



Corporate Social Responsibility, Employer Brand, and Intention to Apply: Testing Mediation and Moderation Model among Indonesian Engineering Students

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Abstract

Background: Competition to secure high-quality talent affects many organizations, including Indonesian mining companies that encounter difficulty attracting Generation Z because of the unfavorable image associated with extractive industries.

Objective: This research examines the effects of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Employer Brand on Intention to Apply, positioning Corporate Reputation as a mediator and the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media as a moderator among Generation Z in relation to Indonesian mining companies.

Methods: A quantitative design was implemented through an online questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale. The sample comprised third- and final-year engineering students from Universitas Indonesia, Institut Teknologi Bandung, and Universitas Gadjah Mada, yielding 262 valid responses. Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was conducted with SmartPLS.

Results: CSR negatively and significantly affected Intention to Apply. Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value positively affected Corporate Reputation, which subsequently increased Intention to Apply. Corporate Reputation mediated the effects of CSR and selected Employer Brand dimensions on Intention to Apply. The Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media weakened the association between Corporate Reputation and Intention to Apply.

Conclusion: The findings advance human resource management knowledge and provide recruitment guidance for mining companies in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

The expression war for talent describes the intensifying rivalry among organizations seeking to recruit and retain capable employees (Banerjee & Sharma, 2025; Kaliannan et al., 2023). An understanding of the determinants of application intentions is therefore necessary for companies to formulate effective recruitment strategies and secure high-quality talent (Suprawan et al., 2026; Zahari et al., 2020). Organizations consequently use employer branding to present themselves as desirable workplaces, making it an important element of this competition (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Suprawan et al., 2026; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019). Generation Z currently constitutes a large share of prospective employees (Barhate & Dirani, 2021; Póznér & Kozák, 2025), representing approximately 27.94% of Indonesia's population and increasingly occupying the

country's productive workforce (Saraswati et al., 2023).

Born between 1997 and 2012 and raised in a digital environment (Deloitte, 2024), Generation Z demonstrates notably different characteristics, expectations, and behavioral patterns. Members of this generation tend to be critical and open-minded and expect prospective employers to uphold ethical values (Gustine, 2024). Their employment preferences extend beyond remuneration to include work-life balance, flexibility, and congruence between personal and organizational values (Institute, 2024). Deloitte (2024) reported that 77% of Generation Z regard a company's positive societal impact as important, while more than 70% consider environmental commitment when selecting an employer.

Attracting Generation Z presents a substantial challenge for the mining industry. Although this sector makes a major economic contribution and provides comparatively high remuneration (PwC, 2023), extractive activities are frequently associated with natural-resource exploitation, environmental degradation, and possible social conflict (Jenkins, 2004; Oliveira & da Silva, 2026). Among sustainability-conscious members of Generation Z, this unfavorable image can generate a perceived mismatch of values and weaken organizational attractiveness, a recognized predictor of Intention to Apply (Gomes & Neves, 2011; Kanwal & Van Hoya, 2026; Wei et al., 2016). PwC (2023) found that climate-change concerns prompted 42% of young workers to consider changing career paths, illustrating the disparity between mining companies' demand for talent and Generation Z's limited Intention to Apply (Bharadwaj, 2025; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019).

Within this setting, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) functions as a strategic means of aligning corporate activities with Generation Z's ethical priorities (Elkington, 1997; Hsu & Bui, 2022; Jenkins, 2004). Indonesian mining companies are legally required to undertake CSR, whose performance is periodically assessed through the OWN program. Alongside CSR, organizations must reinforce their Employer Brand to enhance perceptions of employer attractiveness (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Kaur et al., 2026). Stakeholders' broader appraisal of CSR and Employer Brand is reflected in Corporate Reputation (Fombrun et al., 2000; Vito, 2025), which provides the mediating mechanism through which both constructs shape Intention to Apply.

In a digital environment, communicating CSR and reputation effectively relies on online channels, making the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media particularly relevant (DataReportal & Social, 2025). As the most intensive social-media users, Generation Z members use these platforms to independently examine and verify organizational reputation (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Management, 2025; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Turunen, 2025). This behavior supports treating the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media as a moderator of the association between Corporate Reputation and Intention to Apply.

Thanh et al. (2024) empirically demonstrated that CSR positively influenced Intention to Apply both directly and indirectly through Corporate Reputation. Meanwhile, Thang and Trang (2024) investigated Employer Brand and the moderating function of the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media among Generation Z students in Vietnam. Nevertheless, limited research has combined CSR and Employer Brand as antecedents of Intention to Apply while simultaneously incorporating Corporate Reputation as a mediator and the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media as a moderator, particularly among Generation Z in Indonesia's high-risk, stigmatized mining sector. Accordingly, the present research tests this integrated model in relation to Indonesian mining companies.

METHOD

A confirmatory quantitative method and cross-sectional design were adopted to describe the phenomenon at a specific point in time (Connelly et al., 2025; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The proposed model adapted the Vietnamese studies of Thanh et al. (2024) and Thang and Trang (2024) to the new context of Generation Z and Indonesian mining companies. CSR and the five Employer Brand dimensions (Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value) served as independent variables. Corporate Reputation was specified as the mediator, the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media as the moderator, and Intention to Apply as the dependent variable.

The target population comprised third- and final-year engineering students at Universitas Indonesia, Institut Teknologi Bandung, and Universitas Gadjah Mada. These institutions were selected because of their leading national standing (Symonds, 2025) and the mining industry's

tendency to recruit skilled engineering graduates (Organization, 2023). Eligible participants were born between 1997 and 2012, expressed an interest in employment with an Indonesian mining company, and actively used social media while following an official mining-company account. Purposive sampling was implemented through screening questions. Following Hair et al. (2019), the minimum sample was calculated by multiplying 43 indicators by five, producing a requirement of 215 participants; 262 valid responses were ultimately obtained (Finšgar et al., 2026).

Primary information was gathered through an online questionnaire employing a seven-point Likert scale. This scale was selected because a broader response range can improve data quality while remaining manageable for respondents (Colledani et al., 2025; Dawes, 2008; Preston & Colman, 2000). Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was performed in SmartPLS 4 (Hair et al., 2025). Measurement-model assessment covered convergent validity through standardized loadings and AVE, Composite Reliability, discriminant validity through HTMT, and overall model fit. The structural model was assessed using VIF, R^2 , and path coefficients. One-tailed hypotheses were supported when t-values exceeded 1.645 and p-values were below 0.05. Indirect effects were used to examine mediation, whereas moderation was assessed through Moderated Regression Analysis with mean centering (Giang & Duy, 2025; Hair Jr et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Among the 262 valid participants, 75.19% were men, reflecting the global male predominance in mining employment (Bridges et al., 2026; Ellix et al., 2021). Respondents born in 2004 (40.46%) and 2005 (33.97%) formed the largest groups, confirming their classification as Generation Z. Most participants expected to graduate in 2027 (55.73%), indicating that third-year students predominated. Universitas Gadjah Mada accounted for 50.00% of respondents, followed by Universitas Indonesia at 36.64% and Institut Teknologi Bandung at 13.36%. Table 1 summarizes these respondent characteristics.

Table 1

Respondent Profile (n = 262)

Profile	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	197	75,19%
	Women	65	24,81%
Graduation Plan	2026	116	44,27%
	2027	146	55,73%
Work Experience	Never before	72	27,48%
	Already (internship/work)	193	73,66%
University	University of Indonesia	96	36,64%
	Bandung Institute of Technology	35	13,36%
	Gadjah Mada University	131	50,00%

Source: Author's data, processed (2026)

Evaluation of Measurement Models

Validity and reliability testing confirmed that every construct satisfied the stipulated thresholds: Composite Reliability exceeded 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50. Accordingly, all variables met the validity and reliability requirements, as summarized in Table 2. Discriminant validity was likewise established because every HTMT value remained below 0.90. For model fit, RMSEA indicated a good fit at 0.06, whereas CFI and SRMR were within the marginal-fit range. Based on Gaskin et al. (2025), these results were sufficient for proceeding to structural-model assessment.

Table 2*Convergent Reliability and Validity Test Results*

Variables/Dimensions	CR	AVE	Remarks
Corporate Social Responsibility	0,92	0,72	Reliable
Interest Value	0,84	0,51	Reliable
Social Value	0,92	0,71	Reliable
Economic Value	0,84	0,52	Reliable
Development Value	0,85	0,58	Reliable
Application Value	0,84	0,51	Reliable
Corporate Reputation	0,88	0,65	Reliable
Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media	0,84	0,59	Reliable
Intention to Apply	0,87	0,61	Reliable

Source: Author's data, processed (2026)

Structural Model Evaluation

All pathway VIF values were lower than 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not problematic. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicated that CSR and the five Employer Brand dimensions jointly explained 76% of Corporate Reputation, placing it in the strong category. Meanwhile, CSR, Corporate Reputation, and the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media explained 51.3% of Intention to Apply, which represents a moderate level of explanatory power.

Direct Relationship Hypothesis Testing**Table 3***Results of Direct Relationship Hypothesis Testing*

Hyp.	Pathway	β	p-value	t-value	Results
H1	CSR → Intention to Apply	-0,28	0,02	1,90	Rejected
H2	CSR → Corporate Reputation	0,40	0,00	3,99	Accepted
H3a	Interest Value → Corporate Reputation	0,21	0,05	1,60	Rejected
H3b	Social Value → Corporate Reputation	0,004	0,48	0,04	Rejected
H3c	Economic Value → Corporate Reputation	0,22	0,02	1,89	Accepted
H3D	Development Value → Corporate Reputation	0,64	0,00	7,25	Accepted
H3e	Application Value → Corporate Reputation	0,29	0,002	2,89	Accepted
H4	Corporate Reputation → Intention to Apply	0,73	0,00	6,05	Accepted
H5	Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media → Intention to Apply	0,04	0,24	0,68	Rejected

Source: Author's data, processed (2026)

As reported in Table 3, CSR negatively and significantly predicted Intention to Apply ($\beta = -0.28$); H1 was therefore rejected because the observed direction contradicted the hypothesis. CSR positively and significantly predicted Corporate Reputation ($\beta = 0.40$), supporting H2. Among the five Employer Brand dimensions, Economic Value ($\beta = 0.22$), Development Value ($\beta = 0.64$), and Application Value ($\beta = 0.29$) positively and significantly predicted Corporate Reputation, supporting H3c, H3d, and H3e. Interest Value and Social Value were nonsignificant, so H3a and H3b were rejected. Corporate Reputation positively and significantly predicted Intention to Apply ($\beta = 0.73$), supporting H4. The Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media did not significantly predict Intention to Apply ($\beta = 0.04$), resulting in the rejection of H5.

Mediation and Moderation Testing

Table 4

Mediation and Moderation Test Results

Hyp.	Pathway	β	p-value	t-value	Results
H6	CR mediates CSR → Intention to Apply	0,29	0,007	2,44	Accepted (competitive)
H7a	CR mediates Interest Value → Intention to Apply	0,15	0,07	1,45	Rejected
H7b	CR mediates Social Value → Intention to Apply	0,003	0,48	0,03	Rejected
H7c	CR mediates Economic Value → Intention to Apply	0,16	0,03	1,77	Accepted (complementary)
H7d	CR mediates Development Value → Intention to Apply	0,47	0	3,37	Accepted (complementary)
H7e	CR mediates Application Value → Intention to Apply	0,21	0,002	2,85	Accepted (complementary)
H8	SM Moderates CR → Intention to Apply	-0,25	0,001	2,10	Rejected (weakened)

Description: CR = Corporate Reputation; SMU = Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media

Source: Author's data, processed (2026)

Corporate Reputation significantly transmitted the effect of CSR on Intention to Apply, supporting H6. This mediation was competitive because the negative direct effect and positive indirect effect operated in opposing directions. Complementary mediation was also identified between Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value and Intention to Apply, thereby supporting H7c, H7d, and H7e. No mediation emerged for Interest Value or Social Value, leading to the rejection of H7a and H7b. The Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media produced a significant negative moderating coefficient ($\beta = -0.25$), weakening rather than strengthening the relationship between Corporate Reputation and Intention to Apply; consequently, H8 was rejected. Comparison of the paths further showed that Development Value exerted the strongest influence on Intention to Apply, as reflected by its highest t-value.

Discussion

The significant negative association between CSR and Intention to Apply identified for H1 differs from the positive results reported by Thanh et al. (2024) and Ikhida et al. (2024), but accords with the Indonesian Generation Z evidence of Gandasari et al. (2024). Differences in career stage may account for this pattern because individuals entering the labor market prioritize different considerations from experienced professionals. Viewed through Signaling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011, 2025; Spence, 1973), mining-sector CSR may convey an unfavorable signal when prospective applicants interpret it as compensation for environmental harm or as possible greenwashing, thereby lowering their willingness to apply.

Conversely, CSR positively and significantly affected Corporate Reputation (H2), consistent with Thanh et al. (2023), Story et al. (2016), and Wang (2013). Thus, although CSR did not directly enhance application interest, it remained valuable for strengthening corporate reputation among Generation Z. With respect to Employer Brand, Corporate Reputation was significantly affected only by Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value; Interest Value and Social Value were nonsignificant. In the mining context, Generation Z therefore appears to prioritize development prospects, remuneration, and opportunities to make tangible contributions over social image or the appeal of the work environment alone.

Corporate Reputation positively and significantly influenced Intention to Apply (H4), aligning with Turban et al. (1998), Thang and Trang (2024), and Collins and Stevens (2002); Turunen (2025). This result identifies a favorable reputation as an important determinant of application interest. The mediation results further clarify the process: for CSR (H6), competitive mediation occurred because reputation conveyed a positive indirect influence despite CSR's

negative direct effect. By contrast, the indirect effects of Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value (H7c-H7e) were complementary. These patterns are consistent with Story et al. (2016), Wang (2013) and Rosa (2025).

A particularly distinctive result was that the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media weakened the effect of Corporate Reputation on Intention to Apply (H8), whereas Thang and Trang (2024) documented a strengthening effect. Generation Z's preference for authenticity and its use of social media to independently investigate prospective employers may explain this difference (Institute, 2024; Management, 2025). Heavy reliance on social media can expose users to information that conflicts with a mining company's official reputation, increasing skepticism and diminishing the reputation's effect on application intentions. The Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media also had no significant direct effect on Intention to Apply (H5), consistent with Thang and Trang (2024).

Taken together, these findings extend the use of Signaling Theory to Generation Z recruitment in an industry affected by negative stigma. Path comparison identified Development Value as the strongest route for enhancing Intention to Apply through Corporate Reputation. When resources are constrained, Indonesian mining companies may therefore improve recruitment efficiency by prioritizing Development Value and Corporate Reputation to increase Generation Z's willingness to apply.

CONCLUSION

The results demonstrate that CSR negatively and significantly influenced Intention to Apply, whereas Corporate Reputation exerted a significant positive influence. The Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media had no significant direct influence on Intention to Apply. CSR positively affected Corporate Reputation, while only three Employer Brand dimensions (Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value) showed significant positive effects on Corporate Reputation. Corporate Reputation transmitted the effects of CSR through competitive mediation and those of Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value through complementary mediation. Furthermore, the Availability of Organizational Information on Social Media weakened the link between Corporate Reputation and Intention to Apply, and Development Value represented the strongest pathway.

These results imply that Indonesian mining companies should strengthen CSR and Employer Brand selectively, with particular emphasis on Development Value, while cultivating a transparent and credible Corporate Reputation to encourage Generation Z applications. The research is subject to several limitations: no stimulus was provided, student respondents may not yet fully understand mining-company dynamics, the specific setting restricts generalization, and the R^2 for Intention to Apply was moderately valued at 0.513. Future investigations should expose respondents to an appropriate stimulus, include experienced employees, examine other industries such as technology, and incorporate additional constructs such as work-life balance to broaden the explanation of Intention to Apply.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Muhammad Yoga Pratama was responsible for conceptualization, study design, data acquisition and analysis, interpretation, and manuscript drafting. Putri Mega Desiana contributed to conceptualization, development of the theoretical framework, supervision, validation, and interpretation of the results. Both authors reviewed and approved the manuscript's final version for publication.

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