

THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYER BRANDING, WORK EXPECTATIONS, AND CORPORATE REPUTATION ON JOB APPLICATION INTENTIONS AMONG FINAL-YEAR MANAGEMENT STUDENTS AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS, UNIVERSITAS MALIKUSSALEH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation on job application intentions among final-year students in the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. The study was conducted on final-year students in the 2022 intake of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. The research method used a quantitative approach, distributing questionnaires to 175 final-year student respondents. Data analysis was performed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with the assistance of the SmartPLS application. The results showed that employer branding had a positive and significant effect on job application intentions, work expectations had a positive and significant effect on job application intentions, and corporate reputation had a positive and significant effect on job application intentions. These findings indicate that employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation are important factors that can encourage increased job application intentions, particularly in the decision-making process of applying to a company.

Keywords: : Employer Branding, Work Expectation, Corporate Reputation, Job Application Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive job market compels companies to attract high-quality talent, particularly from Generation Z, a cohort with work preferences that differ from those of previous generations. Beyond compensation, Generation Z considers factors such as the work environment, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and corporate reputation when deciding whether to apply for a job. Consequently, understanding the factors that

influence job application intentions is crucial for companies aiming to formulate effective recruitment strategies.

This study examines three factors hypothesized to influence job application intentions: employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation. These factors are believed to shape prospective applicants' perceptions of a company's attractiveness as an employer. However, previous research has yielded inconsistent results. Some studies have found that employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation do not significantly affect job application intentions, indicating a research gap that warrants further investigation in different contexts.

Given this situation, this study aims to analyze the impact of employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation on the job application intentions of final-year Management students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Malikussaleh. The study is expected to enrich the literature on Generation Z job-seeking behavior and provide insights for companies to design more effective recruitment strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer branding is a corporate strategy designed to build an image as an attractive workplace by communicating the organization's values, culture, and the various benefits offered to both current employees and prospective applicants. This strategy aims to enhance the company's appeal, shape positive perceptions, and support efforts to attract and retain high-quality talent (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022). Employer branding also serves as a communication tool that distinguishes the company from competitors by highlighting the work environment, career development opportunities, and valuable work experiences (Yameen et al., 2025). Previous research indicates that employer branding plays a crucial role in increasing interest and the intention to apply for jobs, particularly among Generation Z, who are increasingly selective when choosing an organization to work for (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020).

Work expectations refer to an individual's desired job characteristics—such as compensation, career development opportunities, the work environment, flexibility, and work-life balance. These expectations serve as a basis for prospective applicants to evaluate the alignment between their personal needs and the attributes offered by a company, thereby influencing their decision to apply for a job (Rani et al., 2023). Consequently, work expectations play a crucial role in shaping job preferences, particularly among Generation Z, who tend to favor organizations capable of meeting their career and well-being expectations (Astuti et al., 2025).

Corporate reputation is the collective perception held by stakeholders regarding a company's credibility, quality, and performance, shaped by past experiences and expectations of future performance (Raithel et al., 2024). A positive reputation reflects a company's ability to meet stakeholder expectations through consistent performance, good governance, and social responsibility, thereby enhancing trust and the company's appeal as a place to work (Thanh et al., 2023). As an intangible asset, corporate reputation plays a crucial role in shaping the perceptions of prospective applicants and influencing their decisions to apply for jobs (Safitri & Erlinda, 2020).

Job application intention refers to an individual's inclination to submit an application to an organization following a process of information seeking, evaluation, and consideration regarding a company perceived to align with their needs, expectations, and career goals (Soeling et al., 2022). This intention is reflected in various behaviors, such as seeking information about the company, communicating with the organization, and preparing for the selection process (Nawakitphaitoon & Sooraksa, 2023). Consequently, the intention to apply for a job serves as a crucial indicator of a company's attractiveness to prospective applicants and represents an initial stage in the recruitment process (Chang & Tanford, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the influence of employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation on job application intentions among final-year students in the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University.

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale, compiled based on indicators proven valid in previous research. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being students in the 2022 intake of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University who had job application intentions.

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software, evaluating the outer model, including convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests. The inner model was evaluated through path analysis and bootstrapping to test hypotheses and structural relationships between variables.

3.2. Sample

This study involved 175 students from the 2022 intake of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University, as respondents. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, with the criteria being final-year students in the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University. The sample size was determined based on the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), which is 5–10 the number of research indicators. The author chose 7 of the 25 indicators used, thus determining 175 respondents as the research sample.

3.3. Data Collection

The data used in this study are primary data obtained directly from respondents through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The research instrument was developed based on indicators adopted and validated in previous studies. The employer branding variable was measured using five indicators developed by Rumangkit and Dwiyan (2019): (1) interest value, (2) social value, (3) economic value, (4) development value, and (5) application value. The work expectation variable was measured using nine indicators adapted from Astuti et al. (2025), comprising (1) salary, (2) working conditions, (3) a good work atmosphere, (4) good interpersonal relationships, (5) opportunities to utilize skills, (6) opportunities to utilize knowledge, (7) rapid career progression, (8) promotion opportunities, and (9) self-expression. The corporate reputation variable was measured using six indicators based on Evrina and Wulansari (2023): (1) emotional appeal, (2) products and services, (3) financial performance, (4) vision and leadership, (5) workplace environment, and (6) social responsibility. Meanwhile, the job application intention variable was measured using five indicators adapted from Junça Silva and Dias (2022) and Rizky et al. (2023): (1) willingness to accept a job offer, (2) considering the company a top choice for employment, (3) readiness to attend an interview, (4) effort to work at the desired company, and (5) willingness to recommend the company to others.

All indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was employed to measure respondents' level of agreement with each statement in a structured manner, allowing the collected data to be quantitatively analyzed using SmartPLS 4 to test the relationships between the variables in the study.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study used the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the help of SmartPLS 4. The first stage was an outer model evaluation to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. Convergent validity was assessed based on the outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, while discriminant validity was evaluated using cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Construct reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha.

The next stage was an inner model evaluation, which included testing the R^2 value, effect size (f^2), and model fit using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). Furthermore, hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping technique. The hypothesis is declared accepted if the “t-statistic” value is more than 1.96 and the “p-value” is less than 0.05. All stages of the analysis are used to test the influence of employer branding, work expectation, and corporate reputation on the intention to apply for jobs in final year students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Malikussaleh University.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

a. Validity Test

Table 1

Outer Loading Test Results

Latent Variables	Instruments	<i>Corporate Reputation</i>	<i>Employer Branding</i>	<i>Job Application Intention</i>	<i>Work Expectation</i>	Desc
<i>Corporate Reputation</i>	CR1	0,734				Valid
	CR2	0,855				Valid
	CR3	0,802				Valid
	CR4	0,842				Valid
	CR5	0,853				Valid
	CR6	0,818				Valid
<i>Employer Branding</i>	EB1		0,883			Valid
	EB2		0,865			Valid
	EB3		0,834			Valid
	EB4		0,877			Valid
	EB5		0,833			Valid
	JAI1			0,777		Valid
	JAI2			0.839		Valid

Job	JAI3	0,828	Valid
Application	JAI4	0,822	Valid
Intention	JAI5	0,743	Valid
Work Expectation	WE1	0,728	Valid
	WE2	0,789	Valid
	WE3	0,750	Valid
	WE4	0,738	Valid
	WE5	0,784	Valid
	WE6	0,767	Valid
	WE7	0,760	Valid
	WE8	0,654	Unvalid
	WE9	0,800	Valid

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on the data in Table 1, it is evident that the outer loading values (measurement model values) for each research variable indicator exceed 0.70. Although the ideal threshold is >0.70 , a factor loading greater than 0.60 is considered sufficient to satisfy convergent validity requirements. The data indicate that no variable indicator has an outer loading value below 0.60; therefore, these indicators are deemed valid for use in the study and suitable for subsequent analysis.

b. Discriminant Validity Test

Table 2

AVE Test Results

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employer Branding	0,737
Work Expectation	0,567
Corporate Reputation	0,671
Job Application Intention	0,644

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 2 above, it can be concluded that the AVE values for variables X1, X2, X3, and Y are above 0.5 therefore, the statements are valid.

c. Cross Loading

Table 3

Cross-loading Values

Indicator	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	Y	Desc
EB1	0.883	0.707	0.737	0.723	Valid
EB2	0.865	0.649	0.703	0.685	Valid

EB3	0.834	0.648	0.703	0.669	Valid
EB4	0.877	0.710	0.722	0.725	Valid
EB5	0.833	0.626	0.657	0.654	Valid
WE1	0.565	0.728	0.583	0.608	Valid
WE2	0.519	0.789	0.593	0.547	Valid
WE3	0.477	0.750	0.548	0.489	Valid
WE4	0.692	0.738	0.646	0.659	Valid
WE5	0.661	0.784	0.639	0.663	Valid
WE6	0.688	0.767	0.659	0.641	Valid
WE7	0.520	0.760	0.580	0.554	Valid
WE8	0.373	0.654	0.460	0.391	Valid
WE9	0.670	0.800	0.684	0.677	Valid
CR1	0.571	0.603	0.739	0.558	Valid
CR2	0.712	0.654	0.855	0.658	Valid
CR3	0.648	0.663	0.802	0.635	Valid
CR4	0.716	0.647	0.842	0.684	Valid
CR5	0.733	0.706	0.853	0.662	Valid
CR6	0.644	0.679	0.818	0.682	Valid
JAI1	0.659	0.595	0.652	0.777	Valid
JAI2	0.721	0.691	0.689	0.839	Valid
JAI3	0.661	0.709	0.672	0.828	Valid
JAI4	0.677	0.596	0.600	0.822	Valid
JAI5	0.489	0.547	0.548	0.743	Valid

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 3, the cross-loading values for the variables of employer branding (X1), work expectations (X2), corporate reputation (X3), and job application intention (Y) indicate that each indicator has a higher correlation with the construct it measures than with the other constructs.

d. Cronbach's Alpha Test

Table 4
Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Variabel	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c) Cra	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EB	0,911	0,933	0,737
WE	0,905	0,922	0,567
CR	0,902	0,924	0,671
JAI	0,862	0,900	0,644

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 4, the analysis results indicate that the composite reliability values for all constructs are equal to or greater than 0.70. This demonstrates that each variable meets the criteria for good reliability.

e. R-Square

Table 5

Koefisien Detreminasi (R2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Job Application Intention	0.729	0.724

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on the results in Table 5, the R-square value for the dependent variable is 0.729, which falls into the strong category. Meanwhile, the adjusted R-square value indicates that the variables of employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation are capable of explaining or predicting the job application intention to the extent of 0.724.

f. F-Square

Tabel 6

Effect Size (F2)

Variable	job application intention
<i>Employer Branding</i>	0.145
<i>Work Expectation</i>	0.103
<i>Corporate Reputation</i>	0.057
job application intention	

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 6, the effect size (f^2) values indicate that employer branding has a moderate influence on the job application intention, with an f^2 value of 0.145. Furthermore, the work expectation variable has a small influence, with an f^2 value of 0.103. Meanwhile, the corporate reputation variable also shows a small influence on the job application intention, with an f^2 value of 0.057.

g. Hypothesis Testing

Table 7

Direct Effect

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
EB -> JAI	0.370	0.362	0.099	3.747	0.000

WE -> JAI	0.300	0.306	0.096	3.132	0.002
CR -> JAI	0.246	0.246	0.117	2.096	0.036

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on the direct effect test results in Table 7, all research hypotheses were accepted. Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on the job application intention ($\beta = 0.370$; $t = 3.747$; $p = 0.000$). Work expectations also have a positive and significant effect on the job application intention ($\beta = 0.300$; $t = 3.132$; $p = 0.002$). Furthermore, corporate reputation has a positive and significant effect on the job application intention ($\beta = 0.246$; $t = 2.096$; $p = 0.036$). These results indicate that the more favorably employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation are perceived, the higher the students' job application intention at the company.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the data analysis and hypothesis testing conducted using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with SmartPLS 4.0 software, the conclusions regarding each hypothesis proposed in this study are as follows:

The results indicate that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intention ($\beta = 0.370$; $t = 3.747$; $p = 0.000$); thus, H1 is accepted. These findings demonstrate that the stronger the employer branding established by a company, the higher the intention of final-year students to apply for jobs. Employer branding plays a role in shaping the positive perceptions of prospective applicants by conveying information regarding company values, the work environment, and career development opportunities. These results align with the findings of Junça Silva and Dias (2022) as well as Ekhsan and Fitri (2021), which state that employer branding can enhance job application intention.

The results indicate that work expectations have a positive and significant effect on job application intention ($\beta = 0.300$; $t = 3.132$; $p = 0.002$); thus, H2 is accepted. These findings indicate that alignment between students' work expectations—such as compensation, work environment, and career development opportunities—and the conditions offered by the company increases the intention to apply. This result is consistent with research by Astuti et al. (2025) and Ngoc et al. (2022), which concluded that met work expectations can enhance job pursuit intention.

The results indicate that corporate reputation has a positive and significant effect on job application intention ($\beta = 0.246$; $t = 2.096$; $p = 0.036$); thus, H3 is accepted. This demonstrates

that companies with a good reputation are more successful in attracting students to apply for jobs, as they are perceived to possess greater credibility, better prospects, and a superior work environment. These findings support the research of Saedi et al. (2015), Rahayu and Sari (2018), as well as Thanh et al. (2025) and Verawati et al. (2025), who state that corporate reputation is an important factor in increasing the intention to apply for a job.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of employer branding, work expectations, and corporate reputation on the job application intention among final-year students of the Management Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Malikussaleh. Based on the analysis results, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Employer branding has a positive and significant influence on the job application intention. This indicates that the better a company's employer branding, the higher the students' intention to apply to that company.
2. Work expectations have a positive and significant influence on the job application intention. This means that the greater the alignment between students' expectations and the jobs offered by the company, the stronger their intention to apply.
3. Corporate reputation has a positive and significant influence on the job application intention. In other words, a better corporate reputation increases students' intention to submit job applications.

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