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THE ISSUE OF EARLY RETIREMENT AS A GUIDE FOR MITHALI TRAINING TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The issue of early retirement dealt a great blow to the education system in Malaysia. This study aims to identify the factors of early retirement among teachers and propose some recommendations in the context of the preparation of trainee teachers. Data collection is carried out through a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach using questionnaires and interviews. A simple sampling technique was used to get feedback from the teachers to answer the research questions and get participants for interviews. A total of 772 respondents participated in this questionnaire and 73 of them agreed to be interviewed. Overall, the results of the study found that there are six dominant factors identified and themed, namely workload, administrative pressure, social environment and bullying, students and society, self-efficacy and infrastructure. Therefore, several recommendations are extended for the attention of education lecturers and trainee teachers so that this issue can be more controlled in the future. It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to the implementation of a healthier and better-quality education agenda.

KEYWORDS: Early retirement, trainee teacher, teachers' psychology, education management

INTRODUCTION

The profession of educating and teaching cannot be disputed in its importance, role and contribution to human development. People who hold the title of teacher are proven to be inspirational to determine the future of students without denying the role of parents as the first teacher in the ecological system of human psychological development. Teachers are often known as important individuals in society not only in the context of education, but also as leaders and models for the local community. Because of that, Islam also glorifies teachers with their diverse characteristics and roles from worldly and spiritual aspects (Istifhama, 2019). Because of that, teachers are also known as murabbi, mursyid and several other terms which aim to describe the height of their position from an

Islamic perspective. The teaching career must be preserved so that the national education system can be implemented well and become an example for others. Society and the country need teachers as supporters of the education system and strengthen the ummah.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of early retirement is a global issue involving various fields whether it involves the public or private sector (Topa, Depolo, & Alcover, 2018). In Malaysia, the trend of early retirement is also seen in the education sector, with more than 10,000 teachers in Malaysia reportedly intending to retire early (A Rosli, 2022; Said, 2022). This phenomenon brings several other implications such as the weakness of curriculum management and the assessment system, the quality of student education, the training of teachers and also the welfare of teachers. The ministry also lost experienced teaching staff to educate students (Said, 2022). From the aspect of manpower management, the government bears the problem of supplying experienced teachers to schools throughout Malaysia. The balance between experienced and new teachers must be under control so that new teachers have the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience from them.

Teachers usually have a positive perception of this career to maintain their motivation to continue serving. Changes in the education system change the perception and motivation of teachers in their excitement to continue the service. The weakness of managing the needs of teachers and students makes teachers lose interest in promoting charity in the context of knowledge and civilization (Börü, 2018). In addition, the workload of more than 400,000 Malaysian teachers is certainly different in terms of geographical position, school type, social, cultural, student personality, administration and so on. Several studies have been carried out (Klai & Bahrin, 2020; Subban, et al., 2022) explaining some of the main factors related to teachers' problems of heavy workload, clerical tasks and emotional stress. All problems related to teachers need to be investigated so that solutions can be taken effectively through the best approaches for certain situations.

The issue of early retirement also leads to the question of the extent to which trainee teachers are sensitive and ready to join Malaysian educators. Teachers need to be reflective because the educational scenario will continue to change with the flow of time (Walshe & Driver; 2019). Therefore, this reflective element needs to be nurtured from the beginning so that trainee teachers are more resistant to the educational scenario, especially in Malaysia. This is because the problems related to education management will certainly not be solved overnight, but instead require a gradual solution. Based on the preliminary survey and observations related to this issue, this study was carried out to examine holistically the issue of early retirement and propose some recommendations for trainee teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career as an educator

A career as a teacher is unique with the responsibility of empowering the future generation to be better as the nation's human capital. This shows that teachers become individuals who play an important role

of their own to convey knowledge and instill virtue in their students (Istifhama, 2019; Erlinung, 2022). The country needs quality and experienced teachers to form well-rounded students. Therefore, experienced teachers need to continue to serve so that quality education can continue. The determination of teachers is the main factor that motivates teachers to survive in an educational career that is seen as increasingly challenging (Gersten et al., 2001; Sun & Wang, 2017). But this is also subject to the factors of the teachers' environment, personality, workload, leadership of administrators, students and other interrelated factors (Allen et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to the inner strength and passion of a teacher, the career of this educator also depends on a healthy environment in terms of psychology, leadership and team spirit.

Motivation and Teacher's Perception of Education

Motivation is an internal process that gives encouragement to continue serving with excellence in one career. Teacher motivation is also exposed to fluctuations based on various factors. However, like any other job, teacher motivation can also be disturbed by negative stimuli such as excessive workload, insufficient infrastructure and an unhealthy social environment (Sipon, 2010, Hong & Ismail, 2017). These elements need to be taken seriously because the world of educational practice needs a positive environment to continue a healthy learning culture that will ultimately affect students as national assets in the future. Issues related to the mental and physical health of teachers need to be given attention by authorities and stakeholders.

Motivation is also influenced by perception and vice versa. In the context of education, teachers have their own perception of education, especially teaching, and this determines their level of motivation towards the world of education (Bergmark et al., 2018; Richardson & Watt, 2018). In principle, teachers have a good perception of the educational career, especially from the aspects of its glory and satisfaction and blessings. It is for this reason that they decided to be leaders and supporters of national education. Educational scenarios and issues, especially leadership, workload, and community attitudes affect the perception and subsequently the motivation of teachers to provide devotional service to students. This includes how the community deals with any issues related to the services and actions of teachers in schools either face to face or through social media. Because of that, the school administration, the environment and good relations between the schools need to be maintained and improved so that the quality of the teachers' work is always at an excellent level.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Identify the factors that lead to early retirement among teachers.
- 2) Provide a list of recommendations for trainee teachers as the new generation of future quality education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a mixed study of quantitative and qualitative approaches using online questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaire sets were distributed to teachers in the state of Perak. Quantitative data was also triangulated by interview data with respondents who agreed to be interviewed. Quantitative research data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software through mean and percentage analysis while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic qualitative data analysis method. The study involved teachers in the state of Perak for the purpose of obtaining an overview of the early retirement scenario. Until this study was carried out, there were a total of 38,218 teachers in the state of Perak. The study respondents consisted of teachers who intend to, have applied, have been successful and have retired early in the public education sector. The sampling technique used is the convenience sampling technique. The link to the study questionnaire was distributed openly to be answered by Perak teachers who were interested in participating.

The instrument for this study has two constructs to achieve the objectives of the study. The instrument begins with demographics and is followed by the construct of early retirement factors that require respondents to mark factors that relate to them personally. Next, a semi-structured interview was conducted between the researcher and the study participants to obtain more in-depth information related to the factors. This aims to understand and gain insight so that guidance for trainee teachers can be developed. The final stage of the study has continued by listing recommendations to be considered by lecturers and education trainers as well as the trainee teachers themselves so that initial preparation is nurtured since they are in the early stages of their studies. The recommendations given are based on the main issues that cause teachers to decide to retire early.

RESULTS

Demographics

The questionnaire developed online has been distributed to teachers in the state of Perak. As a result, a total of 772 respondents participated in the questionnaire for this study and a total of 73 of those respondents agreed to be interviewed for follow-up questions. Demographically, Manjung district contributed to the highest number of respondents for this study (35%) while Kampar district was the lowest contributor (1%). The contribution of these respondents also depends on the extent to which they receive information related to this study, the teachers' willingness to share and the time to answer the questionnaire. Figure 1 follows is the distribution of respondents who participated in this study:

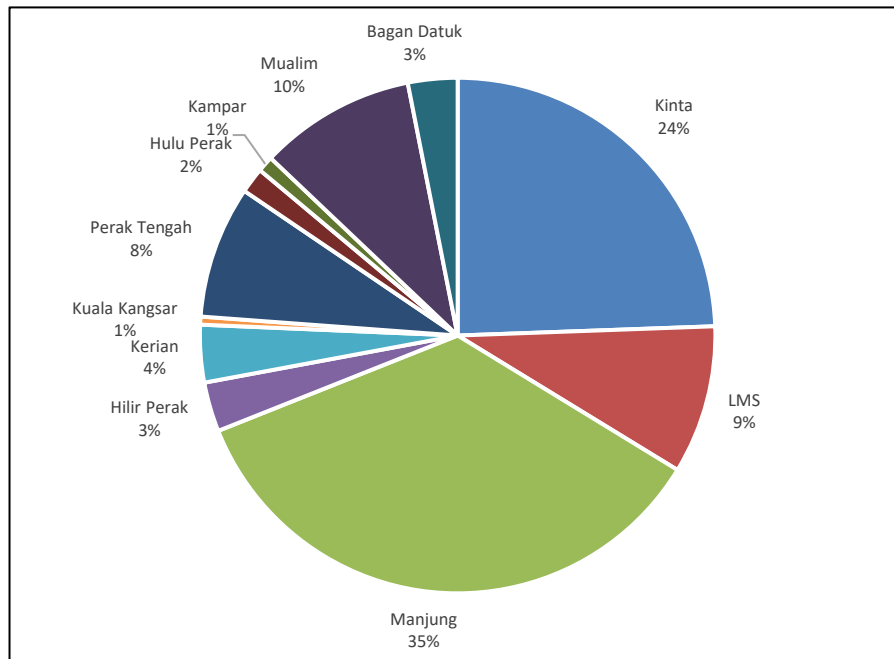


Figure 1. Total Study Respondents by District

Of all the respondents, it was found that 55% (424 respondents) expressed the desire to retire early and 40% (168 respondents) of them were among teachers who had served for 25 years and above. Teachers who have served for 17-22 years are the lowest group who have the desire to retire early which is only 17% (72 respondents). A total of 39% (304 respondents) stated that they do not intend to retire early and most of them are also from the group of teachers who have served for more than 23 years. Respondents consisting of teachers who have served for 1-8 years are the lowest group who stated that they do not intend to retire early which is 14% (44 respondents). As many as 5% (40 respondents) have applied for early retirement and 0.5% (4 respondents) have already enjoyed their early retirement. Summary for this demographic, from all respondents, as much as 61% have the intention, have applied and have retired while 39% do not intend to retire early. Figure 2 below is a diagram of the retirement status of the respondents of this study:

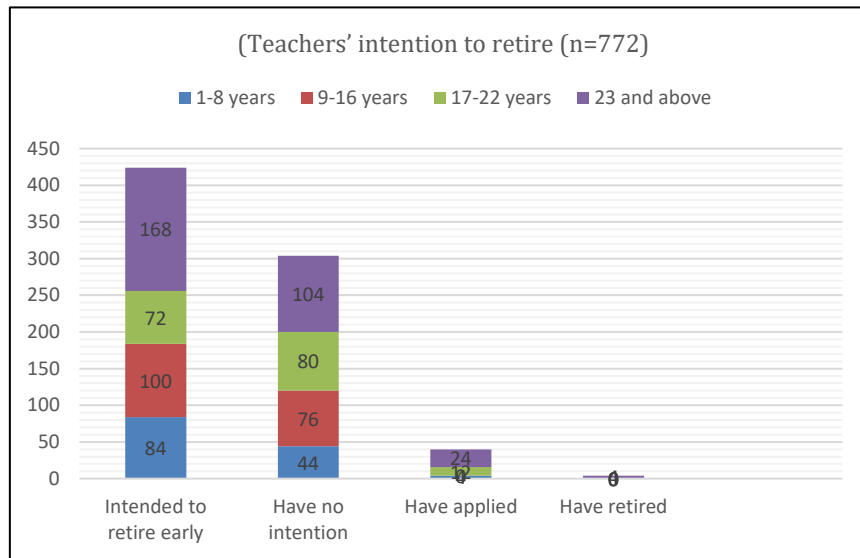


Figure 2. The status of the teacher's retirement wishes

Factors influencing early retirement

Based on the analysis of quantitative data, it was found that several factors influence the intention of early retirement among teachers arranged according to the highest contribution. These include workload, administrative pressure, social environment and bullying, students and community, self-efficacy, infrastructure, changing professions, bullying, family responsibilities and interests. Figure 4 below summarizes the factors in order.

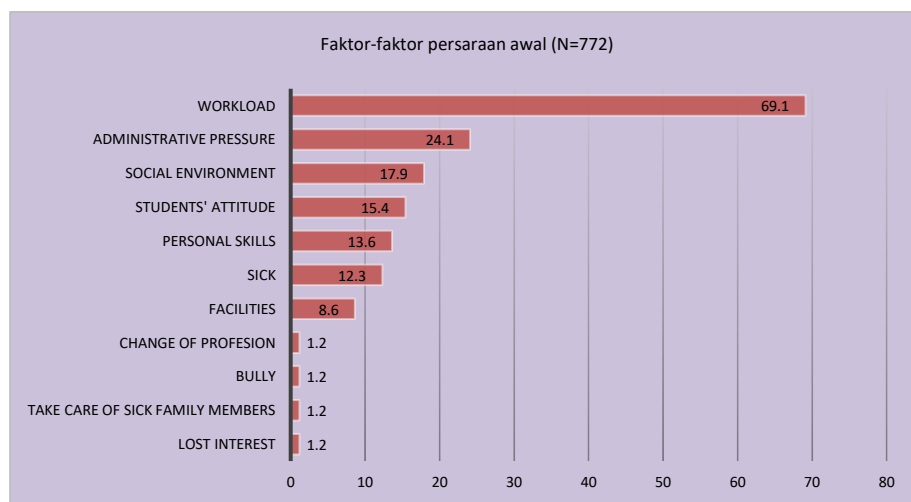


Figure 4. Early Retirement Factors Among Teachers

A total of 73 of the study respondents agreed to be participants in the qualitative study to obtain more in-depth information. Of the 73 interviews, seven were face-to-face online, 35 via email and 31 via

whatapps and telegram. No study participants were interested in being interviewed physically face-to-face at any location. Based on all the interviews, six dominant factors were explained in detail and themed, namely workload, administrative pressure, social environment and bullying, students and society, self-efficacy and infrastructure.

Workload

Several issues were voiced by study participants. Teachers feel burdened when they are given duty instructions on weekends that are not related to teaching. In addition, teachers are also required to perform clerical tasks that take time in addition to existing teaching and assessment recording duties. This includes the preparation of student learning monitoring reports, summaries of student attendance issues and interventions, preparation of papers for each program as well as assessment reports. There are also teachers who have been instructed to conduct additional classes organized by outside parties. In addition, there are additional programs related to PIBG, the community, external agencies, foreign ministries, politicians, and school clusters that are fundamentally unable to be implemented with the existing financial strength and human resources. The teachers also stated that there was an unbalanced distribution of duties according to factors such as length of duty, marital status, age, efficiency and the way teachers work.

Administrative pressure

There are teachers who feel that the administration such as the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM), the State Department of Education (JPN), the District Education Office (PPD) and school administrators are less considerate in the aspect of giving instructions from time to time. Teachers also often receive instructions through online applications that are felt to interfere with the teacher's privacy after duty hours. In addition, there are also orders to change schools outside the reasonable radius with reasons that cannot be accepted by the teacher. Changing teachers felt like restarting a new career with a new environment that took time with different distances. In addition, there is politics and favoritism among administrators and teachers. There are also instructional disagreements among administrators, the result of conflicts among them that affect subordinates. There are also school administrator duties that are handed over to subordinate teachers for reasons of not being proficient with the system.

Social environment

There are teachers who have very critical interpersonal problems such as narcissism which make for an unpleasant working environment. In addition, there is a lack of togetherness in carrying out certain tasks. There is also a culture of disputing duties among teachers such as ordinary academic teachers who often dispute any actions and decisions made by the administration and the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM). There is also a conflict of duties among teachers such as academic teachers and counseling teachers. Furthermore, there is also a culture of openness in conveying negative opinions through social media such as Kami Guru Malaysia. This negative socialization makes the educational environment at school unhealthy and a reflection of the teacher's personality.

Students and community

Teachers feel that today's students are more difficult to control because they are spoiled by their parents so that they have no respect for teachers. This causes teachers to feel too careful to educate and punish students even in giving light punishment. This also creates a feeling that society no longer respects the teacher's career and causes the enjoyment and satisfaction of being a teacher to be eroded.

Self-efficacy

There are teachers who are still not skilled and do not master the best pedagogy to increase student interest. There are also teachers who are still unable to control the class well, ultimately feeling unfit to be teachers. Teachers also do not have the skills to manage time and tasks effectively. There are teachers who feel that they lack skills in delivery to the point of causing students to become bored and difficult to control. There are also teachers who cannot take advantage of the advantages of technology and information that can make learning interesting and more effective. In addition, there are teachers who are unable to use the advantages of technology and information to save and organize work systematically such as using Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets. In addition, there are teachers who admit they lack good interpersonal skills in communicating with students.

Infrastructure

There are schools with class:pupil ratios that are not suitable for effective classroom control and pupil comfort. In addition, there are schools that receive unsatisfactory internet supply. There are schools that still do not have a surau (prayer room) that is comfortable for students and teachers. In addition, there are schools that do not have academic laboratories such as science, religion and language laboratories that can be used, making it difficult to have more effective learning sessions. In addition, there is also a comparison between one school and another related to the provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the quantitative and qualitative study, it was found that teachers have voiced several problems that often occur in schools including leadership, social, self and society. However, this problem is also subject to more specific factors such as the school environment and certain individuals that lead to specific and unique problems. In general, through the interviews conducted, these factors can be caused by oneself or the environment. It is certain that the information obtained received various reactions from society, both among educators and non-educators. In other words, there are things that require change from the leadership aspect itself and there are also things that actually require reflection by the teachers themselves that can actually be improved over time with the support of a positive environment. Therefore, some suggestions can be recommended for the attention of trainee teachers.

Soft skills

This involves self-skills in work management and teaching. Therefore, prospective teachers are recommended to improve their own skills related to pedagogy so that learning is more effective,

interesting and controlled when they are in school later. Prospective teachers must also improve their presentation skills so that communication between teachers, students and parents happens well and clearly. Interpersonal skills among teachers need to be strengthened to guarantee a healthy social system, especially involving feelings and self-respect. All this needs to be started since they are still in their studies.

Intrapersonal skills

These skills include mental health, self-management and discipline. A great teacher is a teacher who can control his emotions and separate personal problems from teaching. A prospective teacher also needs to build a good personality during their studies to determine their unique strengths. They are strongly encouraged to join associations and get involved with university programs. These things will help foster other intrapersonal aspects such as self-confidence, time management, appearance and others. In addition, teachers must always be aware of personal health including mental health due to the increasingly challenging demands of education.

Cultivating lifelong learning

Prospective teachers must have passion and a deep interest in their field. Thus while they are at the study stage, a self-assessment must be done on how much they are really interested in teaching and guiding. DSKP needs to be thoroughly researched and aligned with the National Education Philosophy. A sense of love for new knowledge needs to be fostered either through reading culture, following additional studies or any other available alternative. The latest demands and challenges of the education system must be updated over time, not just after they enroll in school later.

Information technology skills

The management skills of teachers need to be improved especially in using the advantages of information and communication technology for data management and storage as well as any other recording and reporting. The skill of using certain computer software needs to be improved either through existing courses or following additional courses provided by the university. This will reduce the feeling of being burdened when performing clerical tasks that are uncertain when they will end.

Use of social media

Teachers also need to be sensitive in using social media in voicing any point of view. To some extent, caution in using social media will preserve the dignity and perception of teachers in Malaysia. This culture needs to be instilled and started with the social media of prospective teachers themselves who need to be described as educators and role models. One has to distinguish between what can be openly voiced and vice versa. The use of language in social media communication must be maintained as well as the demand to maintain oral speech in physical social conversation.

CONCLUSION

There are six dominant factors identified and themed related to early retirement, namely workload, administrative pressure, social environment and bullying, students and society, self-efficacy and infrastructure. All these factors should be an additional lesson for future teachers in any institution so that they will become strong and great teachers as soon as they step into the school where they start working. Inner strength and social skills must be nurtured from the beginning in accordance with the educational demands of this century. A teacher who always strives to give the best to his students is a mithali teacher who gets God's grace. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the advancement of the world of education now and in the future.

APPRECIATION

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