



# What Drives Gen Z to Apply? an Exploration of Work Expectations, Social Media Use, and Organizational Attractiveness in Indonesia

Adhelia Juwita Chairunnisa\*, Arman Jaya, Ana Fitriana, Titik Rosnani, Yuliyanti Fahrana

Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia

Email : [b1021221262@student.untan.ac.id](mailto:b1021221262@student.untan.ac.id)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i3.2140>

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Generation Z, Work Expectations, Social Media Use, Intention to Apply

\*Corresponding Author

This study aims to examine the influence of work expectations on intention to apply among Generation Z in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of social media use and organizational attractiveness in the context of digital recruitment. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey of 231 Generation Z individuals preparing to enter the labor market, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that work expectations do not have a direct effect on intention to apply; however, they significantly influence both social media use and organizational attractiveness. Furthermore, social media use has a significant positive effect on intention to apply, whereas organizational attractiveness does not show a significant influence. Mediation analysis indicates that social media use fully mediates the relationship between work expectations and intention to apply, while organizational attractiveness does not act as a mediator. These results imply that social media serves as a critical mechanism in translating job seekers' expectations into application intentions, highlighting the importance for organizations to optimize digital recruitment strategies through interactive, informative, and engaging social media content to effectively attract Generation Z talent.

### Article History:

Received: January 2026; Revised: February 2026; Accepted: March 2026

### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Chairunnisa, A. J., Jaya, A., Fitriana, A., Rosnani, T., & Fahrana, Y. (2026). What Drives Gen Z to Apply? an Exploration of Work Expectations, Social Media Use, and Organizational Attractiveness in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(3), 2665-2683.

## INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is projected to become the dominant workforce in the coming years, making their job-seeking behavior a critical issue for both organizations and the broader labor market (Vieira et al., 2024). As digital natives, this generation is characterized by high technological literacy and a strong preference for alignment between personal values and organizational values (Schroth, 2019; Graczyk-Kucharska et al., 2020). In Indonesia, this issue is

particularly significant as Generation Z accounts for approximately 74.93 million individuals, or 27.94% of the total population, representing the largest cohort entering the labor market (IDN Research Institute, 2024). However, despite their numerical dominance, many organizations struggle to effectively attract this group. A key reason lies in the mismatch between job seekers' expectations and the value propositions communicated through digital employer branding (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). This misalignment reduces the effectiveness of recruitment efforts and limits the conversion of interest into actual job applications. Therefore, understanding how Generation Z forms intention to apply is essential for improving recruitment strategies and ensuring sustainable workforce development.

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Signaling Theory as complementary frameworks to explain job application intention in the digital recruitment context (Ajzen, 1991; Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973). TPB posits that behavioral intention is formed through cognitive evaluations based on beliefs and expectations regarding relevant outcomes, suggesting that work expectations play a central role in shaping intention to apply (Ajzen, 1991). Meanwhile, Signaling Theory explains how organizations communicate information about job attributes and organizational quality under conditions of uncertainty, where job seekers rely on observable signals to reduce information asymmetry (Connelly et al., 2011). In digital environments, social media has emerged as a primary signaling platform, enabling organizations to convey employer brand attributes through content, interaction, and engagement (Carpentier et al., 2019). By integrating these theories, this study conceptualizes work expectations as cognitive drivers and social media use as a signaling mechanism that translates expectations into behavioral intentions.

Despite the theoretical linkage between expectations and behavior, empirical evidence indicates that Generation Z often hesitates to apply for jobs due to unmet expectations and uncertainty in evaluating job opportunities. Studies show that key expectations related to work-life balance, flexibility, compensation, career development, and supportive work environments are frequently not fulfilled, leading to cautious decision-making among young job seekers (Deloitte, 2025; Nguyen Ngoc et al., 2022). This issue is further exacerbated by labor market conditions in Indonesia, where youth unemployment remains high, exceeding 16% among individuals aged 15–24 (BPS, 2025). At the same time, the demographic bonus increases competition among job seekers, intensifying the challenge of securing quality employment (Nainggolan & Budiman, 2024; BPS, 2024). Although organizations increasingly rely on platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok for recruitment, these efforts do not consistently translate into higher application rates due to perceived irrelevance or lack of credibility in the information provided (Gandasari et al.,

2024; Lestari et al., 2024). This situation highlights a critical gap between expectations and application behavior.

Previous studies have established that work expectations play a significant role in influencing job pursuit intentions, both directly and indirectly through mediating variables (Rani et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2025; Nguyen Ngoc et al., 2022). Organizational attractiveness has traditionally been viewed as a key mediator, reflecting how job seekers evaluate the desirability of an organization based on instrumental and symbolic attributes (Highhouse et al., 2003). In parallel, employer branding efforts—particularly through social media—have been shown to enhance organizational image and engagement, thereby influencing job-seeking behavior (Hamdan et al., 2023; Kuchеров & Zhiltsova, 2021). Social media facilitates social presence, informativeness, and parasocial interaction, which shape perceptions of organizational warmth and competence (Carpentier et al., 2019). These mechanisms are especially relevant for Generation Z, who rely heavily on digital platforms for career exploration and decision-making (Karácsony et al., 2020). However, most studies conceptualize social media as a passive communication channel rather than an active behavioral mechanism.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the literature. First, prior research tends to examine mediating variables independently rather than testing multiple mediation mechanisms simultaneously within an integrated framework (Wibowo et al., 2025; Soeling et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2023). Second, social media is often treated merely as a tool for information dissemination, neglecting its role as a psychological and behavioral process through which candidates interpret organizational signals (Davies et al., 2025; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025b). Third, empirical findings regarding the effect of organizational attractiveness on intention to apply are inconsistent, particularly in digital recruitment contexts where attraction does not always lead to action (Nawakitphaitoon & Sooraksa, 2023). Addressing these gaps is crucial, as failure to understand these mechanisms may result in ineffective recruitment strategies and persistent talent mismatches. Therefore, this study introduces a novel perspective by positioning social media use as an active mediating mechanism alongside organizational attractiveness.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to examine how work expectations influence intention to apply among Generation Z in Indonesia by incorporating the mediating roles of social media use and organizational attractiveness. The study proposes that work expectations function as an initial cognitive framework, while social media use and organizational attractiveness represent distinct pathways through which these expectations are translated into behavioral intention. Specifically, social media use is conceptualized as an active behavioral mechanism involving exposure, interaction, and evaluation of organizational content, whereas organizational attractiveness reflects cognitive

evaluation of employer desirability (Bowen et al., 2021; Subbarao et al., 2023). By testing these relationships simultaneously, this study contributes theoretically by integrating TPB and Signaling Theory in a digital recruitment context and empirically by identifying the dominant mechanism influencing application intention. Practically, the findings provide insights for organizations to design more effective, evidence-based digital recruitment strategies targeting Generation Z.

Accordingly, this study formulates the following hypotheses: H1: Work Expectation positively influences Intention to Apply; H2: Work Expectation positively influences Social Media Use; H3: Work Expectation positively influences Organizational Attractiveness; H4: Social Media Use positively influences Intention to Apply; H5: Organizational Attractiveness positively influences Intention to Apply; H6: Work Expectation positively influences Intention to Apply through Social Media Use; and H7: Work Expectation positively influences Intention to Apply through Organizational Attractiveness.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the relationships among work expectations, social media use, organizational attractiveness, and intention to apply among Generation Z in Indonesia. The explanatory design is chosen as it enables the testing of causal relationships between latent constructs, including both direct and indirect effects within an integrated structural model. A cross-sectional survey method is utilized, where data are collected at a single point in time, which is commonly applied in studies related to digital recruitment and job-seeking behavior among young individuals. The analysis is conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), as this method is appropriate for exploratory and explanatory models involving psychological constructs, moderate sample sizes, and simultaneous mediation testing (Hair et al., 2019).

The research is conducted in Indonesia, focusing on Generation Z individuals who are preparing to enter the workforce. Indonesia is selected due to its demographic advantage, where Generation Z represents the largest cohort in the population and plays a crucial role in shaping future labor market dynamics. Additionally, the rapid adoption of digital platforms in recruitment practices makes Indonesia a relevant context for examining the role of social media in job application behavior. The population includes individuals aged 17–28 years (born between 1997–2012) who are not yet employed but are actively seeking or considering job opportunities. A non-probability purposive sampling technique is applied to ensure that respondents meet the specific criteria relevant to the study objectives. A total of 231 valid responses are collected, which is considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis with moderate model complexity.

Data collection is conducted through an online survey using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire link is shared through widely used digital platforms among Generation Z, such as WhatsApp and Instagram, as well as through the online survey platform Kudata.id. The use of an online survey aligns with the digital-native characteristics of Generation Z and has been proven effective in recruitment and social media research contexts. Participation is voluntary and anonymous to ensure honest responses. At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents are provided with information regarding the research purpose and an informed consent statement to comply with ethical standards and to reduce potential common method bias procedurally (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Data analysis is carried out using the PLS-SEM approach in two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model and evaluation of the structural model. The measurement model is assessed by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability is evaluated using outer loadings, where values  $\geq 0.70$  are considered strong, while values between 0.50 - 0.69 are acceptable in exploratory studies (Hair et al., 2019). Internal consistency is assessed using Composite Reliability and  $\rho_A$ , with values  $\geq 0.70$  indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity is measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values  $\geq 0.50$  indicate that constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators. Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with values  $< 0.85$  indicating adequate distinction between constructs. The structural model is assessed through path coefficients, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance. The significance of direct and indirect effects is tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples at a 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2019).

To ensure data validity and reliability, several procedures are implemented. Procedurally, common method bias is minimized by ensuring respondent anonymity, providing clear instructions, and separating measurement items logically within the questionnaire (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Statistically, validity and reliability are confirmed through the measurement model evaluation, including convergent and discriminant validity tests. Additionally, the use of bootstrapping enhances the robustness of hypothesis testing by providing stable estimates of standard errors and confidence intervals. These combined procedures ensure that the data used in this study are valid, reliable, and suitable for explaining the relationships among the studied constructs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Sample Profile

This study involved 231 Generation Z respondents who fully met the research criteria and were deemed valid for analysis. The sample was predominantly female (76.19%), while male respondents accounted for 23.81%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 19–21 years old (52.38%), followed by those aged 22–24 years (30.74%), representing individuals transitioning from education to the workforce. Regarding educational background, most respondents had completed high school or its equivalent (57.82%), followed by bachelor's degree holders (36.02%), indicating an adequate cognitive readiness to evaluate work expectations and job application decisions. In terms of job-search behavior, Instagram (94.81%) emerged as the most frequently used platform for seeking job information, followed by TikTok (58.44%) and LinkedIn (54.98%), highlighting the strong role of visual and interactive social media in Generation Z's job search process.

**Table 1. The Sample Profile**

<i>Demographic information</i>		<i>Frequency (n = 231)</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	55	23.81 %
	<i>Female</i>	176	76.19 %
<b>Age</b>	<i>17-18</i>	16	6.93 %
	<i>19-21</i>	121	52.38 %
	<i>22-24</i>	71	30.74 %
	<i>25-28</i>	23	9.96 %
<b>Last Education</b>	<i>Junior Highschool</i>	2	0.87 %
	<i>Highschool</i>	132	57.82 %
	<i>Diploma</i>	12	5.21 %
	<i>Bachelor</i>	84	36.02 %
<b>Interest in the Field of Work</b> (Method: semantic grouping of open answers)	<i>Others</i>	140	60.61 %
	<i>Finance &amp; Accounting</i>	30	12.99 %
	<i>Engineering &amp; IT</i>	23	9.96 %
	<i>Administration &amp; Management</i>	19	8.23 %
	<i>Education &amp; Social Services</i>	10	4.33 %
	<i>Creative &amp; Media</i>	9	3.90 %
<b>Social Media Used to Find Jobs</b> (Multiple response –	<i>Instagram</i>	219	94.81 %
	<i>Tiktok</i>	135	58.44 %
	<i>LinkedIn</i>	127	54.98 %
	<i>Facebook</i>	9	3.90 %

<i>respondents can choose more than one)</i>	<i>Website Perusahaan</i>	2	0.87 %
--	---------------------------	---	--------

Source: Author's own analysis

Table 1 presents the demographic and behavioral profile of the 231 respondents involved in this study. The sample is predominantly female (76.19%), with males representing 23.81%. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fall within the 19–21 age group (52.38%), followed by those aged 22–24 (30.74%), indicating that most participants are in the transitional phase from education to the workforce. Regarding educational background, respondents are largely high school graduates (57.82%) and bachelor's degree holders (36.02%), suggesting adequate readiness to evaluate job opportunities. In terms of career interests, most respondents fall into the "Others" category (60.61%), reflecting diverse and non-specific job preferences, while Finance & Accounting (12.99%) and Engineering & IT (9.96%) are among the more defined fields of interest. Finally, social media usage for job searching is heavily dominated by Instagram (94.81%), followed by TikTok (58.44%) and LinkedIn (54.98%), highlighting the strong reliance of Generation Z on visual and interactive digital platforms in exploring employment opportunities.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of latent constructs prior to testing the structural relationships. The outer loading values indicate that several indicators have moderate contributions in representing their respective constructs. However, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values meet the recommended threshold, suggesting that each construct is capable of explaining the variance of its indicators adequately. Thus, convergent validity is established.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Measurement Items	Outer Loading	Description	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (oa)	Composite Reliability (qc)	AVE	Description	
Intention to Apply (IA)					0.79	0.79	0.86	0.54	Reliable
	IA1.1	0.64	Valid						
	IA1.2	0.78	Valid						
	IA1.3	0.76	Valid						
	IA2	0.77	Valid						
	IA3	0.73	Valid						
Organizational					0.82	0.88	0.87	0.58	Reliable

<b>Attractiveness (OA)</b>								
	OA1.1	0.77	Valid					
	OA1.2	0.73	Valid					
	OA2.1	0.76	Valid					
	OA2.2	0.81	Valid					
	OA2.3	0.74	Valid					
<b>Social Media Use (SMu)</b>				0.88	0.87	0.90	0.57	Reliable
	SM1.1	0.77	Valid					
	SM1.2	0.74	Valid					
	SM1.3	0.74	Valid					
	SM2.1	0.72	Valid					
	SM2.2	0.78	Valid					
	SM2.3	0.82	Valid					
	SM3	0.73	Valid					
<b>Work Expectations (WE)</b>				0.87	0.88	0.90	0.53	Reliable
	WE1.1	0.71	Valid					
	WE1.2	0.72	Valid					
	WE2.1	0.74	Valid					
	WE2.2	0.75	Valid					
	WE2.3	0.77	Valid					
	WE3.1	0.74	Valid					
	WE3.2	0.83	Valid					
	WE4	0.55	Valid					

Source: Author's own analysis

Note: AVE – Average Variance Extracted

The reliability test results table 2 show that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha, rho\_A (Dijkstra–Henseler reliability), and Composite Reliability values exceeding the threshold of 0.70. Therefore, all constructs are considered reliable and demonstrate strong internal consistency. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). All HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct and free from problematic conceptual overlap.

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment (HTMT Criterion)**

	Intention To Apply	Organizational Attractiveness	Social Media Use	Work Expectations
Intention To Apply				
Organizational Attractiveness	0.53			

Social Media Use	0.52	0.54	
Work Expectations	0.49	0.80	0.38

Source: Author's own analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The findings indicate that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct and does not suffer from problematic conceptual overlap. Specifically, the HTMT values between Intention to Apply and Organizational Attractiveness (0.53), Social Media Use (0.52), and Work Expectations (0.49) demonstrate adequate discriminant validity. Similarly, the relationships between Organizational Attractiveness and Social Media Use (0.54), as well as Work Expectations (0.80), remain within acceptable limits, although the latter approaches the upper threshold, indicating a relatively stronger association. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement model satisfies discriminant validity requirements, ensuring that each construct captures a unique concept within the proposed model.

### Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model evaluation indicates that the proposed model meets the required criteria for structural adequacy. All inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below the conservative threshold, ranging from 1.000 to 2.166, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues among predictor constructs. Therefore, the structural relationships can be interpreted reliably without distortion due to excessive correlations among independent variables.

**Table 4. Structural Model Assessment Results**

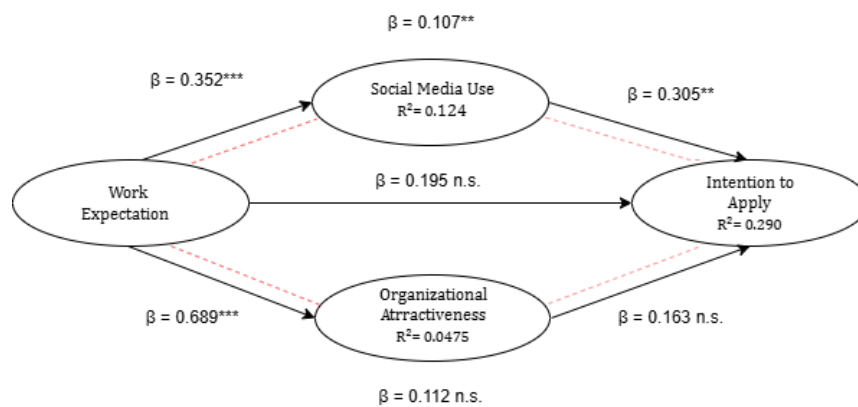
Criteria	Path/Construct	Value
<i>Collinearity (VIF)</i>	Organizational Attractiveness → Intention to Apply	2.166
	Social Media Use → Intention to Apply	1.298
	Work Expectations → Intention to Apply	1.907
	Work Expectations → Organizational Attractiveness	1.000
	Work Expectations → Social Media Use	1.000
<i>Explanatory Power (R<sup>2</sup>)</i>	Intention to Apply	0.290
	Organizational Attractiveness	0.475
	Social Media Use	0.124
<i>Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>)</i>	Organizational Attractiveness → Intention to Apply	0.017
	Social Media Use → Intention to Apply	0.101
	Work Expectations → Intention to Apply	0.028
	Work Expectations → Organizational Attractiveness	0.905

Source: Author's own analysis

Table 4 presents the results of the structural model assessment, including collinearity, explanatory power, and effect size. The collinearity test shows that all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range from 1.000 to 2.166, which are well below the conservative threshold, indicating no multicollinearity issues among predictor constructs. In terms of explanatory power, the model demonstrates a moderate ability to explain the variance of the endogenous constructs, with Intention to Apply having an  $R^2$  value of 0.290, Organizational Attractiveness at 0.475, and Social Media Use at 0.124. This suggests that the model explains 29.0% of the variance in intention to apply, while having stronger explanatory power for organizational attractiveness and a more limited yet meaningful contribution for social media use. Regarding effect size ( $f^2$ ), the influence of Work Expectations on Organizational Attractiveness is very strong (0.905), while its effect on Social Media Use is small to moderate (0.141). The effect of Social Media Use on Intention to Apply is small (0.101), whereas the effects of Work Expectations (0.028) and Organizational Attractiveness (0.017) on Intention to Apply are considered very small. Overall, these results indicate that Work Expectations plays a dominant role in shaping Organizational Attractiveness, while Social Media Use contributes modestly in influencing Intention to Apply.

The explanatory power of the model is moderate. The Intention to Apply construct has an  $R^2$  value of 0.290, indicating that Work Expectations, Social Media Use, and Organizational Attractiveness collectively explain 29.0% of the variance in job application intention. Organizational Attractiveness shows a relatively strong explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.475$ ), while Social Media Use has a lower but still meaningful explanatory value ( $R^2 = 0.124$ ).

The effect size ( $f^2$ ) analysis reveals that the effect of Work Expectations on Organizational Attractiveness is large ( $f^2 = 0.905$ ), while its effect on Social Media Use is categorized as small-to-moderate ( $f^2 = 0.141$ ). The effect of Social Media Use on Intention to Apply is small ( $f^2 = 0.101$ ). Meanwhile, the effects of Work Expectations ( $f^2 = 0.028$ ) and Organizational Attractiveness ( $f^2 = 0.017$ ) on Intention to Apply are considered very small.



**Figure 1. Structural Model Results**

Figure 1 presents the structural model results, including the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for each endogenous construct. The model explains 29.0% of the variance in Intention to Apply ( $R^2 = 0.290$ ), 47.5% of the variance in Organizational Attractiveness ( $R^2 = 0.475$ ), and 12.4% of the variance in Social Media Use ( $R^2 = 0.124$ ).

### Hypothesis Testing / Path Analysis

The structural path analysis results indicate that Work Expectations do not have a direct effect on Intention to Apply ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $t = 1.59$ ;  $p = 0.11$ ;  $f^2 = 0.03$ ), thus H1 is not supported. This finding suggests that Generation Z's work expectations alone are insufficient to directly drive job application intentions.

Furthermore, Work Expectations have a positive and significant effect on Social Media Use ( $\beta = 0.35$ ;  $t = 5.57$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $f^2 = 0.14$ ), supporting H2. Work Expectations also exhibit a strong and significant effect on Organizational Attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.68$ ;  $t = 10.87$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $f^2 = 0.90$ ), supporting H3. These findings indicate that work expectations play a crucial role in shaping candidates' perceptions of organizational attractiveness and encouraging their engagement with organizational social media.

Regarding the mediating constructs, Social Media Use has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply ( $\beta = 0.30$ ;  $t = 3.11$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $f^2 = 0.10$ ), supporting H4. In contrast, Organizational Attractiveness does not have a significant effect on Intention to Apply ( $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $t = 1.62$ ;  $p = 0.10$ ;  $f^2 = 0.01$ ), thus H5 is not supported. This suggests that although organizational attractiveness is strongly perceived, it does not directly translate into application intention.

**Table 5. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Structural Path</i>	$\beta$ ( <i>Original Sample</i> )	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>)</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1	WE → IA	0.19	1.59	0.11	0.03	Not supported
H2	WE → SM	0.35	5.57	0.00	0.14	Supported
H3	WE → OA	0.68	10.87	0.00	0.90	Supported
H4	SM → IA	0.30	3.11	0.00	0.10	Supported
H5	OA → IA	0.16	1.62	0.10	0.01	Not supported
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Indirect Path</i>	$\beta$ ( <i>Indirect Effect</i> )	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Mediation Type</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H6	WE → SM → IA	0.07	3.19	0.00	Full mediation	Supported
H7	WE → OA → IA	0.08	1.67	0.09	No mediation	Not supported

Source: Author's own analysis

Table 5 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing for both direct and indirect effects. The findings show that Work Expectations do not have a significant direct effect on Intention to Apply (H1 not supported), but significantly influence Social Media Use and Organizational Attractiveness (H2 and H3 supported). Social Media Use significantly affects Intention to Apply (H4 supported), while Organizational Attractiveness does not (H5 not supported). For indirect effects, Social Media Use fully mediates the relationship between Work Expectations and Intention to Apply (H6 supported), whereas Organizational Attractiveness does not act as a mediator (H7 not supported). Overall, the results highlight the central role of social media in translating work expectations into application intentions.

### Mediation Analysis

The indirect effect analysis was conducted to evaluate the mediating role between Work Expectations and Intention to Apply. Bootstrapping results show that Social Media Use significantly mediates the relationship ( $\beta = 0.07$ ;  $t = 3.19$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting H6. Since the direct effect of Work Expectations on Intention to Apply is not significant, this indicates a full mediation effect through Social Media Use.

Conversely, Organizational Attractiveness does not mediate the relationship between Work Expectations and Intention to Apply ( $\beta = 0.08$ ;  $t = 1.67$ ;  $p = 0.09$ ), leading to the rejection of H7. Although Work Expectations strongly influence Organizational Attractiveness, this construct does not function as a mediating mechanism in driving job application intentions.

Overall, the results confirm that Work Expectations strongly influence

Organizational Attractiveness and Social Media Use; however, their impact on Intention to Apply occurs only through Social Media Use. These findings highlight that, in the context of Generation Z in Indonesia, social media serves as the key mechanism that translates work expectations into job application intentions, while organizational attractiveness does not directly trigger application behavior.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that work expectations do not have a direct effect on intention to apply among Generation Z in Indonesia. This suggests that work expectations do not function as a direct behavioral trigger but rather as an initial cognitive framework that shapes how candidates interpret and evaluate labor market information. From a theoretical perspective, this result extends the Theory of Planned Behavior by emphasizing that the relationship between beliefs and intentions is highly contextual and increasingly dependent on intervening mechanisms, particularly within information-rich digital recruitment environments. Among digital natives, work expectations tend to operate as an early-stage filtering mechanism in evaluating job opportunities, rather than as an immediate driver of application decisions (Nguyen Ngoc et al., 2022; Vieira et al., 2024). In this sense, intention formation is not instantaneous but emerges through a more complex process of information validation and cognitive alignment.

Furthermore, the finding that the effect of work expectations on intention to apply is fully mediated by social media use provides strong empirical support for Signaling Theory. This result demonstrates that work expectations are translated into application intentions only when candidates actively acquire and process credible organizational signals through engagement with social media. In line with the digital recruitment literature, organizational social media platforms function not merely as channels for information dissemination but as mechanisms through which perceptions of authenticity, clarity, and signal reliability are constructed and evaluated by candidates (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025b; Janssen & Rudeloff, 2025; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025; Janssen & Rudeloff, 2025). Thus, the full mediation observed in this study reinforces the role of social media use as a central psychological mechanism in shaping job application intentions among Generation Z, going beyond its traditional role as a communication tool.

In contrast, although work expectations have a strong and significant effect on organizational attractiveness, this construct does not mediate the

relationship with intention to apply. This finding challenges the classical assumption within the instrumental-symbolic framework, which posits that positive perceptions of organizational attributes will automatically lead to application behavior. In the context of digital recruitment, organizational attractiveness appears to function more as an evaluative judgment rather than a decisive factor capable of reducing uncertainty at the application stage. Without consistent and credible digital signals, positive evaluations alone may not be sufficient to motivate candidates to take action (Wu & Dineen, 2023; Pehlivanli, 2024). This indicates a shift in how organizational attractiveness operates in modern recruitment contexts, particularly among digitally oriented job seekers.

Empirical evidence from Southeast Asia further supports this interpretation, showing that perceptions of organizational attractiveness often remain at the cognitive evaluation stage and do not necessarily translate into actual application behavior when digital engagement is limited (Soeling et al., 2022; Nawakitphaitoon & Sooraksa, 2023). This highlights the importance of interactive and continuous communication strategies in bridging the gap between perception and action. In the absence of such engagement, candidates may perceive an organization as attractive but still refrain from applying due to unresolved uncertainties or insufficient informational cues.

The direct effect of social media use on intention to apply is found to be significant, although with a relatively small effect size. This finding reinforces the view that social media functions as a supporting factor within the broader career decision-making ecosystem rather than as a sole determinant. For Generation Z, job application decisions are gradual and cumulative, shaped by the interaction between personal expectations, perceived career risks, and the level of trust in organizational signals obtained through repeated digital interactions (Vieira et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Therefore, the small yet significant effect size reflects the role of social media as a contextual enhancer that strengthens decision-making processes, rather than acting as an independent behavioral trigger.

From a theoretical standpoint, the primary contribution of this study lies in strengthening the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Signaling Theory in explaining the formation of job application intentions among Generation Z within digital recruitment contexts. This study demonstrates that work expectations establish the initial evaluative framework in line with TPB, while social media operates as a signaling mechanism that enables these expectations to be translated into actual application intentions. By positioning social media use as the main mediating construct, this research extends the employer branding literature by highlighting that digital signal processing plays

a more decisive role than organizational attractiveness alone in shaping intention to apply among Generation Z.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that job application intention among Generation Z in Indonesia is not formed directly by work expectations or organizational attractiveness, but rather through a process of expectation validation facilitated by digital engagement. The most important insight of this research is that work expectations function as an initial evaluative framework that encourages candidates to engage with organizational social media, while social media use emerges as the key mechanism that effectively translates these expectations into intention to apply through full mediation. This finding highlights that, within digital recruitment contexts, the formation of application intentions is highly dependent on the quality of information processing and digital interaction. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by strengthening the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Signaling Theory, demonstrating that digital signal processing through social media plays a more decisive role than organizational attractiveness in shaping behavioral intentions among Generation Z. Accordingly, this research offers a refined understanding of employer branding by positioning social media not merely as a communication channel, but as a central psychological and behavioral mechanism in career decision-making.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture dynamic changes in perceptions and intentions over time, particularly in the rapidly evolving digital recruitment environment. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias and limit the objectivity of responses. Third, the sample is restricted to Generation Z individuals in Indonesia, which may constrain the generalizability of findings to other generational cohorts or cultural contexts. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ longitudinal designs to better understand the temporal dynamics of intention formation, incorporate experimental or mixed-method approaches to enrich causal interpretation, and explore additional moderating variables such as trust, perceived risk, or digital literacy. Expanding the research context across different countries or labor market conditions would also provide deeper insights into the generalizability and robustness of the proposed model.

## REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Ananda, P. J., & Santosa, A. (2024). Pengaruh E-Recruitment, Media Sosial, dan Employer Branding terhadap Minat Generasi Z untuk Melamar Pekerjaan. *Journal of Business and Halal Industry*, 1(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.47134/jbhi.v1i3.176>
- Anggrainy Wibowo, I., Winarno, A., & Fakhri, M. (2025). The Influence of E-Recruitment on the Intention of Gen Z to Apply: The Mediating Role of Employer Branding. *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 28, 021. <https://doi.org/10.28945/5518>
- Bowen, C.-C., Stevenor, B. A., & Davidson, S. G. (2021). How People Perceive Different Types of Social Media Screening and Their Behavioral Intention to Pursue Employment. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100089>
- Carpentier, M., Van Hoye, G., & Weijters, B. (2019). Attracting Applicants Through the Organization's Social Media Page: Signaling Employer Brand Personality. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103326>
- Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2011). Signaling Theory: A Review and Assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419>
- Davies, S., Nguyen, T., Stoermer, S., Froese, F. J., & Budhwar, P. (2025). Industry Image Perceptions and Organizational Attractiveness: Results of an International Survey. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 35(3), 613–634. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12582>
- Dijkmans, C., Kerkhof, P., Buyukcan-Tetik, A., & Beukeboom, C. (2015). Online Conversation and Corporate Reputation: A Two-Wave Longitudinal Study on the Effects of Exposure to the Social Media Activities of a Highly Interactive Company. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12132>
- Gallup. (2024). *Walton Family Foundation—Gallup Voices of Gen Z Study Year 2 Annual Survey Report*.
- Gandasari, D., Tjahjana, D., Dwidienawati, D., & Ichsan, M. (2024). How to Attract Talents? The Role of CSR, Employer Brand, Benefits and Career Development. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2323774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2323774>

- Ghorbanzadeh, D., Radhakrishnan, L. C., Prasad, K., Alkhayet, A., Yajid, M. S. A., & Dhaliwal, A. S. (2025a). Enhancing Intentions to Apply for Job Through Social Media: The Mediating Role of Employer Attractiveness and Person-Organization Fit. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-11-2024-0619>
- Gomes, D., & Neves, J. (2011). Organizational Attractiveness and Prospective Applicants' Intentions to Apply. *Personnel Review*, 40(6), 684–699. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483481111169634>
- Graczyk-Kucharska, M., Erickson, G. S., & the Charles A. Data Professor. (2020). A Person-Organization Fit Model of Generation Z: Preliminary Studies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, 16(4), 149–176. <https://doi.org/10.7341/20201645>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
- Hamdan, A., Shoaib, H. M., Alareeni, B., & Hamdan, R. (Eds.). (2023). *The Implementation of Smart Technologies for Business Success and Sustainability: During COVID-19 Crises in Developing Countries* (Vol. 216). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10212-7>
- Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring Attraction to Organizations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63(6), 986–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164403258403>
- Indra, I. R., & Widodoatmodjo, S. (2021). Analisa Strategi Employer Branding terhadap Minat Melamar Kerja. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis dan Kewirausahaan*, 5(4), 414. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jmbk.v5i4.12803>
- Janssen, H., & Rudeloff, C. (2025). Exploring the Role of Influencers in Shaping Employer Brands: A Comparative Study of Corporate and Third-Party Influencers. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 28(1), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41299-023-00177-9>
- Karácsony, P., Izsák, T., & Vasa, L. (2020). Attitudes of Z Generations to Job Searching Through Social Media. *Economics & Sociology*, 13(4), 227–240. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789X.2020/13-4/14>
- Kucherov, D., & Zhiltsova, E. (2021). Social Media in Employer Branding in FMCG in Russia: Millennials' Perspective. *Journal of East-West Business*, 27(2), 160–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10669868.2020.1862383>
- Lestari, L., Nurita, D., Yasmin, A., & Norsiva, R. I. (2024). Generation Z Career Planning: Is LinkedIn an Important Platform for Career Planning among Generation Z in Indonesia? *KnE Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i19.16487>

- Mohan, M. D., Sarfraz, I., Hewege, C., & Rajendran, D. (2018). An Exploration of Global Employability Skills: A Systematic Research Review. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 9(1), 63. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWOE.2018.10012435>
- Nainggolan, F. A., & Budiman, M. A. (2024). Analisis Potensi dan Resiko Bonus Demografi terhadap Pertumbuhan Ekonomi di Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi Indonesia*, 6.
- Nawakitphaitoon, K., & Sooraksa, N. (2023). Employer Image and Job Pursuit Intention in the New S-Curve Industries in Thailand: The Mediating Role of Organizational Attractiveness. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 13(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.14707/ajbr.230139>
- Nguyen Ngoc, T., Viet Dung, M., Rowley, C., & Pejić Bach, M. (2022). Generation Z Job Seekers' Expectations and Their Job Pursuit Intention: Evidence from Transition and Emerging Economy. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18479790221112548>
- Pehlivanli, E. A. (2024). Dynamics of Organisational Attractiveness and Perceived Attributes: Evidence from Turkish Construction Sector. *Organization, Technology and Management in Construction*, 16(1), 275–288. <https://doi.org/10.2478/otmcj-2024-0019>
- Priyadarshini, C., Kumar, Y., & Jha, R. (2017). Employer Attractiveness Through Social Media: A Phenomenological Study. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2663>
- Rani, I. H., Jalih, J. H., & Widyowati, L. A. (2023). Analyzing the Impact of Working Expectations on Intention to Apply in Indonesia: A Study on Gen Z College Graduate. *Jurnal Manajemen dan Pemasaran Jasa*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.25105/jmpj.v16i2.16558>
- Rasulong, I., Salam, R., Yusuf, M., & Abdullah, I. (2024). Implikasi Kepribadian Gen Z bagi Daya Saing Organisasi: Suatu Kajian Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen dan Bisnis*, 2(2), 13–20.
- Reis, I., Sousa, M. J., & Dionísio, A. (2021). Employer Branding as a Talent Management Tool: A Systematic Literature Revision. *Sustainability*, 13(19), 10698. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910698>
- Schreurs, B., Derous, E., Proost, K., & De Witte, K. (2010). The Relation Between Selection Expectations, Perceptions and Organizational Attraction: A Test of Competing Models. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 18(4), 447–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00527.x>

- Schroth, H. (2019). Are You Ready for Gen Z in the Workplace? *California Management Review*, 61(3), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125619841006>
- Sivertzen, A.-M., Nilsen, E. R., & Olafsen, A. H. (2013). Employer Branding: Employer Attractiveness and the Use of Social Media. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(7), 473–483. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0393>
- Soeling, P. D., Ajeng Arsanti, S. D., & Indriati, F. (2022). Organizational Reputation: Does It Mediate the Effect of Employer Brand Attractiveness on Intention to Apply in Indonesia? *Heliyon*, 8(4), e09208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09208>
- Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>
- Subbarao, N. V., Chhabra, B., & Mishra, M. (2023). Understanding Privacy Violation and Fairness Perception of Job Seekers Using Social Media. In *Palgrave Studies in Democracy, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Growth* (pp. 25–50). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-40439-9\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-40439-9_2)
- Vieira, J., Gomes Da Costa, C., & Santos, V. (2024). Talent Management and Generation Z: A Systematic Literature Review Through the Lens of Employer Branding. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(3), 49. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14030049>
- Wang, P., Wu, L., & McGinley, S. (2025). How and Why Commitment-Focused Hospitality Employee Recognitions Attract Growth-Minded Job Seekers: An Inspiration Theory Perspective. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 49(3), 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480231223152>
- Wijaya, C. N., Mustika, M. D., Bulut, S., & Bukhori, B. (2023). The Power of E-Recruitment and Employer Branding on Indonesian Millennials' Intention to Apply for a Job. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1062525>
- Wulur, L., & Mandagi, D. W. (2023). Employee Performance 2.0: Antecedents and Consequences of Gen Z Employees Performance. *Journal of Management & Business*, 6(2), 224–240.