

# **THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON THE INTENTIONS OF APPLYING FOR JOBS IN STATE-OWNED COMPANIES WITH COMPANY REPUTATION AS A MEDIATOR ON FRESH GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE SPECIAL REGION OF YOGYAKARTA**

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to analyze the effect of employer branding on the intention to apply for a job in a state-owned company as a mediator for fresh graduate students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. By using a non-probability sampling technique where samples are selected based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. Data were collected from 100 fresh graduate students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta using a questionnaire directly through Google Forms which has been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was carried out using the outer model, inner model and mediation testing techniques to test the research hypothesis using SmartPLS software version 4.1.0.9 for Windows. The results of the study showed that employer branding has a positive effect on the intention to apply for a job. Employer branding has a positive effect on the company's reputation. The company's reputation has a positive effect on the intention to apply for a job. Furthermore, employer branding, the intention to apply for a job and the company's reputation together have a positive and significant effect on the interest in applying for a job of fresh graduate students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.*

**Keywords:** *Employer Branding; Company Reputation; Job Application Intention; BUMN; Fresh Graduate*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The advancement of digital technology had driven significant changes across various sectors such as the economy, education, and socio-cultural life. Within this development, the digital economy had become a key driver of national growth, particularly in Indonesia, a developing country with immense potential. Despite an 11% increase in its digital economy in 2021, Indonesia still lagged behind neighboring countries like Singapore and Malaysia. One of Indonesia's main strengths was its large youth population especially Generation Z who were digitally native, highly adaptive, and familiar with technology from an early age.

Although Generation Z was naturally aligned with the dynamic and flexible environment of startups and digital-based companies, many of them still preferred working in state-owned enterprises (BUMN). This contradiction was evident in surveys where BUMNs were chosen over startups due to their perceived stability, structured career paths, and secure employment. However, BUMNs were often criticized for their bureaucratic and rigid work culture, which did not match the expectations of Gen Z, who preferred flexibility, openness, and innovation. In regions like Yogyakarta—known as a center of education with over 50 universities and thousands of graduates each year this issue became increasingly relevant as fresh graduates entered a highly competitive job market.

In this context, employer branding and corporate reputation were seen as crucial in influencing young graduates' career decisions. Despite their importance, empirical studies—especially quantitative ones in the context of BUMN were still scarce. Most existing research focused on private companies using qualitative methods. Therefore, this study aimed to fill the gap by examining the effect of employer branding on job application intention in BUMN, with corporate reputation acting as a mediating variable. By focusing on fresh graduates in Yogyakarta, the study intended to offer both theoretical insights and practical implications for public sector recruitment strategies in the digital era.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Human Resource Management**

According to Hasibuan (2017), Human Resource Management (HRM) is the science and art of regulating relationships and the roles of workforce members to be effective and efficient in achieving the goals of the company, employees, and society. Aditama (2020) adds that HRM is the science and art of implementing planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of human resources. Similarly, Afandi (2018) defines HRM as the science and art of managing labor relations and roles to achieve company and employee objectives effectively and efficiently. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that Human Resource Management is the science and art of managing labor relations, encompassing processes such as selection, development, maintenance, and utilization of human resources to improve overall organizational and individual performance.

### **2.2 Definition of Employer Branding**

Employer branding refers to the strategic process of shaping a company's image as an attractive employer. Backhaus and Tikoo (2024) define employer branding through three main elements: the employer value proposition, organizational culture, and employer image. These influence how potential candidates perceive and evaluate the attractiveness of a company. Employer branding involves more than just visual identity; it reflects organizational values and how these are communicated, especially to job seekers. A strong employer brand helps companies stand out in competitive labor markets, including in traditionally less appealing sectors like state-owned enterprises. Mochla and Tsourvakas (2024) emphasize that employer branding significantly affects millennials and Gen Z's intention to apply, especially when it aligns with values such as transparency and social responsibility. Employer branding also encompasses communication strategies (e.g., social media, internships, employee testimonials) aimed at both attracting and retaining talent.

### **2.3 Corporate Reputation**

Corporate reputation is the cumulative public perception of an organization's quality, integrity, and contributions over time. According to Baumgartner et al. (2022), reputation results from interactions with stakeholders. In public sector organizations such as SOEs, reputation helps counter negative stereotypes. Aldhaen (2024) emphasizes that reputation is shaped not only by financial performance but also CSR, innovation, and ethical practices. Reputation also influences job seekers' perceptions of job security and long-term prospects, often outweighing compensation. This study positions corporate reputation as a mediating variable between employer branding and job application intentions.

### **2.4 Hypothesis Development**

H1: Employer branding has a positive effect on the intention to apply for jobs at SOEs among fresh graduates in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

H2: Employer branding has a positive effect on corporate reputation.

H3: Corporate reputation has a positive effect on the intention to apply for jobs.

H4: Corporate reputation mediates the relationship between employer branding and the intention to apply for jobs.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 Sample**

A sample is a portion of the population selected using a specific method and considered capable of representing the entire population under study (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a total of 100 respondents. According to Sugiyono (2019), there are various types of sampling methods, such as probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling allows each element of the population to have an equal chance of being selected, while non-probability sampling is often used when researchers face limitations in resources or when the population is difficult to access.

This study targeted fresh graduates as respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this case, the criteria set were fresh graduates who had graduated within the past year ( $\leq 1$  year). Therefore, the selected sample was considered to represent the group most appropriate for obtaining the required data.

#### **3.2 Operationalization of Research Variables**

In this study, there are two types of variables used: independent and dependent variables. All variable indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale referring to Sugiyono (2024), with a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

##### **a. Dependen Variabel**

According to Sugiyono (2019), the independent variable was a variable that influenced or caused changes in the dependent variable. In this study, the independent variable was employer branding.

##### **b. Independen Variabel**

The dependent variable, as stated by Sugiyono (2019), was the variable that was affected or became the result of the independent variable. The dependent variable in this study was the intention to apply for a job.

##### **c. Intervening Variabel**

Sugiyono (2019) defined the intervening variable as a variable that theoretically influenced the relationship between the independent and dependent variables but could not be directly observed or measured. This variable served as a mediator or intermediary, positioned between the independent and dependent variables, so the independent variable did not directly affect the dependent variable. In this study, the intervening variable was corporate reputation.

#### **3.3 Analysis Method**

This research used a quantitative approach with numerical data analyzed through multiple linear regression using the SmartPLS software version 4.1.0.9. Partial Least Squares (PLS) was chosen as the analytical technique due to its flexibility, especially in handling small sample sizes and its minimal data assumptions (Ghozali, 2015). Descriptive statistics were employed to present the demographic profile of respondents, including gender, age, education level, university background, and interest in applying to state-owned enterprises (BUMN). This analysis aimed to describe the data without drawing general conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019). In the outer model assessment, convergent validity and reliability were tested. Convergent validity was evaluated through outer loading values and AVE, with acceptable thresholds depending on the research stage (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, where a value of  $\geq 0.6$  indicated

acceptable consistency among items (Sugiyono, 2019). The inner model focused on the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to explain how well independent variables accounted for variance in the dependent variable. A value above 0.67 indicated strong explanatory power, while lower values indicated moderate to weak relationships (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Finally, hypothesis testing involved analyzing both direct and indirect effects. Path coefficients measured the strength and direction of relationships, with significance determined by t-statistics and p-values. Indirect effects were assessed through mediation analysis, helping to explain how a mediator variable (company reputation) influenced the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 100 valid responses were collected and analyzed in this study. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were male (58%), while females accounted for 42%. In terms of age, the largest group (61%) was between 21–23 years old, followed by those aged 24–26 years (29%), and smaller proportions aged 20 years (5%) and over 27 years (5%). Regarding educational status, there was an equal distribution between final-year students (50%) and fresh graduates (50%), providing balanced perspectives from both groups. Most respondents (62%) came from private universities, while the remaining 38% were from public universities, indicating a higher representation of private university graduates in the region.

Additionally, when asked about their interest in applying to state-owned enterprises (BUMN), 89% of respondents answered "yes," reflecting a strong inclination toward BUMN career opportunities. This positive attitude may be shaped by cultural and social perceptions regarding job security and prestige associated with BUMN. Encouraging and supporting this positive interest can contribute to the development of a high-quality workforce among fresh graduates in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

### 4.2 Research Instrument Test

#### 4.2.1 convergent validity Test

**Table 1.** Outer Loading Value Results

Indicator	Construct	Loading Factor	Information
EB1	Employer Branding (X)	0,837	Valid
EB2		0,776	Valid
EB3		0,798	Valid
EB4		0,841	Valid
EB5		0,811	Valid
EB6		0,804	Valid
EB7		0,806	Valid
EB8		0,767	Valid
EB9		0,861	Valid
EB10		0,868	Valid
RP1	Corporate Reputation (Z)	0,840	Valid
RP2		0,759	Valid
RP3		0,757	Valid
RP4		0,832	Valid
RP5		0,898	Valid
RP6		0,841	Valid
RP7		0,872	Valid
RP8		0,861	Valid
RP9		0,871	Valid
RP10		0,861	Valid
IMP1	Job Application Intention (Y)	0,849	Valid
IMP2		0,840	Valid

Indicator	Construct	Loading Factor	Information
IMP3		0,916	Valid
IMP4		0,829	Valid

(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

It can be seen in Table 4.6 that the outer loading values are above 0.7, indicating that all indicators are ideal and valid in measuring their respective latent constructs.

#### 4.2.2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

**Table 2.** Construct validity

Variable	Average variance extracted	Information
Employer Branding	0,668	Valid
Job Application Intention	0,738	Valid
Corporate Reputation	0,706	Valid

(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

Based on Table 4.7, it can be seen that each variable has an AVE value as follows: Employer Branding (0.668), Job Application Intention (0.738), and Corporate Reputation (0.706). These values exceed the minimum AVE threshold of >0.5, which indicates that the constructs are valid.

#### 4.2.3 Reliability Test

Reliability testing was conducted by examining the Cronbach's Alpha values of each research instrument. An instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.6, and a questionnaire is deemed reliable when the responses to its statements remain consistent over time (Sugiyono, 2019). The results of the instrument reliability test in this study can be seen in the following table:

**Table 3.** Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Information
Employer Branding (X)	0,945	0,948	0,953	Reliabel
Job Application Intention (Y)	0,881	0,882	0,918	Reliabel
Corporate Reputation (Z)	0,953	0,954	0,960	Reliabel

(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

#### 4.3 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

According to Ghazali (2018), the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) measures how strongly the independent variables explain the variation of the dependent variable. If the  $R^2$  value is 0, it means there is no relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Conversely, if the  $R^2$  value is 1, it indicates a perfect relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

**Table 4.** R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjustd
Job Application Intention (Y)	0,527	0,517

Corporate Reputation (Z)	0,623	0,619
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(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

Based on the test results shown in Table 4.9, the  $R^2$  value for Job Application Intention is 0.527, which falls within the range of 0.33–0.67 and indicates a moderate category. This result explains that 52.7% of Job Application Intention is influenced by Employer Branding and Corporate Reputation, while the remaining 47.3% is influenced by other factors not observed in this study. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value for Corporate Reputation is 0.623, also falling within the moderate category. This indicates that 62.3% of Corporate Reputation is influenced by Employer Branding, while the remaining 37.7% is influenced by another unobserved factor.

#### 4.4 Hypothesis Test Results

##### 4.4.1 Path Coefesients

The results of the hypothesis testing, based on path coefficient analysis, follow the guidelines of Ghozali and Latan (2015), which state that path coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between latent variables in the structural model, with values ranging from -1 to +1. The bootstrapping method is used to test the significance of these relationships. If the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 at a 5% significance level or the p-value is less than 0.05, the relationship is considered statistically significant.

**Table 5.** Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STD EV)	P values	Impormation
EB - > JAI	0,272	2,080	0,038	Diterima
EB - > CR	0,789	16,266	0,000	Diterima
RP - > JAI	0,492	3,675	0,000	Diterima

(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

Based on Table 4.10, the p-values for each hypothesis are less than 0.05 and the t-statistics are greater than 1.96, while the original sample values are positive, indicating a positive relationship between the variables and a unidirectional effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent variables have a positive and significant influence on the dependent variables.

##### 4.4.2 Indirect Effect

According to Abdillah and Hartono (2015), an indirect effect refers to the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a mediating variable. This occurs when the independent variable affects the intermediary variable, which in turn influences the dependent variable. The magnitude of the indirect effect is measured using the indirect effect coefficient and is considered significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. The coefficient value indicates the strength of the indirect influence, with interpretations similar to path coefficients: 0–0.30 = weak, 0.31–0.50 = moderate, and 0.51–1.00 = strong.

**Table 6.** Indirect Effects

	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STD EV)	P values	Information
EB - > CR - > JAI	0,388	3,611	0,000	Diterima

(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

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(Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS, 2025)

Based on Table 4.11 above, the p-value for each hypothesis is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic is greater than 1.96, while the original sample values are positive. This indicates that the independent variable has a positive and significant influence on the dependent variable through the mediating variable.

#### 4.5 Discussion

This study was conducted on 100 fresh graduate students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta using a non-probability sampling method. Data was collected through a Google Form questionnaire and analyzed statistically. The results of the hypothesis testing are as follows:

##### a. The Effect of Employer Branding on Job Application Intention

The analysis showed a t-value of 2.080 (>1.96) and a p-value of 0.038 (<0.05), indicating a significant and positive relationship (original sample = 0.272). Thus, H1 is accepted. These findings align with Manao et al. (2024), who stated that employer branding influences job seekers' perceptions, portraying the company as attractive and rewarding. It shows both a direct and indirect effect (via corporate reputation) on job application intention.

##### b. The Effect of Employer Branding on Corporate Reputation

With a t-value of 16.266 (>1.96) and p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), and an original sample of 0.789, there is a strong and significant positive relationship, supporting H2. Kapoor et al. (2021) also found that employer branding enhances corporate reputation by building emotional trust and organizational appeal—especially relevant among millennials and first-time job seekers.

##### c. The Effect of Corporate Reputation on Job Application Intention

The results (t = 3.675, p = 0.000, original sample = 0.492) show a significant and positive effect, thus H3 is accepted. This supports Ekhsan (2021), who emphasized that corporate reputation strengthens the influence of employer branding on application intention. High professionalism, ethics, and image contribute significantly to applicants' decisions.

d. The Mediating Role of Corporate Reputation

The indirect effect of employer branding on job application intention via corporate reputation is also significant ( $t = 3.611$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , original sample = 0.388), confirming H4. These findings are consistent with Purborini and Basid (2022), who found partial mediation—highlighting that employer branding not only has a direct impact but also indirectly shapes job intentions through perceived reputation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study titled "The Influence of Employer Branding on Job Application Intention Toward State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) with Corporate Reputation as a Mediator among Fresh Graduates in the Special Region of Yogyakarta", the research was conducted on 100 fresh graduate respondents using a non-probability sampling technique. Data were collected through a Google Form questionnaire and analyzed accordingly. The findings are as follows: 1) H1 is accepted: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intention; 2) H2 is accepted: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on corporate reputation; 3) H3 is accepted: Corporate reputation has a positive and significant effect on job application intention; 4) H4 is accepted: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intention through corporate reputation as a mediating variable.

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