

## Factors Influencing the Employability of Students Studying Records Management

<sup>1</sup>Nurul Huda Md Yatim \*, <sup>2</sup>Khairunnisa Rahman, <sup>1</sup>Faten Elina Kamaruddin, <sup>3</sup>Raja Adzrin Raja Ahmad

<sup>1</sup>School of Information Science, College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Johor Campus, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Johor Campus, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Johor Campus, Malaysia

\*nurul082@uitm.edu.my, khair330@uitm.edu.my, fatenelina@uitm.edu.my, adzrin75@uitm.edu.my

\*Corresponding Author: Nurul Huda Md Yatim

**Abstract:** Record management is a crucial profession in organizations, responsible for the efficient and orderly control of records. It involves creating, acquiring, maintaining, using, and disposing of these records, which prove an organization's operations and business. Many higher institutions in Malaysia offer courses related to records management. This paper explores factors influencing undergraduate students' employability in the field, investigates the required qualifications and skills, and identifies strategies to increase employability among record management students. The research will use a quantitative approach, including online surveys and questionnaires, with respondents graduating from records management courses. The expected findings will provide insights into the factors influencing undergraduate students' employability and strategies to overcome these issues.

**Keywords:** *Records management, employability, graduate, UiTM, university*

### 1. Introduction

Unemployment poses a significant challenge in Malaysia, particularly due to the influx of university graduates. Both public and private institutions are required to generate exceptional undergraduate students who can compete in the job market effectively. According to Fugate et al. (2003), employability is an organizational framework that assists individuals in understanding and making the most of their professional chances. Employability refers to the capacity to secure employment and progress in a career by enhancing marketable skills and qualities through a plan sponsored by an employer or other means. The implementation of lifelong learning is crucial. Employability refers to the ability to be hired and remunerated based on one's talents and experience. Several authors have disputed this notion. The topic of employability is still a subject of controversy, as indicated by Andrews and Higson (2008), Dacre et al. (2014), McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), Rothwell et al. (2008), and Heijde and Heijden (2006).

The Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia (MOHE) has exerted significant effort to cultivate exceptional pupils by publishing The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) which places a high priority on enhancing the employability of undergraduate students. The MOHE strongly advocates for the importance of this goal to meet the needs of individuals seeking employment, those looking to create jobs, and aspiring well-rounded entrepreneurs. Based on the 2022 statistics provided by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), a total of 5.61 million students completed their studies in 2021. 53.6% of Malaysia's 3 million graduates have a degree.

Despite a high graduation rate, 33.9% of graduates were unemployed due to deficiencies in their skills (Department of Statistics Malaysia/DOSM, 2022). This also has been aligned with the collection of data on the employment of undergraduate students conducted before via the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS). GTS compiles data on the extended professional journey of individuals who have completed their education. The online survey is available to all those who have completed their college or university education starting in 2006. According to the 2021 Higher Education Statistics from the Ministry of Higher Education, a total of 326,291 individuals completed their studies at different educational levels and higher education institutions. According to GTS, the percentage of private college graduates who had something in 2021 was 58.5%, whereas the percentage of public university graduates who had something was 61.7%. However, it is important to note that fewer than 20% of college students have never been employed. Several individuals obtained employment, but their education was mainly incongruous, particularly in records administration. According to the Graduates Reference Hub for Employment and Training/GREaT (2021), the percentage of undergraduate students

majoring in recording administration who specialized in social sciences increased from 83.8% in 2020 to 84.4% in 2021. Given the firm's established status and specific focus on records management, the position sought individuals with expertise in records administration. To pursue a successful career in record management, one must possess certain skills.

These factors posed challenges due to several students' insufficient record administration abilities. Only a limited number of Malaysian institutions provide degrees in records administration, including IIUM, UKM, UiTM, and UM. The National Archives of Malaysia oversees the management of documents. The organization's historical background in records administration indicates that individuals with expertise in records administration should be appointed to this role. Numerous companies, particularly those in the public sector, employ specialists in record management.

Recordkeepers need more experience, expertise, and training to produce negligent paperwork (Ipinge and Nengomasha, 2018). There was a discrepancy between the number of filled records management positions and the number of graduating students. Several students have a limited record management background, making these aspects difficult. The fact that students are learning record administration in class but not working in the sector is a significant and questionable problem. According to Zawiyah and Chell (2005), just a few professionals think that records management needs to be given more importance. It is a task that can be accomplished by anyone.

According to Creed and Hughes (2012), making professional concessions, such as enrolling in a degree program that was not the students' top choice, might increase professional anxiety and decrease career opportunities. Undergraduates need to possess substantial talents that are highly valued in the employment market. Nevertheless, the World Economic Forum emphasized enhancing job-related skills to align with evolving market requirements (Wafa, Singh, Singh, Kaur & Singh, 2020). Moreover, scant evidence showed that firms or organizations refrain from hiring undergraduate students due to the low competency and quality of graduates, as asserted by Velasco (2014) and Nilsson (2010), employers found difficulties in finding suitable candidates who possess a variety of skills and competencies that could help to enhance the productivity of the organization.

Organizations must efficiently manage information and records for sustainable development and public responsibility. Record managers play a strategic role in creating procedures and rules for record management, ensuring appropriate and efficient employment. According to Saiful et al. (2016), the study suggests that although there are graduates who have received training in records management, most students from the Faculty of Information Management still require employment after completing their studies. However, there is still a need for these graduates to find employment for example, in the health industry. This is featured in Aniza (2010), where the medical records department is one of the necessary sections in any organization, including a hospital. Thus, undergraduate students from the record management field can be employed and try for a position in which the graduates must be responsible for providing records and medical reports requested by others and managing patients' medical records. The researchers also highlighted the qualifications required to be involved in the medical records department, where the applicants must have either a degree or diploma in records management or any other associated discipline, possess skills in information technology (IT), and know electronic medical records. Aniza (2010) also provided views from the medical record officers, most of whom stated that the competencies come from proper records management knowledge and skills, which Universiti Teknologi MARA has effortlessly provided a related course for.

Throughout this paper, the authors would like to highlight the factors influencing undergraduate students' employability in record management. According to Ipinge and Nengomasha (2018), it's proven that records management is a profession. Record management expertise plays an important role in supporting the efficiency of management practice in an organization. Moreover, record management is an essential part of how organizations operate. It involves the organized control of records from the moment records are created or received through various stages of processing, distribution, maintenance, and retrieval until records are ultimately disposed of. On the other hand, an efficient record administration is crucial for upholding organization, guaranteeing adherence, and bolstering the overall effectiveness and honesty of a company. Records management experts possess the necessary expertise to implement and enforce records policies and

processes, which aid organizations in achieving regulatory compliance (Kautto & Henttonen, 2020). Thus, this paper may highlight the importance of record management professionals in an organization and make records experts visible in the organization. management. Records experts can mitigate the risk that organizations face in terms of non-compliance with records management standards and policies.

## 2. Literature Review

**Employability Among Graduates:** for any company or organization, hiring and selecting employees are essential parts of ensuring that the business operation may be run successfully (Ekwoaba et al., 2015). It is also supported by Gamage (2014) where the researchers agreed that both selecting and recruiting employees will be effective factors for the human resources department in an organization. Meanwhile, employability is an exact term to indicate the process of searching for potential employees and the ability to find and maintain the process of fulfilling the work. In other words, employability will be based on a few factors, which are skills, knowledge, and attitudes owned by an individual that are presented and proven to employers or organizations (Gedye & Beaumont, 2018). According to Pitan and Muller (2020), the researchers opined that employability would have these three criteria where undergraduate students possess skills, knowledge, and attitudes with the addition of attributes for them to ensure that the job they can acquire will be fulfilled successfully.

Many elements can help to assess and clarify graduate employability. Most organizations require excellent employability skills before employment. Many skills need to be possessed by the applicants before undergoing the job process. Personal traits and teamwork affect men's and women's employment. Employers examine incoming undergraduates' employability skills (Husain et al., 2010). Disparities between the needs of the industry and graduate employability have also been noted. Technical competence and knowledge are "hard skills," and people skills are "soft skills." soft abilities improve interpersonal relations and professional effectiveness. Soft abilities include professionalism, dependability, stress tolerance, preparation, communication, self-confidence, creativity, personality, and time management (Andrews & Higson, 2010). Hard and soft talents predict work performance. Technology and soft skills for undergraduates will be in high demand. Employers want hard and soft skills, with inventiveness at the top. Undergraduates face hurdles when finding jobs. There are so many skills required to secure placement in the organization. The first skill required is the ability to communicate. Many studies have shown the importance of communication skills and proficiency in certain languages. According to Robles (2012), knowing many languages will aid university students, and communication is a must-have skill. This has also been asserted by Ting, Marzuki and Chuah (2017); Basir, Zubairi, Jani and Wahab (2022): communication skills can increase employability and opportunities for career advancement. Besides, easily getting employed, it can also negotiate for a better salary (Ting, Marzuki & Chuah, 2017). Respondents claimed soft skills were more critical than basic knowledge. Most institutions do not teach soft skills. The employer stated that most undergrads do not examine skill requirements before applying. Employment requires critical thinking skills. Respondents struggle with unexpected job conditions. Based on all discussions, show that undergraduate students are required to learn and master certain skills for better employment opportunities. This is also agreed by Collet, Hine and Du Plessis (2015) that the connections between skills need to be drawn to understand the drivers that create the functional graduate as a whole.

Additionally, Aliu and Aigbavboa (2020) state that undergraduate students' unemployment issues are at a high stake after graduation. The prevalent problem in the current job market is the discrepancy between the student's skills and knowledge and the employer's requirements. The skills employers seek, and graduates' skills do not match (Kassie, 2023; Bindawas, 2024; Shanfari, 2024). This is the challenge the employer faces in finding suitable candidates with the required competencies or graduate skills that match the organizational requirements (Shanfari, 2024). Employers find difficulties in hiring recent graduates due to a mismatch between the specific skills needed and the skills possessed by graduates, which do not align with the demands of the industry. This situation arises from conflicting views on critical and essential skills needed for employment (pauceanu et al., 2020). Thus, both undergraduate students, as well as employers, and educational institutions need to build strategies for increasing employability status among undergraduate students appropriately.

**Employability in Records Management:** Records management is a vital aspect for organizations, particularly with the constant generation of information leading to the creation of additional records in both physical and electronic formats (Jannah, 2023). In detail, according to the definition in the ISO 15489 standard, record management is the area of management in charge of the effective and systematic control of the creation, acceptance or receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including procedures for capturing and maintaining evidence and information about business activities and transactions. On the other hand, the International Records Management Trust (2009) defined records management as a field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposal of records. Records management includes processes for capturing and maintaining records as evidence of and information about business activities and transactions.

Hiring undergraduate students in the records management field may become essential as it is still relevant. This is due to the challenges when managing public records in archives when everything has transformed into an electronic system, as stated by Kadir (2014). The researcher stated that the organization meets with inefficiency due to the need for more knowledge and expertise in standards, legislation, and policies in electronic record management practice. This is also agreed by Asmadi (2012) in his research, who stated that most of the respondents who responded to the queries were records managers. However, when they were questioned about the responsibilities of managing electronic records, most of them denied the task. Hence, that proves that Malaysian Federal Agencies have not effectively managed electronic records due to insufficient skills and knowledge. This paper is aligned with Johare and Masrek (2011) who mentioned that records managers who were interviewed in their study revealed that they felt as if they had not successfully executed the Records Management Standard MS2229:2009 appropriately. Thus, this shows that undergraduate students in records management studies have the potential to be employed in the field. However, these issues and challenges have arisen due to several factors.

### 3. Factors Contributing To The Low Employment In Records Management

**Undergraduate Students Are Not Interested in Working in the Records Management Field:** Even though there is limited specific previous research regarding the lack of undergraduate students who are not interested in working in the records management field, this problem is like another field and industry. According to Ibrahim et al. (2020), higher-educated students in the hospitality sector are no longer interested in working in that area, and the industry needs younger prospects because of issues with attracting and recruiting younger workers in the institution. Nachmias and Walmsley (2015) discovered that the nature of the job and the working conditions are the main reasons why students do not enter the profession. Other than that, according to Carnevale and Cheah (2013), two students who choose a similar major may not have the same job options or expected financial rewards after graduation. Meanwhile, Chen et al. (2011) discussed that students who are experiencing uncertainty due to the economic downturn should re-evaluate their future career paths to fit in with a flexible market. In aspects of the records management field, there are lingering questions among scholars.

As stated by McLeod and Hare (2010), the researchers mentioned that in previous years, researchers believed that undergraduates were not interested in working in the records management fields due to the claims that records management is not a long-term profession. Though this is still the case for individuals in the field, as it is in others like accounting and law, there is little evidence to imply that this is the view of the majority, and quite the opposite is true if advancement into upper-level managerial positions is considered. The uninterested behavior in working in the records management field also happened in Malaysia as well. This is aligned with the research from Aliza and Adnan (2011), The researchers revealed that when asking the public who the records professionals or records managers are, most of them have no idea what kind of occupation it is, and some of the respondents shrugged in response to ignorance. In the reality of the country, younger respondents mentioned that they wanted to be in a well-known profession like doctors and engineers. Thus, this shows that records management as an occupation has been unseen and unknown by the public, leading to uninterested feelings toward working in the industry.

**Lack of Qualification and Skills of Undergraduate Students in the Field of Records:** The qualifications and skills of undergraduate students are required for employment. Many scholars have their own opinions based

on this issue according to their countries. Based on Wafa et al. (2020), the World Economic Forum stressed that work-related skills need to evolve to keep up with changing market demands. This implies that some skills required ten years ago might not be helpful now. Mokibelo and Seru (2020) also mentioned that several factors contribute to youth unemployment, a global issue. The most frequently stated argument, however, is that young people's unemployment is caused by a lack of skills. Lack of skills is due to insufficient education and training. Those researchers also stated that the employment market condemns students as inexperienced, unskilled, and inadequately educated. As a result, young people in Botswana are stumbling around the streets without jobs. It is also supported by Nthomang and Diraditsile (2016), who described that, among other factors, young unemployment in Botswana is a result of factors such as unemployed and unskilled labor, a lack of work experience, the size of the youth labor force, the state of the unemployment rate, and the lack of job development strategies. Meanwhile, Mohd, Naghavi & Abdul (2020) asserted, that besides skills, job mismatch and unrealistic salary demand, are the crucial factors that cause undergraduate students to remain unemployed in Malaysia.

For undergraduate students in the records management field, according to Duffus (2017), the researchers shared the results of their research, which emphasized that there were insufficient personnel, insufficient training resources, inadequate record-keeping capabilities, a low level of academically competent personnel, and a big presence of temporary personnel. Hiring untrained personnel in record management hindered professional practice and damaged numerous record management-related services in the Jamaican public sector. When accountability mechanisms were weakened due to inefficient record-keeping practices, management could not acquire the information necessary to retain operational control and make intelligent choices, leaving organizations susceptible to collapse. One of the constraints to business sustainability and accountability identified was the need for requisite competencies and specialized skills among practitioners in the Jamaican organizations evaluated to perform record management duties. Thus, this shows that a lack of qualifications and skills may contribute to the failure of record management operations in an organization; instead, the organization should highlight the required qualifications and skills that should be occupied by undergraduate students before hiring them officially.

**Lack of a Strategic Plan for Recruiting Undergraduate Students in the Record Management Industry:** Few studies indicate firms or organizations need a strategic approach to attracting undergraduate students. Velasco (2014) states employers need help finding undergraduate students with the skills to manage their production. Both researchers noted that health education institutions graduate more each year, making it difficult for companies to recruit competent and competitive staff. Al Nejam et al. (2017) explain that there is a gap between the actual demand for employment skill requirements and what is provided through the university that does not meet the employers' requests, and employers will examine certain criteria during the recruitment process that will be unachievable. Marfunizah et al. (2020) found that undergraduate students are unemployed because their courses need to match what companies and organizations want. Thus, educational institutions and employers need a comprehensive plan to recruit undergraduate students.

Aliza and Adnan (2011) found in their research, that no fitting location for records professionals in the respondents' eyes. The company's records could be better managed. This is based on the example of the Malaysian oil company. They added that sizable Malaysian oil business is under government control and needs more qualified document specialists. Only certain important staff receive records management training, meanwhile, the rest who manage records and electronic records are computer scientists and engineers. The researcher found that these personnel are anxious about their inability to rationalize information and record management. Because businesses have yet to make strategic plans to recruit undergraduate students in the records management industry, these recruited individuals struggled to advise and regulate the organization's records management standards.

#### 4. Discussion

A few strategies exist to overcome lower employment rates among record management undergraduates. One of the strategies is providing industrial training or internships to the students (Mseleku & Nyawo, 2024; Sitompul & Athoillah, 2023). The students will be able to acquire relevant and hands-on experience and skills that meet the demands of the industry. It will help the students be prepared for the job market, leading to higher

employment rates and more job placement in the record management field.

Encourage the students to get professional certificates or digital records management qualifications through skilled training, workshops, seminars, and online courses. Employees usually value professional certificates, increasing employability among record management undergraduates (Martin & Davies, 2022).

Another strategy is developing interdisciplinary skills, such as data analysis, project management, and information technology, and focusing on emerging trends in record management, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain. The graduates can handle diverse roles beyond traditional record management with various skill sets. Graduates with different skill sets will be better able to handle multiple roles beyond traditional record management. Graduates who have these skills can have broader employment opportunities as they can perform different roles as needed in working industries (Sitompul & Athoillah, 2023).

By focusing on graduates' learning development, robust connections and collaboration between industry and educational institutions will provide relevant information for academic institutions to provide appropriate student training (Shuhod & Mat Rashid, 2023). This linkage acts as a pipeline for well-prepared candidates from industry and employers, which fosters ongoing industry-academic partnerships.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this paper focuses on the employability of records management students. The primary reason is to understand why graduate records management students face difficulties and employment-related barriers. Several related issues are also related to undergraduate records management students who do not find jobs after graduation, such as a lack of interest in working in the records management field, a lack of qualifications and skills related to records management, and a lack of a strategic plan developed by the universities and government to overcome the issue.

The Malaysian government plays a pivotal role in shaping a supportive environment for record management careers through strategic initiatives and regulations. Establishing national standards for record management practices and encouraging industry-wide adoption can enhance the field's visibility and importance, increasing demand for skilled professionals. Additionally, the government can facilitate continuous professional development by providing grants or funding for advanced training and certifications. By actively promoting these measures, policymakers can help bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that record management graduates are well-prepared for long-term career success and contributing to the overall efficiency and growth of various sectors reliant on effective record management.

Several initiatives by policymakers, for example, my next-GEG, Young Employable Students (YES! ), National Structured Internship Programme (MySIP), Academia Collaboration (IAC), and Penjana Kerjaya 2.0, will help to enhance graduates' employability; however, these initiatives focus on short-term employment. To improve employability for the long term, especially for record management students and other graduate students, the Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) should involve other parties or stakeholders, such as education sectors, industries, and the community, in having all the information and feedback to help policymakers develop frameworks and create strategies to improve and boost the job market for graduates (Berita Harian, 2020, August 18).

As a result, it might guarantee that records management undergraduates would have a stable career position after graduation and recognize the options on how they might achieve this. From the standpoint of universities or other educational institutions, this paper offers a view of areas for improvement in the institution's programs and courses. In the meantime, policymakers may learn about improvements that should be considered to align the courses with current market demands successfully.

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