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Research Article

Employer Branding, Corporate Social Responsibility and Students' Intention to Apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program: The Mediating Role of Corporate Reputation

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Abstract. This study examines students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program by analyzing the role of employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and corporate reputation. The research was conducted among university students in Bandar Lampung because internship programs have become an important bridge between higher education and employment readiness. The main problem addressed in this study is how organizational attractiveness and social responsibility influence students' application intention, both directly and indirectly through corporate reputation. This study used a quantitative survey design with purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings show that employer branding significantly affects students' intention to apply and corporate reputation. Corporate social responsibility also significantly affects intention to apply and corporate reputation. In addition, corporate reputation significantly affects intention to apply. The mediation results indicate that corporate reputation mediates the effect of employer branding on intention to apply, but does not mediate the effect of corporate social responsibility on intention to apply. These findings suggest that employer branding and corporate reputation are key factors in increasing students' interest in internship programs, while CSR should be communicated more directly in relation to student development and internship benefits.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation; Corporate Social Responsibility; Employer Branding; Intention to Apply; Internship Program; Ministry of Manpower; University Students.

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1. Introduction

The transition from higher education to employment has become increasingly challenging as the global labour market is shaped by digital transformation, economic uncertainty, demographic change, and the green transition. The World Economic Forum (2025) explains that these macrotrends are expected to transform jobs and skills toward 2030, requiring future workers to develop adaptability, technological literacy, analytical thinking, and career readiness. (The International Labour Organization, 2024) also emphasizes that youth employment remains a major global concern because young people often experience difficulties in entering decent work due to limited work experience and skills mismatch. In this context, internship programs have become an important bridge for university students to strengthen employability, obtain practical experience, and prepare themselves for professional careers.

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program provides a strategic platform for university graduates and students to gain structured workplace experience before entering the labour market. The Ministry of Manpower Regulation Number 8 of 2025 states that the internship program is intended to improve human resource competence, prepare higher education graduates for the world of work, and expand employment opportunities.

The Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia (2025) also promotes MagangHub as a platform that helps participants find internship opportunities, improve skills, gain real work experience, and prepare for professional careers. Therefore, understanding students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program is important because internship participation is not only influenced by program availability, but also by students' perceptions of the organizations involved in the program.

Employer branding plays an important role in shaping students' perceptions of whether an organization is attractive as a place to learn, grow, and develop career-related competencies. Thang & Trang (2024) found that employer branding has a positive relationship with organizational image and reputation, which subsequently influences job seekers' intention to apply. Halová & Müller (2024) argue that Generation Z applicants tend to evaluate employers through organizational reputation, employer image, development opportunities, and communication channels that are relevant to their preferences. In the Indonesian human resource context, Febrianty, Pratama, et al. (2024) also highlight that flexible and adaptive workplace policies are increasingly important in shaping employee experience and organizational attractiveness. These arguments indicate that employer branding can become a strategic signal for students when they evaluate whether an internship program can support their learning needs and future career goals.

Corporate social responsibility is another important factor that can influence students' intention to apply because CSR reflects the ethical, social, and environmental commitment of an organization. Thanh et al. (2024) show that CSR can influence young individuals' intention to apply for a job because socially responsible organizations are perceived as more reputable and attractive. (Song et al., 2024) explain that CSR affects job pursuit intention through job seekers' perceptions of employer prosocial orientation, value congruence, and employer attractiveness. In the local context, Febrianty, Pratama, et al. (2024) demonstrate that community empowerment through ecopreneurship reflects a form of social contribution that can strengthen organizational value in society. Thus, CSR may increase students' interest in applying for internship programs because students tend to prefer organizations that are not only professionally managed but also socially responsible.

Corporate reputation functions as an intervening mechanism that connects employer branding and CSR with students' intention to apply. Thang & Trang (2024) explain that organizational image and reputation significantly influence job seekers' intention to apply because reputation reduces uncertainty and strengthens confidence in the organization. Thanh et al. (2024) also demonstrate that corporate reputation can mediate the relationship between CSR and intention to apply among young individuals in an emerging economy. In relation to students' decision-making, H. R. Pratama et al. (2025) show that brand image and internet marketing can influence students' decisions in choosing an educational institution. These findings suggest that reputation becomes a critical consideration because students are more likely to apply for internship programs when they believe that the organization has credibility, positive public image, and the ability to provide meaningful work experience.

Previous studies have provided important evidence that employer branding, corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, and intention to apply are closely related in recruitment research. Junça & Dias (2023) found that employer branding dimensions and corporate reputation contribute to applicants' intention to apply, indicating that organizational attractiveness can be strengthened through a positive reputation. Soeling et al. (2022) examined the Indonesian context and showed that employer brand attractiveness plays an important role in shaping intention to apply, although the mediating role of organizational reputation was not fully supported. Islamiaty et al. (2022) also demonstrated that Generation Z evaluates employer branding through economic, social, work culture, environmental, and sustainability values before deciding whether to apply to a company. These studies confirm that young applicants tend to assess organizations not only from job opportunities, but also from the perceived value, image, and reputation offered by the organization.

The influence of CSR on applicant attraction has also been discussed in recent recruitment literature. Wang & Chen (2022) showed that job seekers' perceptions of CSR can increase applicant attraction, while employer reputation and expected pride serve as important psychological mechanisms in this relationship.

Gandasari et al. (2024) found that employer brand, perceived benefits, and perceived career development significantly influence intention to apply, while CSR contributes strongly to the formation of employer brand. Sharma & Tanwar (2023) also emphasized that CSR and ethics, career enhancement opportunities, work culture, company reputation, and incentives are relevant dimensions of employer brand that can shape organization pursuit intention. These findings suggest that CSR may strengthen applicant attraction when it is perceived as part of a broader organizational value system that includes reputation, career development, and ethical responsibility.

Despite these contributions, several research gaps remain. Junça & Dias (2023) examined the relationship between employer branding, corporate reputation, and intention to apply in the context of general job offers, but their study did not specifically address internship application intention. Song et al. (2024) focused on employer brand attractiveness and organizational reputation in Indonesia, yet their model did not include CSR as an additional organizational signal. Wang and Chen (2022) analyzed CSR and job applicant attraction, but their study emphasized employer reputation and expected pride rather than the simultaneous role of employer branding and CSR. Gandasari et al. (2024) investigated talent attraction among potential candidates, but their study did not focus on government-supported internship programs or university students in Bandar Lampung. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by examining employer branding and CSR simultaneously, with corporate reputation as an intervening variable, in the context of students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program.

Based on the identified gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of employer branding and corporate social responsibility on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program, with corporate reputation as an intervening variable. Following the employer brand and reputation perspective discussed by Junça & Dias (2023), this study positions employer branding as an organizational signal that can shape students' evaluation of internship attractiveness. Building on the CSR and applicant attraction mechanism explained by (Han & Wang, 2023), this study also examines whether CSR can strengthen corporate reputation and encourage students' intention to apply. Theoretically, this research extends the literature on applicant attraction by applying employer branding, CSR, and corporate reputation to the internship recruitment context. Practically, the findings may help the Ministry of Manpower and partner companies design more credible communication strategies, strengthen organizational reputation, and increase students' interest in participating in internship programs.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review and hypothesis development related to employer branding, corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, and intention to apply. Section 3 explains the research method, including research design, population and sample, measurement instruments, and data analysis technique. Section 4 presents the results and discussion, including measurement model testing, structural model testing, and hypothesis analysis. Section 5 provides the conclusion, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Employer Branding

Employer branding refers to an organization's strategic effort to build and communicate its image as an attractive place to work, learn, and develop professional competencies. In the context of internship recruitment, employer branding reflects the values, work environment, development opportunities, and benefits offered to prospective interns. Grigore et al. (2024) identify development value, social value, economic value, and interest value as important dimensions of employer branding, while Kanwal & Van Hoye (2024) emphasize that employer branding also depends on communication clarity, consistency, and credibility.

For university students, employer branding helps reduce uncertainty because students often have limited experience with the internal conditions of an organization. A strong employer brand can make an internship program appear more attractive when it offers career relevance, learning opportunities, and professional development. Febrianty; et al. (2020) highlight that career management resources are essential for preparing professionals in the contemporary workplace, which supports the idea that students may evaluate internship programs based on their contribution to future career readiness.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility refers to an organization's commitment to economic, social, and environmental responsibility. In the recruitment context, CSR can serve as a signal that an organization is ethical, responsible, and socially oriented. Ivanov (2025) explains that CSR and employer branding are closely connected because CSR can strengthen employee attraction, retention, and corporate reputation. Asamoah et al. (2025) also show that CSR can increase employer attractiveness when it strengthens corporate brand image among potential employees.

In internship recruitment, CSR may influence students' intention to apply because students tend to prefer organizations that contribute positively to society. CSR activities can create the perception that an organization is not only professionally managed but also aligned with social values. (Anita et al., 2024) discuss financial literacy education as a community-oriented activity, which supports the view that educational and social contribution programs can improve institutional value in the eyes of the public.

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is the overall perception of stakeholders regarding an organization's credibility, trustworthiness, responsibility, and ability to provide value. In internship decisions, reputation is important because students often rely on external information before deciding whether to apply. Nilsen et al. (2026) explain that potential employees evaluate organizational attractiveness through attributes such as development opportunities, organizational values, advancement possibilities, and job security.

Corporate reputation may also function as a bridge between organizational signals and students' application decisions. Putri et al. (2025) found that corporate reputation mediates the relationship between employer branding, website recruitment, and job application intention among undergraduate students. In the local organizational context, sihombing et al. (2025) show that organizational culture, work environment, reward, and punishment are relevant to employee performance perceptions, which indicates that internal organizational quality can shape broader reputational assessment.

Intention to Apply

Intention to apply refers to an individual's willingness, interest, and behavioral tendency to submit an application to a particular organization or program. In the internship context, intention to apply reflects students' motivation to participate in a program that can improve work experience, employability, and career readiness. Ramani & McHugh (2024) found that internship characteristics such as supervisor support, mentoring, autonomy, and task clarity can influence students' perceived internship value and job pursuit intention.

Students' intention to apply is also shaped by the meaningfulness of the internship experience. Ying (2024) argues that meaningful internship experiences involve motivation, expectations, and value creation among stakeholders. In relation to human development, M. I. Pratama & Nursari (2025) explain that education and regional economic conditions are important elements in improving human development, which supports the relevance of internship programs as a practical pathway for strengthening students' competencies before entering the labour market.

Corporate Reputation as an Intervening Variable

Corporate reputation can act as an intervening variable because students may not directly respond to employer branding unless the organizational image is supported by credibility and trust. Sudrajat & Surbakti (2025) found that corporate reputation mediates the influence of employer branding on intention to apply, indicating that employer branding becomes stronger when it improves organizational reputation. Garg et al. (2025) also show that perceived employer attractiveness influences applicants' intention to join, which reinforces the importance of reputation in applicant decision-making.

Corporate reputation may also mediate the relationship between CSR and intention to apply because CSR must be perceived as credible before it can influence students' decisions. When students believe that an organization's social responsibility is genuine, they may evaluate the organization as more reputable and suitable for career development.

(Febrianty, Yuliansyah, et al., 2024) discuss human resource planning as an important element in preparing organizational capacity and future workforce needs, which is relevant to internship programs as part of long-term talent preparation.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review, employer branding is expected to influence students' intention to apply because it communicates the attractiveness of the internship program, including learning opportunities, career development, and organizational values. When students perceive that an organization has a strong employer brand, they are more likely to believe that the internship program can support their future career. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Employer branding has a significant effect on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program. CSR is expected to influence students' intention to apply because socially responsible organizations are often perceived as ethical, credible, and aligned with students' social values. When students see that an organization contributes to society and the environment, they may develop a more positive attitude toward the internship program. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Corporate social responsibility has a significant effect on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program. Employer branding is also expected to influence corporate reputation because positive communication about work culture, career development, and organizational values can shape students' perception of organizational credibility. Therefore, the third hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H3: Employer branding has a significant effect on corporate reputation. CSR is expected to influence corporate reputation because responsibility toward society, the economy, and the environment can strengthen public trust in an organization. When CSR is perceived as genuine and consistent, students may view the organization as more reputable. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Corporate social responsibility has a significant effect on corporate reputation. Corporate reputation is expected to influence students' intention to apply because a reputable organization is perceived as more credible, professional, and capable of providing a valuable internship experience. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H5: Corporate reputation has a significant effect on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program. Corporate reputation is expected to mediate the relationship between employer branding and intention to apply because employer branding may first shape students' perceptions of organizational credibility before influencing their application decision. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H6: Corporate reputation mediates the effect of employer branding on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program. Corporate reputation is also expected to mediate the relationship between CSR and intention to apply because CSR may strengthen reputation, and reputation may subsequently increase students' willingness to apply. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H7: Corporate reputation mediates the effect of corporate social responsibility on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program.

3. Proposed Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a non-experimental survey design. The research aimed to examine the influence of employer branding and corporate social responsibility on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program, with corporate reputation as an intervening variable. The population consisted of university students in Bandar Lampung, while the sample was selected using purposive sampling. The respondent criteria were students aged 20–25 years, registered at universities in Bandar Lampung, and having knowledge of the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Form. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Employer branding was measured through interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and application value. Corporate social responsibility was measured through economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Corporate reputation was measured through emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, social responsibility, and financial performance. Intention to apply was measured through internship needs, internship information search, and application decision.

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0. SEM-PLS was selected because it is suitable for testing complex relationships among latent variables and examining both direct and indirect effects. The analysis consisted of two stages: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. The measurement model was assessed using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and bootstrapping to test the mediation effect.

Algorithm/Pseudocode

Algorithm 1. SEM-PLS Analysis Procedure

INPUT: Questionnaire data; Employer Branding (EB); Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Corporate Reputation (CR); Intention to Apply (IA).

OUTPUT: Validity, reliability, direct effect, indirect effect, and hypothesis testing results.

Step 1: Determine the research model and variables.
Step 2: Collect questionnaire data from respondents based on purposive sampling criteria.
Step 3: Code all responses using a five-point Likert scale.
Step 4: Import the dataset into SmartPLS 4.0.
Step 5: Test the measurement model using outer loading, AVE, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.
Step 6: Test the structural model using path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values.
Step 7: Conduct bootstrapping to examine the mediation effect of corporate reputation.
Step 8: Interpret the results and determine whether each hypothesis is accepted or rejected.

Mathematical Components

The relationship between employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and corporate reputation is shown in Eq. (1).

$$CR = \beta_1 EB + \beta_2 CSR + \varepsilon_1$$

The relationship between employer branding, corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, and intention to apply is shown in Eq. (2).

$$IA = \beta_3 EB + \beta_4 CSR + \beta_5 CR + \varepsilon_2$$

The indirect effect of employer branding on intention to apply through corporate reputation is shown in Eq. (3).

$$IE_{EB} = \beta_1 \times \beta_5$$

The indirect effect of corporate social responsibility on intention to apply through corporate reputation is shown in Eq. (4).

$$IE_{CSR} = \beta_2 \times \beta_5$$

A relationship is considered significant when the p-value is lower than 0.05. Therefore, corporate reputation is considered to have a mediating role when the indirect effect of employer branding or corporate social responsibility on intention to apply is statistically significant.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings of the study, including descriptive analysis, measurement model evaluation, structural model testing, mediation analysis, and discussion of the hypotheses. The data were collected from university students in Bandar Lampung and analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis was conducted in two main stages: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation.

Initial Data Analysis

The descriptive results show that all research variables were categorized as "agree". This indicates that respondents generally had positive perceptions of employer branding, corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, and intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis Summary.

Variable	Items	Mean Range	Category
Employer Branding	10	4.37–4.42	Agree
Corporate Social Responsibility	6	4.40–4.44	Agree
Corporate Reputation	10	4.42–4.46	Agree
Intention to Apply	6	4.37–4.38	Agree

The results indicate that students perceived the internship program and related organizations positively. Employer branding was considered strong because respondents viewed the program as relevant to career development and professional learning. CSR was also perceived positively, reflecting students' appreciation of organizations with social, economic, and environmental responsibility. In addition, the high mean score of corporate reputation suggests that credibility and organizational image are important considerations for students when deciding to apply for an internship program.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability testing. Convergent validity was assessed through outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results show that all indicators had outer loading values above 0.70, while all AVE values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50. Therefore, all constructs met the convergent validity requirement.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted.

Variable	AVE	Result
Employer Branding	0.720	Valid
Corporate Social Responsibility	0.872	Valid
Corporate Reputation	0.604	Valid
Intention to Apply	0.856	Valid

Corporate social responsibility had the highest AVE value, indicating that its indicators strongly represented the construct. Intention to apply also showed a high AVE value, which means that the items used to measure students' application intention were highly consistent with the construct. Although corporate reputation had the lowest AVE value, it remained above the required threshold and was therefore considered valid.

Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The results show that each construct was sufficiently distinct from the other constructs. However, the correlation between CSR and employer branding was relatively high, suggesting that students may view both variables as related organizational signals.

Table 3. Fornell–Larcker Criterion.

Variable	CSR	Employer Branding	Intention to Apply	Corporate Reputation
CSR	0.848			
Employer Branding	0.967	0.934		
Intention to Apply	0.388	0.455	0.777	
Corporate Reputation	0.269	0.329	0.328	0.925

Reliability testing was conducted using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. All values met the required standards, indicating that the instruments were reliable and internally consistent.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results.

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Employer Branding	0.947	0.922	Reliable
Corporate Social Responsibility	0.986	0.983	Reliable
Corporate Reputation	0.914	0.904	Reliable
Intention to Apply	1.001	0.982	Reliable

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was tested using bootstrapping in SmartPLS 4.0. A relationship was considered significant when the p-value was below 0.05. The direct effect results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Direct Effect Results.

Relationship	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Result
Employer Branding → Intention to Apply	1.089	2.963	0.003	Significant
CSR → Intention to Apply	-0.714	2.074	0.038	Significant
Employer Branding → Corporate Reputation	1.059	3.931	0.000	Significant
CSR → Corporate Reputation	-0.754	3.043	0.002	Significant
Corporate Reputation → Intention to Apply	0.166	2.322	0.020	Significant

The results show that employer branding had a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. This means that stronger employer branding increases students' interest in applying for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program.

Employer branding also had a positive and significant effect on corporate reputation, indicating that a strong organizational image can improve students' perception of credibility and reputation. CSR had a significant effect on intention to apply and corporate reputation. However, the coefficients were negative, which indicates that CSR did not move in the same direction as students' intention and reputation in this model. This finding suggests that although CSR is statistically meaningful, students may prioritize more direct benefits when deciding to apply for an internship, such as career development, work experience, skill improvement, and program quality.

Corporate reputation had a positive and significant effect on intention to apply. This means that students are more likely to apply when they perceive the organization as credible, professional, and capable of providing a valuable internship experience. Reputation therefore serves as an important trust-building factor in internship application decisions.

Mediation Analysis

The indirect effect test was conducted to examine whether corporate reputation mediated the relationship between employer branding and intention to apply, and between CSR and intention to apply.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Results.

Relationship	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Result
CSR → Corporate Reputation → Intention to Apply	-0.125	1.890	0.059	Not Significant
Employer Branding → Corporate Reputation → Intention to Apply	0.176	2.016	0.044	Significant

The results show that corporate reputation significantly mediated the relationship between employer branding and intention to apply. This means that employer branding increases students' intention to apply not only directly, but also indirectly through corporate reputation. In other words, employer branding becomes more effective when it successfully builds trust and strengthens organizational reputation.

Meanwhile, corporate reputation did not mediate the relationship between CSR and intention to apply because the p-value was 0.059, which is higher than 0.05. This finding indicates that CSR did not significantly increase students' intention to apply through corporate reputation. Students may perceive CSR as a general social responsibility activity rather than as a direct indicator of internship quality. Therefore, CSR needs to be connected more clearly with student development, learning opportunities, and career benefits to become more influential in internship application decisions.

Hypothesis Summary

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Summary.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Employer branding significantly affects intention to apply.	Supported
H2	CSR significantly affects intention to apply.	Supported
H3	Employer branding significantly affects corporate reputation.	Supported
H4	CSR significantly affects corporate reputation.	Supported
H5	Corporate reputation significantly affects intention to apply.	Supported
H6	Corporate reputation mediates employer branding and intention to apply.	Supported
H7	Corporate reputation mediates CSR and intention to apply.	Not Supported

Overall, six hypotheses were supported, while one hypothesis was not supported. Employer branding was the most important factor because it had a significant direct effect on intention to apply and also a significant indirect effect through corporate reputation. This indicates that students respond strongly to organizational signals related to career value, learning opportunities, and professional development.

The non-significant mediation effect of CSR shows that CSR alone is not enough to increase students' intention to apply through reputation. Although CSR remains important, its influence may become stronger when CSR activities are integrated into the internship experience, such as student empowerment projects, sustainability programs, social innovation, or community-based learning. Therefore, the Ministry of Manpower and partner companies should strengthen employer branding, maintain corporate reputation, and communicate CSR in a way that is more relevant to students' career expectations.

5. Comparison

This study extends previous research by applying employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and corporate reputation to the context of government-supported internship recruitment. Garg et al. (2025) explain that employer branding is important for attracting Generation Z because younger applicants tend to evaluate organizations through career development, organizational values, and workplace image. Andruszkiewicz et al. (2024) found that employer prestige significantly affects Generation Z's intention to apply, while this study shows that employer branding significantly influences both students' intention to apply and corporate reputation. This indicates that internship applicants do not only consider organizational prestige, but also evaluate whether the organization can provide learning opportunities, career relevance, and professional development.

The findings also provide a different perspective from previous studies on CSR and internship experience. This suggests that CSR may not automatically increase students' internship application intention unless it is clearly linked to student development and internship benefits. Banker & Borchardt (2025) emphasize that internship experience can improve students' career readiness, while Pianda et al. (2024) highlight that internship experience contributes to employability, student satisfaction, experiential learning, and employer involvement. In contrast, the present study focuses on the pre-application stage by examining what attracts students before they decide to apply for an internship program.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends employer branding research from regular job recruitment to internship recruitment. Second, it examines employer branding and CSR simultaneously with corporate reputation as an intervening variable, and the results show that reputation mediates the effect of employer branding on intention to apply but does not mediate the effect of CSR. Third, it provides empirical evidence from university students in Bandar Lampung, making the findings relevant for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program and its partner companies. In the local human resource management context, Febrianty et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of human resource development in preparing individuals to meet contemporary labour market demands, while Mufahamah et al. (2025) show that youth-oriented educational programs can strengthen practical knowledge and public value. Therefore, internship programs should combine strong employer branding, credible reputation, and student-oriented social value to attract young applicants more effectively.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the influence of employer branding and corporate social responsibility on students' intention to apply for the Ministry of Manpower Internship Program, with corporate reputation as an intervening variable. The findings show that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on students' intention to apply and corporate reputation, indicating that students are more interested in applying when they perceive the internship program as attractive, career-oriented, and beneficial for professional development. Corporate reputation also has a positive and significant effect on intention to apply, confirming that credibility and public image are important considerations in students' internship application decisions. Meanwhile, CSR has a significant effect on intention to apply and corporate reputation.

But the negative coefficient suggests that CSR does not automatically increase students' application intention unless it is clearly linked to career benefits, learning opportunities, and internship quality. The mediation results further show that corporate reputation mediates the effect of employer branding on intention to apply, but does not mediate the effect of CSR on intention to apply.

Theoretically, this study contributes to applicant attraction literature by extending the discussion of employer branding, CSR, corporate reputation, and intention to apply into the context of government-supported internship programs. Practically, the findings suggest that the Ministry of Manpower and partner companies should strengthen employer branding by communicating internship benefits, mentoring systems, career relevance, and professional development outcomes more clearly. CSR activities should also be integrated into internship experiences, such as student empowerment, sustainability learning, community-based projects, and social innovation, so that students can perceive CSR as personally and professionally meaningful.

This study is limited to university students in Bandar Lampung and measures intention to apply rather than actual application behavior. Future research is encouraged to expand the sample to other regions, compare students from different academic backgrounds, and use qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore why CSR does not significantly influence intention to apply through corporate reputation.

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