

Why do Vocational College Agriculture Subject Teachers Choose to Early Retire? A Case Study

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the factors of Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers choose early retirement. The research methodology is quantitative. The sampling for this study is simple random sampling. Questionnaires have been distributed to 150 teachers of Agriculture subjects at three Vocational Colleges. The findings of the study show that there are several dominant factors that contribute to this phenomenon, namely salary payment, workplace environment, personal problems and workload. The negative impact of teachers retiring early can destabilize the education system, including the loss of experienced teachers and the increased cost of training new teachers. This study suggests the need for holistic interventions by relevant parties, such as reducing workload, increasing psychological support and better recognition of teachers' contributions in order to reduce the rate of early retirement teachers and ensure the continued quality of education.

Keywords: Teachers' Early Retirement, Salary Payment, Workplace Environment, Personal Problems, Workload, Education System

Introduction

Nowadays, the issue of teacher's early retirement is getting more and more attention in the global education system. Early retirement refers to a teacher's decision to leave the teaching profession before reaching the mandatory retirement age set by the government. Accordingly, this trend not only affects the stability of the education system but also has a major impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Ababneh, 2020; Bickmore and Dowell, 2019; Allen, Burgess and Mayo, 2018). Various factors have been identified that contribute to the decision of teachers to early retirement such as excessive workload, stress and mental health problems, lack of support and recognition, frequency of educational policy changes, physical health issues and challenges in classroom management. Same goes for Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers.

However, the heavy or excessive workload is often associated with the stress experienced by teachers. In addition to teaching duties, teachers are also involved in various administrative tasks, preparation of teaching aids and extracurricular activities. According to Thomas, Ahmad and Fakhruddin (2024) continuous workload causes teachers to experience emotional and

physical fatigue. Then encourage them to choose to retire early. In addition, mental health problems such as depression and anxiety are also major contributors. Based on the report of the National Department of Education (2023) reports that the increase in cases of mental problems among teachers has increased. Thus also contributing to the factor of teachers retiring early. Also happened to Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers.

The lack of support and recognition from the school administration also contributes to the factor of teachers early retirement. Teachers often feel unappreciated and marginalized. Especially when their contribution is not formally recognized. According to Yusoff, Abidin, Wahid, Abas, Salleh and Deraman (2023) a positive internal environment will make teachers happy and enjoy their work even when faced with various challenging tasks. In addition, frequent and inconsistent educational policy changes also add pressure to teachers. However, the frequency of policy changes causes teachers to feel stressed and at the same time not confident in the ability of the new job demands (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers also faced it.

Next, physical health issues also play an important role in teachers' decisions to early retirement. Teachers who suffer from health problems such as back pain, high blood pressure, other chronic diseases are unable to continue working in a demanding environment. According to a report from the Malaysian Institute of Education Research (2022), physical health problems are among the main reasons why teachers choose to early retirement. In addition, challenges in classroom management, especially with increasing cases of student discipline and behavioural problems being a driving factor. In relation to that, a study done by Liping and Abdul Rahman (2023) thinks that teachers who face serious disciplinary challenges are more likely to consider early retirement. Also happens to Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers.

Methodology

This study has been done in three vocational colleges that offer Agriculture streams and are quantitative in nature. The selection of teachers is done by simple random sampling. The researcher has distributed questionnaires to 150 teachers who teach Agriculture subjects at vocational colleges.

Results

This study, as shown in Table 1.1, shows that salaries are not commensurate. Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers need a reasonable salary to improve the standard of living showing the highest mean reading which is 4.7067. Next followed by the income earned is not enough mean reading (4.2000) and lastly the Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers is not satisfied with the salary compared to other individuals who have the same role with the mean reading (3.5667)

Table 1.1

Payment of salary

Item	Questions	Mean
B.A1	The income I received was insufficient to meet my basic needs.	4.2000
B.A2	My salary was unsatisfactory compared to others in similar roles.	3.5667
B.A3	I've always wanted to improve my standard of living.	4.7067

Table 1.2 shows the workplace environment. Too much work recorded the highest mean reading of 4.2867. While large classes recorded the second highest mean reading of 3.887. And finally, there was a lack of support from other teachers (3.2667).

Table 1.2

Workplace environment

Item	Questions	Mean
B.B1	I have experienced lack of support from other teachers.	3.2667
B.B2	Large class size.	3.8867
B.B3	Excessive paperwork.	4.2867

Table 1.3 shows that personal problems are contributing factors to teachers early retirement. Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers expect the school nearby to their home with a mean reading of 4.1333, followed by teachers spent time with their children (3.5600) and changes in family status such as getting married, separating from their partner or even moving to another job with a mean (2.3467).

Table 1.3

Personal problems

Item	Question	Mean
B.C1	I need more time with my children.	3.5600
B.C2	Finding new working place nearer my home.	4.1333
B.C3	A change in my family status (such as marriage, divorce, or transfer) impacted my work situation.	2.3467

Next, Table 1.4 shows the workload. Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers need to bring work home record the highest mean (4.7667). Next, Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers can deal with the demands of work (3.9800) and finally, they do not have enough time to plan teaching and learning with a mean record of 2.9133.

Table 1.4

Workload

Items	Questions	Mean
B.D5	I often have to take my work back home.	4.7667
B.D10	I can cope with the demands of my job.	3.9800
B.D13	I have enough time to ensure that majority of my lessons are well-planned.	2.9133

Discussion

The findings of this study show that salary payments that are not commensurate with the work are a factor causing Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers to early retirement. Incommensurate salary payments include elements of improving the standard of living, insufficient monthly income and teachers also compare their jobs with other jobs that also receive the same monthly salary. According to Moody and Randzzo (2020) and Fuchsman, McGee and Zamarro (2024) stated that the payment of a commensurate salary can motivate teachers to work more without thinking. This is because the salary payment is not only for the teacher's individual use. In fact, to support the family including kitchen expenses, house rent, monthly utility payments and so on. There are some Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers whose spouses are not working or have retired. So the teachers is the one who bears all household expenses. This makes the teacher stressed and has dragged them into depression and feelings of depression at school and causes the school environment to also contribute to this.

Next, this study states that the workplace environment greatly influences the quality of work of an employee or in the context of this study, Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers. The workplace environment, including too many tasks, a large number of students in one class and no support from other teachers, is a contributor to the cause of early retirement of Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers. This is also supported by Suprayitno (2024) who states that if the workplace has a positive aura, it is able to produce employees who work in a healthy, comfortable and conducive atmosphere. At the same time, employees feel like they are at home while working in an enjoyable situation. Therefore, employees are able to show encouraging performance. However, some Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers have personal problems that make them stressed, thus causing them to choose to early retirement.

Based on this study, it is also believed that personal problems are a driver for Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers to early retirement. Aspects of personal problems include Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers wanting their homes nearby to school. In addition, they also need to spent time with their children. However, changes in family status such as getting married, separating and moving also contribute to the cause of Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers retiring early because they need time to adapt to these circumstances. The causes of personal problems contributing to the cause of teachers retiring are also supported by a study conducted by O'Hanlon (2021) stating that personal problems cause teachers to retire early. Personal problems greatly affect emotions and actions in carrying out daily tasks at school. If a teacher's emotions are disturbed, the teacher will certainly not be able to carry out the teaching and learning process successfully. Subsequently, the teacher is encouraged to take reckless or unexpected actions. Then, the teacher is also unable to do all the workload well.

Workload is a cause for Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers choose to early retirement. The workload in question includes aspects such as teachers having to do clerical tasks, filling in for absent colleagues, attending workshops or seminars. Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers indicated the need to reduce their workload, especially avoiding unnecessary tasks so that their time can be spent on effective teaching and learning without affecting teachers' well-being. The findings of this study indicate that time constraints

interfere with Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers' work. Hope school administrators will be able to balance teachers' workload without affecting teaching and learning and at the same time be able to ensure teachers' well-being (Mohammad and Borkoski, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, early retirement among Vocational College Agriculture subject teachers is a complex issue that requires serious attention from all parties. This is because the factors that contribute to early teacher retirement among college vocational teachers such as salary payment, workplace environment, personal problems and workload need to be addressed holistically. Therefore, efforts to produce intelligent and dedicated students will not succeed. Through this study, it can be concluded that college vocational teachers need support from various parties, reducing workload also needs to be emphasized and at the same time increasing recognition of college vocational teachers' contributions needs to be emphasized in an effort to ensure the stability and quality of the national education system in an effort to produce students who are physically, spiritually and intellectually balanced. Especially to Vocational College teachers in Agriculture stream.

Contribution

Special thanks to those involved in this study directly or indirectly. Hope this study can be a reference in resolving the early pension problem among vocational college teachers. All parties need to be involved in resolving this problem so that it does not get worse.

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