

The influence of corporate social responsibility, benefits and career development on intention to apply at startup companies mediated by employer brand (Empirical study on Generation Z in Jakarta)

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

corporate social
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career development

employer brand

intention to apply

This study investigates the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR), benefits, and career development on the intention to apply for a job, while also examining the role of employer branding as a mediating variable. The study employs a quantitative method, utilizing questionnaires distributed online via Google Forms to Generation Z individuals in Jakarta, Indonesia, who are actively seeking jobs and interested in applying to startup companies. The data collected from the surveys were analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a tool suitable for studies with numerous indicators and complex relationships. The descriptive results show that CSR has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply in startup companies, while benefits have a negative effect. Employer Brand has an important mediating role in this relationship. This research contributes to filling the gap by offering a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact, providing valuable insights for both academia and the practical field of employee branding in startups.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the startup market in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, is in the process of rapid growth. Companies such as Gojek, Tokopedia, Traveloka, etc., are examples of startup companies that have successfully grown in Indonesia, so it is undeniable that there will be more new startup companies that will continue to grow. Startup companies have become businesses that have bright prospects in the future. This is due to the concept of a startup business that develops innovative products to solve problems in social life which certainly has a positive impact on people's lives (Syavitra & Ardianto, 2023). The development of startup companies in Indonesia is very fast and large on an international scale. Indonesia currently occupies the 6th position as the company with the largest number of startups in the world.

Indonesia currently has a number of startups of 2,662 companies. The number of startup companies that have sprung up in Indonesia is enough to put Indonesia in the top position as the largest number of startup companies in Southeast Asia. With many startup companies growing in Indonesia, it directly affects Indonesia's economic growth. As reported on the website of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the presence of startup companies in Indonesia is the main driver in Indonesia GDP growth of 7.6% - 8.7% in 2022 and is targeted to continue to grow until it reaches 20% of the contribution to Indonesia GDP in 2045 (KEMENTERIAN KOORDINATOR BIDANG PEREKONOMIAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA, 2024). Digital development in Indonesia is still dominated by Jakarta as the highest with a scale of 76.6 out of a total perfect index score of 100 (Ahdiat, 2023). This states that Jakarta is still the center of digital competition and the growth of startup companies (Annur, 2023).

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the population has been dominated by Generation Z which has reached 71.5 million. The population of this generation has entered the productive age between 15 – 64 years old and fully contributes to economic progress (BPS, 2024). Generation Z is believed to be a creative, collaborative, and tech-savvy generation, a generation that wants to use their talents in creating new businesses

and actively participate as a team to produce a product that is supported by the use of technology (Gentina, 2020). In addition, Generation Z also has the hope of being able to work for companies that use the latest technology so that all their abilities in social media can be channeled, and all their ideas can be conveyed directly without going through a prolonged process (Hinduan et al., 2020). Generation Z is also believed to have different expectations than the previous generation in looking for a job, Generation Z is more concerned with companies that are committed to changing the world for the better, have supportive relationships in the work environment and flexible time so that they can have free time in the family and to do their pleasures, so it is not uncommon for this generation to choose a job not based on the company's brand but on cultural suitability, environment and its purpose (Hinduan et al., 2020). When faced with social and environmental issues, Generation Z is more sensitive than the previous generation, marked by this generation being willing to buy expensive green products and willing to donate to companies that support sustainable action (Dwidienawati et al., 2021).

Digital growth and the dominance of generation Z in the productive age demographic make organizations must understand what are the expectations and expectations of generation Z so that they can generate the intention to work for the organization (Thang et al., 2022). The phenomenon of talent wars also occurs among companies in Indonesia. This competition is not competition between startup companies but with conventional companies. Competition to get the best talent and retain those employees in the organization. Generation Z is considered a new generation in the world of work, while the variety of generations in the company is a difficult task for organizations to be able to recognize the characteristics of this generation (Hinduan et al., 2020). Another phenomenon is also shown by the growth of startups in Indonesia also experiencing obstacles due to several problems, including a lack of capital and human resources (Syavitra & Ardianto, 2023).

In a report from the Indonesia Information and Communication Technology Creative Economy Community (MIKTI) institution stated that as many as 34.7% of startups responded to their problems related to capital, while human resources were the second most faced by startup companies in Indonesia with a figure of 18.7% and, it was also not spared that startup companies in Indonesia were constrained by problems such as regulations, market, marketing strategy, and infrastructure (Dihni, 2022). But despite the various problems faced by startup companies. Startups remain the main destination for workers to work. Reporting from the *journal.revou.co* page, the startup companies presented are startup companies that have experienced growth of more than 100 employees in the past year. Astro recorded an increase of 69.2% or equivalent to 332 employees. Well-known companies such as Gojek also experienced an increase of 389 employees (*journal.revou.co*, 2023). This shows the great desire of workers, especially the younger generation, in working with startup companies.

A study by Silva & Dias (2022) found that a company's brand can positively influence a company's reputation, which can ultimately increase the desire of job seekers to apply for the company. Similarly in buying a product, before buying a product, consumers will collect information before finally deciding to buy a product (Thang et al., 2022). In looking for a job, prospective employees will also collect information that can ultimately be useful to influence prospective employees in choosing the organization. Similar research from Yameen et al. (2021) which examined higher education institutions in India also showed the discovery of the role of corporate brands in attracting and retaining prospective employees. Organizations must be able to analyze factors that can contribute to improving the company's branding such as CSR, career development, safety at work, input from fellow employees, etc. Furthermore, CSR, career development, and ethics have proven to be effective in attracting and retaining employees (Yameen et al., 2021). A study according to Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2022) states that there are variables that greatly affect a company's branding, including car development, compensation and benefit, corporate social responsibility, training and development, work environment, organization culture, and work life-balance. This variable is the most valid variable in its contribution to the company's branding (Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2022).

Corporate Social Responsibility practices have been tested to influence employer brand and intention to apply. Implementing CSR practices shows a high commitment to social values, which indirectly shows the good ethical work behavior of the organization, thus affecting the company's brand. Similar findings are also evidenced in Pham et al. (2024), stating that companies that carry out CSR actions, when the social value shown by the company is high, it indirectly has an impact on the psychology of workers that the company also cares about its employees so that it becomes an interesting place to be able to be part of the company. In addition, the social spirit of young workers can be channeled through the activities carried out by the company. Organizations that carry out CSR activities show a high commitment to social and sustainability systems, making prospective workers decide to take part in the interview process and recommend good things about the company to their friends. However, research conducted by Gandasari et al. (2024), shows the contra where CSR does not directly affect the intention to apply, so an indirect relationship is needed through the employer brand to see the influence. CSR is felt to have no direct impact on the employer brand by management. Improving the quality of products and services is still felt as one of the factors in increasing employer brand.

Furthermore, the fact that CSR does not directly affect the intention to apply can also be explained that most young generation workers choose organizations because of their career opportunities. The young generation is at the beginning of their careers so they prioritize careers in choosing jobs.

Studies on Benefit as a goal in work have been widely discussed. A study according to Acheampong (2021) states that benefits are a driving motivation for generation Z to choose a job. Benefits are divided into two classifications, including extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards. Benefits are not only always related to materialistic things such as salaries, commissions, and bonuses, but can also be psychological such as social status, job values, and work-life time balance (Yoopetch et al., 2021). Regarding the relationship between benefits and company brands and the intention to apply for a job, in a further study presented by Vogelzang (2019), it was stated that benefits have a positive influence on company branding. When employees or job seekers are felt to have received a number of benefits from the company, it directly improves the company's image and ultimately increases the intention of prospective employees to apply for the organization. Still in Vogelzang (2019), benefits cannot directly be a driver for prospective employees to have the intention to apply for a company. Furthermore, because the preference for benefits between individuals has differences. Studies related to the relationship between benefits and the desire to apply are re-proven in the research of Gandasari et al. (2024), which shows a significant relationship between benefits and the desire to apply for a job. Information related to the benefits offer that is structured, detailed and clear is a driving factor for prospective employees to decide to apply to the organization.

In Shah et al. (2023) researching related career development to career intention in the digital era, it was found that career development has a positive effect on the intention to apply for jobs for students. A similar thing was also found in the study Gandasari et al. (2024) said that career development has a positive effect on intention to apply. Generation Z workers are interested in choosing a workplace that has promising career prospects and provides a fast time phase in their career development (Gandasari et al., 2024). When information about the career journey presented by the company is clear, such as facilities, training programs, and even support for mentoring from the employer, this can affect the choice of potential workers to apply for a job in the organization. According to a study by Gunesh & Maheshwari (2019), it is explained that organizations can improve the company's brand through a career website. An attractive career website such as testimonials from employees, videos, and animations can reflect the company's brand (Gunesh & Maheshwari, 2019).

This research addresses a gap in the literature regarding the inconsistent findings on the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and benefits on job application intentions, as well as the lack of studies exploring the mediating role of employer branding in this relationship, particularly within startup companies. By developing a conceptual and empirical model, the study aims to confirm the influence of CSR, benefits, and career development on the intention to apply for jobs, with employer branding acting as a mediating factor. This research contributes to filling the gap by offering a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact, providing valuable insights for both academia and the practical field of employer branding in startups.

METHOD

This study investigates the influence of corporate social responsibility, benefits, and career development on the intention to apply for a job, while also examining the role of employer branding as a mediating variable. To gather data, the researchers employed a quantitative method, utilizing questionnaires distributed online via Google Forms to Generation Z individuals in DKI Jakarta who are actively seeking jobs and interested in applying to startup companies. The online distribution method proved effective in overcoming geographical and time constraints. The study targeted a sample size of 200 respondents, exceeding the minimum requirement of 165 respondents based on the rule of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators.

The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling, chosen due to the purposive nature of the research. The questionnaire utilized close-ended questions measured on a Likert scale to assess responses related to the variables. The data collected from the surveys were analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a tool suitable for studies with numerous indicators and complex relationships. The use of PLS-SEM allowed the researchers to explore and test the theoretical relationships in the study, producing accountable and reliable results on the influence of the examined variables on job application intentions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model Test Results

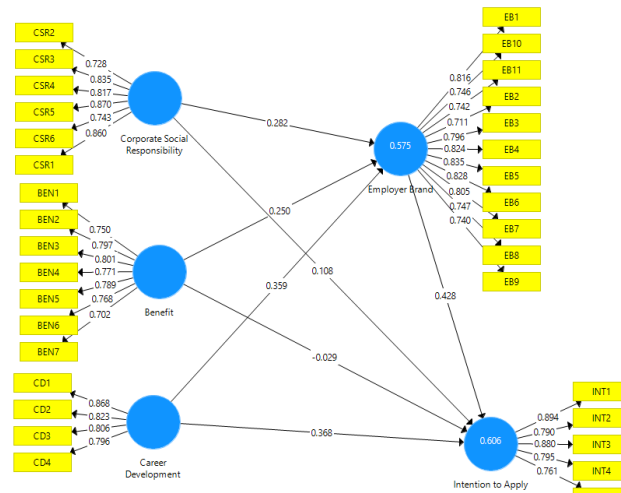


Figure 1. Outer Model Test Results

From the results of data processing with SmartPLS 3.2.9 above, it shows that all indicators in each variable in this study have a loading factor value of more than 0.70. So it can be stated that all the variable indicators used in this study have been declared valid and no statement indicators in this study have been eliminated. Subsequently, the indicator items that have been declared valid are worthy of use in further test analysis.

Table 1. Results of Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Benefit (X2)	0.884	0.910	Reliable
Career Development (X3)	0.842	0.894	Reliable
Corporate social responsibility (X1)	0.895	0.920	Reliable
Employer Brand (Z)	0.936	0.945	Reliable
Intention to Apply (Y)	0.883	0.914	Reliable

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Table 1 shows that Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability are at values greater than 0.70. This value has met the requirements, so that all variables in this study can be declared reliable.

Test Coefficient of Determination / R-Square (R2)

Table 2. R2 Value Results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employer Brand (Z)	0,575	0,568
Intention to Apply (Y)	0,606	0,598

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Table 2 shows the value of the adjusted r-square showing that 4 dependent variables (corporate social responsibility, benefit, career development and employer brand) have an effect on 59.8% of the intention to apply variable. Meanwhile, corporate social responsibility, benefits and career development contributed 56.8% to the employer brand variable. So that in the study it can be grouped that the combination of independent variables to the dependent is categorized as moderate.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results (Direct Influence)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Benefit (X2) -> Employer Brand (Z)	0.250	0.257	0.078	3.224	0.001
Benefit (X2) -> Intention to apply (Y)	-0.029	-0.027	0.079	0.359	0.720
Career Development (X3) -> Employer Brand (Z)	0.359	0.357	0.078	4.588	0.000
Career Development (X3) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0.368	0.374	0.087	4.243	0.000
Corporate social responsibility (X1) -> Employer Brand (Z)	0.282	0.276	0.062	4.563	0.000
Corporate social responsibility (X1) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0.108	0.113	0.066	1.632	0.103
Employer Brand (Z) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0.428	0.416	0.087	4.930	0.000

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Table 4. Mediation Hypothesis Test Results (Indirect Influence)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Benefit (X2) -> Employer Brand (Z) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0,107	0,107	0,040	2,663	0,008
Career Development (X3) -> Employer Brand (Z) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0,154	0,149	0,047	3,245	0,001
Corporate social responsibility (X1) -> Employer Brand (Z) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0,121	0,114	0,033	3,615	0,000

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Table 5. Comparison of Direct and Indirect Influence

Variable	Estimation	Hypothesis	Conclusion
Career Development (X3) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0.368	Accepted	Better direct influence
Career Development (X3) -> Employer Brand (Z) -> Intention to apply (Y)	0.154	Accepted	

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Table 6. Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents				
No.	Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Man	111	55.5%
		Woman	89	44.5%
2	Age	17 - 19 years old	54	27.0%
		20 - 23 years old	87	43.5%
		24 - 27 years old	59	29.5%
3	Last Education	SMA - SMK / Equivalent	65	32.5%
		DIPLOMA - S1 / Equivalent	130	65.0%
		S2	5	2.5%
4	Status	Single	185	92.5%
		Marry	15	7.5%
5	Domicile	East Jakarta	48	24.0%

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6	Startup companies you want to target	West Jakarta	43	21.5%
		South Jakarta	44	22.0%
		North Jakarta	33	16.5%
		Central Jakarta	30	15.0%
		Seribu Islands	2	0.5%
		Astro	15	7.5%
		Efishery	4	2.0%
		Tiket.com	46	23.0%
		Kredivo	6	3.0%
		Amartha	6	3.0%
		Blibli	39	19.5%
		Moladin	4	2.0%
		Dana	24	12.0%
		Kopi Kenangan	13	6.5%
		Mekari	3	1.5%
		J&T	11	5.5%
		Gojek	26	13.0%
		Other	3	1.5%

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Discussion

Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply

The results of hypothesis 1 in this study were rejected, where corporate social responsibility did not have a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. The results of this study are in accordance with previous research by Gandasari et al. (2024) explaining that CSR does not have a direct relationship with intention to apply. The results of this study are contrary to the results of previous studies than Pham et al. (2024), Choi (2020), H. Y. Wang & Chen (2022), and Sun et al. (2022) which states that corporate social responsibility has a positive and significant influence on intention to apply. Furthermore, in Gandasari et al. (2024), it was also explained that there is no effect of CSR variables on job application intentions because Generation Z is a generation that has just entered the job field, so it requires a clear stage of career journey in choosing a job. The relevance of the results of this study can also be explained in Andruszkiewicz et al. (2024) which states that women are more motivated in choosing companies that carry out CSR activities in terms of employees, the environment, and social activities. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the respondents who participated in this study were mostly male (55%). So that the gender factor can be an influence.

Benefits have a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply

The results of hypothesis 2 in this study were rejected, where the benefit did not have a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply. The results of this study are not in line with previous research by Gandasari et al. (2024). The results of this study are in line with Santiago (2019) which states that economic value has no effect on the desire to apply, because in the process of applying for workers into the organization, economic factors such as the amount of salary, promotion opportunities are not absolute values. Furthermore, this study is also in line with the findings from Vogelzang (2019) where the benefits do not have a direct effect on the intention to apply. This is because generalizations of all dimensions in benefits cannot be done for all individuals and generations, there are differences in preferences regarding benefits between one employee and another employee at work. In the Bharadwaj (2024) study, it was explained that the compensation dimension and its benefits and balanced time in work-life have no effect on the desire to apply because the majority of the younger generation does not have children or wives so there is no responsibility to take care of the family for them. The relevance of the results of this study can be seen in the characteristics of the respondents who are the majority of single/unmarried (92.5%).

Career Development has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply

The results of hypothesis 3 in this study were accepted, where career development had a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. The results of this study are in line with Shah et al. (2023), D. Wang et al. (2024), and Gandasari et al. (2024), which stated that benefits have a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. Job seekers know how to align their abilities and skills in their careers, being aware of the type of work they expect and useful for them (Shah et al., 2023). The higher the optimism of workers in their careers, the greater the encouragement for workers to apply for jobs, because optimism makes a person want to achieve their pleasure in their career, and want to be involved in work activities to enrich their abilities and

knowledge (D. Wang et al., 2024). Furthermore, Gandasari et al. (2024) stated that Generation Z needs a clear stage of career journey in choosing a job. The relevance between Generation Z requires career development as the first step in choosing a job can be proven through this study, where only career development variables can have a positive and significant influence directly on the intention to apply. This study also shows that the characteristics of the respondents who participated in this study were mostly in the age range of 20-23 years which is the peak age of graduation from Bachelor 1 and diploma studies. And the majority of respondents involved are men (55%) and single/unmarried (92.5%) who urgently need career certainty in working for the future.

Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive and significant effect on the Employer Brand

The results of hypothesis 4 in this study were accepted, where corporate social responsiveness has a positive and significant effect on employer brand. The results of this study are in line with Özcan & Elçi (2020) of CSR activities in the view of job seekers are good companies in terms of benefits and work environment because they support social welfare. A good company brand can be a good signal in the worker recruitment process (Raj et al., 2022). The same relationship is also explained again in Gandasari et al. (2024) providing legal value showing that the company is aware of its presence as a business entity that cares about the environment and social welfare of the community, as well as increasing revenue because in its activities it shows the company's brand image through products and services shown in every CSR activity. In Andruszkiewicz et al. (2024), CSR activities must be managed on target and transparently within the company in order to create a trustworthy company brand and have a strong commitment to society, finally be able to achieve a competitive advantage in the market position and be able to attract and retain its employees as well as gain new potential employees within the organization (Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2022).

Benefits have a positive and significant effect on the Employer Brand

The results of hypothesis 5 in this study were accepted, where the benefits had a positive and significant effect on the employer brand. In line with research from Vogelzang (2019), the offer of benefits packages that are developmental in nature such as (training, safety at work, freedom of decision-making at work, work opportunities and promotions) so that the offer can improve the company's brand within the organization in terms of employees and potential new employees. Furthermore, companies that offer a balanced time between work and life can encourage employees' desire to be part of the company and be able to respond to the company's brand (Elbendary et al., 2024). The relevance of this study also proves the role of benefits as one of the variables that contribute to the employer brand as described in Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2022).

Carrer Development has a positive and significant influence on the Employer Brand

The results of hypothesis 6 in this study were accepted, where career development has a positive and significant effect on the employer brand. Job seekers can respond to a company's brand that has been tested in terms of development and provides job security to its employees (Elbendary et al., 2024). The relevance of this study also proves the role of career development as one of the variables that contribute to the employer brand as explained in Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2022).

Employer Brand has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply

The results of hypothesis 7 in this study were accepted, where employer brand had a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. The results of this study are in line with Silva & Dias (2022) explaining that job seekers are encouraged to join the organization because of interest, a comfortable and socially active work environment, competitive salaries, an appreciation for achievements, and the opportunity to get equivalent knowledge, when these values are there, the company's brand can become attractive so as to increase the commitment of its employees in the company and even attract job seekers. The results of the same research shown in Gandasari et al. (2024) explained that having a good company brand makes the company strategically superior, especially in maintaining and obtaining the best talent.

Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply through Employer Brand as a mediating variable

The results of hypothesis 8 in this study were accepted, where corporate social responsibility has a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply through employer brand as a mediating variable. The results of this study have similarities with Gandasari et al. (2024) where it is explained that corporate social responsibility does not have a significant effect on intention to apply, but corporate social responsibility has a significant and positive effect on intention to apply through employer brand as a mediating variable.

Benefits have a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply through Employer Brand as a mediating variable

The results of hypothesis 9 in this study were accepted, where the benefits had a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply through the employer brand as a mediating variable. This is in line with Vogelzang (2019) that the relationship of attractive benefit offerings will affect the company's brand and corporate image, further can encourage the desire to apply for jobs, furthermore, benefit offers with symbolic dimensions such as development value and economic value mediate a strong relationship, compared to benefits in the materialistic dimension.

Career Development has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply through Employer Brand as a mediating variable

The results of hypothesis 10 in this study were accepted, where career development had a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply through employer brand as a mediating variable. This study also proves the role of career development as one of the variables that contribute to the employer brand as explained in Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2022). Although in this study it was also found that career development has a greater direct influence on the intention to apply (without the mediation of the employer brand).

CONCLUSION

The study found that increasing corporate social responsibility (CSR) does not significantly impact intention to apply in startup companies, but it does positively impact employer brand. Benefits also have a positive effect on intention to apply, as they increase employer brand and attract new talent. Career development also positively impacts intention to apply, as it increases employer brand. Employer brand also positively impacts intention to apply, as it builds a positive brand image through CSR activities, attractive benefits, and career development packages. The study suggests future research should consider digital variables, larger scopes, and comparing different generations and industries, such as travel agencies and tourism.

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