Early Retirement Option among Teachers at the Teachers' Training Institute (IPG)

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ABSTRACT	Published Online: July 26, 2023

The phenomenon of early retirement among civil servants also affects the education sector. In addition, lecturers at the Teacher Education Institutes (IPG) are also involved in the issue of early retirement from the public service. This study was conducted to examine the factors contributing to the choice of early retirement among lecturers at IPG Kampus Ilmu Khas. A total of 21 lecturers responded to the distributed instrument. The findings of the study indicate that the highest factor contributing to the choice of early retirement among IPG lecturers is the basic factor aspect, which recorded a mean of 4.16 (sd=.99). The study also revealed two other contributing factors for lecturers opting for early retirement, namely having too many additional responsibilities and tasks (n=18) and the lack of priority given to lecturer welfare (n=12). Furthermore, the study findings suggest that reducing the rate of early retirement among IPG lecturers involve management and service aspects, such as implementing a more balanced distribution of tasks and creating a conducive working environment (n=19). The researcher recommends addressing the issue of early retirement by paying attention to and taking immediate action to cultivate a sense of joy in work among educators.

KEYWORDS:
to retire early, enjoy working, management and service

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to carrying out their primary duties as educators, IPG lecturers are also bound by various additional tasks. Among the other tasks of IPG lecturers are serving as practicum coordinators, involvement in innovation, examination coordinators, panel assessors, curriculum developers, attending meetings, seminars, workshops and more. Most of these additional tasks are carried out alongside their existing official positions, which require high commitment and effort to ensure the entrusted responsibilities are successfully fulfilled. Based on the demanding nature of these tasks, job satisfaction is among the key factors that need attention to prevent early retirement culture among lecturers from occurring, as is currently happening in the teaching profession (Syed Ismail, Lee Leh Hong, Edaham & Ahmad Subki, 2022).

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In the public sector, early retirement refers to a retired member reaching the age of 40 before the mandatory retirement age of 60. According to the Public Service Department, early retirement, also known as Optional Retirement, is subject to Section 12 of Act 227/239, and officers who choose to retire early must have been confirmed in their position, approved for pension status, be 40 years of age or older, have a minimum of 10 years of service that can be considered, submit an integrity screening report from the Anti-Corruption Commission (for Grade 27 and above only), and the application for optional retirement must be supported by the Department Head and submitted three (3) months from the date of departmental approval for retirement (JPA, 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have found that universities lecturers experience burnout due to increased workload and long working hours (Masuku & Muchemwa, 2015). Additionally, a significant number of educators feel challenged by high workloads and heavy responsibilities, regardless of differences in work conditions across countries, such as salary, social status, or security (Bottiani et al., 2019).

The excessive burden of additional side tasks that disrupt the primary role as educators is among the factors leading many teachers to opt for early retirement. The President of the National Union of Teaching Profession Peninsula Malaysia (NUTP) stated that the need to fulfill various additional tasks, including administrative work, has caused many teachers to lose the joy of teaching in schools. Moreover, educators are found to struggle in meeting ever-changing policy requirements (Muhammad Amnan Hibrahim, 2022).

The trend of early retirement among teachers has gained attention from various parties. The issues surrounding this problem revolve around the lack of attention given to teachers and an unsupportive work environment, which contribute to the emergence of these concerns. Some schools have an excessive number of students in a single classroom, requiring additional classrooms. Additionally, the work environment does not provide peace and enjoyment for teachers, and this contributes to an increase in student absenteeism. As a result, teachers experience emotional pressure in dealing with workplace issues. Therefore, it is possible that early retirement is seen as a protest by educators against these issues (Mohd Nizam Mohamad Yatim, 2022).

In the context of higher education, lecturers in community colleges and polytechnics are also involved in tasks and various mandatory external management courses, especially from the department or the Ministry of Higher Education. They are also required to carry out tasks such as question bank development and selection, panel assessment, curriculum development, attending meetings, seminars, and workshops. On average, these external courses last for four to five days and require high dedication and focus from morning until evening. Such situations also have some impact on the job satisfaction level of the respective lecturers (Norliza, 2017).

Furthermore, academic, and non-academic staff who do not receive recognition for their achievements and whose salaries do not align with the workload imposed by employers can be affected. All these factors can have an impact on the psychological and physical aspects of employees, which can also influence their emotional well-being (Rahim & Yatim, 2017). This leads to a lack of happiness while performing job duties, feelings of sadness, emptiness, pressure, a sense of being undervalued, becoming irritable, and experiencing anxiety. Ultimately, this results in continuous stress, loss of interest in work, inability to focus, loss of appetite, and may even reach a point where individuals contemplate suicide (Aziz, 2014).

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to examine the issue of early retirement among lecturers at the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) Kampus Ilmu Khas, Kuala Lumpur. The focus of the study is to identify the primary factors that contribute to IPG lecturers choosing early retirement from their service. The study focuses on early retirement factors in seven (7) aspects, namely workplace stress, health issues, service schemes, bureaucratic whims, personal factors, policy changes, and the economy.

The specific objectives are to:
  i.   Identify the primary factors that contribute to early retirement among IPG lecturers.
  ii. Identify other contributing factors that lead to early retirement among IPG lecturers.
  iii. Propose suggestions to reduce the rate of early retirement among IPG lecturers.

Research Questions:
  i.   What are the primary factors contributing to early retirement among IPG lecturers?
  ii. What are the other contributing factors leading to early retirement among IPG lecturers?
  iii. What suggestions can be made to reduce the rate of early retirement among IPG lecturers?

IV. RESULTS

The obtained data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0. The researcher conducted the assessment of minimum scores based on the assessment by the Planning, Research, and Educational Policy Division (2006b). The researcher conducted the assessment of minimum scores based on the assessment by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), interpreting the initial minimum values among IPG lecturers in this study as follows:

Table 1. Minimum value determination table

No	Mean	Level
1	4.01 to 5.00	high level
2	3.01 to 4.00	moderately high level
3	2.01 to 3.00	moderately low level
4	1.00 to 2.00	low level

Source: Nunnally, J. C. & Bernstein 1994

A total of 21 retired lecturers from the Special Education Institute (IPG) participated in the study by responding to the distributed instrument. The sample distribution is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall sample distribution

No	Age	n	Gender	Qualification	Grade	Position	Year of Retirement
i.	below 55 year old	5 (16.7%)					2023=3 (14.3%)
ii.	55 year old	1 (5.6%)		PhD=12 (57.1%)	DG 54 (Confirmed / Acting) = 2 (9.5%)	Head of department = 2(9.5%)	2022=10 (47.60%)
iii.	56 year old	2 (25.6%)	Male = 8 (38.1%)	Master degree =5 (23.8%)	DG 52 (Confirmed / Acting) = 17 (81.0%)		2021=4 (19.0%)
iv	58 year old	5 (7.4%)	Female= 13(61.9%)	Bachelor's degree=4 (19.1%)	DG 48 (Confirmed / Acting) =2 (9.5%)	lecturer=19 (90.5%)	2020=2 (9.5%)
v.	59 year old	3 (14.8%)					2019=2 (9.5%)

Based on Table 2, a total of 49 lecturers from the Special Education Institute (IPG) retired between 2017 and 2023. Out of the total population, 21 lecturers responded to the distributed instrument, representing 42.9 percent of the overall involved population. Further data analysis shows that the highest number of retirees was among those aged 58, with 5 individuals (7.9%), followed by 3 individuals (14.8%) aged 59, 2 individuals (25.6%) aged 56, 1 individual (5.6%) aged 55, and the lowest number was among those aged 57, with only 4 individuals (7.4%). Out of these numbers, 8 individuals (38.1%) were male, while 13 individuals (61.9%) were female. Data analysis also indicates that 12 individuals or 57.1 percent held a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, 5 individuals or 23.8 percent held a master's degree, and the remaining 4 individuals or 19.1 percent held a bachelor's degree.

Based on Table 2, data analysis also shows that two individuals or 9.5 percent retired while holding the DG 54 Genuine/Acting Grade, 17 individuals (81.0 percent) were in the DG52 Grade, while the remaining two individuals (9.5 percent) retired while holding the DG 48 Genuine/Acting Grade. Analysis by position indicates that the highest number consists of lecturers, totaling 19 individuals (90.5 percent), followed by Department Heads with two individuals (9.5 percent). Furthermore, analysis by retirement year reveals that three individuals (14.3 percent) retired in 2023, 10 individuals (47.6 percent) retired in 2022, four individuals (19.0 percent) retired in 2021, while the remaining two individuals (9.5 percent) retired in 2020 and 2019.

To address the first research question, which is the highest factor contributing to early retirement among IPG lecturers, the findings of the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Highest Factors for Early Retirement

No	Factors/Grade of Officers	DG 54 (Confirmed / Acting)		DG 52 (Confirmed / Acting)		DG 48 (Confirmed / Acting)		Overall	
		min	sp	min	sp	min	sp	min	sp
1	Pressure	3.08	0.82	3.30	0.93	2.83	1.41	3.24	0.92
2	Health	2.00	0.28	2.58	0.92	1.60	0.00	2.43	0.89
3	Service	3.30	0.42	2.89	0.93	3.20	1.98	2.96	0.96
4	Bureaucracy	3.50	1.89	3.38	0.90	3.17	0.24	3.37	0.91
5	Personal	3.29	0.40	3.35	0.83	3.07	1.11	3.32	0.79
6	Policy	4.40	0.57	4.24	0.86	3.30	2.40	**4.16**	**0.99**
7	Economy	3.50	0.42	3.01	0.96	4.00	0.57	3.15	0.93
Overall		3.29	0.38	3.26	0.59	3.03	0.94	3.24	0.58

Based on Table 3, overall data analysis reveals that the highest factor contributing to early retirement among IPG lecturers is the basic factor, which recorded a minimum value

of 4.16 (SD=0.99), followed by the bureaucracy factor with a minimum value of 3.37 (SD=0.91). The analysis also indicates that the lowest factor influencing early retirement

among lecturers is the health aspect, with a minimum value of 2.43 (SD=0.89).

To further examine the basic factor in depth, item analysis for the respective factor is presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Item Analysis for the Personal Factor

No.	Statement	1 2 3 4 5	
		Disagree	**Agree**
1	There have been numerous sudden policy changes.	4 (19.0%)	17(81.0%)
2	Confusing policy changes.	3 (14.3%)	18 (85.7%)
3	Inability to keep up with ministry policy changes.	8(38.1%)	13(61.9%)
4	The switch to a 3-semester academic system has resulted in insufficient rest time for lecturers.	3(14.3%)	18(85.7%)
5	Student intake policies, especially for the PDPP program, have added to the workload and interaction hours for lecturers.	4(19.0%)	17(81.0%)

Based on Table 3, item analysis for the top two factors in the basic aspect reveals that 18 individuals (85.7%) indicated their agreement with the confusing policy changes and the switch to a 3-semester academic system, resulting in insufficient rest time for lecturers. Additionally, 17 individuals (81.0%) agreed that there have been numerous sudden policy changes and that student intake policies, particularly for the PDPP program, have added to the workload and interaction hours for lecturers. Qualitative data obtained through interview sessions are as follows:

P1: The workload has become overwhelming. There are so many tasks that need to be done immediately.

Sometimes, I feel left behind. So, why not just retire? It's not like it's too far away... retirement is the way to go...

P2: I feel like I can't keep up with the current developments anymore. There have been too many changes. Let the younger generation handle it... besides, it's tiring...

To address the second research question regarding other contributing factors to early retirement among IPG lecturers, an analysis of open-ended responses was conducted and is presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Other Contributing Factors

No.	Other Contributing Factors	n
1	Excessive additional responsibilities & side tasks	18
2	Insufficient priority given to lecturer welfare, such as infrastructure facilities and lecture interaction hours	12
3	Lack of support and teaching materials, such as technology applications, electronic resources, teaching aids, etc.	6
4	Leadership failures in leading the organization, including lack of recognition, favoritism, and negative biases	6
5	Personal factors: lack of time for family, diminishing self-capabilities	4
6	Burnout	3

Based on Table 4, there are two other secondary factors that contribute to lecturers opting for early retirement. The first aspect is their belief that there are excessive additional responsibilities and side tasks (n=18). The second aspect is the inadequate prioritization of lecturer welfare, such as infrastructure facilities and lecture interaction hours (n=12).

To address the third research question on suggestions to reduce the rate of early retirement among IPG lecturers, an analysis of open-ended responses was conducted and is presented in Table 5:

Table 5. Suggestions to Reduce the Rate of Early Retirement

No.	Suggestions	n
1	Management and Service • Ensure balanced task distribution. • Create a conducive work environment. • Prioritize human elements. • Take care of lecturer welfare. • Value the opinions and expertise of lecturers. • Reduce stress among lecturers. • Increase the number of lecturers.	19

2	Diversify non-core activities. • Reduce non-core activities that are not part of the lecturers' main tasks. • Excessive non-core activities lead to boredom and compromise the quality of core tasks. • Do not prioritize quantity of activities but focus on quality.	8

Referring to Table 5, the research findings indicate that among the suggestions to reduce the rate of early retirement among IPG lecturers, it involves the management and service aspect by implementing a more balanced task distribution and creating a conducive work environment (n=19). Qualitative data obtained through interview sessions are as follows:

P3: I suggest refining the task distribution among lecturers... you see... let there be a balance among each other... otherwise, some may appear to have heavier tasks... while others may seem to have less...

P4: Human elements should be the primary consideration... pay attention to this aspect... you know, if the work is enjoyable, if the atmosphere is pleasant, even if the workload is a bit heavy, it doesn't feel like anything... what's important is to enjoy the workplace...

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the overall findings of this study, it can be concluded that the highest factors contributing to early retirement among IPG lecturers are related to basic factors, followed by bureaucratic factors. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that educators often struggle to meet the constantly changing policy requirements (Muhammad Amnan Hibrahim, 2022). Therefore, the responsible parties should conduct a more in-depth examination of this issue to prevent it from becoming a major problem within the national education system.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that there are two additional factors contributing to early retirement among lecturers. The first aspect is the perception that there are excessive responsibilities and side tasks, while the second aspect pertains to the lack of priority given to lecturers' welfare, such as infrastructure facilities and lecture interaction hours. These findings align with the statement made by the President of the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) in Peninsular Malaysia, stating that the various additional tasks, including administrative work, have caused many teachers to lose their enthusiasm for teaching in schools. Hence, this issue needs to be taken seriously and addressed promptly to reduce the incidence of early retirement among educators.

The research findings also suggest that one of the recommendations to reduce the rate of early retirement

among IPG lecturers involves management and service aspects. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that poor management practices in institutions lead to employees feeling unhappy, sad, empty, stressed, unappreciated, irritable, and prone to anxiety. Eventually, these individuals experience continuous pressure, loss of interest in work, inability to focus, loss of appetite, and may even reach a point of contemplating suicide (Aziz, 2014). Therefore, institutional management should take proactive measures to create a harmonious work culture that fosters enjoyment among the staff they lead.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends addressing the issue of early retirement by giving attention and taking immediate action to create a sense of enjoyment in the teaching profession. In various situations, the human element should be given due consideration. Lecturers should also be given opportunities to participate and provide their input in facing various changes. Failure to manage this situation may result in professionals retiring early and seeking employment opportunities abroad. This will directly contribute to the brain drain phenomenon, which is detrimental as it renders the investment made in their education and training futile. Additionally, qualitative studies can be conducted to further explore all aspects related to the factors influencing early retirement among educators.
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VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

List / thank / acknowledge here individuals who contributed to the work but do not qualify for authorship

VIII. DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work. [Each manuscript needs to include a disclosure of financial interest or other conflict of interest statement. This is where these statements go].

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