

Generation Z's Intention to Join State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN): The Role of Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of employer branding, work-life balance, and work environment on Generation Z's intention to join Indonesian State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN). A quantitative approach was employed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The sample consisted of 200 Generation Z respondents aged 20–28 years who had participated in at least one BUMN recruitment process. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using purposive sampling. The results indicate that employer branding ($\beta = 0.432$; $p < 0.001$), work-life balance ($\beta = 0.395$; $p < 0.001$), and work environment ($\beta = 0.457$; $p < 0.001$) positively and significantly influence intention to join BUMN. Among the predictors, work environment has the strongest effect. Furthermore, the three variables simultaneously explain 55.1% of the variance in intention to join ($R^2 = 0.551$). These findings suggest that Generation Z evaluates prospective employers not only based on job security and compensation but also on organizational reputation, workplace flexibility, and supportive work environments. The study contributes to the literature on Generation Z career preferences in the public sector and provides practical implications for BUMN organizations in designing recruitment and talent management strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z's Intention to Join State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN): The Role of Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment

The rapid transformation of the labor market has significantly increased the presence of Generation Z in the workforce. Generation Z refers to individuals born and raised in the digital era who tend to be highly adaptive to technology and open to information (Schroth, 2019). Compared to previous generations, this generation is considered more selective in choosing workplaces and career paths (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In addition to financial considerations, Generation Z also places great importance on organizational values, work culture, flexibility, and the balance between professional and personal life (Vieira et al., 2024). These shifting preferences have encouraged organizations to better understand the expectations of young job seekers in order to attract and retain high-quality talent amid increasingly competitive labor market conditions.

In Indonesia, State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) face unique challenges in attracting Generation Z employees. BUMN institutions are often associated with rigid bureaucratic structures and less flexible work systems compared to private companies and startups. On the other hand, Generation Z tends to prefer dynamic, innovative, and flexible work environments. Nevertheless, BUMN companies play a strategic role in supporting national economic

development and therefore require competent and adaptive human resources. Thus, identifying the factors that influence Generation Z's intention to join BUMN organizations has become an important issue for both academics and practitioners.

One factor frequently associated with organizational attractiveness among young job seekers is employer branding. Employer branding refers to a company's efforts to create and communicate a positive image as an attractive workplace for prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Through employer branding, organizations convey their values, organizational culture, and employee work experience to prospective applicants. Prior research by Longgarini, Purnomo, and Wijaya (2023) found that employer branding positively influences job application intentions among individuals interested in working at Indonesian State-Owned Enterprises. Consistent with this, other studies have shown that employer branding can strengthen organizational attractiveness and enhance candidates' perceptions of the company (Theurer et al., 2018; Varghese & Deepa, 2023).

Another important factor influencing Generation Z's career preferences is work-life balance. Work-life balance reflects an individual's ability to manage work responsibilities while maintaining personal well-being (Wood et al., 2013). Previous research indicates that Generation Z highly values flexibility, psychological well-being, and self-fulfillment in the workplace (Vieira et al., 2024). Rahmawati and Putra (2024) reported that poor work-life balance can increase stress levels and reduce employee loyalty. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to implement flexible work arrangements, such as hybrid work systems and employee welfare programs, to enhance their attractiveness to young workers.

Furthermore, the work environment has also been identified as a factor influencing employee interest and engagement. A supportive work environment can enhance employee comfort, motivation, and productivity (Chandrasekar, 2011). The work environment encompasses not only physical facilities but also organizational culture, social interactions, and technological support systems (Hendriana et al., 2023). Fajri and Amelia (2023) found that a modern and collaborative work environment positively contributes to employee engagement while reducing turnover intention. As a generation that grew up in the digital era, Generation Z tends to prefer technologically advanced, flexible, inclusive, and innovation-oriented workplaces.

Although various studies have examined the influence of Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment on prospective employees' attraction, several research gaps remain. First, prior studies have shown inconsistent findings regarding the influence of each variable on Generation Z's work intentions. Second, most research has been conducted in private companies, startups, or non-governmental organizations, while research in the context of State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) remains relatively limited. Third, prior studies generally tested these variables separately or only combined two variables in a single conceptual model. Research that simultaneously examines Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment in explaining Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN in Indonesia is still scarce. Therefore, this study was conducted to address these gaps.

This study is grounded in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent et al. (2017). This theory explains that individual career decisions are influenced by interactions between personal factors, learning experiences, and perceptions of the environment and expected outcomes. In the context of this study, Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment are viewed as environmental factors that can shape Generation Z's perceptions of organizational attractiveness, thereby influencing their Intention to Join BUMN companies.

Based on the research problems and gaps identified, this study analyzes the influence of Employer Branding, Work–Life Balance, and Work Environment on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN in Indonesia, both partially and simultaneously, and identifies the variable with the most dominant influence.

The novelty of this study lies in the simultaneous examination of Employer Branding, Work–Life Balance, and Work Environment in explaining Generation Z's Intention to Join in the context of Indonesian BUMN using a PLS-SEM approach. Unlike prior studies generally conducted in the private sector that tested variables separately, this study integrates the three variables into a single structural model to explain Generation Z's career preferences in public sector organizations. This study contributes theoretically by expanding the understanding of factors influencing Generation Z's Intention to Join public sector organizations, particularly BUMN. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as input for BUMN companies in designing Employer Branding strategies, Work–Life Balance policies, and Work Environment management that better align with Generation Z's characteristics.

Based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and prior research findings, the hypotheses proposed in this study are:

H1: Employer Branding has a positive effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN.

H2: Work–Life Balance has a positive effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN.

H3: Work Environment has a positive effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS application to examine the relationships among Employer Branding, Work–Life Balance, Work Environment, and Generation Z's Intention to Join State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) in Indonesia. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study aims to test causal relationships among latent constructs simultaneously within a structural model. PLS-SEM was employed due to its ability to accommodate complex models, analyze latent variables measured through multiple indicators, and remain robust against non-normal data distributions and moderate sample sizes.

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z individuals in Indonesia who had participated in at least one BUMN recruitment or selection process, regardless of whether they were accepted or not. In this study, Generation Z refers to individuals aged between 20 and 28 years as of 2025. This population was selected because the study focuses on understanding the perceptions and work preferences of young job seekers toward BUMN organizations.

The research sample was determined using purposive sampling to ensure that respondents met the study's criteria. Respondents were considered eligible if they were aged between 20 and 28 years, had applied for or participated in a BUMN recruitment process, and were willing to complete the questionnaire honestly and completely. Based on the 10-times rule in PLS-SEM, the minimum sample size was determined by the highest number of structural paths leading to a construct. Since

the research model has three structural paths leading to the Intention to Join construct, the minimum sample size is 30 respondents. However, to enhance statistical power, parameter estimation stability, and reliability of the analysis results, this study utilized 200 respondents.

Respondent characteristics were analyzed descriptively based on gender, age, educational level, and experience in BUMN recruitment. Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a general overview of the respondents' profiles.

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via digital platforms and social media commonly used by Generation Z. All measurement items were adapted from previously validated research instruments and then adjusted to the context of State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) in Indonesia. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The Employer Branding variable was adapted from concepts and instruments developed by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Highhouse et al. (2003), and Tanwar & Kumar (2019). This construct was measured using six indicators reflecting company reputation, organizational attractiveness, organizational value congruence, career development opportunities, employer communication, and organizational attractiveness to prospective employees.

The Work–Life Balance variable was adapted from Greenhaus & Allen (2011), Wood et al. (2013), and Tanoto and Go Tami (2024). This variable was measured through five indicators related to work flexibility, balance between work and personal life, organizational support for employee well-being, and workload management.

The Work Environment variable was adapted from Chandrasekar (2011), Dul et al. (2011), and Robbins & Judge (2017). This construct was measured using six indicators encompassing aspects of the physical environment, social support, organizational culture, leadership style, work facilities, and technological support in the workplace.

The Intention to Join variable was adapted from Highhouse et al. (2003) and related research on job application intentions in organizations. This variable was measured using five indicators reflecting application intent, preference for BUMN, interest in pursuing a career at BUMN, intent to recommend BUMN as a workplace, and perception of long-term career prospects.

Table 1. Research Instrument Sources

Variable	Number of Indicators	Source
Employer Branding	6	Backhaus & Tikoo (2004); Highhouse et al. (2003); Tanwar & Kumar (2019)
Work–Life Balance	5	Greenhaus & Allen (2011); Wood et al. (2013); Tanoto & Go Tami (2024)
Work Environment	6	Chandrasekar (2011); Dul et al. (2011); Robbins & Judge (2017)

Intention to Join	5	Highhouse et al. (2003)
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The collected data were analyzed using PLS-SEM procedures through SmartPLS. Analysis was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). Outer model evaluation included testing convergent validity through outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as well as reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability. An indicator is considered valid if it has an outer loading value > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 , while a construct is considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values are > 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022).

After the measurement model met the specified criteria, inner model evaluation was conducted by analyzing path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping procedures. Statistical significance was assessed using t-statistics and p-values at a 5% significance level.

The use of PLS-SEM in this study enables a comprehensive understanding of the direct and simultaneous influence of Employer Branding, Work–Life Balance, and Work Environment on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN companies in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
EB1	.844	Valid
EB2	.807	Valid
EB3	.818	Valid
EB4	.835	Valid
EB5	.838	Valid
EB6	.825	Valid
LK1	.820	Valid
LK2	.836	Valid
LK3	.801	Valid
LK4	.826	Valid
LK5	.834	Valid
LK6	.811	Valid
MB1	.767	Valid
MB2	.800	Valid
MB3	.823	Valid
MB4	.772	Valid
MB5	.786	Valid
WLB1	.855	Valid
WLB2	.861	Valid
WLB3	.883	Valid
WLB4	.873	Valid

WLB5	.893	Valid
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Source: Processed Data (2026)

The validity test was conducted using outer loading values generated through SmartPLS analysis. The results show that all indicators obtained outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its respective latent construct (Hair et al., 2022). Employer Branding indicators had loading values ranging from 0.807 to 0.844, Work–Life Balance from 0.855 to 0.893, Work Environment from 0.801 to 0.836, and Intention to Join from 0.767 to 0.823. Thus, all indicators are declared valid and suitable for further analysis.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</i>
Employer Branding	0.909	0.917	0.929	0.685
Work Environment	0.904	0.910	0.926	0.675
Intention to Join	0.849	0.850	0.892	0.624
Work–Life Balance	0.922	0.924	0.941	0.762

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The reliability test results show that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, thus meeting the reliability criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2022). The Work–Life Balance variable has the highest Composite Reliability value of 0.941 with an AVE of 0.762. Meanwhile, Intention to Join has the lowest reliability value compared to other constructs, but still exceeds the required minimum threshold. In addition, all AVE values exceed 0.50, indicating that each construct has good convergent validity.

R-Square (R²)

Table 4. R-Square Test Results

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Intention to Join	0.551	0.544

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Based on Table 4, the R-Square value for the Intention to Join variable is 0.551. This result indicates that 55.1% of the variance in Generation Z's intention to join State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) can be explained by Employer Branding, Work–Life Balance, and Work Environment. Meanwhile, the remaining 44.9% is influenced by other variables outside this research model. Additionally, the adjusted R-Square value of 0.544 indicates that the model maintains adequate predictive capability after adjustment for the number of predictors used. According to Hair et al. (2017), an R² value of 0.551 falls within the moderate category, meaning the model has a reasonably good explanatory power.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Employer Branding terhadap Intention to Join	0.432	0.432	0.045	9.522	0.000
Work Environment terhadap Intention to	0.457	0.461	0.047	9.708	0.000

Join					
Work–Life Balance terhadap Intention to Join	0.395	0.395	0.046	8.559	0.000

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all independent variables have a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's intention to join BUMN. Work Environment shows the strongest influence with a path coefficient of 0.457 and t-statistic of 9.708. Employer Branding ranks second with a coefficient of 0.432 and t-statistic of 9.522, while Work–Life Balance has a coefficient of 0.395 and t-statistic of 8.559. All variable relationships produced p-values below 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Thus, all hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted. These findings suggest that a strong employer brand, adequate work-life balance policies, and a supportive work environment can significantly increase Generation Z's intention to work in BUMN companies.

Discussion

Employer Branding on Intention to Join BUMN

The results indicate that Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN, with a path coefficient of 0.432 and t-statistic of 9.522 ($p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the more positive a company's image as an employer, the higher Generation Z's intention to join that organization.

This finding supports research by Longgarini et al. (2023), who found that employer branding positively influences job application intentions toward State-Owned Enterprises in Indonesia. The results also align with Theurer et al. (2018), who argued that employer branding plays an important role in shaping prospective employees' positive perceptions of an organization. From a theoretical perspective, employer branding helps organizations build workplace attractiveness through company reputation, career development opportunities, organizational culture, and values offered to prospective employees.

For Generation Z, these factors are important considerations in choosing a workplace, as this generation tends to seek organizations that not only offer job stability but also self-development opportunities and a work environment aligned with their personal values. Therefore, BUMN companies need to strengthen their employer branding strategies through effective organizational communication, enhanced company reputation, and more transparent dissemination of information regarding career opportunities and talent development.

Work–Life Balance on Intention to Join BUMN

The results indicate that Work–Life Balance has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN, with a path coefficient of 0.395 and t-statistic of 8.559 ($p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the better an individual's perception of the work-life balance offered by an organization, the higher their intention to join that company.

This finding is consistent with research by Rahmawati and Putra (2024), who found that work–life balance contributes to increased employee satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, Vieira et al. (2024) explained that Generation Z places high importance on work flexibility, psychological well-being, and quality of life, making work-life balance a key consideration in choosing employment.

These findings indicate that BUMN organizations need to pay attention to policies supporting employee work-life balance, such as flexible working hours, mental health support,

and employee welfare programs. Such policies can enhance organizational attractiveness in the eyes of Generation Z and strengthen BUMN's position in competing for quality young talent.

Work Environment on Intention to Join BUMN

The results indicate that Work Environment has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN, with a path coefficient of 0.457 and t-statistic of 9.708 ($p < 0.001$). This coefficient value is the highest among all variables, indicating that Work Environment is the most dominant factor influencing Generation Z's intention to join BUMN.

This finding is consistent with research by Fajri and Amelia (2023), who found that a positive work environment can enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover intention. The results also support Hendriana et al. (2023), who argued that a modern work environment supported by positive organizational culture and adequate technology can create a better work experience for the younger generation.

These findings suggest that Generation Z considers not only financial aspects when choosing employment, but also workplace comfort, social relationships, organizational culture, and available technological support. Therefore, BUMN companies need to create collaborative, inclusive, and technologically adaptive work environments to enhance organizational attractiveness for Generation Z prospective employees.

Simultaneous Influence of Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment

Simultaneously, Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment were able to explain 55.1% of the variation in Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN ($R^2 = 0.551$). Meanwhile, 44.9% of the variation in Intention to Join is influenced by other factors outside the research model. These results indicate that the three variables have a sufficiently strong contribution in shaping Generation Z's career preferences.

This finding supports Social Cognitive Career Theory proposed by Lent et al. (2017), which explains that career decisions are influenced by individuals' perceptions of the environment, their experiences, and expectations of outcomes to be obtained. In the context of this study, employer branding, work-life balance, and work environment serve as environmental factors that shape Generation Z's perceptions of organizational attractiveness.

Therefore, BUMN companies need to implement integrated strategies in attracting young talent, not only through enhancing organizational reputation but also through providing a supportive work environment and policies that prioritize employee work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that Employer Branding, Work-Life Balance, and Work Environment have a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN. Work Environment is the variable with the most dominant influence ($\beta = 0.457$), followed by Employer Branding ($\beta = 0.432$) and Work-Life Balance ($\beta = 0.395$). Furthermore, the three variables simultaneously explain 55.1% of the variation in Generation Z's Intention to Join BUMN.

These research findings indicate that BUMN companies need to strengthen their employer branding strategies, implement policies that support work-life balance, and create modern, collaborative, and supportive work environments. These efforts are essential to enhancing organizational attractiveness in the eyes of Generation Z and strengthening BUMN's capacity to attract and retain high-quality young talent.

This study provides theoretical contributions to the development of human resource management and career behavior literature by demonstrating that organizational factors play an important role in shaping Generation Z's work preferences. The research findings also support Social Cognitive Career Theory, which explains that career decisions are influenced by individuals' perceptions of the environment and expected outcomes.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of respondents was limited to 200 individuals, so the generalization of results should be made carefully. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, thus unable to capture changes in respondents' perceptions over time. Third, the research model was only able to explain 55.1% of the variation in Intention to Join, leaving 44.9% influenced by other factors outside the model.

Future research is suggested to add other variables such as compensation, organizational culture, leadership style, career development opportunities, and digital workplace innovation. In addition, future studies can expand the research scope to include private sector companies, startups, and multinational corporations, as well as employ longitudinal designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of changes in Generation Z's career preferences.

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