

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BASED EMPLOYER BRANDING, JOB SEARCH SELF-EFFICACY, AND CAREER CENTER SUPPORT ON JOB SEEKING INTENTION AMONG GENERATION Z STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS ISLAM RIAU

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media-based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career center support on the job seeking intention of Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Riau. Using a quantitative explanatory survey design, data were collected from 228 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The measurement and structural models were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that the model explains 70.5% of the variance in job seeking intention, indicating substantial predictive power. Social media-based employer branding emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by job search self-efficacy with a medium effect, while career center support shows a smaller yet significant influence. These findings highlight the central role of digital employer communication and personal confidence in shaping students' readiness to engage in job-search activities, while institutional support functions as an enabling factor. The study contributes to the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Career Theory and offers practical implications for universities, employers, and career-service providers.

Keywords : Employer Branding; Job Search Self-Efficacy; Career Center Support; Job Seeking Intention; Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the labor market in the digital era characterized by intense competition and increasing uncertainty has made the school-to-work transition more challenging for university students. Students in Management and Human Resource Management (HRM) programs occupy a dual position: they are trained to design HR policies while simultaneously being required to navigate job-search strategies effectively. In the context of rising youth unemployment and heightened competition for employment, strengthening job seeking intention has become a critical issue for individuals, universities, and employers.

Theoretically, job seeking intention is explained through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). (Ajzen, 1991) argues that intention represents motivational factors that drive individuals to perform a behavior. In the career context, intention reflects students' readiness to engage in job-search activities such as seeking vacancies, preparing résumés, participating in selection processes, and submitting applications. Within TPB, intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, all of which are influenced by psychological and social factors.

TPB is further enriched by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett. SCCT highlights the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental support in forming career interest, choices, and persistence (Lent, Brown, &

Hackett, 1994). This framework explains how self-beliefs, learning experiences, and institutional support—such as career-center services collectively shape students' job seeking intention.

Externally, technological advancement and digital communication have transformed how organizations interact with potential applicants through employer branding. (Ambler & Barrow, 1996) define employer branding as a package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits offered by an organization. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) emphasize employer branding as a strategic process for building organizational identity and differentiation. Contemporary employer-branding practices increasingly rely on social-media platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok to showcase workplace culture, organizational values, and employee testimonials—key reference points for Generation Z in evaluating employer attractiveness.

Internally, an essential construct that explains job-search behavior is job search self-efficacy. Based on (Bandura, 1997) theory, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific actions. (Saks, 2006) adapts this concept into job search self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one's ability to carry out job-search behaviors effectively. Meta-analytic findings by (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001) show that self-efficacy is strongly related to the intensity and persistence of job-search activities and to employment outcomes. Among Generation Z students, this belief functions as a psychological asset that enables them to translate knowledge and skills into concrete actions.

In addition to these external and internal factors, career-center support within universities also plays a substantial role. Career centers provide career counseling, résumé training, interview simulations, internship information, job fairs, and campus-recruitment activities. These services align with the SCCT concept of environmental supports, which enhance self-efficacy, strengthen positive outcome expectations, and encourage adaptive career behaviors. Empirical evidence indicates that students who actively utilize career-center services tend to have clearer career plans and higher readiness for entering the job market. At the Universitas Islam Riau, such career-center programs potentially influence students' perceptions and intentions related to the job-search process.

Although employer branding on social media, job search self-efficacy, and career-center support have been widely examined individually, research that integrates these three variables into a comprehensive model to explain Generation Z students' job seeking intention—particularly in Management and HRM programs—remains limited. Prior studies often focus solely on the relationship between employer branding and intention to apply, while research on job search self-efficacy typically targets graduates or active job seekers. Meanwhile, career-center support is frequently treated merely as contextual background rather than as a measurable construct. This

gap is particularly relevant within Islamic-based universities such as the Universitas Islam Riau.

Integrating TPB and SCCT provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding how these constructs interact. Employer branding influences attitudes and outcome expectations; job search self-efficacy is closely related to perceived behavioral control and forms a core component of SCCT; and career-center support functions as contextual reinforcement that strengthens self-efficacy and career readiness. Thus, a model incorporating social-media-based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career-center support as predictors of job seeking intention offers a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z students' preparedness to enter the labor market.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the influence of social-media-based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career-center support on the job seeking intention of Generation Z students at the Universitas Islam Riau. The study assesses the individual and combined effects of these variables. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the HRM and career-psychology literature by proposing an integrative model that incorporates employer branding, self-efficacy, and institutional support within the frameworks of TPB and SCCT. Practically, the findings may inform study-program managers, career-center practitioners, and HR professionals in designing more effective employer-branding strategies and career-development services for Generation Z students.

METHODOLOGY (Material and Method)

This study employs a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design. The quantitative approach is selected because the research focuses on examining the influence of multiple independent variables on a dependent variable in a measurable and objective manner through hypothesis testing. Creswell states that quantitative inquiry "relies on numerical measurement and statistical analysis to describe relationships among variables" (Creswell, 2014). The survey design used is cross-sectional, meaning that data are collected once within a specific period from respondents who meet the research criteria (Sugiyono, 2017). An explanatory design is chosen because the study not only describes a phenomenon but also explains the causal relationships between social-media-based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career-center support with the job seeking intention of Generation Z students.

The population of this study comprises all active students at Universitas Islam Riau (UIR) who belong to Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). The sample is determined using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: active UIR students, falling within the Generation Z age range, and having used social media to access information about jobs, companies, or career-center activities. This technique is selected because

it allows the researcher to apply specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The sample size follows the guideline by (J F Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), which recommends a minimum of 5–10 respondents per indicator for SEM analysis; therefore, this study targets approximately 200 respondents.

Data are collected using a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), which is widely used in behavioral research (Sugiyono, 2017). The instrument is developed from the employer branding scales of (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016), the job search self-efficacy scale by (Saks & Ashforth, 1999), the career-center support construct derived from the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994), and the job seeking intention items adapted from the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The questionnaire draft undergoes pilot testing and expert review to ensure content validity, while internal reliability for each construct is evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha with a minimum threshold of 0.70 (J F Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022).

The collected data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt note that PLS-SEM is suitable for “complex models, moderate sample sizes, and data that do not fully meet normality assumptions” (Joseph F Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2019). The analysis consists of two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). In the measurement model stage, the researcher assesses convergent validity through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and/or the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), and internal reliability through Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability, with 0.70 as the minimum acceptable benchmark (Joseph F Hair et al., 2019). Once the constructs satisfy validity and reliability requirements, the structural model is assessed by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients, statistical significance based on bootstrapping t-statistics, as well as effect size (f^2).

The results generated from the PLS-SEM analysis are presented in the findings and discussion section to explain the extent to which social-media-based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career-center support influence the job seeking intention of Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Riau.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The empirical analysis was conducted on 228 respondents, all of whom are Generation Z

students enrolled at Universitas Islam Riau. The sample reflects a cross-faculty composition, with the largest proportion coming from the Faculty of Economics and Business, followed by students from Agriculture, Psychology, Social and Political Sciences, Communication, Education, Islamic Studies, Law, Engineering, and a smaller group from postgraduate programs. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slightly higher number of female respondents than male, and the vast majority are undergraduate (S1) students. Patterns of social media use for career-related purposes indicate that most respondents use social media with moderate frequency to search for information about jobs, companies, or career events, confirming their profile as digital natives who naturally integrate social media into their career exploration (Dimock, 2019).

Table 1 Demographic Respondent

	Gender		Grand Total
	Male	Female	
Faculty			
Faculty Agama Islam	7	10	17
Faculty Ekonomi dan Bisnis	37	40	77
Faculty Hukum	9	7	16
Faculty Ilmu dan Keguruan Pendidikan	9	8	17
Faculty Ilmu dan Politik	7	11	18
Faculty Ilmu Komunikasi	7	11	18
Faculty Pertanian	13	10	23
Faculty Psikologi	8	12	20
Faculty Teknik	8	8	16
PostGraduate	4	2	6
Grade			
Frequency Use social media For Job Seeking			
S1	106	118	224
>5 kali	8	8	16
1 kali	39	41	80
2- 4 kali	59	69	128
S2	3	1	4
1 kali	3	1	4
Grand Total	109	119	228

Evaluasi Model Pengukuran

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model evaluation. All indicators show outer loadings between 0.810 and 0.906, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 and indicates that each item adequately reflects its underlying latent construct (J F Hair et al., 2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are also satisfactory, amounting to 0.686 for Career Center Support (CCS), 0.690 for Social Media Based Employer Branding (EB), 0.779 for Job Seeking Intention (JSI), and 0.724 for Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSS). These values, all above 0.50, show that more than half of the variance in each set of indicators is explained by its latent construct, confirming convergent validity (J F Hair et al., 2010). Internal consistency

reliability is likewise strong, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.886 to 0.905 and composite reliability values between 0.916 and 0.934, all well above the recommended minimum of 0.70. These results indicate that the items adapted from (Ajzen, 1991), (Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016) are internally consistent and reliable for measuring the four constructs in this study.

Table 2 Construct Validity and Reliability Results (AVE, CR, α)

Construct	Item	Outer loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Rho a	Rho C
CCS	CCS1	0.810	0.686	0.886	0.890	0.916
	CCS2	0.831				
	CCS3	0.844				
	CCS4	0.833				
	CCS5	0.823				
EB	EB1	0.834	0.690	0.888	0.891	0.918
	EB2	0.871				
	EB3	0.824				
	EB4	0.812				
	EB5	0.812				
JSI	JSI1	0.894	0.779	0.905	0.907	0.934
	JSI2	0.880				
	JSI3	0.906				
	JSI4	0.850				
JSS	JSS1	0.828	0.724	0.905	0.906	0.929
	JSS2	0.870				
	JSS3	0.873				
	JSS4	0.869				
	JSS5	0.815				

Validitas Diskriminan

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait Monotrait ratio (HTMT), as summarized in Table 3. The HTMT values for all pairs of constructs range from 0.733 to 0.892, with the lowest value observed between CCS and JSI and the highest between EB and JSI. All values remain below the 0.90 cut-off commonly used as a criterion for adequate discriminant validity in PLS-SEM (J F Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). This indicates that, although the constructs are conceptually related, they are empirically distinguishable from one another. In theoretical terms, this is consistent with the distinction made in the Theory of Planned Behavior between attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and intentions (Ajzen, 1991) and with Social Cognitive Career Theory's differentiation between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual supports (Lent et al., 1994).

Table 3 Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT)

	CCS	EB	JSI	JSS
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CCS				
EB	0.776			
JSI	0.733	0.892		
JSS	0.768	0.882	0.865	

Pengujian Model Struktural dan Pembahasan Hipotesis

The structural model results in Table 4 show that the adjusted R-square for Job Seeking Intention is 0.705, indicating that the combination of EB, JSS, and CCS explains approximately 70.5% of the variance in job seeking intention among Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Riau. In behavioral research, an R^2 above 0.50 is generally regarded as moderate to substantial, so this value suggests that the model has strong explanatory power and that the three predictors are highly relevant for explaining students' intentions to engage in job search activities (J F Hair et al., 2022). At the level of individual paths, all three relationships are positive and statistically significant. Career center support has a positive but relatively small effect on job seeking intention ($\beta = 0.106$; $p = 0.031$; $f^2 = 0.018$), meaning that students who perceive stronger support from the university career center through counseling, CV workshops, job information, and job fairs tend to report higher intentions to search for work, although the magnitude of this influence is modest. This finding is in line with SCCT, which positions contextual supports as important yet often indirect facilitators of career behavior via self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994)

Social media based employer branding emerges as the strongest predictor of job seeking intention ($\beta = 0.450$; $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 0.232$). The more positively students perceive companies' employer branding communicated via social media through content on work culture, career opportunities, and employee testimonials the stronger their intention to actively engage in job search. Within the TPB framework, this reflects the role of employer branding in shaping favorable attitudes toward entering the labor market and applying for jobs (Ajzen, 1991) and is consistent with prior evidence that employer branding significantly influences intention to apply and other job-related intentions, especially when mediated by social media (Sivertzen et al., 2013). Job search self-efficacy also has a positive and significant effect on job seeking intention ($\beta = 0.354$; $p = 0.001$; $f^2 = 0.144$), representing a medium effect size: students who feel more confident in their ability to perform job search tasks finding vacancies, preparing applications, attending interviews, and building networks report stronger intentions to engage in those activities. This finding is fully consistent with SCCT and the broader job search literature, which identify self-efficacy as a key predictor of job search intensity, persistence, and success (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006), and with TPB's concept of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictors range from 2.148 to 2.998, well below the common

threshold of 5, indicating no problematic multicollinearity and allowing the unique contribution of each construct to be interpreted with confidence (Joseph F Hair et al., 2019) Taken together, these results show that a model integrating social media based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career center support within the TPB SCCT framework provides a robust explanation of job seeking intention among Generation Z students in an Islamic private university context: digital employer messages and personal confidence are the most direct drivers of intention, while institutional support plays a complementary enabling role.

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficient, t, p, Decision)

Hypothesis	Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t value	P values	Bias	Confidence Interval		VIF	Decision	R-square adjusted	f-square
							5%	95%				
H1	CCS -> JSI	0.106	0.057	1.862	0.031	0.007	0.021	0.205	2.148	Supported	0.705	0.018
H2	EB -> JSI	0.450	0.110	4.104	0.000	0.000	0.264	0.625	2.998	Supported		0.232
H3	JSS -> JSI	0.354	0.118	3.006	0.000	-0.006	0.166	0.549	2.982	Supported		0.144

Discussion

The findings show that social media based employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career center support together explain a substantial proportion of the variance in job seeking intention among Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Riau, with employer branding emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by job search self-efficacy and then career center support. This configuration is theoretically coherent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, in which attitudes and perceived behavioural control are key determinants of intention (Ajzen, 1991), and with more recent evidence that extended TPB models remain effective for predicting student intentions in contemporary contexts (Fan et al., 2021). Job search self-efficacy behaves as expected within Social Cognitive Career Theory, which places self-efficacy at the core of career interests, choices, and persistence (Lent et al., 1994), and aligns with empirical findings that self-efficacy is closely related to job search effort, employability, and transition outcomes (Guan et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2021; Saks, 2006). Career center support, although weaker in effect, is conceptually consistent with SCCT's notion of contextual supports as environmental factors that facilitate, rather than dominate, the formation of intention and fits with recent work showing that well-designed university career services can ease students' transition from university to work (Elia, 2021).

Beyond theory testing, these results offer several conceptual refinements that are particularly relevant for understanding Generation Z. The study extends employer branding

research, which has often focused on intention to apply to a single target organisation, by framing job seeking intention as a broader tendency to engage in a series of job search activities across multiple potential employers an approach that resonates with recent studies on Gen Z job preferences and application behaviour in Indonesia (Wibowo, Winarno, & Fakhri, 2025; Widiati, 2022). Positioning job search self-efficacy among students still in the final stages of their studies at an Islamic regional university adds contextual nuance to a literature that has largely centred on unemployed job seekers or fresh graduates. At the same time, career center support is operationalised as a latent construct measured from students' perceptions and linked directly to intention, in line with contemporary views that career services should be treated as active levers of employability rather than passive institutional background (Elia, 2021). Taken together, the dominance of employer branding and self-efficacy, alongside the more modest but still significant role of career center support, suggests a refined theoretical view: for Generation Z, institutional support is best understood as a contextual enabler that strengthens job search self-efficacy and amplifies the influence of digital employer branding, within an integrated TPB SCCT framework that situates job seeking intention at the intersection of personal agency, digital information flows, and university-based career ecosystems.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study shows that the job seeking intention of Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Riau is significantly influenced by a combination of individual, organisational, and institutional factors. The structural model is able to explain approximately 70.5% of the variance in job seeking intention, indicating that social mediabased employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career center support are relevant and substantial predictors of students' readiness to enter the world of work. In particular, social media based employer branding emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by job search self-efficacy with a medium effect, while career center support exerts a positive influence with a relatively small but still significant effect. These findings underscore that the way organisations present themselves as workplaces through social media, students' confidence in performing job search activities, and the career support provided by the university jointly shape the strength of students' intention to engage actively in job search processes.

Theoretically, these results confirm the relevance of integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Career Theory in explaining the career behaviour of young people. Social media based employer branding functions as a source for shaping attitudes and expectations toward organisations, job search self-efficacy captures the dimensions of self-efficacy and

perceived behavioral control, while career center support represents contextual support surrounding the transition from the university environment to the world of work. The configuration of effects found where employer branding and self-efficacy are more dominant than career center support illustrates that for highly digital Generation Z, messages consumed through social media and personal confidence exert a more direct driving force on job seeking intention than general institutional support. At the same time, the fact that career center support remains significant indicates that the role of the university as an institution is still important, particularly as an ecosystem that can strengthen self-efficacy and connect students with relevant employers.

The practical implications of these findings demand more concrete action from various stakeholders. For the university and its career center, the results suggest the need to reposition career services from merely providing information to becoming an “engine” that strengthens students’ intention and capacity for job search. Operationally, the career center should: (1) design practice-based programmes such as CV clinics, interview simulations, and job search bootcamps explicitly aimed at enhancing job search self-efficacy; (2) integrate employer branding into the university’s official communication strategy, for example through regularly curated career content on university social media that showcases partner companies, alumni testimonials, and behind-the-scenes depictions of working life; and (3) build strategic collaboration schemes with companies, whereby the career center is not only an intermediary for vacancies but a co-creator of campus recruitment programmes and digital career content. For organisations, the finding that social media based employer branding is the strongest predictor means that companies need to develop content strategies that consistently communicate work values, development opportunities, and work climate that are relevant to Generation Z, rather than merely posting vacancies. For students, the results imply the need for active engagement in two areas: developing job search self-efficacy through participation in training, internships, and professional networking; and critically utilising social media not only as entertainment but as a space to observe employer branding, map opportunities, and plan career steps. Thus, the concrete action that follows from this study is the strengthening of synergy among three parties university, employers, and students to turn social media and career services into a structured transition-to-work ecosystem, rather than a spontaneous and purely individual process.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design renders the findings a snapshot in time, so the dynamics of changes in job seeking intention cannot be adequately captured. The use of purposive sampling at a single Islamic higher education institution in one geographical region limits the generalisability of the findings to universities with different characteristics. In addition, all variables were measured using self-report instruments, so

perception bias and social desirability bias may still be present. The research model also focuses only on the direct effects of employer branding, job search self-efficacy, and career center support, without incorporating potential mediating or moderating roles of other variables such as employability, career adaptability, family support, or local labour market conditions, which could meaningfully enrich understanding of how job seeking intention is formed.

Based on these limitations, the main suggestion for future research is to develop designs that are richer both methodologically and contextually. Subsequent studies may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how specific interventions such as training programmes to strengthen job search self-efficacy, intensive collaboration between career centers and companies to build social media based employer branding, or coaching-based career mentoring affect the dynamics of job seeking intention over time. Cross-institutional and cross-regional studies, including comparisons between public universities and religious-based universities, are also important to examine whether the patterns of influence of employer branding, self-efficacy, and career center support are consistent or vary across different contexts. Furthermore, integrating objective behavioural indicators, such as the actual number of job applications submitted or participation in recruitment activities, with perceptual data could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how job seeking intention is translated into real actions, while at the same time strengthening the empirical basis for the development of career behaviour theory and for the design of policies and programmes supporting students' transition into the labour market.

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