizes, making it suitable for exploratory studies (Hair et al., 2019). The main advantage of SEM-PLS analysis is its ability to integrate measurement and structural models into a unified analysis, thus increasing statistical efficiency compared to other multivariate techniques (Hair et al., 2019).

The data analysis process includes an evaluation of the validity and reliability of the research instruments, an assessment of the measurement model (also known as the “outer model”), and an evaluation of the structural model (also known as the “inner model”). These evaluations were conducted to ensure the capacity of the instruments to measure the research variables and assess the strength of the relationships between the variables. This methodological approach is designed to provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing Gen Z’s interest in applying for jobs at state-owned companies in Indonesia. In addition, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective recruitment strategies in the future.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As indicated in Table 2, all respondents were 18–27 years old. Most respondents (83%) were female, while 17% identified as male. The majority of respondents had received an associate degree or bachelor’s degree (69%), with a smaller percentage having graduated from high school (30%) compared to those who held a master’s degree (1%). In terms of geographical origin, the majority of respondents (82%) were from Java Island. This is not surprising, as Java is the most densely populated city in Indonesia and home to most of Indonesia’s economic and business centers, including access to state-owned companies.

Table 2. Demographic profile

Criteria		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	249	83%
	Male	51	17%
Education	Associate degree or bachelor’s degree	207	69%
	High school	89	30%
	Master’s degree	4	1%
Geographical origin	Java Island	246	82%
	Sumatera Island	31	11%
	Sulawesi Island	8	3%
	Bali & Nusa Tenggara Island	7	2%
	Maluku & Papua Island	7	2%

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The SEM-PLS analysis followed a two-step approach: (1) evaluating the measurement model for validity and reliability and (2) assessing the structural model using path coefficients, R^2 values, and mediation analysis. Both steps have been tested in this study, as seen in Tables 3 and 4. The objective of

measurement model analysis is to ascertain the robustness and validity of the analysis and research results. This is typically verified by evaluating several criteria: indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The analysis results for the measurement model reported in Table 3 indicate an adequate measurement model in terms of achieving good internal consistency, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 3. Measurement model

Construct	Item	Loadings	CR	Cronbach's alpha	Rho A
E-recruitment	ER1	0.608	0.806	0.725	0.727
	ER10	0.540			
	ER11	0.593			
	ER13	0.619			
	ER2	0.573			
	ER3	0.569			
	ER5	0.544			
Employer branding	EB1	0.618	0.867	0.833	0.834
	EB10	0.615			
	EB11	0.587			
	EB12	0.604			
	EB13	0.623			
	EB2	0.516			
	EB4	0.649			
	EB5	0.584			
	EB6	0.554			
	EB7	0.604			
	EB8	0.563			
Intention to apply	IA1	0.626	0.798	0.684	0.686
	IA2	0.682			
	IA3	0.655			
	IA4	0.646			
	IA5	0.711			

Indicator reliability is evaluated exclusively by considering items with factor loadings greater than 0.5-0.6 (Chin, 1998, as cited in Ghazali, 2014, 39). The loading factor value signifies the extent to which each indicator contributes to the explanation of the latent variable. In this model, indicators are declared valid if the results of the outer loading calculation exceed 0.5-0.6. It is noteworthy that the factor loadings for each item are calculated, and items with factor loadings less than 0.5 are subsequently excluded. This results in the deletion of items ER4, ER6, ERR7, ER9, ER12, and EB3. The measurement model has been confirmed to exhibit discriminant validity.

The reliability of internal consistency is ensured by testing Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's alpha represents the lower bound, while CR represents the upper bound for internal consistency reliability. Both Cronbach's alpha and CR recommend a minimum threshold of greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). However, for exploratory research, a value of 0.6 to 0.7 is still considered acceptable. As illustrated in Table 3, the e-recruitment variable demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.725 and a CR of 0.806, both of which meet the established reliability criteria (>0.6). This substantiates the instrument's consistency and reliability in measuring the variable. The employer branding variable, when utilized as a mediating variable, exhibits exceptional reliability,

evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.833 and a CR of 0.867. Additionally, the intention to apply the variable satisfies the reliability criteria, with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.684 and a CR of 0.798, thereby substantiating the reliability of the measurement instrument.

STRUCTURAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

The process of hypothesis testing or path coefficient analysis is employed to ascertain the direction of the variable relationship, determining whether it exhibits a positive or negative relationship. The assessment of multicollinearity between variables can be conducted through the utilization of the Inner Variance Inflated Factor (VIF) measure, which must fall below 5. Additionally, the determination of statistical significance is facilitated by the employment of various statistical metrics, including p values, t statistics, f squares, and r squares (Hair et al., 2019). The observed VIF range is 1.00-5.00, with a maximum value of 2.088, indicating that multicollinearity does not pose a significant challenge (Hair et al., 2019).

The Q^2 predictive relevance value for the employer branding variable is $0.508 > 0.50$, indicating that the model possesses a strong predictive ability for this variable. Meanwhile, the Q^2 predictive relevance value for the intention to apply variable is 0.250, suggesting that the model exhibits a moderate predictive ability for this variable, given that the Q^2 value falls between 0.15 and 0.35. PLS-SEM was chosen over CB-SEM because it is more suitable for predictive and exploratory research, particularly when data normality cannot be assured, and sample sizes are relatively small (Hair et al., 2019).

The coefficient of determination (R-Square) is a statistical measure used to assess the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, quantifying the extent to which the independent variable can explain the variability in the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2021). In the context of employer branding, the R-Square value of 0.520 indicates that the e-recruitment variable can account for 52% of the variability in the employer branding variable. The magnitude of this value can be categorized as a moderate influence, which indicates that the e-recruitment variable has a fairly strong contribution to influencing employer branding. Meanwhile, the remaining 48% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

The R-Square value of 0.404 for the intention-to-apply variable suggests that the independent variable of e-recruitment, encompassing employer branding mediation, accounts for 40.4% of the variability in the intention-to-apply variable. This value is also categorized as a moderate influence, indicating that the model exhibits a satisfactory degree of goodness, even though 59.6% of the variability is attributed to factors not examined in this study.

Based on Table 4 and Figure 2, the path coefficients and their significance for each hypothesis are presented. The results show that e-recruitment ($\beta=0.133$, $t= 1.401$, $p= 0.161$) has no significant effect on the intention to apply, so H1 is not supported. However, e-recruitment ($\beta = 0.722$, $t = 19.363$, $p = 0.000$) was shown to have a significant positive influence on employer branding, which supports hypothesis H2. In addition, employer branding ($\beta = 0.535$, $t = 5.583$, $p = 0.000$) has a significant positive influence on the intention to apply. Meanwhile, employer branding also plays a mediating role with a significant positive influence between e-recruitment and intention to apply ($\beta = 0.387$, $t = 5.166$, $p = 0.000$), supporting hypotheses H3 and H4.

Table 4. Path coefficient

Hypothesized relationship	Path coefficient	P value	95% confidence interval		T statistic	VIF	F square/ Upsilon v	R square	Q square
			Lower limit	Upper limit					
Direct effect									
E-Recruitment -> Intention to Apply	0.133	0.161	-0.049	0.319	1.401	2.088	0.014	0.404	0.250
E-Recruitment -> Employer Branding	0.722	0.000	0.648	0.793	19.363	1.000	1088	0.520	0.508
Employer Branding -> Intention to Apply	0.535	0.000	0.332	0.716	5.583	2.088	0.232	0.404	0.250
Indirect effect									
E-Recruitment -> Employer Branding -> Intention to Apply	0.387	0.000	0.238	0.533	5.166	-	0.149	-	-

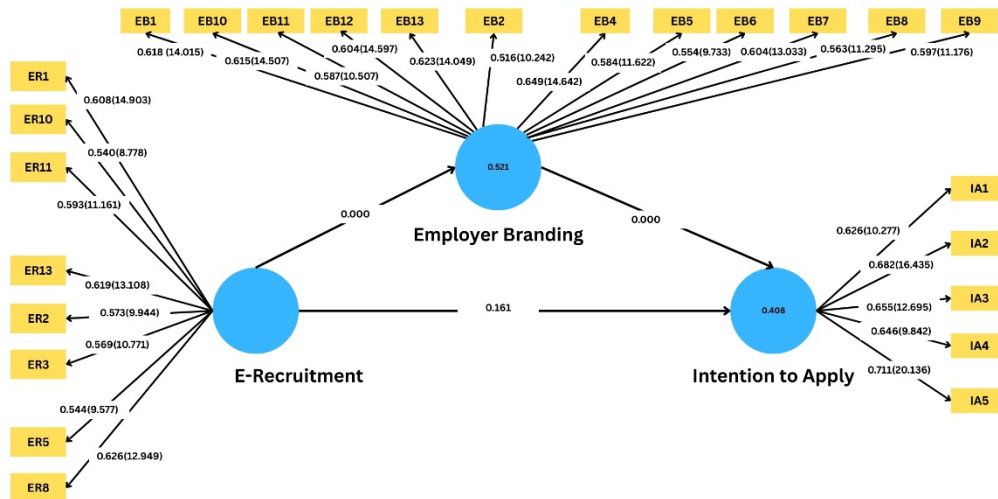


Figure 2. Path analysis result

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer noteworthy insights into the impact of e-recruitment and employer branding on the intention to apply Gen Z within state-owned companies in Indonesia. Initially, e-recruitment exhibits a positive correlation with the intention to apply; however, this effect is not statistically significant. The weak direct effect of e-recruitment suggests that Gen Z values company reputation over digital hiring convenience. Future studies should examine whether recruitment transparency or responsiveness affects these perceptions. This suggests that the e-recruitment system is not the primary factor influencing Gen Z's intention to apply (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2023). It is plausible that Gen Z places a higher value on other factors, such as employer branding than on the convenience of the recruitment process. Additionally, it is crucial for SOEs to optimize the e-recruitment system's user experience. This optimization is necessary to enhance the system's functionality and ensure it can effectively engage and retain Gen Z applicants. SOEs must consider incorporating innovative features on the e-recruitment platform. These features should include displaying employee testimonials, work culture simulations, and employer branding information that is aligned with the preferences of Gen Z.

Concurrently, e-recruitment has been demonstrated to exert a substantial effect on employer branding, manifesting a relatively robust positive correlation. This finding suggests that the effective execution of e-recruitment initiatives can potentially enhance the perception held by Gen Z concerning the image of the company in question. This result is in line with previous research which states that e-recruitment systems give the impression of being modern, professional, and efficient, which are important elements in building positive employer branding (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Geofanny & Faraz, 2023; Hardiansyah et al., 2023; Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2023; Winarno & Silvianita, 2024). For state-owned companies, e-recruitment functions as an employee selection tool and a means to promote the company's image to job seekers, especially Gen Z, who are more responsive to technology-based innovations.

Employer branding has been demonstrated to exert a substantial influence on the intention to apply. The extent to which a company's image is perceived as positive is directly correlated with the intention of Gen Z to apply for employment opportunities (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Evrina & Wulansari, 2023; Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023; Tien Thanh et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2023). Employer branding strategies that resonate with Gen Z include compensation, reputation, work environment, and career development opportunities. Consequently, SOEs must develop employer branding strategies that align with Gen Z's preferences, utilizing authentic, transparent content based on employees' real-life experiences. Additionally, SOEs should foster creativity and innovation in the workplace. Employing the optimal combination of these elements enables enterprises to wield employer branding as a potent instrument in the pursuit of young talent, particularly from Gen Z, who possess distinctive and dynamic work preferences.

Furthermore, the present study demonstrates that employer branding functions as a mediator in the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply. This suggests that while e-recruitment does not directly influence intention to apply, it can augment employer branding, which in turn can lead to an enhancement in intention to apply (Banerjee et al., 2020; Collins & Kanar, 2013; Elbendary et al., 2023; Junça Silva & Dias, 2023). Therefore, companies must ensure that e-recruitment platforms are designed in such a way that they represent the company's values and project a positive image relevant to young job seekers. This finding indicates that a strong and impactful employer branding strategy is still a major concern. Therefore, combining good e-recruitment with transparent and innovative branding strategies is projected to be crucial in strengthening the position of Indonesian SOEs as employers of excellence in the employment sector. This assertion assumes particular relevance in the context of Gen Z, who are demonstrating increasing discernment in their selection of employment opportunities. This study offers novel insights into the dynamics of e-recruitment and

employer branding among Gen Z fresh graduates interested in applying to state-owned companies in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to the development of literature in the field of human resource management, particularly in the context of e-recruitment, employer branding, and job application intention in state-owned companies. The finding that e-recruitment does not have a significant influence directly on application intentions challenges the assumptions in several previous studies that emphasize the importance of digitizing the recruitment process. This result supports the perspective that other factors, such as employer branding, are more dominant in influencing the decision of job seekers from Gen Z. In addition, this study reinforces the theory that employer branding acts as an intermediary in the relationship between e-recruitment and application intention. The findings support the employer attractiveness model, which states that a strong corporate image can increase job seekers' attraction to the organization. This study also expands the understanding of how digital technology in the recruitment process can strengthen employer image and contributes to research on technology-based branding in the employment context.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have practical implications for state-owned companies in improving their recruitment and employer branding strategies. State-owned enterprises need to improve the user experience in the e-recruitment platform with innovative features such as employee testimonials, work culture simulations, and the delivery of employer branding information that appeals to Gen Z. E-recruitment should not only serve as a selection tool but also as a marketing medium that strengthens the company's image. Therefore, state-owned enterprises need to adapt their branding strategies to Gen Z's preferences, such as disclosure of information on compensation, company reputation, work environment, and career development opportunities.

In addition, the e-recruitment system used should be able to reflect the company's values consistently so that employer branding can be more optimal in attracting the best talent. State-owned enterprises can adopt a technology-based storytelling approach to build a positive narrative about the company, thereby increasing attractiveness to Gen Z job seekers. As employer branding plays a key role, state-owned enterprises should strengthen their reputation through innovative work practices and clear employee development programs. Collaboration with universities, social media, and career platforms can be a strategy to increase company exposure and appeal to Gen Z. Thus, the integration of branding strategies and innovation in the recruitment process is expected to increase the competitiveness of state-owned companies as employers of choice for young talents in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth insight into the influence of e-recruitment and employer branding on Gen Z's intention to apply to state-owned companies in Indonesia. The results show that e-recruitment has no significant effect on the intention to apply for a job, which suggests that the e-recruitment system is not the main factor that hinders Gen Z's decision to apply for a job. In contrast, employer branding significantly influences Gen Z's intention to apply for a job in Indonesian SOEs. Therefore, SOEs need to optimize employer branding strategies that are more in line with Gen Z's preferences and expectations.

In addition, this study also found that e-recruitment has a significant effect on employer branding, which in turn can strengthen the intention to apply. In other words, while e-recruitment does not directly influence application intentions, an effective recruitment platform can build a more positive employer image in the eyes of job seekers. Therefore, SOEs should ensure that the e-recruitment system serves not only as a selection tool but also as a marketing tool that strengthens the company's image.

This study confirms that while e-recruitment enhances employer branding, it does not directly influence Gen Z's application intentions. These findings highlight the need for SOEs to shift focus from recruitment platforms to branding strategies. While employer branding strongly influences Gen Z job applications, factors such as salary expectations and workplace flexibility may also play a role. Future research should explore these additional influences.

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