

The Influence of Self-Efficacy and Employer Branding on Employment Decisions with Intention to Apply as a Mediating Variable (On Generation Z in Malang City)

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Abstract

The transformation of the job market in the digital era requires organizations to understand the factors that influence the work decisions of Generation Z as a productive age group entering the workforce. This study aims to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and employer branding on work decisions with intention to apply as a mediating variable in Generation Z in Malang City. This study used a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method on 160 respondents. The results showed that self-efficacy and intention to apply had a positive and significant effect on work decisions, while employer branding did not have a direct effect on work decisions. However, self-efficacy and employer branding were proven to have a significant effect on intention to apply. The mediation analysis showed that intention to apply acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between self-efficacy and work decisions and as a full mediator in the relationship between employer branding and work decisions. Theoretically, this finding strengthens the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Job Demands–Resources Theory by confirming that work decisions in Generation Z are more determined by the mechanisms of intention and psychological readiness than simply perceptions of the organization. Practically, organizations need to combine employer branding strategies with efforts to increase self-efficacy and career readiness to improve recruitment effectiveness.

Kata kunci: Self-Efficacy, Employer Branding, Intention to Apply, Employment Decision, Generation Z.

A. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the job market in the digital era requires organizations to understand the factors influencing the employment decisions of younger generations (Bińczycki et al., 2023). Generation Z, now entering their productive age, is known for being adaptable to technology, possessing a strong self-development orientation, and prioritizing the fit between values and the work environment as primary considerations in career selection (Bulut, 2021). In Malang, a city with a high concentration of higher education institutions, the transition of graduates to the workforce is a strategic phenomenon to study, particularly in understanding how this generation shapes employment decisions (Putri et al., 2024).

Based on data from the Malang City Central Statistics Agency, the workforce in Malang City in August 2025 reached 486,794 people with a Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK) of 69.85% (BPS, 2025). The Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) was recorded at 5.69%, although it decreased by 6.10% in August 2024 (BPS, 2025). These data indicate that despite improvements in macroeconomic conditions, tens of thousands of productive-age residents remain under-employed in the labor market. This situation suggests that employment decisions are not solely influenced by job availability, but also by individual psychological factors and perceptions of the organization as a place to work.

From the perspective of Job Demands–Resources Theory (JD–R), an individual's success in entering the workforce is influenced by a combination of personal and organizational resources (Demerouti &

Bakker, 2023). Self-efficacy is understood as an individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks and face challenges (Stremersch et al., 2021). As a personal resource, self-efficacy increases psychological resilience, optimism, and readiness for the job selection process. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to have a stronger perception of control over their career opportunities. However, previous research has shown inconsistent results regarding the influence of self-efficacy on actual work decisions, necessitating a mechanistic variable to explain this process (Zhou et al., 2023).

On the other hand, employer branding represents an individual's perception of the reputation, values, and image of an organization as a place to work (Ada et al., 2023). Within the JD–R framework, employer branding functions as an organizational resource that can increase organizational attractiveness and strengthen positive evaluations of prospective employees (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Research by Junça Silva & Dias (2022) shows that employer branding significantly influences job application intentions. However, according to Bharadwaj (2023), not all positive perceptions of an organization directly lead to employment decisions. This finding suggests that the relationship between employer branding and employment decisions may be mediated by certain psychological factors.

To explain the mechanisms of intention and behavior formation, this study integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). In TPB, intention is the primary determinant of actual behavior. Intention to apply is defined as an individual's tendency or readiness to apply for a job at a particular organization. This intention is formed through an evaluation of attitudes toward the organization, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). In the context of this study, self-efficacy represents perceived behavioral control, while employer branding contributes to shaping attitudes toward the organization. Thus, both variables theoretically influence intention to apply before ultimately impacting employment decisions.

Unlike intention to apply, which reflects psychological tendencies, the decision to work is an actual action that demonstrates an individual's commitment to accepting and pursuing a particular job. Not all intentions translate into actual behavior, particularly among Generation Z, who tend to consider value alignment, work flexibility, and development opportunities before making a final decision (Bińczycki et al., 2023). This potential gap between intention and actual behavior makes intention to apply important to examine as a mediating variable.

In this research model, self-efficacy and employer branding are positioned as independent variables representing personal and organizational resources. Intention to apply serves as a mediating variable, bridging the influence of both variables on the decision to work, which is the dependent variable. Conceptually, self-efficacy increases an individual's perception of control over job opportunities, while employer branding shapes a positive attitude toward the organization. Both factors influence intention to apply, which in turn contributes to the actual decision to work. This approach allows for a more comprehensive explanation of the process of converting resources into work behavior.

Most previous research has focused on examining the intention to apply without examining how that intention translates into actual employment decisions (Stich, 2020). Furthermore, research on the influence of self-efficacy and employer branding on employment decisions remains inconsistent (Zhou et al., 2023). Therefore, an integrative approach that can explain the relationships between variables more systematically is needed.

This study offers novelty by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and Job Demands–Resources Theory into a single conceptual model to explain the mechanism of personal and organizational resource conversion into work decisions through intention to apply as a mediating variable. Empirically, this study focuses on Generation Z in Malang City, an educational city with unique labor market dynamics. Thus, this study not only tests the direct relationship between variables but also explains the psychological mechanisms underlying the formation of work decisions. This research contribution is expected to enrich the literature on work behavior while providing practical implications for organizations in designing more effective employer branding strategies in attracting and retaining young talent.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Demands–Resources Theory (JD–R)

Job Demands–Resources Theory was developed by Demerouti & Bakker (2023), as a framework to explain how job characteristics influence employee well-being and performance. This theory distinguishes between job demands, which refer to physical, psychological, or organizational aspects of work requiring sustained effort, and job resources, which help individuals achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth. Over time, the JD–R model evolved to include personal resources as important determinants of motivation and performance. Personal resources are positive self-evaluations linked to resilience and the belief in one's ability to control and impact the environment successfully. In this perspective, self-efficacy is considered a crucial personal resource that enables

individuals to cope with challenges and pursue career opportunities effectively. Furthermore, organizational attributes such as employer branding can be interpreted as organizational resources. A strong employer brand signals supportive work environments, career development opportunities, and positive organizational culture, which enhance organizational attractiveness. In the context of this study, JD-R Theory provides a foundation to explain how personal resources (self-efficacy) and organizational resources (employer branding) contribute to shaping intention to apply and ultimately influence decision to work.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Theory of Planned Behavior was proposed (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020) as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action. TPB explains that human behavior is primarily determined by intention, which is influenced by three components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a behavior. Subjective norms involve perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control reflects the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, which is closely related to self-efficacy. In employment contexts, intention to apply represents an individual's readiness to submit a job application to a particular organization. According to TPB, intention is the most immediate predictor of actual behavior. Therefore, decision to work can be understood as the realization of prior intention. In this study, TPB explains how self-efficacy (as perceived behavioral control) and employer branding (as an antecedent of attitude toward the organization) influence intention to apply, which subsequently affects the decision to work.

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by Bandura (1977) within Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater persistence, resilience, and confidence in facing challenges. In career-related contexts, self-efficacy influences job search behavior, career exploration, and employment readiness. Individuals who believe in their competence are more proactive in seeking job opportunities and more confident in engaging with recruitment processes. Empirical studies suggest that self-efficacy positively affects job search intention and employment-related decision-making. Within the framework of this study, self-efficacy functions as a personal resource that enhances perceived behavioral control. High levels of self-efficacy are expected to increase intention to apply and strengthen the likelihood of making a firm decision to work.

Employer Branding

Employer branding refers to the image and reputation of an organization as an employer. The concept was popularized by (Ambler & Barrow (1996), who defined employer branding as the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. A strong employer brand enhances organizational attractiveness by communicating values, work culture, career opportunities, and employee benefits. For job seekers, employer branding reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in the organization. Research indicates that employer branding significantly influences organizational attractiveness and intention to apply. In this research context, employer branding serves as an organizational resource that shapes positive attitudes toward the organization. These positive perceptions are expected to increase intention to apply and indirectly influence the decision to work.

Intention to Apply

Intention to apply refers to an individual's conscious plan or readiness to apply for a job in a specific organization. It represents a motivational factor that indicates how much effort individuals are willing to exert to perform job-seeking behavior (Bharadwaj, 2023). In TPB, intention is the immediate antecedent of behavior. However, not all intentions result in actual behavior. Various internal and external factors may facilitate or inhibit the translation of intention into action. In employment studies, intention to apply often mediates the relationship between psychological factors and employment outcomes. In this study, intention to apply functions as a mediating variable that explains the mechanism through which self-efficacy and employer branding influence the decision to work. By examining this mediation effect, the study aims to clarify the process of converting psychological readiness and organizational perception into actual employment decisions.

Decision to Work

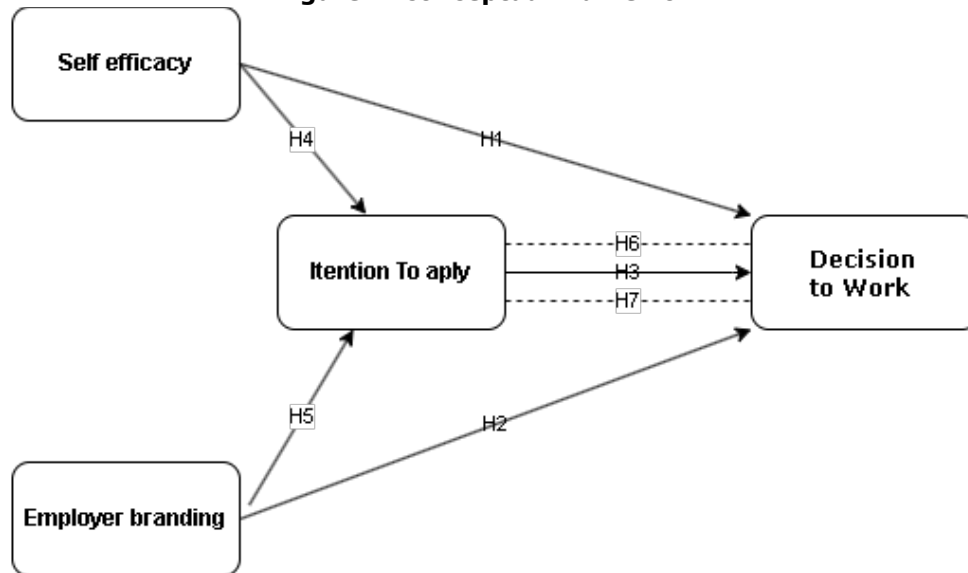
Decision to work refers to an individual's actual commitment to accept and engage in employment within a particular organization (Bińczycki et al., 2023). Unlike intention, which represents psychological readiness, decision to work reflects observable behavior or finalized choice. The decision-

making process in employment involves evaluation of alternatives, comparison of benefits, assessment of personal capability, and alignment with personal values. For Generation Z, additional considerations such as work-life balance, flexibility, and career growth opportunities may influence the final decision. In this research model, decision to work is positioned as the dependent variable. It represents the behavioral outcome influenced directly or indirectly by self-efficacy and employer branding through intention to apply.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the integration of Job Demands–Resources Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior, this study proposes a model in which self-efficacy (personal resource) and employer branding (organizational resource) influence intention to apply, which subsequently affects decision to work. Self-efficacy strengthens perceived behavioral control, while employer branding shapes positive attitudes toward the organization. Intention to apply functions as a mediating mechanism that explains how these resources are translated into actual employment decisions. This integrative approach allows a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and organizational factors shaping employment decisions among Generation Z in Malang City.

Figure. 1 conceptual framework



Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Hypothesis

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Work Decisions

In Job Demands–Resources Theory, according to Demerouti & Bakker (2023), self-efficacy is categorized as a personal resource that increases motivation, optimism, and an individual's ability to face work challenges. This is supported by Muvida & Almanshur (2022), who found that individuals with high self-efficacy are able to complete tasks more effectively and achieve optimal performance. This indicates that strong confidence in personal abilities enhances individuals' capacity to deal with work-related demands and make appropriate decisions. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy tend to have confidence in making career decisions independently. From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior, self-efficacy is closely related to perceived behavioral control, namely an individual's belief in their ability to perform an action (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). The higher this belief, the greater the likelihood of actual behavior occurring. Some studies have shown that self-efficacy has a positive effect on work decisions. According to Mares et al. (2025), this occurs because self-efficacy increases an individual's belief in their abilities, thus encouraging courage in making career decisions. However, these findings differ from Hadi (2023), research, which states that self-efficacy does not directly influence work decisions but rather first influences intention or motivation before becoming actual behavior. This difference in results suggests the possibility of a mediating mechanism in this relationship.

H1: Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant influence on work decisions.

The Influence of Employer Branding on Work Decisions

From the perspective of Job Demands–Resources Theory according to Demerouti & Bakker (2023), employer branding can be positioned as an organizational resource that provides information about the reputation, work environment, company values, and career development opportunities. Positive organizational resources will increase job attractiveness and strengthen an individual's tendency to choose that organization as a place to work. Meanwhile, within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework, positive perceptions of an organization shape attitudes that lead to actual behavioral tendencies, including work decisions (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). The more positive a company's image and reputation, the more likely an individual is to make the decision to join. Empirically, various studies have shown that employer branding has a positive effect on work decisions (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022). However, some studies have found that this effect is weaker or insignificant when individual psychological factors, such as self-confidence or work readiness, are more dominant in the decision-making process (Ristiani & Lusianingrum, 2022). This inconsistency suggests that the relationship between employer branding and work decisions still requires further examination.

H2: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on employment decisions. The effect of intention to apply on employment decisions

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, intention is the closest predictor of actual behavior. Intention to apply represents an individual's psychological readiness to take concrete action (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). Conceptually, the stronger the intention to apply, the greater the probability of an individual making a work decision when the opportunity arises. Various studies support that intention significantly influences actual behavior (Conner & Norman, 2022). However, findings suggest that the gap between intention and behavior can occur due to situational factors or external obstacles (Gardner et al., 2020).

H3: Intention to Apply has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Work. The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Intention to Apply

In the Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioral control directly contributes to the formation of intentions. Self-efficacy, as a form of self-confidence, increases an individual's perception of control in the job application process (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Meanwhile, in Job Demands–Resources Theory, personal resources such as self-efficacy strengthen an individual's motivation and readiness to face the demands of job selection (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). This is supported by Aini & Setiani (2024), who found that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more actively involved and show higher levels of engagement in their activities. This indicates that self-efficacy encourages proactive behavior, which is also relevant in the context of job-seeking and application intentions. Previous research has shown that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to apply for jobs (Biramio et al., 2025). However, several studies have found that external factors such as labor market conditions also influence the formation of these intentions (Chowdhury et al., 2025).

H4: Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply. The Effect of Employer Branding on Intention to Apply

Within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework, attitude toward an organization is a key determinant of intention formation. Strong employer branding shapes positive perceptions and increases organizational attractiveness, thereby strengthening intention to apply (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). From the perspective of Job Demands–Resources Theory, employer branding as an organizational resource provides positive signals regarding job support and opportunities, which encourages applicants to apply (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). Empirical findings generally indicate that employer branding has a positive influence on intention to apply (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022). This is supported by Khan (2024), who found that strong employer branding enhances organizational image, which in turn attracts potential applicants and increases their intention to apply. However, some research suggests that in certain groups, such as Generation Z, personal values and work meaning may be more dominant than organizational reputation (Thang & Trang, 2024).

H5: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. The mediating role of intention to apply on the influence of self-efficacy on employment decisions.

Self-efficacy, as a personal resource, increases perceived behavioral control, which strengthens intentions (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). In the TPB, intention is the primary psychological mechanism linking beliefs to behavior. Empirically, several studies have shown that self-efficacy more strongly

influences work decisions through intentions than directly. This supports the hypothesis of a mediation mechanism (Chowdhury et al., 2025).

**H6: Intention to Apply Mediates the Effect of Self-Efficacy on Employment Decisions.
The Mediating Role of Intention to Apply in the Effect of Employer Branding on Employment Decisions**

In the TPB integration, employer branding forms a positive attitude that influences intention, and intention, in turn, influences actual behavior (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). This suggests that the influence of employer branding on employment decisions likely occurs through intention to apply. Several studies have shown that the direct effect of employer branding on employment decisions becomes insignificant when intention variables are included in the model, indicating mediation (Kashive & Khanna, 2021).

H7: Intention to Apply mediates the influence of Employer Branding on Work Decisions.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative design to examine the relationships between variables in the research model. This approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement of the influence of employer branding and self-efficacy on employment decisions, with intention to apply as a mediating variable, through statistical analysis. The research is based on a positivistic paradigm that emphasizes hypothesis testing based on measurable empirical data. The research design is cross-sectional because data collection was conducted over a specific period.

The research was conducted in the Greater Malang region, encompassing Malang City, Malang Regency, and Batu City. This region was chosen because it is a center of education and economic growth in East Java, with a high concentration of Generation Z, particularly final-year students and recent graduates. Furthermore, the presence of various local and multinational companies actively recruiting makes this region a representative area for examining Generation Z's perceptions of employer branding, self-efficacy, intention to apply, and employment decisions.

The study population was Generation Z in the Greater Malang area who were in the transition phase into the workforce, both final-year students and recent graduates. Because there is no official data available on the exact number of Generation Z who are or will be entering the workforce, the population is categorized as an unknown population. The sample size was determined based on the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021), (2021) for PLS-SEM, which is 5–10 times the number of indicators. With 16 indicators, the minimum sample size was 160 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with the following criteria: aged 18–27 years (Generation Z), domiciled or active in Greater Malang, and having experience or intention to apply for a job. This technique was chosen to ensure that respondents matched the research characteristics.

This study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms during January–February using a Likert scale of 1–5 (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Secondary data were obtained from official publications to strengthen the empirical context of the study. The use of questionnaires allowed for the systematic and structured collection of respondent perception data according to the research variables.

The research variables consist of self-efficacy (X1) which reflects an individual's belief in their ability to complete work tasks and is measured through the dimensions of confidence, persistence, adaptability, and motivation; employer branding (X2) which reflects perceptions of economic, social, developmental, attractive, and application values of abilities; intention to apply (Z) which describes an individual's intention and readiness to apply for a job; and work decision (Y) which reflects willingness to accept a job, rational consideration, career satisfaction, and organizational commitment. All indicators are measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS. This method was chosen because it is suitable for predictive models and mediation testing and does not require a strict normal distribution. The analysis included evaluation of the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability) and evaluation of the inner model (R-square, f-square, Q-square, model fit, and path coefficient). Mediation testing was conducted through indirect effect analysis using bootstrapping techniques to assess the significance of indirect relationships between variables.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Berdasarkan Tabel dibawah dapat diketahui bahwa responden penelitian berjumlah 160 orang dengan distribusi jenis kelamin yang seimbang antara laki-laki dan perempuan (masing-masing 50%). Mayoritas responden berada pada rentang usia 22–23 tahun (73%), yang menunjukkan bahwa sebagian

besar berada pada fase akhir perkuliahan atau awal memasuki dunia kerja. Dari sisi domisili, responden paling banyak berasal dari Kecamatan Lowokwaru (47%), yang dikenal sebagai kawasan pendidikan di Kota Malang. Berdasarkan latar belakang pendidikan, mayoritas responden merupakan lulusan SMA/ sederajat (59%) dan S1/ sederajat (36%), sehingga mencerminkan karakter Generasi Z yang sedang atau telah menempuh pendidikan tinggi. Selain itu, sebagian besar responden telah melamar pekerjaan sebanyak 3–4 kali (69%), yang menunjukkan pengalaman aktif dalam proses pencarian kerja. Secara keseluruhan, karakteristik ini mendukung relevansi penelitian mengenai employer branding, self-efficacy, intention to apply, dan keputusan bekerja pada Generasi Z di Kota Malang.

Table. 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Aspek	Kategori	Jumlah	Persentase
Jenis Kelamin	Laki-laki	80	50%
	Perempuan	80	50%
Usia (Tahun)	18–19	1	1%
	20–21	11	7%
	22–23	117	73%
	24–25	13	8%
	26–27	19	12%
Domisili	Kecamatan Blimbing	15	9%
	Kecamatan Klojen	22	14%
	Kecamatan Lowokwaru	75	47%
	Kecamatan Sukun	30	19%
	Kecamatan Kedungkandang	18	11%
Pendidikan Terakhir	SMP/ sederajat	2	1%
	SMA/ sederajat	95	59%
	S1/ sederajat	58	36%
	S2/ sederajat	6	4%
Frekuensi Melamar Pekerjaan	1–2 kali	22	14%
	3–4 kali	111	69%
	5–6 kali	16	10%
	> 7 kali	11	7%
Total Responden		160	100%

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Evaluasi measurement model (outer model)

Evaluation of the outer model was conducted through construct validity and reliability testing. Convergent validity was assessed based on the outer loading and AVE values, while discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell – Larcker criterion.

Validity Convergent

Berdasarkan tabel outer loading di bawah, seluruh indikator pada variabel Self-Efficacy (X1), Employer Branding (X2), Intention to Apply (M), dan Keputusan Bekerja (Y) memiliki nilai outer loading di atas 0,70, dengan nilai tertinggi sebesar 0,901 pada indikator X2.3.2 yang merepresentasikan dimensi Development Value, serta nilai terendah sebesar 0,808 pada indikator X1.2.2 yang merepresentasikan dimensi Persistence. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa seluruh indikator mampu merefleksikan konstruk laten secara kuat dan konsisten sehingga telah memenuhi kriteria validitas konvergen dan tidak terdapat indikator yang perlu dieliminasi. Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam pendekatan PLS-SEM nilai outer loading yang direkomendasikan adalah $\geq 0,70$ karena indikator dengan nilai tersebut mampu menjelaskan lebih dari 50% varians konstruk laten, sehingga memenuhi batas minimum convergent validity.

Table. 2 Validity Convergent

	Employer Branding (X2)	Intention To Apply (M)	Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	Self-Efficacy (X1)
X1.1.2				0.873
X1.1.1				0.862
X1.3.1				0.846
X1.4.2				0.845

X1.4.1		0.836
X1.2.1		0.832
X1.3.2		0.814
X1.2.2		0.808
Y1.3.2		0.894
Y1.3.1		0.892
Y1.4.2		0.892
Y1.2.1		0.880
Y1.1.2		0.877
Y1.1.1		0.876
Y1.2.2		0.871
Y1.4.1		0.858
M1.2.2	0.872	
M1.1.1	0.867	
M1.3.2	0.849	
M1.1.2	0.848	
M1.2.1	0.834	
M1.3.1	0.827	
X2.3.2	0.901	
X2.1.2	0.892	
X2.3.1	0.883	
X2.5.1	0.882	
X2.5.2	0.867	
X2.2.2	0.865	
X2.2.1	0.860	
X2.4.2	0.860	
X2.4.1	0.855	
X2.1.1	0.834	

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Berdasarkan tabel reliabilitas dan validitas konstruk di bawah, seluruh variabel dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan tingkat konsistensi internal yang sangat baik. Nilai Cronbach's Alpha pada masing-masing konstruk berada di atas 0,90, yaitu Employer Branding (0,964), Intention to Apply (0,923), Keputusan Bekerja (0,958), dan Self-Efficacy (0,940), yang mengindikasikan reliabilitas sangat tinggi. Demikian pula nilai Composite Reliability (rho_c) seluruhnya melebihi 0,70, bahkan berada di atas 0,90, sehingga memperkuat bahwa indikator pada setiap konstruk memiliki konsistensi internal yang kuat. Selain itu, nilai Average Variance Extracted (AVE) seluruh variabel berada di atas 0,50, dengan nilai tertinggi pada Keputusan Bekerja sebesar 0,775 dan terendah pada Self-Efficacy sebesar 0,705, yang menunjukkan bahwa masing-masing konstruk mampu menjelaskan lebih dari 50% varians indikatornya. Menurut Hair et al. (2021), konstruk dinyatakan reliabel apabila nilai Cronbach's Alpha dan Composite Reliability $\geq 0,70$, serta memenuhi validitas konvergen apabila AVE $\geq 0,50$, sehingga berdasarkan kriteria tersebut seluruh konstruk dalam penelitian ini dinyatakan reliabel dan valid.

Table. 3 Reliability and Validity Test Results

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Employer Branding (X2)	0.964	0.967	0.969	0.757
Intention To Apply (M)	0.923	0.923	0.940	0.722
Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.958	0.959	0.965	0.775
Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.940	0.942	0.950	0.705

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026
Discriminant Validity

Berdasarkan tabel Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) di bawah, seluruh nilai korelasi antar konstruk berada di bawah batas ambang yang direkomendasikan. Nilai HTMT tertinggi terdapat pada hubungan antara Intention to Apply (M) dan Keputusan Bekerja (Y) sebesar 0,806, sedangkan nilai terendah terdapat pada hubungan antara Employer Branding (X2) dan Self-Efficacy (X1) sebesar 0,103. Seluruh nilai HTMT berada di bawah 0,90, bahkan sebagian besar di bawah 0,85, sehingga menunjukkan bahwa masing-masing konstruk memiliki diskriminasi yang baik dan tidak terjadi masalah multikolinearitas antar variabel laten. Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam evaluasi PLS-SEM nilai HTMT yang disarankan harus kurang dari 0,90 (atau lebih ketat < 0,85) untuk memastikan terpenuhinya discriminant validity. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa seluruh konstruk dalam penelitian ini telah memenuhi kriteria discriminant validity berdasarkan pendekatan HTMT.

Table. 4 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Employer Branding (X2)	Intention To Apply (M)	Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	Self-Efficacy (X1)
Employer Branding (X2)				
Intention To Apply (M)	0.564			
Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.296	0.806		
Self-Efficacy (X1)	0.103	0.508	0.755	

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Inner Model

Evaluation of the inner model was carried out by analyzing the R-square, f-square, path coefficients, specific indirect effects, model fit, and predictive relevance (Q-square) values.

R-Square

Berdasarkan tabel R-square di bawah, nilai R-square untuk variabel Intention to Apply (M) sebesar 0,561 dengan R-square adjusted 0,556, yang menunjukkan bahwa Self-Efficacy (X1) dan Employer Branding (X2) mampu menjelaskan sebesar 56,1% variasi Intention to Apply, sedangkan sisanya 43,9% dijelaskan oleh variabel lain di luar model. Selanjutnya, nilai R-square Keputusan Bekerja (Y) sebesar 0,744 dengan R-square adjusted 0,739, yang berarti 74,4% variasi Keputusan Bekerja dapat dijelaskan oleh variabel dalam model penelitian ini. Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam PLS-SEM nilai R-square sebesar 0,75 dikategorikan kuat (substantial), 0,50 moderat, dan 0,25 lemah. Dengan demikian, model penelitian ini memiliki kemampuan penjelasan yang moderat pada variabel Intention to Apply dan mendekati kategori kuat pada variabel Keputusan Bekerja, sehingga model struktural dinyatakan memiliki daya prediksi yang baik.

Tabel. 5 R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Intention To Apply (M)	0.561	0.556
Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.744	0.739

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

F-Square

Berdasarkan tabel F-Square di bawah, nilai effect size menunjukkan bahwa Employer Branding (X2) memiliki pengaruh yang sangat besar terhadap Intention to Apply (M) dengan nilai f² sebesar 0,765, namun memiliki pengaruh sangat kecil terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) sebesar 0,012. Selanjutnya, Self-Efficacy (X1) juga menunjukkan pengaruh besar terhadap Intention to Apply (M) dengan nilai f² sebesar 0,626 serta pengaruh besar terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) sebesar 0,588. Sementara itu, Intention to Apply (M) memiliki pengaruh besar terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) dengan nilai f² sebesar 0,400. Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam PLS-SEM nilai f² sebesar 0,02 dikategorikan kecil, 0,15 sedang, dan 0,35 besar. Dengan demikian, sebagian besar hubungan dalam model ini memiliki effect size besar, kecuali pengaruh langsung Employer Branding terhadap Keputusan Bekerja yang tergolong sangat kecil, sehingga memperkuat dugaan adanya peran mediasi Intention to Apply dalam hubungan tersebut.

Tabel. 6 F-Square

	Employer Branding (X2)	Intention To Apply (M)	Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	Self-Efficacy (X1)
Employer Branding (X2)		0.765	0.012	
Intention To Apply (M)			0.400	
Keputusan Bekerja (Y)				
Self-Efficacy (X1)		0.626	0.588	

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Path Coefficients

Berdasarkan tabel Path Coefficients di bawah, hasil pengujian menunjukkan bahwa Employer Branding (X2) berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Intention to Apply (M) dengan koefisien sebesar 0,581, nilai t-statistic 12,223, dan p-value 0,000 (< 0,05). Namun, pengaruh langsung Employer Branding (X2) terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) tidak signifikan dengan koefisien 0,073, t-statistic 1,629, dan p-value 0,103 (> 0,05). Selanjutnya, Intention to Apply (M) terbukti berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) dengan koefisien 0,483, t-statistic 9,429, dan p-value 0,000. Self-Efficacy (X1) juga menunjukkan pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Intention to Apply (M) sebesar 0,526 (t = 11,158; p = 0,000) serta terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) sebesar 0,496 (t = 11,874; p = 0,000). Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam PLS-SEM suatu hubungan dinyatakan signifikan apabila nilai t-statistic > 1,96 pada tingkat signifikansi 5% (two-tailed) atau p-value < 0,05. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa sebagian besar hubungan dalam model ini signifikan, kecuali pengaruh langsung Employer Branding terhadap Keputusan Bekerja, yang mengindikasikan adanya kemungkinan peran mediasi Intention to Apply dalam hubungan tersebut.

Tabel. 7 Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Employer Branding (X2) → Intention To Apply (M)	0.581	0.581	0.048	12.223	0.000
Employer Branding (X2) → Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.073	0.073	0.045	1.629	0.103
Intention To Apply (M) → Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.483	0.482	0.051	9.429	0.000
Self-Efficacy (X1) → Intention To Apply (M)	0.526	0.527	0.047	11.158	0.000
Self-Efficacy (X1) → Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.496	0.497	0.042	11.874	0.000

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Specific Indirect Effects

Berdasarkan tabel pengaruh tidak langsung (specific indirect effects) di bawah, Employer Branding (X2) memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Keputusan Bekerja (Y) melalui Intention to Apply (M) dengan koefisien sebesar 0,281, nilai t-statistic 7,080, dan p-value 0,000 (< 0,05). Sementara itu, pengaruh langsung Employer Branding terhadap Keputusan Bekerja sebelumnya terbukti tidak signifikan (p > 0,05), sehingga menunjukkan bahwa Intention to Apply berperan sebagai mediator penuh (full mediation) dalam hubungan tersebut. Selanjutnya, Self-Efficacy (X1) juga memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Keputusan Bekerja melalui Intention to Apply dengan koefisien sebesar 0,254, nilai t-statistic 7,626, dan p-value 0,000, serta tetap menunjukkan pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap Keputusan Bekerja. Hal ini mengindikasikan terjadinya mediasi parsial (partial

mediation). Menurut Hair et al. (2021), dalam PLS-SEM suatu efek mediasi dinyatakan signifikan apabila nilai t-statistic > 1,96 atau p-value < 0,05 pada taraf signifikansi 5%. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa mediasi Intention to Apply dalam model penelitian ini terbukti signifikan dan memperkuat hubungan antara variabel eksogen dan Keputusan Bekerja.

Tabel. 8 Specific Indirect Effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Employer Branding (X2) → Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.281	0.280	0.040	7.080	0.000
Self-Efficacy (X1) → Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.254	0.254	0.033	7.626	0.000

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Model fit

Berdasarkan Tabel 9, nilai SRMR pada *saturated model* dan *estimated model* sebesar 0,044, yang berada di bawah batas 0,08, sehingga menunjukkan bahwa model memiliki tingkat kesesuaian yang baik. Nilai NFI sebesar 0,893 juga mendekati cut-off 0,90, yang mengindikasikan bahwa model memiliki *goodness of fit* yang memadai. Sementara itu, nilai d_ULS, d_G, dan Chi-square pada kedua model menunjukkan hasil yang identik, yang menandakan tidak adanya perbedaan estimasi antara model jenuh dan model terestimasi. Secara keseluruhan, hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa model struktural dalam penelitian ini telah memenuhi kriteria *model fit* dan layak untuk digunakan dalam pengujian hipotesis, sebagaimana dijelaskan oleh Hair et al. (2021), bahwa nilai SRMR < 0,08 dan NFI yang mendekati 0,90 menunjukkan tingkat kesesuaian model yang dapat diterima dalam analisis PLS-SEM.

Table. 9 Model fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.044	0.044
d_ ULS	1.036	1.036
d_ G	0.661	0.661
Chi-square	560.602	560.602
NFI	0.893	0.893

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Berdasarkan hasil pengujian *predictive relevance* (Q²), diperoleh nilai Q² sebesar 0,441 pada variabel *intention to apply* (M) dan 0,345 pada variabel *keputusan bekerja* (Y), dengan nilai keseluruhan (overall) sebesar 0,386. Seluruh nilai Q² > 0 menunjukkan bahwa model memiliki kemampuan prediktif yang baik. Selain itu, nilai *average loss difference* yang negatif (-0,287; -0,324; dan overall -0,308) serta didukung oleh nilai t-statistik yang signifikan (t = 5,765; 6,374; 6,693; p-value = 0,000 < 0,05) mengindikasikan bahwa model PLS memiliki kesalahan prediksi yang lebih rendah dibandingkan model perbandingan, sehingga secara statistik memiliki daya prediksi yang kuat. Temuan ini sejalan dengan pendapat Hair et al. (2021), yang menyatakan bahwa nilai Q² di atas nol menandakan adanya relevansi prediktif model, dan perbandingan *prediction error* melalui PLSpredict dapat digunakan untuk menilai kekuatan prediksi model PLS-SEM secara lebih komprehensif.

Table. 10 Predictive Relevance (Q²)

	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	t value	p value
Intention To Apply (M)	0.441	0.728	-0.287	5.765	0.000
Keputusan Bekerja (Y)	0.345	0.669	-0.324	6.374	0.000
Overall	0.386	0.694	-0.308	6.693	0.000

Source: Researcher Processed Model, 2026

Discussion

The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Job Decision

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, the path coefficient of self-efficacy (X1) on job decision (Y) is 0.496 with a t-statistic value of 11.874 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This

indicates that self-efficacy has a positive and statistically significant effect on job decision. Thus, the hypothesis stating that self-efficacy positively influences job decision is accepted. The positive coefficient shows that higher levels of self-efficacy will significantly increase the likelihood of individuals making firm job decisions. Furthermore, the R-square value of job decision is 0.744 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.739$), meaning that 74.4% of the variance in job decision can be explained by the variables included in the model. This confirms that self-efficacy plays a substantial role in shaping job decision among Generation Z in Malang City.

Theoretically, this finding can be explained through the perspective of Bandura (1977), Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to achieve specific outcomes. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate stronger confidence, persistence, and readiness in facing challenges, including career-related decisions. In the context of job decision-making, strong self-efficacy enhances perceived behavioral control, which aligns with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020), Theory of Planned Behavior. According to this theory, higher perceived control increases the likelihood of translating intention into actual behavior, including the decision to work in a particular organization.

Empirically, this result is consistent with previous studies. Research by Xin et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy significantly influences career-related outcomes and job-related decisions. Similarly, a study by Alessandri et al. (2025), within the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework demonstrated that self-efficacy plays a central role in shaping career choices and employment decisions. In the context of Generation Z in Malang City, who are characterized as adaptive, technology-oriented, and highly concerned with self-development, strong self-efficacy becomes a crucial psychological resource in navigating the transition from higher education to the labor market. As a city with a high concentration of universities, Malang presents intense competition among graduates; therefore, individuals with stronger confidence in their competencies are more decisive and proactive in determining their employment choices.

The Effect of Employer Branding on Job Decision

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, the path coefficient of employer branding (X2) on job decision (Y) is 0.073 with a t-statistic value of 1.629 and a p-value of 0.103 (> 0.05). This indicates that employer branding has a positive but not statistically significant effect on job decision. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that employer branding positively influences job decision is rejected. Although the relationship is positive, the statistical evidence shows that employer branding does not directly determine job decision among Generation Z in Malang City.

From a theoretical perspective, within the Job Demands–Resources Theory developed by Demerouti & Bakker (2023), employer branding can be positioned as an organizational resource that provides information regarding reputation, work environment, organizational values, and career development opportunities. These organizational resources are theoretically expected to enhance job attractiveness and encourage individuals to choose a particular organization. Similarly, according to the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020), Theory of Planned Behavior, positive perceptions toward an organization shape favorable attitudes that may lead to actual behavioral decisions, including job choice. However, the insignificant finding in this study suggests that favorable organizational perceptions alone may not be sufficient to directly influence employment decisions.

Empirically, this finding is supported by several previous studies that also reported an insignificant direct effect of employer branding on job decision when individual psychological factors were more dominant. For instance, research by Shafiee & Goodarzi (2025), found that employer branding did not significantly influence job decision among fresh graduates when self-confidence and career readiness were stronger determinants. Likewise, Samoliuk et al. (2022) reported that organizational image alone was insufficient to drive employment decisions without strong internal motivation. In the context of Generation Z in Malang City who are adaptive, self-development oriented, and facing competitive labor market conditions internal factors such as self-efficacy appear to be more decisive than external organizational image. Therefore, employer branding may function more as a complementary factor rather than a primary determinant in shaping job decisions.

The Effect of Intention to Apply on Job Decision

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, the path coefficient of intention to apply (M) on job decision (Y) is 0.483 with a t-statistic value of 9.429 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that intention to apply has a positive and statistically significant effect on job decision. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that intention to apply positively influences job decision is accepted. The positive coefficient demonstrates that stronger intention to apply significantly increases the likelihood of individuals making actual employment decisions. This finding confirms that psychological

readiness to apply for a job translates into concrete decision-making behavior among Generation Z in Malang City.

Theoretically, this result is consistent with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020), Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intention is the most proximal predictor of actual behavior. Intention to apply represents an individual's psychological readiness and commitment to take concrete action. When individuals form a strong intention, they are more likely to convert that intention into actual employment decisions once opportunities become available. Thus, the significant relationship found in this study reinforces the central proposition of the Theory of Planned Behavior that behavioral intention directly influences realized behavior.

Empirically, numerous studies have demonstrated that intention significantly predicts actual behavior across various contexts, including employment decisions. Research by Ajzen & Schmidt (2020) established that intention consistently serves as a strong determinant of behavior. Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by Lander et al. (2023) confirmed that behavioral intention explains a substantial proportion of variance in actual behavior across domains. In the recruitment context, studies such as those by Coffey et al. (2022) also highlight that strong career-related intentions significantly influence subsequent employment decisions. Although some research acknowledges the possibility of an intention-behavior gap due to situational constraints, the findings of this study indicate that among Generation Z in Malang City who are adaptive and proactive in navigating competitive labor market conditions the alignment between intention to apply and job decision remains strong. Therefore, intention to apply plays a central role in translating evaluative processes into concrete employment decisions.

The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Intention to Apply

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, the path coefficient of self-efficacy (X1) on intention to apply (M) is 0.526 with a t-statistic value of 11.158 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that self-efficacy has a positive and statistically significant effect on intention to apply. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that self-efficacy positively influences intention to apply is accepted. The magnitude of the coefficient demonstrates that higher levels of self-efficacy substantially increase individuals' intention to apply for jobs. Furthermore, the R-square value of intention to apply is 0.561 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.556$), indicating that 56.1% of the variance in intention to apply can be explained by the predictors in the model. This confirms that self-efficacy plays a dominant role in shaping job application intention among Generation Z in Malang City.

Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020) Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that perceived behavioral control directly contributes to the formation of behavioral intention. Self-efficacy, as conceptualized by Bandura (1977), reflects individuals' belief in their ability to successfully perform specific actions. When individuals perceive strong control over the job application process, they are more confident and motivated to form concrete intentions to apply. In addition, within the Job Demands-Resources Theory developed by Demerouti & Bakker (2023), self-efficacy is categorized as a personal resource that enhances motivation and readiness to face job selection demands. Strong personal resources increase proactive behavior, including the intention to pursue employment opportunities.

Empirically, this result aligns with previous studies. Research by Alessandri et al. (2025), within the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework demonstrates that self-efficacy significantly influences career-related intentions. Similarly, findings by Saul & Dywili (2021) show that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to display stronger job pursuit intentions and proactive career behaviors. Although some studies acknowledge that external factors such as labor market conditions may also shape intention formation, the present findings indicate that among Generation Z in Malang City who are navigating a competitive employment landscape internal confidence in personal competence serves as a crucial determinant in strengthening intention to apply.

The Effect of Employer Branding on Intention to Apply

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, the path coefficient of employer branding (X2) on intention to apply (M) is 0.581 with a t-statistic value of 12.223 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that employer branding has a positive and statistically significant effect on intention to apply. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that employer branding positively influences intention to apply is accepted. The magnitude of the coefficient demonstrates that stronger employer branding substantially increases individuals' intention to apply for jobs. This finding confirms that positive organizational image and reputation play a crucial role in shaping job application intention among Generation Z in Malang City.

Theoretically, this result aligns with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020) Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that attitude toward a behavior or object is a primary determinant of intention formation. A strong employer brand builds favorable perceptions, enhances organizational attractiveness, and shapes positive attitudes toward the organization, thereby strengthening intention to apply. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources Theory developed by Demerouti & Bakker (2023), employer branding can be viewed as an organizational resource that signals support, career opportunities, and a conducive work environment, which in turn increases applicants' motivation to pursue employment opportunities.

Empirically, numerous studies support the significant influence of employer branding on intention to apply. Research Ammari et al. (2025) shows that organizational attractiveness significantly predicts applicant intentions. In addition, Thang & Trang (2024) found that employer branding communicated through corporate reputation and social media positively affects job seekers' intention to apply. These findings indicate that strong employer image functions as an important signal that shapes applicant perceptions and behavioral intentions. Although some studies suggest that among Generation Z personal values and meaningful work considerations may also play a role, the results of this study confirm that employer branding remains a dominant determinant of intention to apply, particularly in the competitive labor market context of Malang City.

The Mediating Role of Intention to Apply in the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Job Decision

Based on the results of the indirect effect analysis, the path coefficient of self-efficacy (X1) on job decision (Y) through intention to apply (M) is 0.254 with a t-statistic value of 7.626 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the indirect effect is positive and statistically significant. Therefore, intention to apply significantly mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and job decision. These findings suggest that self-efficacy not only influences job decisions directly but also strengthens employment decisions indirectly through the formation of intention to apply. The significant indirect coefficient confirms that psychological confidence enhances job decision-making by first increasing individuals' intention to apply.

Theoretically, this result is consistent with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020) Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intention serves as the primary psychological mechanism linking beliefs and actual behavior. Self-efficacy reflects perceived behavioral control, which contributes to the development of intention and subsequently influences behavioral outcomes. In addition, from the perspective of Bandura (1977), Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy functions as a key personal belief that shapes motivation and action, reinforcing the mediating role of intention in translating confidence into concrete decisions.

Empirically, prior studies support this mediating mechanism. Research by Alessandri et al. (2025) within the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework demonstrates that self-efficacy influences career-related outcomes primarily through intention formation. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Feil et al. (2023) confirms that intention acts as a significant mediator between psychological determinants and actual behavior across various domains. Additional support is provided by Conner & Norman (2022), who highlight that self-belief enhances goal commitment and behavioral execution through strengthened intention mechanisms. In the context of Generation Z in Malang City who face competitive labor market conditions the findings indicate that self-efficacy more effectively influences job decision when channeled through intention to apply. Thus, intention to apply serves as a critical psychological bridge linking internal confidence to actual employment decisions.

The Mediating Role of Intention to Apply in the Relationship between Employer Branding and Job Decision

The results of the indirect effect analysis show that employer branding (X2) influences job decision (Y) through intention to apply (M) with a path coefficient of 0.281, a t-statistic of 7.080, and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the indirect effect is positive and statistically significant. Thus, intention to apply significantly mediates the relationship between employer branding and job decision. These findings imply that employer branding does not directly translate into employment decisions, but rather operates through the formation of intention to apply as a key psychological mechanism.

From a theoretical perspective, this result is consistent with the Ajzen & Schmidt (2020) Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that attitude toward a behavior influences intention, and intention subsequently predicts actual behavior. Employer branding strengthens positive attitudes toward an organization, which then increases intention to apply and ultimately leads to a job decision. In line with

Demerouti & Bakker (2023) Job Demands Resources framework, employer branding can be positioned as an organizational resource that provides positive signals regarding work environment, career development, and organizational values, thereby stimulating motivation that is channeled through intention before influencing behavioral outcomes.

Empirically, previous research supports this mediation mechanism. Studies Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2025), demonstrate that organizational attractiveness affects job pursuit behavior primarily through job pursuit intentions. Similarly, Boğan et al. (2020), found that employer image influences application decisions indirectly via applicant intentions. These findings reinforce the present result that intention to apply serves as a critical intervening variable. In the context of Generation Z in Malang City, employer branding appears to first shape psychological readiness and intention before being translated into an actual decision to work, confirming the central mediating role of intention to apply in the employment decision process.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the SEM-PLS analysis on Generation Z in Malang City, this study shows that self-efficacy and intention to apply have a positive and significant effect on work decisions, while employer branding does not directly influence work decisions. However, self-efficacy and employer branding are proven to have a significant effect on work intentions. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value for work decisions is relatively strong indicating that the model has substantial ability to explain work decision behavior in Generation Z. The results of the mediation analysis revealed two different patterns. In the relationship between self-efficacy and work decisions, partial mediation occurs because the direct and indirect effects are both significant, which means that self-efficacy influences work decisions both directly and through the formation of intentions. Conversely, in the relationship between employer branding and work decisions, full mediation occurs because the direct effect is not significant, but the indirect effect through intention to apply is significant. This confirms that employer branding will only influence work decisions if it first forms the intention to apply.

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Job Demands–Resources Theory by confirming that Generation Z's work decisions are more determined by the mechanisms of intention and psychological readiness than simply perceptions of the organization. Practically, organizations need to combine employer branding strategies with efforts to increase self-efficacy and career readiness of prospective applicants to make the recruitment process more effective. Future research is recommended to incorporate contextual variables such as labor market conditions or value congruence to expand the explanatory power of the work decision model.

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