

## Factors Influencing Early Retirement Intention of Teacher Leaders in Secondary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

*The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) is committed to ensuring that teachers serve until the end of their service. However, there is an increase in the intention for early retirement among teachers. Hence, this study aimed to identify the factors influencing early retirement intention among the teacher leaders of secondary schools. Seven teacher leaders were purposely selected: senior assistants, senior teachers, heads of departments, and heads of six core subjects for Malaysian Certificate Examination from secondary schools in Kelantan, Malaysia. The qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed thematically. The findings analysis found eight contributing factors: lack of information technology skills, health problems, role conflict, financially stable, career satisfaction, wanting family time, filling time meaningfully, and venturing into other fields. To reduce the desire for early retirement, this study suggested that relevant parties relevant parties relevant parties relevant parties should give all factors as contributors attention should give all factors as contributors attention should give all factors as contributors attention should give all factors as contributors attention.*

### Keywords:

Early Retirement Intention; Teacher Leaders; Contributing Factors.

### ABSTRAK

*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia berkomitmen untuk memastikan bahawa para guru bertugas hingga akhir masa kerja mereka. Namun, ada peningkatan niat untuk pensium dini di kalangan guru. Oleh kerana itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang*

*mempengaruhi niat pensiun dini pada pimpinan guru sekolah menengah. Tujuh pemimpin guru sengaja dipilih yang terdiri dari asisten senior, guru senior, kepala unit dan kepala enam mata pelajaran inti untuk Ujian Sertifikat Malaysia dari sekolah menengah di negara bagian Kelantan, Malaysia. Data kualitatif yang diperoleh melalui wawancara dianalisis secara tematik. Analisis temuan menemukan delapan faktor yang berkontribusi yaitu kurangnya keterampilan teknologi informasi, masalah kesehatan, konflik peran, keuangan stabil, kepuasan karir, keinginan waktu keluarga, mengisi waktu bermakna dan bertualang ke bidang lain. Untuk mengurangi keinginan pensiun dini, penelitian ini menyarankan agar semua faktor sebagai penyumbang harus diperhatikan oleh pihak-pihak terkait.*

**Kata Kunci:**

Niat Pensiun Dini; Pemimpin Guru; Faktor Pendukung.

## 1. Introduction

A demand for retirement in most western countries occurs due to an increasing percentage of the aging working population (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018; Meng, Sundstrup & Andersen, 2020). Studies at the international level have found that the mandatory retirement age is extended. The government strongly encourages employees to continue working until the end of compulsory service to save the country's economic costs (Ilmarinen & Tuomi, 2004; Meng et al., 2020). This is because early retirement will exacerbate the national economy which has to deal with early retirement payments of workers and the high cost of training and hiring new employees to replace vacancies (Von Bonsdorff, 2016).

The mandatory retirement age in most western countries is 65 years (Topa, Depolo & Alcover, 2018; Von Bonsdorff, 2009; Von Bonsdorff, Huuhtanen, Tuomi & Seitsamo, 2010). Various proactive efforts have been taken to curb the problem of rising early retirement intentions which is said to affect the national economy due to large allocations to pay pensions besides the country losing valuable experienced and skilled resources to improve the national economy (Philips, Andrews & Hickman, 2014; Von Bonsdorff, 2009 ). Thus, studies on the factors that can reduce early retirement aspirations have been extensively conducted to retain workers in the employment sector (Brown, Carr, Fleischmann, Xue & Stansfeld, 2019; Meng et al., 2020).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has also made new branding efforts to ensure that individuals who choose the teaching profession are truly interested and qualified to achieve educational aspirations in Malaysia (Malaysia Education Development Plan, 2013-2025). Nevertheless, many teacher leaders express job dissatisfaction and intend to leave a profession that was originally chosen based on interest and want to contribute to society (Van Scheers & Wiid,

2011). There are many teacher leaders who intend to retire earlier than continue to serve until the end of their term of service (Appiah-Agyekum, Suapin & Peparah, 2013).

According to the Public Service Department (PSD) statistics, every year there will be a large number of teachers in secondary schools in Malaysia who choose to retire early and retire compulsory (PSD, 2018). The increase in applications for early retirement is increasing starting in 2013 (PSD, 2018). In fact, in Kelantan, it was found that almost 500 teachers have chosen to retire early within four years (JPN Kelantan, 2018). Thus this situation invites losses due to the loss of valuable resources of the organization, namely teacher leaders who play an important role in helping school leadership to continue educational aspirations and school excellence.

Theory of Conservation of Resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu & Westman., 2018) is seen as the most relevant to examine the need to preserve valuable school resources, namely experienced teachers and middle school leaders to help key leaders administer schools with excellence until compulsory retirement age. A valuable resource for school organizations in the context of this study are teachers who have high experience, skills, and interpersonal influence, have expertise in problem-solving and usually hold various important positions in the school to assist the main leadership of the school.

For this study, researchers refer to the Beehr retirement model (Beehr, 1986) to examine the decision to retire early, which is influenced by the desire for early retirement in addition to personal factors involving self and family as well as work-related environmental factors and Social Identity Theory introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979). This theory is particularly relevant to relate the self-perceptions of individuals who are in their 50s and older and feel they are old, less productive in employment, declining levels of physical and mental ability cause them to retain early retirement aspirations (Gaillard & Desmette, 2008; 2010; Riaz, Anjum & Anwar; 2016). Accordingly, this study aims to identify factors contributing to the early retirement intentions of teacher leaders in secondary schools.

## **2. Methods**

The research design adopted for this study was a cross-sectional survey design using a qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews. To obtain clearer and more detailed information on what factors contribute to the early retirement intentions of teacher leaders, researchers use semi-structured interview instruments. For this purpose, the researcher has selected respondents among teacher leaders in secondary schools in Kelantan who has intended to retire early. This qualitative data is analyzed traditionally (manual) by interpreting the interview transcript to obtain the information needed by the researcher.

To build the interview protocol, the researcher has submitted only three questions, namely the first, a brief sharing of the respondents covering age, teaching experience, and tenure of the latest position in the school. Second, the researcher posed a question about the expected age for

retirement, and third, the researcher unearthed the factors that motivate the respondents to intend to retire early. As suggested by Creswell (2014), researchers need to use an interview protocol that includes several components, namely; first, before the interview is held, the researcher should contact the respondent to be interviewed and inform about the purpose, date and time, and questions to be asked to enable respondents to be better prepared to answer interview questions smoothly and submit ideas more systematically. Second, when conducting an interview, the researcher should start with a question that can interest the respondent to answer well and cast an opinion honestly and sincerely. The researcher also needs to convince the respondent that the respondents identity is confidential and the study is only intended for educational research so that they feel.

Research needs to be conducted ethically (Siti Uzairiah Mohd Tobi, 2017). In addressing this ethical issue, the researcher priorities from the planning stage of the study to the stage of reporting the study prioritizes from the planning stage of the study to the stage of reporting the study results. Among the ethical issues given priority by researchers are the need to conduct research, the ability to set boundaries, obtain permission to conduct research, honesty, trust, and confidentiality.

A transcript of the interview was made for this study, and field notes were made verbatim to ensure its validity. Thus, validity can be obtained through respondent validation where interview transcripts and field notes are resubmitted to respondents and asked to revalidate and give opinions if necessary to improve so that they are confident in the results (Creswell, 2009). Before the researcher wrote the report, the researcher asked the respondent to review the interview analysis to ensure that what was written reflected what the respondent meant. If there is a discrepancy in meaning, the respondent will correct it, and the researcher will modify the findings to achieve the meaning that the respondent wants to express. Finally, honesty in writing a report is also given attention.

The researcher interviewed seven teacher leaders for the interview respondents, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Respondents by Position, Gender, Age, Experience as a teacher leader, Expected age to retire (N=7)**

Position	Gender	Age	Experience as a teacher leader	Expected age to retire
PKP	Female	56 years	More than five years	57 years
PKKO	Male	53 years	More than five years	55 years
GKSS	Female	53 years	More than five years	54 years
GKB	Female	55 years	More than five years	56 years
KP Sains (KPS)	Female	56 years	More than five years	57 years
KP Matematik (KPMA)	Female	45 years	More than five years	46 years
KP Pendidikan Islam(KPPAI)	Male	55 years	More than five years	56 ears

### **3. Results and Discussion**

To obtain in-depth details on what factors contribute to the early retirement intentions of teacher leaders, the researcher has submitted the following questions to the teacher leaders:

*Can you share the factors that drive early retirement intention?"*

#### *3.1. Lack of information technology skills*

Researchers found that teacher leaders aged 50 years and above have less skilled problems because information technology is constantly evolving. The use of computers for various tasks and online data filling causes most teacher leaders are not able to perform tasks properly. This situation causes them (teacher leaders) to ask for help from other teachers or bring it home to be resolved at home because they are not good at using computer applications. This can be explained through interviews with respondents teacher leaders who serve as the Chairman of the Science Committee (KPS):

*"... I am less skilled with information technology. As we know, all year-end examination marks, co-curriculum marks, and all student information must be filled in the computer online ..."* (KPS)

*"... not only that, I need to key in test and examination marks, teacher performance scores, and other data that needs to be entered online. Generations in the 50s and above like me can no longer afford to face a computer for a long time and sometimes do not finish at school then I have to continue at home ..."* (PKP)

Based on interview findings, the researcher found that the lack of skills in using information technology is a contributing factor towards the desire for early retirement among teacher leaders. Most teacher leaders who hold several positions in the school have to spend a lot of time filling in various data online according to the set time. A key factor, for example, readiness to face rapid changes in information and communication technology, needs to be faced by all age groups of teacher leaders (Banda & Mutambo, 2016; NAHT, 2019). This causes inconvenience to most teacher leaders aged 50 and above as they often face time constraints completing work involving information technology. Even individuals who are less skilled in using information technology feel burdened due to the inability to perform a job according to the limited resource allocation (Palomeno & Frezzati, 2016; Prakash et al., 2019).

#### *3.2. Conflict over the ability to perform multiple roles*

Based on interviews with several other teacher leaders, one of the factors that drive the desire for early retirement is wanting to escape from the burden of various roles in school. This situation may be because there are several several experienced teachers in the school entrusted to hold more than one position at a time

*“... I want to escape from multiple roles at school. Apart from teaching, I have to supervise the teachers under me rather than update files. I also have to fill in various marks ... teachers’ success scores, student achievement scores..everything online. Everything needs to be done within the prescribed period ...” (PKKO).*

*“... when I am in my 50’s and above, I am not ready to hold multiple roles in school ..” (GKSS)*

*“... the duties of a teacher are changing ... and although it is said that the workload has been reduced but more and more in fact ... the tasks in management and administration are also increasing and challenging. I feel guilty if I am not able to perform my responsibilities well ...” (GKB)*

In conclusion, the findings of the above interview clearly show that teacher leaders feel burdened with various roles that need to be shouldered by them at the same time. This is likely because teacher leaders hold one important position in the school and hold several key positions to help governance towards school excellence. In addition to preparing for effective 21<sup>st</sup> century PdPc, they are also burdened with various administrative and classroom management tasks, dealing with various student grievances and dealing with parents and the community (Banda & Mutambo, 2016; NAHT, 2019). This situation causes them to face conflicts of various roles that need to be resolved in school and sometimes even have to take the work home, thus affecting the time that should be spent with the family (Arif et al., 2017; Gardazi et al., 2016; Mahira et al., 2020; Maqsood et al., 2017; Naz et al., 2017; Nurul Arshikin Mohamad Jalil & Salina Mohammed Rashid, 2016; Siti Aisyah Panatik & Siti Khadijah Zainal Badri, 2012). Prolonged busy situations with multiple tasks to be completed prompt teacher leaders to break free from being bound by the various job demands and desires of top leaders. The less stable emotions due to this multi -role burden invite the desire for early retirement as a relief to the problems faced by teacher leaders (Meng et al., 2020; NAHT, 2019).

### 3.3. Health problem

Next, the researcher found that the factors that contribute to teacher leaders’ early retirement intentions are personal or family health problems that require them to always be by their side.

*“... my husband is facing a prolonged health problem causing me to always be by his side ...” (KPMA)*

*“... health factors that are sometimes uncertain cause me to have to release from the pressures of work that is increasingly challenging in the field of education ...” (PKKO)*

This shows that health problems that contribute to the desire for early retirement of teacher leaders, whether it is personal health or the need to take care of a sick immediate family member. Furthermore, teacher leaders who have been around the age of 50 and above often face personal

health problems or need to provide special care to immediate family members who have health problems. As the findings of a study by Badun (2018), Meng et al. (2020), Topa and Herrador-Alcaide (2016), Topa et al. (2018), and Von Bonsdorff et al. (2010), health factors for older employees also influence their desire to retire early. Interview findings also found constraints to perform multiple roles due to limited abilities and capabilities due to age factors and family attraction (Topa et al., 2018; Von Bonsdorff, 2009; Yeung & Zhou, 2017).

### *3.4. Financial Stability*

Next, the researcher found that the teacher leaders stated the factors that caused their initial retirement intentions due to having a strong financial position and sufficient household income for later retirement

*“... I do not have a debt burden with the bank or the government ... so I feel able to make a living in the future. After all, my dependents are only one child ...” (KPMA).*

*“... I already have enough savings and a high monthly income plus no dependents anymore because my five children have been working ..” (GKSS).*

In parallel with Davies et al. (2017) and Meng et al. (2020) that the economic factor of having a strong household income increases the desire for early retirement. The findings of the study are in line with consumer theory that the supply curve curves backwards (Che ‘Ros Zainol, 1996; Rahman, 2013) which describes the situation of teacher leaders who tend to reduce working time and begin to aspire to early retirement after gaining career satisfaction and income. solid. Respondents of the interview also admitted that their strong financial position and no liabilities such as financing their children’s education costs or having to settle loan debts with any party also encouraged the desire for early retirement.

### *3.5. Satisfaction in Career*

Researchers have found that among the factors that motivate teacher leaders to retire early are also satisfaction with achievement in their jobs.

*“... I am satisfied because I have been very devoted to the people of the nation...” (KPPAI).*

*“... I am satisfied because throughout being a teacher, I have succeeded in producing students who are successful in their studies and get good jobs...” (PKKO).*

As conceptualized by Beehr (1986) teacher leaders who have served for a long time and gained satisfaction over their career achievements will also encourage early retirement desires.

### 3.6. Family life

Factors that also contribute to the desire for early retirement of teacher leaders are the desire to achieve the harmony of family life that requires them to spend more time with their loved ones.

*“... Sometimes work is not completed at school .. you have to continue at home. This limits my time with family...” (PKP).*

*“... Factor of time with family... because sometimes a lot of school work needs to be brought back home... sometimes have to get up at 4 am to complete data filling... this limits my time with family...” (KPMA).*

In line with the findings of Tippens et al. (2013) who found that most teacher leaders intend to retire early due to wanting to spend time with family instead of the job satisfaction they get in the workplace. Furthermore, a lot of time has been spent on various school-related tasks throughout the service, thus often compromising quality time with family (Gardazi et al., 2016; Mahira et al., 2020; Naz et al., 2017).

### 3.7. Want to venture into other fields

Satisfaction factor in this teaching profession also causes teacher leaders to want to venture into other fields as well.

*“... I also intend to venture into other fields such as gardening and business. I will be more comfortable because I am not bound by the instructions of my superiors like now...” (PKP).*

*“... I feel like moving to another field anyway..maybe the business or livestock field that I am interested in ..” (PKKO).*

In addition, the interview findings also found that teacher leaders are interested in venturing into other fields such as agriculture, livestock and business that are not tied to official working hours and work according to Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which is always stressed by the demands of top leaders and stakeholders.

### 3.8. Filling more meaningful time

Researchers also found that many teacher leaders wanted to fill more meaningful time with beneficial activities such as adding religious knowledge and serving the local community.

*“... I feel like I want to increase my religious knowledge, I want to learn to read the Al Quran again in a more orderly and correct manner ... and I also intend to learn Fardhu ain in more detail... Understand that I think I am old..and preparing to go to the hereafter. .” (KPS)*

*“... Want to spend time to increase the knowledge of the hereafter... I have intended to retire early so that I can serve the villagers and the local community that I have never cared about them...” (KPPAI).*

Yet, at a certain level mainly involving health and family life factors, they began to think about taking a break from continuing to be tied to various roles in school. This is also likely due to their desire to find self-satisfaction by filling more meaningful time by adding religious knowledge and doing community activities. Skills and expertise as teacher leaders want to be channeled to the local community as a social responsibility that they underestimated.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of the study also support the view of Von Bonsdorff (2009), Negrini et al. (2013), Topa et al. (2018) and Meng et al. (2020) who found that the desire for early retirement is due to two main factors, namely factors related to the work environment and personal factors that cause the desire for early retirement for individuals aged 50 years and above. Among the work environment factors outlined are role conflict, increased workload, health conditions, technological changes in employment and pressure from superiors to meet the organization's needs. While personal factors include the desire to acquire leisure time, do favorite leisure activities with family, do volunteer work in the community, and satisfy personal interests or inclinations (Negrini et al., 2013; Topa et al., 2018; Von Bonsdorff, 2009).

Next, the results of the study contribute ideas in the field of education to retain committed and extensively experienced teacher leaders in helping the school's key leadership lines to continue to serve the field of education. In line with the fourth shift in PPPM 2013–2025 to produce competent and quality teachers (KPM, 2018) this group of teacher leaders should be effective pedagogical and leadership guides to young people to improve teaching professionalism. Therefore, the findings of this study are also expected to be a guide to schools and the MOE in strengthening the implementation of several educational initiatives that are constantly changing so as not to put pressure on the implementers in schools and reduce the desire for early retirement in line with the need to maintain these valuable resources in the continuity of the country's educational aspirations.

Next, based on personal factors such as lack of skills in the use of information technology, the researcher suggested that special teachers or administrative assistants do the administrative work and management of student data. This requires the professional judgment of top leaders to distribute tasks according to skills and expertise.

The researcher also suggested that the element of professional commitment of teacher leaders should be strengthened in implementing Self-Learning such as Professional Learning Community (PLC) and Guidance and Mentoring so that this element can be linked to loyalty and acceptance of the goals and values of a school so that teacher leaders are willing to contribute energy to the

school. and determined to remain serving the school (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982) until mandatory retirement age.

The proposal to create a teacher assistant position has been recommended since 2013. Furthermore, Conant (2017) also found that schools that have special assistant teachers to carry out management tasks for student sports athletes can reduce the conflict of the role of teacher leaders who teach in the classroom and as sports coaches, especially those in boarding schools because they also need to act as loco -parentis for 24 hours at school. Yet to this day, teacher leaders still hold various roles that create conflict over their jobs. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that the position of special assistant be expedited to help teacher leaders perform management and administrative work such as student data management.

When viewed from the perspective of knowledge consolidation, it is hoped that this study can positively contribute new meaningful findings to produce creative and innovative teacher leaders resolve role conflicts, enjoy the work environment in school and faithfully serve the school organization until mandatory retirement age. Thus, the proposed further study is believed to further strengthen the findings and complement the existing study and add new findings that can be a new source of reference for future researchers, especially what other factors also contribute to the increase in early retirement intentions of teachers in secondary schools in entire Malaysia.

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