



# The Effect of E-Recruitment on Generation Z's Intention to Apply: The Mediating Role of Employer Branding

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## ABSTRACT

Advances in information technology have driven the adoption of e-recruitment in the hiring process, particularly among Generation Z, who increasingly rely on digital platforms to search for information and apply for jobs. This study aims to analyze the effect of e-recruitment on the intention to apply, with employer branding as a mediating variable. This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal design. Data were collected from 140 Generation Z respondents selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using the PLS-SEM method with the assistance of SmartPLS software. Simultaneously, e-recruitment (X) and employer branding (Z) have a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply (Y). Furthermore, e-recruitment was found to have a positive and significant effect on the intention to apply, both directly and indirectly through employer branding, which also exerts a positive and significant influence. These findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that e-recruitment can foster positive perceptions of a company through employer branding, thereby increasing Generation Z's intention to apply for jobs. In practical terms, the results of this study underscore the importance of managing e-recruitment in a way that is easily accessible, informative, transparent, and capable of presenting a positive company image to strengthen employer branding and increase Generation Z's intention to apply.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in producing competent human resources capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly competitive labor market. Along with rapid technological advancement, organizations are also experiencing significant changes in the way they attract and recruit prospective employees. Traditional recruitment methods are gradually being replaced by digital recruitment systems that enable organizations to reach a broader pool of applicants more efficiently (Kismono & Rahayu, 2021). Consequently, e-recruitment has become one of the most widely adopted recruitment strategies because it allows organizations to disseminate job information, communicate with applicants, and manage recruitment processes through internet-based platforms. The adoption of e-recruitment is expected not only to improve organizational recruitment efficiency but also to attract talented applicants whose competencies align with organizational needs (Ariani & Zulhawati, 2024).

This transformation has become increasingly relevant with the growing participation of Generation Z in the labor market. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2024), Generation Z accounts for approximately 27.94% of Indonesia's total population, making it the largest productive-age generation entering the workforce. In addition, Amrullah. M. et al. (2025) state that Generation Z, as digital natives, relies heavily on digital platforms to obtain job information and evaluate potential employers before deciding to apply for a position. Besides salary and career opportunities, this generation also considers recruitment transparency, organizational reputation, and digital recruitment experiences when making employment decisions. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing intention to apply, defined as an individual's willingness to submit a job application after evaluating employment opportunities, has become increasingly important for organizations seeking to attract highly qualified candidates from Generation Z (Thang & Trang, 2024).

One important organizational strategy for attracting prospective applicants is the implementation of effective e-recruitment practices. Academically, e-recruitment refers to the use of internet-based technologies to advertise job vacancies, communicate with applicants, and facilitate recruitment activities through digital platforms. Compared with conventional recruitment methods, e-recruitment provides greater accessibility, faster communication, and higher transparency throughout the recruitment process, thereby creating positive recruitment experiences for applicants. Research conducted by Awanji et al. (2025) found that effective e-recruitment systems significantly increase applicants' intention to apply because they improve perceptions of recruitment efficiency and organizational professionalism. Lestari & Manggiasih (2023) reported that user-friendly digital recruitment platforms encourage Generation Z to apply for available positions by providing convenience, flexibility, and timely access to employment information. These findings indicate that positive digital recruitment experiences can strengthen applicants' willingness to pursue employment opportunities. Based on these theoretical and empirical arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H1: E-recruitment has a positive effect on intention to apply.**

Besides encouraging applicants' intention to apply, e-recruitment also contributes to strengthening an organization's employer branding. The recruitment process often represents the first point of interaction between applicants and organizations, making it an important channel through which organizations communicate their values, professionalism, and organizational culture (Chowdhury et al., 2025). A transparent recruitment process, responsive communication, and an accessible digital recruitment platform create favorable first impressions that shape applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Consequently, organizations implementing effective e-recruitment systems are more likely to

develop stronger employer branding among prospective applicants. Wibowo et al. (2025) demonstrated that positive digital recruitment experiences significantly improve employer branding by enhancing applicants' perceptions of organizational credibility and attractiveness. Similarly, Geofanny (2023) argued that digital recruitment platforms function as strategic communication media capable of strengthening employer image and increasing organizational attractiveness in the eyes of prospective employees. Based on this empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H2: E-recruitment has a positive effect on employer branding.**

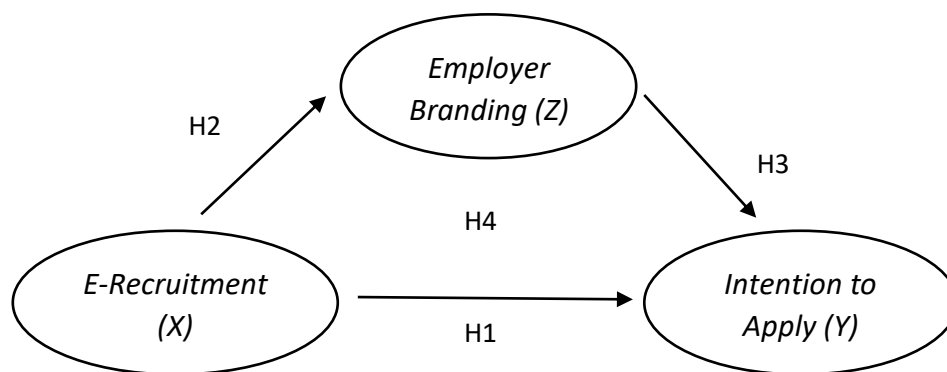
However, previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the effectiveness of e-recruitment in encouraging applicants' intention to apply. Although numerous studies have demonstrated a significant positive relationship between e-recruitment and job application intention, other empirical evidence suggests that digital recruitment alone may not be sufficient to influence applicants' behavioral intentions. Wibowo et al. (2025), for instance, found that e-recruitment did not have a significant direct effect on Generation Z's intention to apply because applicants' decisions were influenced by their perceptions of the employing organization rather than by the recruitment system itself. Similarly, organizations with advanced digital recruitment platforms may still struggle to attract qualified applicants if they fail to establish a positive employer image. These inconsistent findings indicate that there are psychological mechanisms through which e-recruitment influences applicants' behavioral intentions, suggesting that additional variables should be considered to better explain this relationship (Mawardah et al., 2024).

Employer branding has become one of the most influential factors affecting applicants' employment decisions because it reflects an organization's reputation, values, and attractiveness as a workplace (Hegazy & Elsayed, 2022). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), individuals develop behavioral intentions after evaluating available information and forming favorable attitudes toward a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Within the recruitment context, employer branding represents applicants' overall evaluation of an organization as a desirable employer. Organizations with strong employer branding are generally perceived as more trustworthy, professional, and capable of providing meaningful career development opportunities, thereby increasing applicants' willingness to pursue employment. Berthon et al. (2005) explain that employer branding enhances organizational attractiveness by communicating functional, economic, and psychological benefits offered to prospective employees. Wibowo et al. (2025) found that employer branding significantly increases Generation Z's intention to apply because positive organizational perceptions strengthen applicants' confidence in choosing a prospective employer. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H3: Employer branding has a positive effect on intention to apply.**

The relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply can be viewed as a psychological process in which applicants transform their digital recruitment experiences into behavioral intentions through their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, e-recruitment serves as an external stimulus that shapes applicants' evaluations of an organization's professionalism, credibility, and transparency throughout the recruitment process. Positive recruitment experiences subsequently strengthen employer branding by creating favorable perceptions and attitudes toward the organization, which ultimately encourage applicants to submit job applications. In this framework, employer branding functions as a psychological mechanism that translates applicants' digital recruitment experiences into stronger intention to apply. Wibowo et al. (2025) support this argument by demonstrating that employer branding significantly

mediates the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply among Generation Z job seekers (Hutomo et al., 2024). Therefore, organizations cannot rely solely on digital recruitment technology but must simultaneously develop a strong employer brand to maximize recruitment effectiveness. Based on this argument, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H4: Employer branding mediates the effect of e-recruitment on intention to apply.**

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the effect of e-recruitment on Generation Z's intention to apply by considering the mediating role of employer branding. By integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior with the concepts of digital recruitment and employer branding, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how recruitment practices influence applicants' behavioral intentions in the digital era (Jordan & Mega, 2024). The findings are expected to contribute to the development of recruitment literature while providing practical implications for organizations in designing more effective recruitment strategies to attract high-quality Generation Z talent. Figure 1 presents the proposed research model illustrating the relationships among e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply.



**Figure 1 Research Model**

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1. Research Design and methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the causal relationships among e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply. Specifically, the study investigated the direct effect of e-recruitment on intention to apply, the effect of e-recruitment on employer branding, the effect of employer branding on intention to apply, and the mediating role of employer branding in the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply. Data were collected through a survey using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

### **2.2. Population and Sample**

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z individuals who were actively seeking employment and had experience using online recruitment platforms. Generation Z was selected because they represent the largest cohort entering the labor market and are highly familiar with digital recruitment technologies, making them an appropriate population for investigating e-recruitment practices and job application intentions.

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling. To ensure that respondents possessed relevant characteristics, three sampling criteria were established: (1)

respondents belonged to Generation Z (aged approximately 18–27 years); (2) respondents had searched for job vacancies through online recruitment platforms such as company career websites, LinkedIn, Jobstreet, Glints, Kalibrr, or similar platforms; and (3) respondents had experience evaluating or intending to apply for jobs through online recruitment systems. Following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022), the minimum sample size was determined by multiplying the number of indicators by ten. With 15 measurement indicators, the minimum required sample was 150 respondents.

### **2.3. Measurement**

All constructs were measured using internationally validated instruments with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The intention to apply variable (Y) was measured using an instrument adapted from Highhouse et al. (2003), consisting of 15 items, which assess an individual's willingness and intention to submit job applications to a prospective employer. The e-recruitment variable (X) was measured using an instrument adapted from AbdulKareem et al. (2024) and previous e-recruitment studies, consisting of 13 items, focusing on applicants' perceptions of the effectiveness, accessibility, ease of use, information quality, and efficiency of online recruitment systems. The mediating variable, employer branding (M) was measured using the Employer Attractiveness Scale adapted from Berthon et al. (2005) Berthon, consisting of 25 items covering five dimensions of employer attractiveness: Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4.1.1.7. PLS-SEM was selected because it is appropriate for examining complex structural relationships involving mediating variables, accommodates non-normal data distributions, and performs well with relatively moderate sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis consisted of two stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess construct validity and reliability. Second, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated by examining the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), path coefficients, and bootstrapping results to test the proposed hypotheses

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **a. Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity was assessed to ensure that each indicator adequately represented its respective construct. Following the criteria proposed by (Hair et al., 2022), indicators were considered acceptable if they had an outer loading of at least 0.60 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.50 or higher. The initial measurement model indicated that several indicators did not meet the recommended outer loading threshold and were therefore removed through an iterative process. The model was subsequently re-estimated until all remaining indicators satisfied the required criteria.

The final measurement model retained valid indicators for the e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply constructs. All retained indicators demonstrated outer loading values above 0.60, while the AVE values for each construct exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming satisfactory convergent validity. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Output AVE**

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>E-recruitment</b>	0,549
<b>Employer branding</b>	0,667
<b>Intention to apply</b>	0,548

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the AVE values for e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply all exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022)

### **b. Reliability**

The reliability of the measurement model was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). According to Hair et al. (2022), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.60 and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency. The results of the reliability assessment are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha**

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
<b>E-recruitment</b>	0,909	0,925
<b>Employer branding</b>	0,932	0,940
<b>Intention to apply</b>	0,936	0,944

Table 2 shows that all constructs met the recommended reliability criteria. The Cronbach's Alpha values for e-recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, while all Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.70. These results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

### **c. Structural Model and R-Square**

The structural model was evaluated after the measurement model had been confirmed to be valid and reliable. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to assess the predictive power of the structural model by indicating the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by the exogenous variables. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 Cronbach's Alpha**

	R-square	R-square Adjusted
<b>E-recruitment</b>	0,236	0,231
<b>Intention to apply</b>	0,887	0,885

Based on Table 3, the  $R^2$  value for employer branding is 0.236, indicating that 23.6% of the variance in employer branding is explained by e-recruitment. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value for intention to apply is 0.887, indicating that 88.7% of the variance in intention to apply is explained jointly by e-recruitment and employer branding. Furthermore, the adjusted  $R^2$  values are close to the corresponding  $R^2$  values, suggesting that the proposed research model demonstrates good explanatory power and model stability.

#### d. Hypothesis test

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS to examine the significance of the direct relationships among the research variables. A hypothesis was considered supported if the T-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05 at the 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2022). The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4 Hypothesis Test**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P-values
ER → IA	0,522	0,535	0,139	3,763	0,000
ER → EB	0,486	0,506	0,084	5,794	0,000
EB → IA	1,078	1,097	0,058	18,570	0,000
ER → EB → IA	0,372	0,417	0,089	4,199	0,000

#### 1) E-Recruitment Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Intention to Apply

The results indicate that e-recruitment has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply, as evidenced by an original sample value of 0.522, a T-statistic of 3.763 (> 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These findings suggest that the more effectively organizations implement e-recruitment, the greater Generation Z's intention to apply for available job opportunities. Digital recruitment systems that are accessible, efficient, and user-friendly encourage applicants to engage more actively in the recruitment process and increase their willingness to submit job applications.

This finding is consistent with Wijaya et al. (2023), who reported that e-recruitment positively influences applicants' intention to apply. This result is also supported by Yuspita et al. (2024), who reported that the quality of e-recruitment systems, reflected in transparent information, ease of navigation, efficient application procedures, and favorable user experiences, plays a significant role in strengthening Generation Z's intention to apply for jobs. From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), e-recruitment provides information and recruitment experiences that shape applicants' attitudes toward the recruitment process. When job seekers perceive the recruitment system as transparent, efficient, and easy to navigate, they develop more favorable evaluations of the application process, which subsequently strengthens their intention to apply.

#### 2) E-Recruitment Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Employer Branding

The findings further reveal that e-recruitment has a positive and significant effect on employer branding, with an original sample value of 0.486, a T-statistic of 5.794 (> 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This result indicates that well-designed digital recruitment systems contribute to more positive perceptions of an organization's employer brand. Recruitment platforms that provide clear job information, timely communication, and transparent recruitment procedures help applicants perceive the organization as professional and trustworthy.

This result supports the findings of Wibowo et al. (2025), who found that e-recruitment contributes to strengthening employer branding among job seekers. Every

interaction that applicants experience during the recruitment process represents an opportunity for organizations to communicate their values and professionalism. A positive digital recruitment experience not only facilitates job applications but also reinforces perceptions of organizational credibility and attractiveness. Consequently, e-recruitment functions not only as a recruitment channel but also as an important strategic tool for building a strong employer brand in an increasingly competitive labor market.

### **3) Employer Branding Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Intention to Apply**

The results also demonstrate that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply, as indicated by an original sample value of 1.078, a T-statistic of 18.570 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a p-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This finding suggests that Generation Z is more likely to apply for positions offered by organizations with a positive employer image. Organizations perceived as attractive employers tend to generate greater confidence and interest among potential applicants.

This finding is in line with Wijaya et al. (2023), who concluded that favorable perceptions of organizational attractiveness significantly increase applicants' intention to apply. This finding is further supported by Safanya et al. (2025), who demonstrated that effective employer branding significantly enhances applicants' intention to apply by strengthening the organization's attractiveness and positioning it as a desirable place to work. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, employer branding influences behavioral intention by shaping applicants' attitudes toward a prospective employer. Positive organizational attributes, including a strong corporate reputation, attractive career opportunities, and a supportive work environment, encourage applicants to evaluate the organization more favorably. As a result, Generation Z becomes more motivated to pursue employment opportunities with organizations that successfully communicate a compelling employer brand.

### **4) Employer Branding Significantly Mediates the Relationship Between E-Recruitment and Intention to Apply**

The bootstrapping results indicate that employer branding positively and significantly mediates the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply, with an original sample value of 0.372, a T-statistic of 4.199 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a p-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). These findings indicate that the influence of e-recruitment on applicants' intention to apply is not limited to its direct effect but also occurs indirectly through the development of a stronger employer brand. Effective digital recruitment therefore contributes to higher application intentions by improving applicants' perceptions of the organization.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis indicates that employer branding functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply, as both the direct and indirect effects are significant. This finding suggests that e-recruitment influences applicants' intention to apply both directly and by strengthening the organization's employer brand.

This finding is consistent with Lestari & Manggiasih (2023), who emphasized that employer branding strengthens the effectiveness of e-recruitment in attracting Generation Z applicants. From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior, e-recruitment acts as an external source of information that shapes applicants' perceptions of the organization, while employer branding transforms these perceptions into favorable attitudes that ultimately influence behavioral intention. Therefore, organizations should not focus solely on developing efficient digital recruitment systems but should also ensure

that every stage of the recruitment process consistently reflects a positive employer image. Integrating these two strategies enables organizations to enhance their attractiveness and strengthen Generation Z's intention to apply.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that Generation Z's intention to apply is influenced by both e-recruitment and employer branding. All four hypotheses proposed in this study were supported by empirical evidence. First, e-recruitment has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. Second, e-recruitment has a positive and significant effect on employer branding. Third, employer branding has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. Fourth, employer branding partially mediates the relationship between e-recruitment and intention to apply, indicating that effective digital recruitment enhances applicants' intention to apply both directly and indirectly through stronger employer branding.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the important role of employer branding as a mediating mechanism in the digital recruitment process. The effectiveness of e-recruitment extends beyond improving the efficiency and accessibility of recruitment practices; it also shapes applicants' perceptions of the organization as an attractive employer. These positive perceptions subsequently strengthen Generation Z's intention to apply for job opportunities. This study supports the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by demonstrating that applicants' behavioral intentions are influenced by their evaluations of recruitment practices and their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. In this context, employer branding serves as a psychological mechanism that transforms positive recruitment experiences into stronger job application intentions.

Based on these findings, organizations are encouraged to continuously improve the quality of their e-recruitment systems by ensuring that recruitment platforms are user-friendly, transparent, efficient, and capable of delivering a positive applicant experience. At the same time, companies should strengthen their employer branding by consistently communicating organizational values, career development opportunities, and a positive work environment across digital recruitment channels. Future research is recommended to examine additional variables that may influence intention to apply, such as organizational reputation, perceived organizational support, recruitment fairness, or organizational attractiveness. Expanding the research to different industries, regions, or demographic groups would also provide a broader understanding of the factors influencing job application intentions in the context of digital recruitment.

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