

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND
STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING
SKILLED WORKER SHORTAGES
IN THE MALAYSIAN PRINTING
INDUSTRY**

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian printing industry, a longstanding pillar of the national economy, generated approximately RM14.5 billion in revenue in 2023 but continues to face a critical skilled worker shortage, threatening its growth and competitiveness. This study addresses this gap by investigating the specific challenges encountered by printing companies in recruiting and retaining skilled personnel, as well as the strategies they employ to mitigate these shortages. Through in-depth interviews with eight industry representatives including company owners, human resources and operations managers. This research utilized thematic analysis and an inductive approach to uncover key themes. The findings reveal that the skilled worker shortages leads to significant issues, including compromised product quality, decreased customer satisfaction, operational inefficiencies, and technical limitations. The main contribution of this thesis is the development of a validated, context-specific framework strategy that provides systematic guidance for companies to address skilled worker shortages. This framework, informed by both literature and industry insights, offers practical solutions to help companies maintain high standards, attract young professionals, and ensure a sustainable supply of skilled workers. The significance of these findings lies in their potential to inform industry stakeholders and policymakers, offering actionable recommendations for workforce development and setting a foundation for future research in Malaysia and beyond.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The Malaysian printing industry is a vital component of the nation's economy, supporting a wide range of sectors from packaging and publishing to art and product branding. Its adaptability and contribution to national development have made it a cornerstone of Malaysia's industrial landscape. Over time, the industry has evolved to embrace new technologies and diversify its services, ensuring its continued relevance and growth.

Historically, Malaysia's printing sector dates to 1806 with the establishment of the first printing press in Penang. This early foundation spurred the growth of numerous printing establishments, driven by both local and international demand. By the late 19th century, the industry had expanded to include a diverse array of operators, reflecting the multicultural fabric of Malaysian society. The sector's historical resilience and ability to adapt to technological advancements have enabled it to remain a key player in the country's economic progress.

In recent years, the printing industry has experienced notable growth, generating approximately RM13.7 billion in revenue in 2022—a 6.2% increase from the previous year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). The workforce has also expanded, with the number of employees in printing and related manufacturing rising from 67,428 in 2021 to 70,120 in 2022. Despite this growth, the industry faces a significant challenge: a persistent skilled worker shortage. Only about 9.3% of the workforce is classified as skilled, compared to the broader sector average of 11–13% between 2019 and 2022. This shortage is particularly acute in specialized roles such as printing technologists, which have been listed as critical occupations since 2015. The gap between the demand for skilled labor and the available talent pool hampers the industry's ability to adopt new technologies, maintain high-quality standards, and remain competitive in the global market.