

CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT RETIREES

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ABSTRACT

The number of Malaysian senior citizens is expected to rise to 2.71 million by the year 2020. By then, Malaysia will be an ageing society, which includes the government retirees who have reached their mandatory retirement age of 56 years old. The objective of this study was to determine the type of contribution the government retirees in Malaysia are able to provide to society and subsequently to the nation as a whole. Given this, a total of 1609 questionnaires were gathered and analysed using SPSS. Findings indicated that most of the retirees have acquired vast skills and other characteristics throughout their years of service, especially in the area that relates to their tasks and responsibilities. However, these retirees are unable to transfer their invaluable skills and other characteristics appropriately, once they have retired. It is therefore of paramount importance for the government and non-government bodies to develop a proper means for these retirees to utilise their skills. Recommendations bring to fore several policy guidelines and activities, such as retirees' involvement in businesses, flexible reemployment programmes, and various social rehabilitation programmes. These measures can be undertaken by the relevant authorities to help government retirees optimise their skills and other characteristics for national development.

Keywords: *Government retiree; skill; other characteristics; Malaysia.*

ABSTRAK

Menjelang tahun 2020, jumlah warga tua di Malaysia dijangka akan meningkat kepada 2.71 juta orang. Dengan itu, Malaysia akan menjadi

sebuah negara yang mempunyai bilangan warga tua yang ramai dan ini termasuklah mereka yang telah mencapai umur wajib persaraan iaitu 56 tahun. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti jenis sumbangan yang dapat diberikan kepada masyarakat dan negara oleh para persara kerajaan Malaysia. Oleh itu, sejumlah 1,609 borang soal selidik telah diperoleh dan dianalisa dengan menggunakan SPSS. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan kebanyakan persara telah memperoleh pelbagai kemahiran dan ciri-ciri lain sepanjang perkhidmatan mereka yang lepas. Walau bagaimanapun, kemahiran dan ciri-ciri lain tersebut tidak dapat disalurkan selepas persaraan. Sehubungan itu, adalah penting bagi badan kerajaan dan bukan kerajaan membangunkan saluran yang sesuai bagi para persara untuk menggunakan kemahiran mereka. Cadangan kajian menggariskan beberapa panduan polisi dan aktiviti, seperti penglibatan persara dalam perniagaan, program pekerjaan semula yang fleksibel, dan pelbagai program pemulihan sosial. Langkah-langkah ini boleh dilaksanakan oleh pihak yang berkaitan dalam membantu para persara kerajaan mengoptimalkan kemahiran untuk pembangunan negara.

Kata kunci: Persara kerajaan; kemahiran; ciri-ciri lain; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the world's population has continued on its remarkable transition path, which changes from a state of high to low birth and death rates. This has ignited a gradual decrease in the proportion of the base population at the younger ages (UN Press Release, 2003). Nonetheless, the transition trend has precipitated the proportional growth of senior citizens in the upcoming century. It is estimated that the number of persons aged 60 years and above will double from 10 to 21% globally between 2000 and 2050 (*United Nations*, 2005). It is estimated that in 2020, the world ageing population will reach 1 billion, and in 2025 it will reach 1.2 billion.

In Malaysia, the total population is approximately 24.82 million with an increase of 1.76% per year since 1995 (Department of Statistics, 2007). The population of people in the age group of 0-14 years old decreased from 32.6% in 2005 to 32.2% in 2007, while the population of people in the age group of 65 and above increased from 4.3% in 2005 to 4.8% in 2007. This indicated that the number of Malaysian senior citizens has gradually increased over time compared to the younger group. Based on this trend, the Department of Statistics (2007) also reported that 6.48% or 1.66 million out of 24.53 million of

Malaysia's population are senior citizens, who are in the age group of 60 years and above. The population of senior citizens, which includes government retirees, is expected to rise to 2.71 million by the year 2020. The graying of the population calls for significant concern from the Malaysian government as it may pose many challenges to the country. In essence, an increase in the number of retirees will result in less robust economic growth. The retirement of the senior citizens with knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics has inevitably lowered the number of population in the workforce. This will affect the productivity of the nation in the long run. Most importantly, Lum (1992) stated that people who are reaching 55 years old are still healthy, active, efficient, and dynamic in performing their tasks. Therefore, opportunities should be created for the retirees to remain in their respective employment if they choose to do so.

In a similar vein, the basic tenet of the Eighth Malaysia Plan spelt out the principle thrust of human resource development, which is the creation of a strong human resource base to support the development of knowledge-based economy and to enhance the country's productivity and competitiveness. In light of this, efforts have been taken to develop an efficient and responsive education and training system to fulfill the demand for a knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce. The workforce also need to be equipped with positive values and attitude in transforming Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Furthermore, the government has expanded the budget for senior citizens' programmes (Economic Planning Unit, 2005). These measures taken by the Malaysian government in the Eighth Malaysia Plan have indeed signified its effort to enhance retirees' role in developing the nation.

Nevertheless, ageing population increase may impede the process of developing highly skilled workforce required to achieve Malaysia's 2020 Vision. This is due to the smaller number of capable workforce supply, ascribed to the mandatory retirement age of 56 years old in Malaysia. Unlike most developed countries where the retirement age is 65, Malaysia's civil servants retire five to ten years earlier than their counterparts in the developed countries. Hence, their contribution to the country would come to a halt due to the mandatory retirement age imposed by the Government. These situations have prompted the need for this study, which is intended to examine the skills and other characteristics of Malaysian government retirees, and to identify their contribution to society for national development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Retirees' Role in National Development

Government retirees refer to people who used to work as civil servants. Lim (2001) specifically noted that about 22,000 civil servants retire every year with 12,000 undergoing compulsory retirement, an average of 5,000 took up optional retirement, and another 5,000 retire because of privatisation. Only a small number of the total retirees retired because of health problem and other reasons. At present, there are 513,689 government retirees in Malaysia who used to work in various organisations or local government departments ("Retiree extension," 2005).

The Malaysian Government has made concerted efforts to encourage retirees to participate actively in national development through various activities. As an illustration, Klang City Council (*Majlis Perbandaran Klang*) has introduced the Workforce Recycle System, aimed at retirees who are interested in voluntary programmes (Daud, 2005). Retirees can be advisors, teachers, and mentors in programmes, such as state associations, crime prevention programmes, and parents and teachers association. In conjunction with the International Year of Older Persons in 1999, the government has implemented an action plan for the National Policy on the Elderly to ensure the integration and participation of senior citizens in society.

The above notion is echoed in other parts of the world. For instance, the forum of Ageing with Dignity: Rights of Older Persons in 2005 propagated senior citizens' participation and integration in the society as a way to contribute to national development. In essence, retirees can participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies. Retirees also can seek and develop opportunities for social service by volunteering in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities. Furthermore, in 2003, the Commission on Social Development emphasised that there is a need to include the ageing group in the social development programmes even if the ageing population has indeed become a common challenge to all countries (UN Press, 2003). Take the case of China, whereby 70% of the ageing population is under 70 years old (UN Press, 2003). Nevertheless, the Chinese government has strongly encouraged the senior citizens to remain engaged in voluntary activities at the community level because the latter are the backbone to the country's socio-economic development.

Additionally, Kim and Feldman (2000) asserted that retirees can apply Atchley's continuity theory of aging (1989) in undergoing the retirement process. This theory postulated that in order to sustain a healthy daily life structure, retirees have to participate in activities that they value most. In fact, those with high career identification are likely to seek continuity in their daily life structure through some form of work involvement, such as part-time work, consulting activities, or professional associations. This is crucial to avoid the feeling of *rolelessness* among senior citizens after they undergo retirement (Richardson & Kilty, 1991). Similarly, Lachman (2001) suggested that retirees can be volunteers or participants in various community associations. Kim and Feldman (2000) also noted that individuals can sustain continuity of their daily life structure through voluntary work as it entails healthy communication and interaction with others in these activities. In the same regard, Pickersgill, Briggs, Kitay, O'Keefe, and Gillezeau (1996) concurred that being a volunteer in community service is an important form of social integration because it has been reported that unpaid work is positively related to a vigorous human well being. Broderick and Glazer (1983) added that the socially active retirees have the highest level of post retirement participation in associations and voluntary programmes. It can therefore be concluded that being engaged in a range of activities is rewarding if the retirees are to remain hale and hearty.

Furthermore, retirees can be involved in mentoring at the organisational as well as society levels. Mentoring is part of an organisational succession planning in which retirees are re-employed as mentors to the new employees (Liebowitz, 2004). Kerschner and Hansan (1996) concurred that retirees can be involved in mentoring programmes to create productive lifestyles for both the rookie and the retirees themselves. At the society level, retirees can become mentors in enhancing family dynamics. For instance, Big Brothers/Big Sisters in the USA is an organisation that provides quality voluntary and professional services to assist children and youth in achieving their highest potential. Volunteers in these activities, which consist of retirees, are usually matched with children from single-parent families to serve as mentors in one-on-one relationships.

Besides mentoring, retirees can enter into various forms of flexible employment suitable with their attributes. According to Liebowitz (2004), retirees can be teachers and coaches for the successor generations. For instance, schools in Maryland and Virginia are tapping retirees as substitute teachers. This channel allows retirees to harness their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics

(KSAOs) in a pragmatic way to help students. Furthermore, Patrickson (2002) strongly contended that teleworking is good potential employment opportunities for retirees since they are more independent and attentive in performing their jobs, compared to their younger counterparts. Teleworking is deemed appropriate because it was reported that retirees are highly motivated and passionate about work (Arrowsmith & McGoldrick, 1997; Lim, 2002; Patrickson, 1994). A study by Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997) also revealed that retirees are more likely to exhibit positive work ethics, and high level of commitment and persistency in achieving work goals. Moreover, they are flexible in adapting to the new environment and learning new skills (Arrowsmith & McGoldrick, 1997; Lim, 2002; Patrickson, 1994). Taken together, these dispositions fit the role required in teaching, coaching, and teleworking.

Skills and Other Characteristics

Government retirees are a great source of human capital to the nation, given their vast skills and other characteristics. Dunnette (1976) defined skill as the capacities needed to perform a set of tasks that are developed from training and experience of performing a certain job. How well a person is able to carry out a specific action, for instance effective communication is a reflection of the acquired skill. Skill is dependent on knowledge. A person must know *what* to do and *when* to do it. However, knowing *what* and *when* to do something is different from actually *able* to do it. In addition, skill refers to dexterity, accuracy, and alertness required in understanding the workflow or levels of complexity in the use of and interaction with both human and non-human resources in performing assignments (Henderson, 2000). Interaction with humans requires individuals to be accurate and alert in managing mentality, situation, and creativity (Ivancevich, 2003). Skills also require individuals to be accurate or alert in the use of precision and non-precision tools, such as advance operating equipment and technological systems, advance keyboard devices, simple settings, and so forth. Skills also can be developed by attending training programmes (Desimone, Werner, & Harris, 2002). Steinberg, Najman, Donald, McChesney-Clark, and Mahon. (1994) highlighted that training is more frequently offered to younger employees, compared to their older counterparts. On the same ground, Lim's (2002) study reported that almost 67% of retirees are willing to undergo skill retraining and upgrading so as to make them qualified to work. That same study also revealed that 57% of the retirees are willing to undergo training to enable them work in a different job or in a different industry. This situation is attributed to the retirees' willingness to continue working upon retirement.

Additionally, other characteristics composed of all other aspects that are crucial to the job besides knowledge, skills, and abilities. It is of great importance for employees to have other characteristics prior to entering employment relationships and coming to the workplace to perform the job. Heneman and Judge (2003) pointed out that employers have to make sure that the selected employees possess values that are consistent with organisational culture and values because this disposition is categorised as other characteristics (Heneman & Judge, 2003). According to Heneman and Judge (2003), there are three areas of other characteristics: (i) legal requirements, for example possession of license, citizens or legal alien, geographic residency, security clearance, etc.; (ii) availability requirements, such as for instance starting date, worksite locations, travel, attendance and tardiness, etc.; and (iii) character requirements, for example moral, work ethic, background, honesty, and integrity (Heneman & Judge, 2003). In this study, other characteristics are tapped in terms of work styles and job values. The former are further subdivided into achievement orientation, social influence, practical intelligence, conscientiousness, adjustment, and interpersonal orientation. Job values are measured in the aspects of achievement, status, autonomy, and altruism.

METHODOLOGY

Currently, there are about 513,689 government retirees in Malaysia ("Retiree extension", 2005). Out of that figure, only 15,519 retirees have registered as members of the Malaysian Government Retirees Association (MGRA). Questionnaires were designed to examine the profiles, skills, other characteristics, and contributions of retirees. Items in the questionnaire were adapted from Martocchio (2004). A total of 3000 questionnaires were distributed and 1633 questionnaires or 53.37% were received. However, only 1609 questionnaires were used for further analysis. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0.

FINDINGS

Background of the Sample

The present study revealed that 1,277 respondents of the study were male while 332 respondents were female. Out of 1,609 respondents, 561 of the respondents were above 65 years old and 1407 respondents

were Malay and Muslim. The respondents were from all over Malaysia: 16.6% from Pahang, 14% from Kedah, 11.4% from Selangor, 9.9% from Perak, 8.4% from Negeri Sembilan, 6.6% from Sarawak, 6.1% from Johor, 5.7% from Pulau Pinang, 5.3% from Perlis, 4.7% from Terengganu, 3.5% from Kelantan, 3.2% from Melaka, 2.9% from Sabah, and 1.8% from Wilayah Persekutuan.

With regard to education level, the majority of the respondents (1,265 respondents) possess SPM/MCE (O-Level), SRP/LCE or standard six or primary education. In terms of retirement profile, a total of 1,447 respondents retired due to the mandatory retirement age, which is 56 years old between the year 1984 and 2005. A total of 538 respondents (33.4%) were in the education service and 483 were teachers. The study also shows that 82.8% of the respondents perceive themselves as healthy and only 17.2% of respondents view themselves as not healthy.

Retirees' Involvement in Activities

As presented in Table 1, 85.5% of the retirees are currently involved in several associations. The majority of them (49.2%) are actively involved in 1 or 2 associations, 22.1% are actively involved in 3 or 4 associations, and 14.2% are actively involved in 5 or 6 associations. These findings showed that retirees are still active in various associations. Specifically, quite a number of the retirees are involved in associations at the national, state, and district level, which are 16.7%, 8.0%, and 20.0%, respectively. Overall, 43.4% of the respondents are reported to be involved in associations at various levels.

Table 1: Involvement in Association's Activities among Government Retirees (n = 1,609)

Involvement Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Involvement in associations	1381	85.8
Currently involved	228	14.2
Number of associations		
1-2 associations	792	49.2
3-4 associations	355	22.1
5-6 associations	229	14.2

(continued)

7-8 associations	25	1.6
9-10 associations	10	.6
Above10 associations	4	.2
Level of Involvement		
National	268	16.7
State	128	8.0
District	321	20.0
Combination	698	43.4

Skills of the Retirees

Table 2 presents the findings of the skills possessed by government retirees. As depicted, respondents in the present study possess a number of different skills. For example, 51.5% of the retirees have skills in language, 22.1% in mathematics, and 32.2% in religion. The findings also showed that 11.5% of the respondents have skills in arts, 4.7% in music, 16.5% in cooking, and 8.8% in sewing. In terms of agriculture and counseling, 24.2% and 16.5% of respondents have skills in the respective areas. Only a small number of the respondents possess advisory and care service skills (27.5% and 10.8%, respectively). Findings also indicated that 28.2% of the respondents have skills in charitable activities, 28.7% have voluntary skills, and 25.2% have public speaking skills. Results also showed that 20.6% of the respondents have decision-making skills, 27.3% have time management skills, and 30.3% have leading skills. Additionally, 37.7% of the respondents have meeting skills, and 27.3% have task delegation skills.

Table 2: Skills of Government Retirees (n = 1,609)

Teaching	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Language	828	51.5
Mathematics	355	22.1
Religion	518	32.2
Arts	185	11.5

(continued)

Music	76	4.7
Cooking	265	16.5
Sewing	142	8.8
Agriculture	389	24.2
Social Services		
Counseling	266	16.5
Advisory Service	442	27.5
Care Service	174	10.8
Charitable Organisations	454	28.2
Volunteer Service	461	28.7
Leadership Skills		
Public Speaking	406	25.2
Decision Making	332	20.6
Time Management	439	27.3
Leading Skills	487	30.3
Meeting	606	37.7
Task Delegation	439	27.3
Technical Skills		
Basic Computer	337	20.9
Advanced Computer	29	1.8
Transport Repairing	50	3.1
Machine Repairing	121	7.5
Carpentering	173	10.8
Flexibility		
Stress Control	593	36.9
Self-Adjustment	608	37.8
Other Skills		
Clerical	329	20.4
Health	243	15.1
Finance	279	17.3
Handicrafts	81	5.0
Crafting	48	3.0
Swimming	155	9.6

Only a small number (20.9%) of the respondents have basic computer skills, while 1.8% have advanced computer skills. Our findings also indicated that 3.1% of the respondents have transport repairing skills, 7.5% have machine repairing skills, and 10.8% have carpentering skills. Over one third of the respondents (36.9%) have skills in stress control, while 37.8% have self-adjustment skills. It was also found that 20.4% of the respondents have clerical skills, 15.1% have health management skills, and 17.3% have financial management skills. Only 5.0% of the respondents have handicraft skills, 3.0% have crafting skills, and 9.6% have swimming skills.

Other Characteristics of the Retirees

Table 3 presents research findings on other characteristics possessed by government retirees. In terms of achievement, 56.4% of the respondents are able to utilise their abilities in performing tasks and responsibilities, while 44.3% have obtained good achievements in their prior job performance. The findings also indicated that 44.9% of the respondents have had the opportunity to develop themselves through their previous tasks and responsibilities, and 32.9% have received recognition from their prior tasks and responsibilities. Additionally, 33.5% of respondents have acquired authority while 40.8% have exhibited positive social values in performing their tasks and responsibilities. As for autonomy, 33.7% of the respondents are creative in performing their job, 53.7% are responsible for the tasks they carried out, and 20.8% have autonomy in tasks they performed. It was also found that 43.3% of the respondents are self-sacrificing while 52.3% are involved in social services.

Table 3 also depicted that 32.1% of the respondents have obtained achievements in their previous jobs based on their own effort, 30.6% are able to maintain good performance in any task given, and 29.5% have initiative in pursuing the best achievements. On top of that, 34.6% of the government retirees have the ability to lead, 38.5% are highly cooperative with others, 48.2% always care for others, and 48.5% are able to interact effectively with others. It was also found that 48.7% of the respondents are able to tolerate stress and 49.5% are adaptable to changes in any given situations. In terms of conscientiousness, 39.3% of the government retirees are independent, 45.4% are able to pay attention to details, and 44.3% have integrity in performing their tasks and responsibilities. Finally, as for pragmatic intelligence, 55.7% of the respondents are innovative and 28.1% have a good analytical thinking ability.

Table 3: Other Characteristics of Government Retirees (n = 1,609)

Job Values	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Achievement		
Utilise abilities	907	56.4
Good achievement	712	44.3
Status		
Self-development	722	44.9
Recognition	529	32.9
Authority	539	33.5
Social values	657	40.8
Autonomy		
Creativity	542	33.7
Responsibility	864	53.7
Autonomy	335	20.8
Altruism		
Sacrifice	696	43.3
Social Service	841	52.3
Work Styles - Achievement Orientation		
Independent	517	32.1
Persistent	492	30.6
Initiative	475	29.5
Social Influence		
Leadership Orientation	556	34.6
Interpersonal Orientation		
Cooperation	941	58.5
Concern for Others	776	48.2
Social orientation	780	48.5
Adjustment		
Stress tolerance	784	48.7
Adaptability	797	49.5
Conscientiousness		
In dependability	633	39.3
Attention to details	731	45.4
Integrity	712	44.3
Practical Intelligence		
Innovation	413	55.7
Analytical thinking	452	28.1

DISCUSSIONS

Retirees' Skills and Contribution toward National Development

Findings have elucidated that most government retirees are equipped with various useful skills and other characteristics that may or may not be related to their jobs. In terms of skills, 51.5% of the respondents have skills in teaching, specifically language. This is consistent with the findings on demography and knowledge, which illustrate that 30.0% of the government retirees are former teachers and 33.4% of them have knowledge in teaching. Findings on skills also indicated that 36.9% and 37.8% of the government retirees are flexible, specifically in stress control and self-adjustment. Even though this finding is incongruent with the common perception that older people are inflexible to change, this result is found consistent with preceding studies by Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), Lim (2002), Patrickson (1994), and Patrickson (2002). In particular, Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), Lim (2002), Patrickson (1994), and Patrickson (2002) have earlier revealed that retirees are more flexible to change and to learn. As noted in the findings, 20.9% of the retirees have basic computer skill and 1.8% of the respondents have advanced computer skills. With adequate computer skills, retirees can be involved in teleworking. Dooley (1996), Patrickson (1994), and Patrickson (2002) reported that teleworking requires employees that are good in self-management and employers with established support system so that both parties can thoroughly understand and approve the communication structure. As indicated in the findings, 27.3% and 20.6% of the retirees have skills in time management and decision making respectively. Therefore, they are qualified to become teleworkers since they are able to work independently. Patrickson (2002) posited that capability takes precedence over age in determining the success of teleworking, and he strongly suggested that teleworking is a good potential employment opportunity for retirees. On top of that, teleworking can be appealing to retirees since it can help supplement their retirement income and at the macro level, teleworking can perpetuate their contribution to the economy of society (Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 1999). It is also noteworthy that retirees are involved in social service such as counseling, care service, advisory service, etc. This is plausible because 32.2% of the retirees have skills in religion teaching, which can thus be applied in social activities. Additionally, Lim (2002) asserted that retirees will no longer experience loneliness if they are actively engaged in various social services, for instance counseling sessions, motivation workshops, and so forth.

In terms of other skills, only 17.3% of the retirees have skills in finance. This finding is consistent with a study by Lim (2002) that reported only 19% of retirees in Singapore have financial skills. On the other hand, Turner, Bailey, and Scott (1994) highlighted that most retirees in the West have financial skills, even among those with previous jobs are not related to finance. Where verbal abilities are concerned, 57.7% and 50.2% of the retirees have oral expression and written expression respectively. This is consistent with the findings that indicated 26.4% of respondents have oral communication skills, which explains the reason most retirees engaged in social services and possessed leadership skills. This finding is also congruent with the findings on retirees' idea generation and reasoning abilities. Specifically, 40.4% and 43.8% of the retirees have abilities in fluency of ideas and problem sensitivity respectively. These findings are attributed to the fact that 25.2% and 37.7% of the respondents have public speaking and meeting skills. Interestingly, 29.6% of respondents have the organising information ability while 50.2% of the retirees possess the task memorising ability. These abilities are crucial in teleworking as concurred by Patrickson (2002). As for perceptual abilities, 42.9% of the retirees have the ability on change awareness. Apparently, this finding supports the previous studies by Patrickson (1994), Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), and Lim (2002), which reported that there is no significant difference in change awareness between the younger or older employees. As noted by Patrickson (1994), Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), and Lim (2002), the age factor can never be a hindrance to learn. This study agrees with the assertion because 37.3% of the retirees have visualising abilities, 36.3% are attentive, and 35.7% are multi-tasked. Findings also showed that in terms of quantitative abilities, 37.8% and 42.4% of the respondents have abilities in problem comprehension and basic calculation. This finding is parallel to the fact that 40.5% and 21.9% of the retirees have knowledge in Fundamental Mathematics and Additional Mathematics respectively.

Retirees' Other Characteristics and Contribution toward National Development

Other characteristics are job values and work styles, which are further subdivided into several aspects. In terms of achievement, 56.4% of the retirees are willing to fully harness their abilities in performing any tasks given. This particular finding underpins the study by Lim (2002), which reported that most retirees are willing to continue working upon retirement. In fact, almost 67.0% retirees in Lim's (2002) study are willing to undergo skill retraining and upgrading in order for them

to work on a part-time or full-time basis. This study also reported that 44.9% of the respondents have undergone a self-development phase in their working life to improve the social status. Similarly, Lim (2002) in his study found that 57.0% of the retirees are willing to undergo training to enable them working, even in a different job or different industry.

Besides that, 40.8% of the retirees possess positive social values, 33.5% have recognition, and 33.5% of the retirees have authority in performing their jobs. In essence, 53.7% of the respondents have responsibility in performing their jobs, 33.7% of the retirees have creativity in task performance, and 20.8% of the respondents have autonomy in doing their jobs. Where altruism is concerned, 43.3% of the retirees are willing to make sacrifices for their friends and 52.3% of the retirees have the tendency to join social services. This is consistent with the findings that indicated quite a significant percentage of the retirees are engaged in social services. Findings also showed that in terms of achievement orientation, 32.1% of the retirees are able to work independently, 30.6% are persistent in getting their job done, and 29.5% of the respondents have initiative to attain the best achievement in their jobs. This finding is congruent to several prior studies on retirees by Patrickson (1994), Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), and Lim (2002).

As for social influence, 34.6% of the retirees have the ability to lead, which is congruent to the findings that 30.3% of the respondents have skills in leading associations as well as other activities. In addition, quite a significant percentage of the retirees have good interpersonal orientation, i.e. they are cooperative, concerned for others, and able interact with other people. This also supports the fact that these retirees are very much interested in social services. Retirees are also found to be good in adjusting themselves, especially in stress tolerance and adaptability. This underpins the studies by Patrickson (1994), Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997), and Lim (2002), which revealed that retirees as well as older workers are more flexible to change rather than their younger counterparts. In terms of conscientiousness, retirees are independent and attentive in performing their jobs, which fit the required criteria for teleworking (Patrickson, 1994). Where practical intelligence is concerned, 55.7% of the retirees are innovative while 28.1% of the respondents have analytical thinking. These are also important attributes in performing jobs such as teleworking and social services.

Retirees' Involvement and Contribution toward Various Associations and Social Services

Given the vast skills and other characteristics identified earlier, this study then highlights several contributions that can be made by the government retirees in attaining the national development. The first type of contribution is through the retirees' involvement in associations. The results of this study revealed that 85.5% of the retirees are actively involved (by holding various important positions) in many associations. Their involvement varies in terms of position held at the district, state, and national level (refer to Table 1). It was found that 49.2% are actively involved at least in 1 or 2 associations (refer to Table 1). This study showed that retirees have the capabilities and interest to be actively involved in various voluntary community activities. In fact, their participation can be extended by becoming counselors or advisors in these charitable organisations, non-profit organisations, and youth associations. The findings are in agreement with Atchley's continuity theory of aging (1989, in Kim & Feldman, 2000), which postulated that older workers can participate in activities that they like in order to sustain their involvement in society. Atchley's theory suggested that retirees who have high career identification are likely to seek continuity through some form of work involvement, such as in professional associations, so as to keep themselves occupied. Moreover, these findings are in line with Broderick and Glazer's (1983) and Lachman's (2001) studies, which reported that most socially active retirees are those participating in formal associations and voluntary activities.

The findings also discovered that retirees are actively involved in social services. This is evident because 52.3% of the respondents are involved in social services, namely counseling, advisory service, care service, charity organisation, and voluntary work. This is parallel to Freedman's (1997) study that indicated older adults in the United States are looking for the opportunity to engage in voluntary activities. Similarly, findings showed that Malaysians above 55 are actively involved in social activities. According to Atchley's theory (1989, in Kim & Feldman, 2000), older people can maintain their healthy daily life structure and accomplish their daily life objectives through activities at the community level. Furthermore, it was found that 1381 of the respondents are involved in social services. This showed that retirees are aware of their responsibility in nation building by participating in social activities. Freedman (1997) explained that senior citizens are experienced workers and family members; therefore, they are the rich repository of social capital required by society. Engaging these senior citizens in social services can contribute to preserving the

essential feature of a civil society. In this context, the idea of optimising retirees' skills and other characteristics as a way to restore a sense of community, knowledge of the past, and a sense of the future, seems very much compelling.

Retirees' Involvement and Contribution toward Associations and their Health Status

The present study showed that 15.66% of the retirees are actively involved in various associations, regardless of their health status. Evidently, retirees with health problems are willing to allocate time in sharing their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) as part of their social obligations to society. This phenomenon is in agreement with Atchley's continuing theory of aging (1989, in Kim & Feldman 2000), which elaborated on post retirement employment. Acthley's theory asserted that older workers need to maintain their daily routine so as to sustain structure in their daily life by participating in the activities they value most. In fact, individuals with high career identification are likely to seek continuity through some form of work involvement. Drawing on this, Atchley's theory suggested that individuals need to sustain levels of satisfying social contract in the old age. This finding corroborates with Atchley's continuing theory of aging, which postulated possible reasons for retirees' involvement in social services.

Retirees' Involvement in Social Services and their Prior Employment

The present research also found that former teachers, clerks, administrative officers, administrative assistants, general workers, and technicians contribute to the highest percentage of participation in social services after retirement. Cytrynbaum and Crites (1989 in Kim and Feldman, 2000) found that individuals who have high career identification and high job satisfaction would be disconcerted by an abrupt end to work because they value participation in work and interaction with co-workers and clients. Given the last position the retirees held before retirement, it could be assumed that the nature of the jobs, such as teachers, administrative staff, general employees, and technicians, makes them to be always in contact with their co-workers and clients. Furthermore, most of the government officials, such teachers and administrative staff, were involved in employee union, such as National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE) and Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service (CUEPACS). Drawing on these, it can be summed up that retirees attempt to get

themselves continuously occupied by participating in social services and harnessing their skills and other characteristics through such activities.

In terms of leadership skills, 37.7% of the respondents possess meeting skills. This indicated that retirees have prior experience in handling meetings. Hence, it could be assumed that much of the leadership skills are related to their current and previous jobs. Cross tabulation results also indicated that retirees possess leadership skills which commensurate their education level, post held before retirement, job classification, and age. These factors indirectly influence the type of leadership skills they have. Hence, the retirees' wide experience, skills, abilities, and knowledge can be shared with others at the society level. They can be employed as advisors, mentors, and counselors in profit or non-profit associations. In terms of retirees' involvement in society, research data show that 1,415 retirees are involved in social activities. Even though this figure is relatively trivial compared to the total number of government retirees, it somehow indicates that there is a group of retirees who are willing to contribute their skills and other characteristics to the community. Melanie and Marie (2004) explained that if retirees are involved in various activities after retirement, they have a better potential to achieve higher levels of satisfaction in life. The present study also found that four retirees, who are above 60 years old, were involved in more than 10 societies. Retirees, who are between 55 and 60, were found to be less active in associations and activities. This is probably because retirees in the early retirement stage are in the transition process of adapting to the new life, which inadvertently slowed their participation in social activities.

Retirees participate in the workforce in a variety of ways. Some retirees, who have experienced a higher level of satisfaction in their previous employment, will continue working on a part-time basis with their former employer or they may seek similar employment opportunities from other employers (Melanie & Marie, 2004). Retired teachers are more likely to participate at the community level, for instance by providing academic help. Most importantly, retired teachers can extend their role in the society by instilling good values in the younger generations. In this study, 32.5% of retired teachers are involved in social activities. This is parallel to the report in "*Peranan persara guru*" (2005) in the June *Berita Persara* issue, which stated that retired teachers can become a consultant or advisor in community services. This study also revealed that respondents with SPM (O-Level or lower qualification) make up to 76.68% from total society involvement among retirees. This is in accordance to Freedman's

(1997) notion that low-income senior citizens play important role in catalysing activities at the community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this study has revealed types of skills and other characteristics possessed by the Malaysian government retirees. Furthermore, this paper has examined activities and associations that retirees have participated at the community and national levels. Drawing on these findings, several recommendations are put forward. Firstly, some policy guidelines and activities should be formulated in optimising retirees' skills and other characteristics. For instance, retirees should be given the opportunity to apply for New Entrepreneurs Fund (NEP) and to get involved in franchising, retailing, and small or medium sized businesses. Employers should give ample opportunity for retirees to become involved in teleworking as it may help them in generating income, both to the retirees as well as the organisations. In a similar vein, the Public Service Department should also consider allowing the retirees to rejoin the workforce, probably on a part-time basis. They can be mentors, advisors, and counselors to young employees. Through these means, retirees can enhance and utilise their skills and expertise to the fullest. Secondly, the Government Pensioners Associations of Malaysia should cooperate with the Welfare Department in each state of Malaysia to organise social rehabilitation programmes, such as motivational workshops, religious activities, etc. This is due to the increasing social problems among teenagers and young adults, in both rural and urban areas. Institutions or associations that are close to society, such as mosques or teachers and parents association (PIBG), should be used as a platform to start up these programmes.

Thirdly, retirees should also be given the opportunity to harness their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics in the existing national's programmes, such as national service or youth activities, where they can be appointed as the facilitators, counselors, or speakers. Finally, retirees, especially former teachers, can provide tuition classes especially for students with financial constraints in the rural areas. Apart from enhancing their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics, retirees can contribute to the students as well as to the nation development at large.

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