

Retirees' skills and involvement in society for national development

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Abstract

Malaysia has been forecasted as an ageing society by the year 2020 due to the expected rise of the number of senior citizens to 2.71 million. This portion includes the government retirees who have reached their mandatory retirement age of 56 years old. The objectives of this study are to analyze the retirees' profiles and skills and to examine their involvement in associations. To elicit data, a total of 1609 questionnaires were gathered and analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicate that most of the retirees have acquired various skills throughout their years of service, especially in the area related to their tasks and responsibilities. However, these retirees were unable to utilize their invaluable skills appropriately. It is therefore of high importance for the government and non-government bodies to develop a proper means for the retirees to utilize their skills. Recommendations bring to fore several measures that can be undertaken by the relevant authorities to help government retirees optimize their skills in the society for the national development.

Introduction

In the year 2007, Malaysia's total population is approximately 24.82 million with an increase of 1.76 percent per year since 1995 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2007). The population of people in the age group of 0-14 years old has decreased from 32.6 in 2005 to 32.2 percent in 2007 while the population in the age group of 65 and above has increased from 4.3 percent in 2005 to 4.8 percent in 2007. This indicates that the number of Malaysian senior citizens has gradually increased over time compared to the younger group. Based on the trend, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2007) also reported that 6.48 percent 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 old and above. The population of senior citizens, which includes the 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 and skills 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 addition, the Eighth Malaysia Plan has specifically proposed that the principle thrust of human resource development relies on 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 fulfil the demand for a knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce. The workforce has also to be equipped with positive values and attitude in transforming Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Further, the government has expanded the budget for senior citizens' programs (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.

However, 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, attributed 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 5 to 10 years earlier than their counterparts in most developed countries. Hence, their contributions to the country have come to a halt due to the mandatory retirement age posed by the Government. These situations have prompted the need for this study, which is intended to analyse the profiles and skills of the Malaysian government retirees, to examine the contributions of the government retirees to the society, and finally to identify opportunities for the government retirees to transfer their skills.

Government retirees and their role in the national development

Government retirees refer to people who used to work as civil servants. Lim (2002) specifically noted that there are 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 privatization. Only a small number of the total retirees retired because of health problem and other reasons. At present, there are 513,689 government's retirees in Malaysia who used to work in various organizations or local government departments (Public Service Department, 2007).

The Malaysian Government has made concerted efforts to encourage retirees to participate actively in the national development through various activities. As an illustration, Klang City Council has introduced the Workforce Recycle System, aimed at retirees who are interested in voluntary programs (Daud, 2005). Retirees can be advisors, teachers, and mentors in programs, such as state associations, crime prevention programs, 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 Elderly to ensure the integration and participation of senior citizens in the 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 the national development. In essence, retirees can participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies. Retirees also can seek and develop opportunities in social services by volunteering in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities. Furthermore, in 2003, the Commission on Social Development emphasizes that there is a need to include the ageing group in the social development programs even if the ageing population has indeed become a common challenge to all countries (UN Press, 2003). Take the case of China, whereby 70 percent of the ageing population is under 70 years old (UN Press, 2003). Nevertheless, the China's government has strongly encouraged its 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 postulates that in order to sustain healthy daily life structure, retirees have to participate in the 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 the activities. In the same regard, Pickersgill, Briggs, Kitay, O'Keefe, and Gillezeau (1996) concurred that being a volunteer in the 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 programs. It can therefore be concluded that being engaged in a range of activities is rewarding if the retirees are to remain hale and hearty. Further, retirees can involve in mentoring at organizational as well as society levels. Mentoring is part of an organizational succession planning in which retirees are re-employed as mentors to the new employees (Liebowitz, 2004). Kerschner and Hansan (1996) concurred that retirees can get involved in mentoring program to create productive lifestyles for both the rookie and the retirees themselves. At a society level, retirees can become mentors in enhancing family dynamic. For instance, Big Brothers/Big Sisters in the USA is an organization 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 relationship.

Besides mentoring, retirees can enter into various forms of flexible employment suitable to 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 skills in a pragmatic way to help students. Further, 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 reveals 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 defined

According to Dunnette (1976), skills are the capacities needed to perform a set of tasks, which are acquired from training and job-related experience. Skill is reflected on the extent a person is able to carry out a specific action, for instance effective communication. Further, skill is dependent on knowledge whereby 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. Henderson (2000) added that skill refers to dexterity, accuracy, and alertness required in understanding the workflow or levels of complexity in the use of and interaction with human resources in performing assignments. Interaction with human requires individuals to be accurate and alert in managing mental, situation, and creativity (Ivancevich, 2003). Skills also require individual to be accurate or alert in the use of precision and non-precision tools, such as advance operating equipment and technological systems, advanced keyboard devices, simple settings, and so forth. Likewise Dunnette (1976), Desimone, Werner, and Harris (2002) believed that skills can be developed over time by attending training programs. Lim's (2002) study reports that almost 67 percent of the retirees in Singapore are willing to undergo training to keep themselves abreast with the current skills. Nonetheless, Steinberg, Najman, Donald, McChesney-Clark, and Mahon (1994), revealed that training is more frequently given to the younger employees compared to their older counterparts.

Government retirees are a great source of human capital to the nation, given their numerous skills. 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 human resources in performing assignments (Henderson, 2000). Interaction with human requires individuals to be accurate and alert in managing mental, 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 advanced operating equipment and technological systems, advance keyboard devices, simple settings, and so forth. Skills also can be developed by attending training programs (Desimone, Werner, & Harris 2002). Steinberg, Najman, Donald, McChesney-Clark, and Mohan. (1994) highlighted that training is more frequently offered to younger employees, compared to their older counterparts. On the same ground, Lim's (2002) study reports that 67 percent of retirees are willing to undergo skill retraining and upgrading so as to make them qualified to work. The same study also reveals that 57 percent 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.

Methodology

Population and development of the research instrument

Currently, there are about 513,689 government retirees in Malaysia (Public Service Department, 2007). Out of this figure, only 15,519 retirees have registered as members of the Malaysian Government Retirees Association (MGRA). Questionnaires were designed to examine the retirees' profiles, skills, and involvement in associations. Items in the questionnaire were adapted from Martocchio (2002).

Pilot study and pre-testing of the instrument

To ensure reliability and validity of the items, a pilot study was conducted among the government retirees' association members in Kubang Pasu District in Kedah. From the pilot study, the respondents were asked to give comments regarding unclear statements and instructions. Changes on the questionnaires were then made based on the respondents' comments and suggestions.

Data collection

The questionnaires were distributed to 3060 respondents consisting of government retirees from 14 states throughout Malaysia during the district and state annual general meetings of the government retirees' association. Prior to that, the researchers had contacted the secretary of each government retirees' association (state and district level) to explain on the objectives of the research and to ask consent for data collection. Then, during the annual general meetings, a total of 3,060 questionnaires were distributed and 1,633 questionnaires or 53.37 percent were returned. However, only 1609 questionnaires were usable for further analysis. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0. Table 1 shows the distribution of questionnaires to all respondents throughout Malaysia.

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires based on states

State	Questionnaire			
	Distributed	Returned	Incomplete	Analyzed
Perlis	120	85	0	85
Kedah	390	226	0	226
Pulau Pinang	150	91	0	91
Perak	200	164	6	158
Wilayah Persekutuan	60	29	0	29
Selangor	340	183	0	183
Negeri Sembilan	200	135	0	135
Melaka	200	52	0	52
Johor	250	102	4	98
Kelantan	100	57	1	56
Terengganu	90	79	3	76
Pahang	460	273	6	267
Sabah	150	46	0	46
Sarawak	250	111	4	107
TOTAL	3060	1633	24	1609

Findings

Demographic background of the government retirees

The present study reveals that 1,277 respondents of the study are male while 332 of the respondents are female. Out of 1,609 respondents, 561 of the respondents are above 65 years old and 1,407 respondents are Malay and Muslim. The respondents were from all states of Malaysia as depicted in Table 1. With regard to education level, majority of the respondents, which is 1,265 or 78.6 percent of the respondents, possessed SPM/MCE (O-Level), SRP/LCE or standard 6 or primary education. In terms of retirement profile, a total of 1,447 (89.9 percent) respondents retired due to the mandatory retirement age, which is 56 years old between the year 1984 and 2005. 538 respondents (33.4 percent) were in the education service and 483 were teachers. The study also shows that 82.8 percent of the respondents perceived themselves as healthy and only 17.2 percent of respondents viewed themselves as not healthy.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	1277	79.4
	Female	332	20.6
Age	Below 55	72	4.5
	55-60	461	28.7
	61-65	515	32.0
	Above 65	561	34.9
Ethnic group	Malay	1407	87.4
	Chinese	69	4.3
	Indian	81	5.0
	Others	52	3.2
Religion	Muslim	1413	87.8
	Buddha	38	2.4
	Christian	104	6.5
	Hindu	49	3.0
	Others	5	0.3
State	Perlis	85	5.3
	Kedah	225	14.0
	Pulau Pinang	92	5.7
	Perak	159	9.9
	Selangor	183	11.4
	Wilayah Persekutuan	29	1.8
	Negeri Sembilan	135	8.4
	Melaka	52	3.2
	Johor	98	6.1
	Pahang	267	16.6
	Terengganu	76	4.7
	Kelantan	56	3.5
	Sarawak	106	6.6
	Sabah	46	2.9

Government retirees' involvement in associations

As presented in Table 3, 85.5 percent of the retirees were involved in several associations. Majority of them (49.2 percent) were actively involved in 1 to 2 associations, 22.1 per cent were actively involved in 3 or 4 associations, and 14.2 percent were actively involved in 5 or 6 associations. These findings show that retirees were still active in various associations. Specifically, quite a number of the retirees were involved in associations at the national (16.7 percent), state (8.0 percent), and district (20.0 percent) level. Overall, 43.4 percent of the respondents were reported to involve in associations at various levels.

Table 3: Involvement in association's among government retirees

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

Table 4 presents the findings on the skills of the government retirees. As depicted, respondents in this study possessed a number of different skills. For example, 11.5 percent of the respondents have skills in arts, 4.7 percent in music, 16.5 percent in cooking, and 8.8 percent in sewing. In terms of agriculture and counseling, 24.2 percent and 16.5 percent of the respondents have skills in the respective areas. Only a small number of the respondents possessed advisory and care service skills (27.5 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively). Results also show that 20.6 percent of the respondents have decision-making skills, 27.3 percent have time management skills, and 30.3 percent have leading skills. However, only a small number (20.9 percent) of the respondents have basic computer skills, while 1.8 per cent have advanced computer skills. The findings also indicate that 3.1 per cent of the respondents have transport repairing skills, 7.5 per cent have machine repairing skills, and 10.8 percent have carpentering skills. Almost one third of the respondents (36.9 percent) have skills in stress control, while 37.8 percent have self-adjustment skills. It is noteworthy that only 5

percent of the respondents have handicraft skills, 3 percent have crafting skills, and 9.6 percent have swimming skills.

Table 4: Skills of government retirees

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

Cross tabulation analysis of the retirees' health status and social services

Table 5 shows the level of health of retirees who are involved in social services. The table indicates that 1519 or 84.34 percent of the respondents are healthy. On the other hand, 15.66 percent of the respondents are not in good health. Many retirees who are in good health were actively involved in voluntary activities (387), advisory service (368) and charity bodies (384) while many retirees who are not in good health were involved in advisory service (78), voluntary activities (74) and charitable bodies (70).

Table 5: Cross tabulation results on health status and social services

	Coun- seling	%	Advisory Services	%	Care Services	%	Charity Organi- zations	%	Volun- teers	%
Healthy	227	85.34	368	82.51	153	87.93	384	84.58	387	83.95
Not healthy	39	14.66	78	17.49	21	12.07	70	15.42	74	16.05
Total	266	100.0	446	100.0	174	100.0	454	100.0	461	100.0

Cross tabulation analysis of the government retirees' last position and involvement in associations

Table 6 presents the cross tabulation result of respondents' last position held and their involvement in associations. The result reveals that 37.1 percent of the committee members were teachers and 11.8 percent were the administrative assistant. In terms of being a member of any particular organization, 23.3 percent of the respondents were teachers while only 11.6 percent were administrative assistants. Respondents who are both the committee member and regular member of the associations were teacher, which made up to 38.8 percent followed by administrative clerks, which consist of 12 percent. However, 27.3 percent of the former general employees and 14.4 percent of the former administrative assistant are not involved in any association.

Table 6: Cross tabulation result on last position and involvement in associations

Last Position Held	Committee Members	%	Members	%	Committee members & Members	%	No involve- ment	%
Officer Assistant Nurse	20	4.4	22	4.2	12	2.8	1	0.5
General Employees	8	1.7	32	6.1	13	3.0	5	2.6
Teacher	35	7.6	65	12.4	28	6.4	53	27.3
Director	170	37.1	122	23.3	168	38.8	23	11.9
Development Assistant	10	2.2	8	1.5	9	2.1	0	0.0
Administrative Assistant	3	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Officer	54	11.8	61	11.6	52	12.0	28	14.4
Administrative Officer	16	3.5	19	3.6	20	4.6	3	1.5
Hospital Instructor	11	2.4	5	1.0	5	1.2	3	1.5
Clerk	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0
Matron	4	0.9	11	2.1	11	2.5	5	2.6
Supervisor	1	0.2	5	1.0	2	0.5	1	0.5
	8	1.7	15	2.9	7	1.6	3	1.5

Hospital Assistant	14	3.1	15	2.9	8	1.8	5	2.6
Police	7	1.5	14	2.7	12	2.8	8	4.1
Technician	40	8.7	36	6.9	22	5.1	19	9.8
Telephone Operator	2	0.4	5	1.0	1	0.2	1	0.5
Driver	11	2.4	24	4.6	6	1.4	18	9.3
Attendant	5	1.1	17	3.2	8	1.8	7	3.6
Army	18	3.9	14	2.7	25	5.8	8	4.1
Welfare Officer	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
State Assemblyman	1	0.2	0	0.0	2	0.5	0	0.0
Information Officer	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.2	0	0.0
Health Officer	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0
Fireman	4	0.9	6	1.1	1	0.2	0	0.0
Social Welfare Officer	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Deputy Director	1	0.2	2	0.4	4	0.9	0	0.0
Forestry Officer	5	1.1	12	2.3	2	0.5	2	1.0
Custom Officer	2	0.4	7	1.3	1	0.2	0	0.0
Lecturer	4	0.9	3	0.6	6	1.4	1	0.5
Auditor	3	0.7	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0
Prison Officer	1	0.2	1	0.2	4	0.9	0	0.0
Total	458	100.0	524	100.0	433	100.0	194	100.0

Discussions

Findings have elucidated that most government retirees are equipped with various useful skills that may or may not be related to their jobs. This study reports that 51.5 percent of the respondents have skills in teaching, specifically language. Findings on skills also indicate that 36.9 percent and 37.8 percent of the government retirees have stress control and self-adjustment skills respectively. 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 Goldrick (1997), and Lim (2002) Patrickson (1994), and Patrickson (2002). In particular, Arrowsmith and Goldrick (1997), and 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 percent of the retirees have basic computer skill and 1.8 percent of the respondents have advanced computer skills. With adequate computer skills, retirees can involve 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 percent and 20.6 percent 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 suggests that teleworking is a good potential employment opportunities for the retirees. On top of that, teleworking can be appealing to the retirees since it can help supplement their retirement income and at the macro level, teleworking can perpetuate their contributions to the economy of the society (Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 1999). It is also noteworthy that retirees are involved in social services such as counseling, care service, advisory service, etc. This is plausible because 32.2 percent of the retirees have skills in religion teaching, which can thus be applied in the 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 session, motivation workshop, and so forth. In terms of other skills, only 17.3 percent of the retirees have skills in finance. This finding is consistent with a study by Lim (2002) that reports only 19 percent 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 whom their previous jobs are not related to finance.

Given the vast skills 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 reveal that 85.5 per cent 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. It was also found that 49.2 per cent are actively involved at least in one or two associations. This study shows 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 counselor or advisor in these charitable organizations, non-profit organizations, and youth associations. The findings are in agreement with Atchley's continuity theory of aging (1989) in Kim and Feldman (2000), which postulates that older worker can participate in activities that they like in order to sustain their involvement in the society. The Atchley's theory suggests 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 report that most socially active retirees are those participating in formal associations and voluntary activities.

The findings also discover that retirees are actively involved in social services. This is evident because 52.3 percent of the respondents are involved in social services, namely counseling, advisory services, care service, charity organization, and voluntary work. This is parallel to Freedman's (1997) study that indicates older adults in the United States are looking for opportunity to engage in voluntary activities. Similarly, findings show 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. Further, it was found that 1,381 of the respondents are involved in social services. This shows that retirees are aware of their responsibility in nation building by participating in social activities.

The present study shows that 15.6 per cent 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 skills, abilities as part of their social obligations to the society. This phenomenon is in agreement with Atchley's continuing theory of aging (1989) in Kim & Feldman (2000), which elaborates on post retirement employment. Atchley's theory asserts that older workers need to maintain their daily routine so as to sustain structure in their daily life by participating in the activities they valued 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 suggests that individuals need to sustain levels of satisfying social contract in the old age. This finding corroborates to Atchley's continuing theory of aging, which postulates possible reasons for retirees' involvement in social services.

Conclusion And Recommendations

All in all, this study has revealed the types of skills and other characteristics possessed by Malaysian government retirees. Furthermore, this paper has examined activities and associations that retirees participated in at community and national levels.

Drawing on the findings, several recommendations are put forward. First, some policy guidelines and activities should be formulated in optimizing retirees' skills and other characteristics. For instance, retirees should be given the opportunity to apply for New Entrepreneurs Fund (NEP) and to be involved in franchising, retailing, and small or medium businesses. Employers should give ample opportunity for retirees to involve in teleworking as it may help them in generating income, both to the retirees as well as the organizations. In a similar vein, 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 utilize their skills and expertise to the fullest. Second, the Government Pensioners Associations of Malaysia should cooperate with the Welfare Department in each state of Malaysia to organize social rehabilitation programs, 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 the society, such as mosques or parents and teachers association, should be used as a platform to start up these programs. Third, retirees should also be given the opportunity to harness their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics in existing national programs, 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's development at large.

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