Military Personnel Retention Beyond 21 Years of Service: A Business Consultation Case Study in the Malaysian Army

Hasbullah bin Ismail[1]*, Johanim binti Johari[1]

[1] Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.
***Corresponding author**

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ABSTRACT

Retaining experienced personnel is an important workforce-planning concern for military organisations, particularly when service-extension decisions involve demanding operational and administrative responsibilities. This article presents a document-supported business consultation case study examining the decision of Malaysian Army personnel to retire after 21 years of service or apply for an extension to 26 years. The study is based on an actual postgraduate business consultation conducted within a specific Army administrative setting. It examines organisational challenges without disclosing the identity of the unit or individuals involved. The consultation identified several areas of concern, including workload and scheduling, career development opportunities, supervisory recognition and support, financial security, and family priorities. These issues are examined using established literature on employee retention, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, and employee motivation. The analysis considers how these factors may influence personnel decisions while recognising that their effects have not been statistically established. Based on the consultation, a three-stage management action plan is proposed. Short-term actions focus on improving communication, reviewing workload, and providing clear service-extension information. Medium-term actions emphasise career development, work process improvement, and confidential staff feedback. Long-term actions involve reviewing retention practices, strengthening knowledge transfer, and evaluating workforce-planning outcomes. The article provides practical recommendations and suggested indicators to support future management evaluation. It does not report a new survey, formally validated interview findings, or measured retention outcomes. Although similar challenges may exist in other military settings, the findings are specific to the administrative context examined and require further investigation before wider application. This case study contributes to understanding military personnel retention by linking an actual organisational consultation with established academic literature and practical management recommendations.

Keywords: military retention, service extension, Job Demands–Resources, business consultation, career progression.

INTRODUCTION

Military personnel retention is not simply a question of maximising years of service. An experienced workforce carries tacit knowledge, professional judgement, training investment and operational continuity, yet members also have legitimate reasons to reassess their careers. Such reassessments become especially important where retirement and extension decisions are linked to a fixed service milestone. This article concerns a Malaysian Army context in which eligible Other Rank personnel may face a decision around completing 21 years of service and whether to seek continuation up to 26 years. The service-extension arrangement is discussed with reference to the applicable pension regulations and official parliamentary records, while individual eligibility and approval remain subject to the relevant military administrative requirements.

The present analysis examines an actual administrative business consultation case study concerning military service extension through a workforce-management lens. Its central question is why retention policy incentives may not fully address the work demands, development expectations and life-course considerations raised by the

case. The paper provides a structured interpretation and practical management responses without treating the consultation as proof of measured causal effects.

Two distinctions shape the argument. First, actual retirement, the intention to retire and a formally approved extension are not interchangeable outcomes. The consultation addresses organisational conditions that may influence the deliberation process; it does not estimate which conditions cause actual exit. Second, military-specific constraints, including eligibility, command authority and service requirements, mean that retention remedies from civilian employers cannot simply be transferred without adaptation. A solution may be attractive to individuals yet infeasible within the career structure or operational duty system.

This article addresses two applied questions: (1) how can a business consultation case study of one Army administrative setting be translated into a transparent analysis of a regulated service-extension decision; and (2) which management interventions could be prioritised for evaluation without claiming new causal evidence? Its contribution is a bounded, case-informed decision-support synthesis rather than an estimate of the factors determining actual retirement. It links the 21-to-26-year decision point to work demands, developmental and organisational resources, life-course considerations and regulatory constraints. Similar issues may warrant attention in other departments, but their presence, significance and appropriate remedies require separate examination.

ORGANISATIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

Military administrative functions require continuity, accuracy and experienced personnel. The service-extension context considered here raises a broader human-resource question: how might organisations sustain capability when experienced members are eligible to choose between retirement and additional years of service? Restricted unit-level figures and internal organisational structures are outside the scope of this public-facing article.

The service-extension scheme introduced on 1 November 2017 allows eligible Malaysian Armed Forces Other Rank personnel to apply to extend their service from 21 to 26 years, subject to eligibility and approval requirements. An official statement recorded in the Dewan Rakyat on 30 October 2018 confirmed the introduction of this arrangement and its objective of enabling personnel to receive a pension of 60% of their basic salary upon completing the extended service period (Parliament of Malaysia, 2018). In the consultation context, this is compared with a pension rate of 50% at 21 years of service. The legal basis for pension and gratuity calculations remains the Peraturan-Peraturan Angkatan Tetap (Pencen, Ganjaran dan Faedah-Faedah Lain) 1982 [P.U. (A) 123/1982], read together with applicable amendments and authorised provisions (Government of Malaysia, 1982). Regulation 24 of the original 1982 Gazette addresses pension and gratuity provisions for other ranks. Thus, the original pension regulations and the later service-extension arrangement are distinct but related elements of the policy context. Service-extension decisions may also involve career prospects, working conditions, family priorities and formal approval procedures.

A retention decision may be affected by factors that operate over different stages of the decision. Short-term concerns include daily workload and schedule predictability. Other considerations include access to training, promotion prospects and treatment by leaders. Long-term considerations concern retirement income, employment after service, family plans and perceptions of fairness. The consultation therefore requires an integrated perspective rather than an explanation based solely on monetary incentives.

The policy decision should be understood as a choice made at a particular stage of a military career rather than a conventional resignation decision. Personnel who have reached a pension-eligible service milestone may compare the benefits of additional years of employment with the benefits of beginning civilian transition sooner. These alternatives are not directly interchangeable. Continued service offers income continuity and further experience, whereas departure may provide time for family responsibilities, other employment or entrepreneurship. A meaningful retention strategy must therefore recognise individual circumstances rather than presume that continued service is preferable for every eligible member.

The business consultation was conducted within an administrative unit of the Malaysian Army, focusing on personnel retention and service-extension decisions. Its context helps explain why continuity may depend on

established routines, knowledge of regulations, accuracy requirements and practical judgement accumulated through lengthy service. These are case-informed management concerns, not grounds for publishing internal staffing figures or restricted workflow details. The identity of the unit and details that could identify individuals are not disclosed. The wider question raised by this case is whether further service can be sustainable and developmentally worthwhile while respecting personnel's legitimate option to retire at the applicable milestone.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BASIS

Evidence directly from military personnel offers a more relevant comparison than general employee turnover studies alone. Tidwell and Lucier-Greer (2025) analysed military career intentions using data from United States soldiers and found that unit support and work–family balance operated alongside indicators of morale and psychological well-being. McKay et al. (2026) similarly identified a positive relationship between unit cohesion and retention intentions among United States Air Force personnel. The populations and retirement systems differ from the Malaysian case; accordingly, these studies inform the choice of managerial considerations rather than establish local effects.

Retention is frequently presented as the opposite of turnover, but the distinction matters in an extended-service context. Turnover studies often examine intentions to leave an ongoing employment relationship. Here, an individual is approaching an institutionalised decision point at which leaving is expected and may be financially viable. An intention to extend is thus a positive choice to undertake a further period of work, not merely an absence of dissatisfaction. Hom et al. (2017) trace how turnover research has moved beyond simple dissatisfaction models towards multiple paths and changing employment conditions. This supports using several complementary explanations rather than assuming that a single inducement can account for all decisions.

Another conceptual distinction concerns organisational preferences and organisational authority. A manager may want to retain an experienced member, but promotion structures, pension rules and service eligibility may be determined elsewhere. Recommendations must distinguish actions under local managerial control, matters that can be referred through the appropriate administrative channels and policy changes that require wider approval. This distinction is crucial when evaluating a proposed intervention: an attractive policy statement cannot be treated as an immediately available managerial tool.

Retention as a Decision Process

The timing and character of military service matter for retention analysis. In research on Canadian military recruits, Anderson et al. (2022) found that different configurations of organisational commitment were associated with turnover intentions and well-being. Their findings concern entrants rather than pension-eligible personnel, so they support the broader importance of commitment without establishing why Malaysian soldiers decide at 21 years. For evidence-based retention practice, Allen et al. (2010) advise matching managerial intervention to documented drivers rather than relying on widely held assumptions about employee departure.

Employee retention is not merely the reverse of turnover. Hom et al. (2017) show that departure decisions can reflect interacting attitudes, alternatives and work experiences. Research into reasons for staying further highlights that advancement, attachment and extrinsic benefits vary across workers and work settings (Hausknecht et al., 2009). Job embeddedness adds the links, fit and perceived sacrifices that may discourage exit (Mitchell et al., 2001). These perspectives explain why a member nearing an authorised service milestone may weigh continued employment differently from a civilian employee considering an immediate resignation. They do not establish which consideration dominates in this Army setting. A meta-analysis by Griffeth et al. (2000) identifies turnover intention among the correlates of subsequent employee turnover; nevertheless, intention is not equivalent to a confirmed service-extension decision.

For this article, the relevant outcome is the decision under consideration, not an observed rate of retirement. It is useful to distinguish personal willingness to continue, formal eligibility, approval and subsequent service behaviour. Confusing these stages would turn an organisational planning problem into an unsupported account of individual behaviour.

Job Demands–Resources Theory

The work–home dimension is particularly relevant when further military service entails substantial personal opportunity costs. Amstad et al. (2011), in a meta-analysis, found that work–family conflict was associated with a range of work and non-work outcomes. More recently, Bakker et al. (2023) highlighted the work–home resources model as an extension of JD–R theory. Neither study measures the Malaysian 21-to-26-year decision, but both clarify why managers should assess service conditions alongside pension-related information.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework distinguishes job demands, which require sustained effort and may carry psychological or physiological costs, from job resources, which facilitate work, support coping and foster development. In a service-extension setting, this distinction is useful because continuation decisions depend not only on future benefits but also on whether current work remains sustainable. The model is compatible with a resource-preservation logic: when people perceive that important resources such as energy, time, family stability or occupational control are being depleted, their willingness to remain may weaken (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023; Hobfoll, 1989).

JD–R adds value by making two directions of improvement visible. Removing avoidable administrative burdens may reduce exhaustion even without altering compensation. Adding resources such as training access or predictable feedback may improve the experienced value of continued service even when workload cannot be eliminated. This is important in military organisations because some demands are inherent to duty. An intervention should distinguish unavoidable requirements from unnecessary administrative problems and then assess whether local leadership has authority to change the latter.

In administrative roles, repeated deadlines, precision requirements and changing instructions may increase demands. Resources could include accessible training, clear task ownership, supportive supervision and functioning knowledge-transfer arrangements. The explanatory value of JD–R lies in examining these demands and resources together, not presuming that administrative duties are universally harmful.

Motivation and Career Expectations

Research on organisational support provides another basis for management action. Kurtessis et al. (2017) synthesised 558 studies and reported broad support for organisational support theory, including links between perceived support and employees' orientation towards their organisation. This evidence complements, but does not replace, case-specific investigation of access to development, supervisory communication and procedural fairness. Herzberg's (1968) distinction between hygiene factors and motivators offers a practical, though simplified, lens. Conditions such as work arrangements and supervision may contribute to dissatisfaction, whereas opportunities for achievement and recognition can make continued service professionally worthwhile. Career-growth evidence supports careful attention to perceived progress and skill development (Weng & McElroy, 2012), but those results were not obtained from Malaysian military personnel and should not be transferred as if they were direct findings.

Organisational support provides a complementary account of how employees interpret the way they are treated. Where work contributions and welfare are visibly valued, personnel may view the institution more positively (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This is a reason to examine communication and supervisory practices alongside formal career opportunities; it does not mean that recognition alone can offset heavy demands or limited progression. The frameworks therefore serve different diagnostic purposes. JD–R organises work conditions into demands and resources, while motivation and support perspectives distinguish basic working conditions from signals of achievement, fairness and institutional care. Their joint application informs intervention design; their combined use does not itself constitute empirical validation.

An Applied Retention Decision Framework

The proposed framework has three components. First, job and personal pressures create reasons to reconsider service. Second, organisational resources and expected future rewards create reasons to continue. Third, the individual evaluates those forces within a regulated career system, which limits both personal choices and

managerial discretion. The framework is diagnostic: it identifies questions managers should investigate and options they may evaluate, without assigning numerical weights or predicting individual decisions.

Analytical domain	Illustrative concern	Proposed management question
Demands	Deadline concentration, administrative complexity	Which tasks can be redistributed, simplified or scheduled more predictably?
Development resources	Training and promotion visibility	What progression information and development access can be clarified?
Social resources	Recognition and supervisory conversations	Are experienced personnel receiving timely, fair and confidential guidance?
Future security	Retirement and family planning	Is accurate, authorised service-extension information readily available?

METHODOLOGY: BUSINESS CONSULTATION CASE STUDY

This article adopts a document-supported business consultation case study approach grounded in an actual postgraduate consultation conducted within one Malaysian Army administrative setting. The consultation was undertaken for academic purposes to examine organisational challenges, consider underlying explanations and propose practical management responses. The 2026 manuscript analyses the earlier consultation report as its primary case document, alongside selected published research. The report documents the 21-to-26-year decision context, management-oriented themes, SWOT and root-cause exercises, and potential remedies. The analysis draws on non-identifying, non-restricted descriptions of the case; it is not a new survey, a formal interview study or a systematic review. Neither the case nor its recommendations are presented as representative of every Army department.

The analysis of the business consultation case followed four steps. First, the study focused on the decision of military personnel to continue serving beyond 21 years, taking into account their willingness to remain, eligibility requirements and formal approval. Second, the main issues identified in the consultation, including workload, career development, recognition, financial considerations and family priorities, were examined using the Job Demands and Resources (JD–R) theory and relevant literature on employee retention. Third, these issues were used to develop questions that could help management understand the possible reasons behind retirement decisions. However, these reasons were not treated as proven causes. Finally, practical management actions were proposed for the short, medium and long term, together with indicators to assess their progress. Table 1 shows how the consultation issues were linked to the proposed actions. It does not represent a formal analysis of interview responses.

The original academic consultation included informal contextual discussions. The present article does not treat these summaries as a formally consented interview dataset suitable for journal publication. It therefore does not reproduce verbatim quotations, identify participants, calculate respondent frequencies or claim thematic saturation. It also excludes named personnel records, internal staffing figures, restricted correspondence and detailed command arrangements. The case is real, but these safeguards distinguish the documented consultation context from independently verified evidence of causal effects or Army-wide prevalence.

From Consultation Findings to Management Recommendations

Table 1. Consultation to Recommendation Traceability Matrix

Consultation Theme	External Conceptual Basis	Question To Verify Locally	Proposed Action (Not Evaluated)
Workload and scheduling	JD–R demands/resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)	Which tasks, deadlines or roster changes create avoidable strain?	Review task duplication, priorities and recovery opportunities

Career progression	Career growth and retention (Weng & McElroy, 2012)	Do eligible members understand development options and formal advancement constraints?	Provide transparent career-development guidance
Recognition and support	Perceived organisational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017)	Are feedback, recognition and administrative support perceived as fair?	Standardise feedback and clarify access to assistance
Family and personal priorities	Work–family conflict and military intentions (Amstad et al., 2011; Tidwell & Lucier-Greer, 2025)	Which service conditions most disrupt family planning or time predictability?	Review communications and feasible roster predictability
Financial and decision information	Retention as a decision process (Hom et al., 2017)	Do personnel understand official eligibility, pension implications and deadlines?	Issue authorised information and referral pathways

Note. The broad themes originate in the actual administrative consultation and are interpreted alongside published literature. The table records case-informed management questions and proposed responses, not verified causal effects or evidence that the same conditions exist across all Army departments.

The outputs comprise a case-informed root-cause question map, an illustrative SWOT planning matrix and a staged management roadmap. Figure 1 organises explanations considered relevant to the consultation but does not establish causal pathways; Figure 2 indicates planning issues rather than audited strengths or weaknesses. Table 1 makes the chain from documented case themes to research concepts, questions and proposed interventions explicit. Wherever organisational evidence is not available for public scrutiny, the analysis distinguishes contextual concerns from propositions requiring further verification. The unit of analysis is the management problem encountered in one administrative case, not the Malaysian Army as a population. The analysis can offer analytical insights for similar settings, but it cannot estimate the prevalence of a concern, quantify causal relationships, measure intervention effects or statistically generalise to other units, formations or services. Its applied value lies in clarifying what managers can investigate and how proposed responses may be evaluated locally.

The case-based approach also differs from a systematic review. Published studies are used selectively for theoretical grounding and practical comparison rather than assembled through a reproducible database search. Consequently, this article makes no claim to exhaustive coverage of military retention evidence; alternative explanations may have been omitted. Future work should combine broader literature synthesis with ethically approved primary data and documented service outcomes. The article describes the actual consultation at a level that protects the specific unit and personnel. Figures and case discussion use general administrative terminology rather than restricted organisational detail. Potential vacancy effects, morale changes and operational errors are not portrayed as verified Army-wide outcomes. The analysis reflects the authors' academic interpretation of the case and does not constitute an official organisational audit or policy position.

CONSULTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The additional military literature supports a cautiously transferable point: service continuation is unlikely to be well understood by examining pension incentives in isolation. Work–family conditions and unit support were associated with military career intentions in Tidwell and Lucier-Greer (2025), while McKay et al. (2026) linked unit cohesion to retention intentions. These are associations in other forces, not causal findings about the Malaysian Army. The present consultation therefore uses them to prioritise questions for local evaluation and does not infer the relative strength of retirement motives.

The administrative consultation provides a real context in which service-extension decisions were examined in relation to institutional rules, personal priorities and the perceived value of further working years. The case did not yield a validated estimate of how much each factor contributes to actual departures. Accordingly, the analysis

explores plausible mechanisms and management responses without ranking causes by frequency or statistical effect. The root-cause diagram is a structured interpretation of case concerns and potential pathways requiring further investigation.

The Retention Challenge is Multidimensional

The original consultation addressed workload, development opportunities, recognition, financial considerations and family needs in the administrative setting examined. These case-derived domains reflect different dimensions of the service relationship and provide a defensible starting point for local management action. However, the material available for publication does not establish their prevalence, relative strength or direct effects on extension decisions. Similar patterns may plausibly occur elsewhere, but this must be examined rather than assumed. A multidimensional diagnosis is therefore preferable to assigning retirement decisions to one presumed cause.

A manager who assumes that pension benefits are sufficient may overlook avoidable daily burdens. Conversely, a manager who attributes decisions entirely to workload may neglect career aspirations or family transitions. A consultation should therefore ask how personnel perceive their present duties, opportunities during additional service and likely alternatives after leaving. Such conversations should be voluntary and conducted within established personnel and ethics safeguards.

Work Demands and the Risk of Knowledge Loss

Administrative military roles can involve precision, schedule pressure and continuity requirements. From a JD–R perspective, long-running demands could be experienced differently depending on staffing practices, tools and support. The appropriate consultation question is not whether military work can become free of pressure, but which processes create avoidable strain and whether resources are matched to peak demands. Possible steps include documenting recurring workload peaks, assessing duplicate reporting requirements and improving structured handovers. These proposals need local feasibility and information-security review.

Departure of experienced members may also challenge continuity because informal know-how is not always captured in procedural manuals. Yet staff departures should not automatically be described as a measured loss in productivity. A more defensible approach is to track handover completion, time needed for role competency, errors or rework in approved aggregated form, and staff perceptions of task clarity. These measures can show whether knowledge-transfer practices are functioning without publishing restricted operational details.

Workload concerns become strategically important where tasks require accumulated familiarity with regulations, exceptions and coordination practices. When experienced employees leave, organisations may need to redistribute tasks, retrain staff and document tacit procedures. Nevertheless, an assertion of actual service disruption would require verified organisational performance data. The consultation framework therefore treats knowledge loss as a foreseeable risk, not an established consequence measured in this case. Practical responses include structured handovers, cross-training, updated work instructions and workload reviews that are proportionate to the sensitivity of the work.

A workload review should examine activities, not characterise people as insufficiently resilient. For example, managers could assess whether duplicated reporting, unclear approvals and poorly sequenced deadlines create avoidable administrative pressure. If a proposed improvement requires access to internal records, its assessment should remain within authorised management channels. The public paper can set out the general evaluation logic without revealing operational details. This separation preserves the paper's practical value while recognising that openness about the existence of a management problem is not permission to disclose everything contained in the original consultation.

Career Development, Recognition and Perceived Fairness

The availability of additional service years does not necessarily create additional career opportunity. Experienced personnel may want predictable information about qualifications, selection processes and the development value of further service. Where promotion vacancies are limited, leaders cannot promise outcomes; they can nonetheless communicate eligibility and provide non-promotional development, coaching or specialist skill

recognition. The managerial objective is to make opportunities and constraints intelligible rather than to imply guaranteed advancement.

Recognition also needs a more precise meaning than occasional praise. It can include constructive performance feedback, acknowledgement of specialist responsibility and fair distribution of demanding work. Where support is experienced as credible and consistent, employees are more likely to perceive that the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being. That broader sense of perceived organisational support has long been linked to more positive work attitudes and lower withdrawal tendencies (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Career progression is often constrained by formal establishment and eligibility rules. The most defensible response is not to promise accelerated promotion but to improve the clarity of information available to personnel. Managers may communicate the competencies required for progression, identify development opportunities that do not depend on a vacant higher position and provide consistent feedback about career planning. Whether these measures alter extension intention would still require prospective evaluation. An implementation programme should record what information was supplied, how personnel understood it and whether they regarded it as useful.

Financial Security, Family Needs and Legitimate Choice

Service-extension decisions concern life beyond the immediate job. Retirement income and continuity of employment may offer security, while time with family, health, personal projects and prospective civilian work may pull in the opposite direction. These considerations should not be reduced to a deficit in employee commitment. Classic work–family scholarship explains that time-based and strain-based pressures can make continued work service more difficult even when employees still value their organisation (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Retention counselling should therefore provide accurate, neutral information on authorised options, decision milestones and available transition support, enabling informed choices without coercion.

A successful personnel policy is not necessarily one that retains every eligible individual. It should help the organisation anticipate departures, preserve essential capability and create fair opportunities for those who wish to remain. From this perspective, a consultation can recommend better information and workforce planning while respecting legitimate retirement choices.

Figure 1. Root-Cause Analysis of Early Retirement Decisions among Malaysian Army Personnel



Note. This case-informed conceptual map draws on an actual Army administrative consultation and relevant literature. It does not demonstrate causal effects or represent an empirical assessment of all Malaysian Army units.

Figure 1 is an illustrative causal-question map, not evidence that any branch produced retirement at 21 years. It helps managers formulate separate enquiries about personal priorities, demands, career expectations and perceived alternatives. Proposed relationships would require a suitable participant design and validated measures before they could be reported as determinants.

Pension-related considerations create a distinctive feature of this decision. The attractiveness of continued service depends not just on the additional benefit but on what the individual gives up by remaining employed. Family commitments, anticipated civilian opportunities and preferences about how to spend later career years

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can reasonably lead different people to different conclusions. Consultation should therefore provide accurate, neutral information on the applicable choices and avoid treating a decision to retire as disloyalty or evidence of weak commitment. A better organisational objective is to enable informed decisions and improve conditions for those who are willing and eligible to remain.

SWOT Reinterpreted as Decision Support

The original report included a SWOT analysis. For journal purposes, a SWOT map is most defensible when presented as a planning aid, not independently verified evidence. Potential strengths include accumulated expertise and established training arrangements; potential weaknesses include reliance on undocumented tacit knowledge and uneven access to development; opportunities include process improvement and clearer retention communication; threats include unexpected capability gaps and competing post-service opportunities. The specific relevance of each proposition should be confirmed through approved organisational review before implementation.

Figure 2. SWOT Analysis of Military Personnel Retention Challenges in the Malaysian Army



Note. This illustrative SWOT is informed by one actual Army administrative consultation and published literature. Its entries are planning propositions, not independently verified findings for other departments or the Malaysian Army as a whole.

Figure 2 is a structured planning aid rather than a scored organisational assessment. Each strength, weakness, opportunity and threat should be verified using permitted organisational information before being used to justify a resource decision. In particular, references to workload, vacancies or loss of expertise describe potential exposure and must not be read as measured outcomes in the whole Malaysian Army.

SWOT category	Consultation proposition	Validation needed
Strength	Experienced staff hold specialist knowledge	Approved skills inventory or competency mapping
Weakness	Some workflows may depend on informal handovers	Confidential process audit
Opportunity	Development and role clarity may increase perceived value	Voluntary staff feedback and development records
Threat	Departure without succession could disrupt continuity	Aggregated turnover and transition indicators

What the Theory Does and Does Not Explain

An important safeguard is to avoid circular explanation. A manager cannot infer that work pressure caused departure merely because turnover is discussed alongside work pressure in a consultation report. A stronger study would specify the proposed mechanism, measure work demands and resources independently, and then evaluate observed extension decisions while accounting for eligibility and organisational approval. Until then, these categories remain hypotheses for managerial assessment.

MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Implementation should be evidence-led. Allen et al. (2010) caution that retention strategies should be chosen with regard to documented drivers rather than generic prescriptions. A defensible sequence is to verify the permitted service-extension guidance, seek confidential feedback where authorised, test workload and career-information interventions on a limited basis, and evaluate subsequent decision confidence and workforce continuity. The paper does not claim that any proposed action has already increased retention.

A staged plan should specify who can act, what could be delivered and what would constitute useful evidence of progress. Short-term actions can focus on clear service-extension information, appropriate discussions with supervisors and reducing unnecessary administrative work. Medium-term actions can focus on career-development communication, workload redesign, cross-training and knowledge-transfer routines. Long-term actions can assess whether the organisation needs a more systematic review of its workforce-retention practices. All actions remain proposals until approved through the relevant management arrangements, and none is presented as an intervention already implemented or shown to work.

An evaluation design could combine process indicators with employee-reported outcomes. Process indicators might include the proportion of eligible personnel receiving timely guidance, attendance at optional career discussions and completion of documented handovers. Perception measures could cover clarity of information, perceived support, manageable work demands and confidence in making a service decision. Where permitted, long-term analysis could compare administrative continuation patterns before and after implementation. Causal conclusions would remain limited without a robust comparison design, and small-unit figures should not be publicly reported where they might identify individuals.

Short-Term Actions (0–6 Months): Improve Communication and Work Processes

First, provide an authorised service-extension information sheet summarising the decision process and clearly directing personnel to official policy owners for individual eligibility or benefits. Second, offer confidential, non-coercive career conversations sufficiently early to inform the decision. Third, conduct a small operational process review to identify avoidable duplication, bottlenecks and predictable workload peaks. Fourth, strengthen recognition through fair feedback routines rather than discretionary reward promises. These actions are intended to improve decision quality and work management, not to guarantee retention.

Medium-Term Actions (6–18 Months): Career Development and Work Improvement

Develop a transparent career-development map identifying the courses, capabilities and role experiences relevant to continued service, while communicating that advancement is subject to formal rules and vacancies. Pilot targeted process simplification in approved administrative tasks, supported by appropriate information-security approval. Introduce aggregate, privacy-respecting monitoring of upcoming service decisions and training needs so that succession planning becomes proactive. The monitoring system should avoid unnecessary collection of individual personal data and should use access controls consistent with military requirements.

Long-Term Actions (18 Months Onwards): Policy Review and Continuous Improvement

Policy owners can review whether existing retention communication, career-development provision and transition systems offer an appropriate balance of organisational continuity and individual choice. Long-term work should establish knowledge-transfer standards and periodically evaluate the causes of capability gaps, rather than presuming that every vacancy results from retirement decisions. Any proposed structural changes to promotions, posts or incentives require decision-making at the appropriate authority level and should be distinguished from low-cost actions within local control.

Implementation Period	Proposed Action	Suggested Performance Indicator
0–6 months	Extension information and confidential career conversations	Staff understanding of options; conversation uptake
0–6 months	Process and workload mapping	Number of approved bottlenecks resolved

6–18 months	Development pathway and targeted learning	Course access, capability completion and perceived clarity
6–18 months	Structured handover and succession plan	Handover coverage; time-to-competence where approved
18+ months	Policy review and prospective evaluation	Aggregated applications, approved extensions and departures, subject to release approval

Implementation should proceed through small pilots with predefined baseline and follow-up measures. Before implementing these actions on a larger scale, HR stakeholders should check policy authority, budget implications, confidentiality, fairness and possible unintended effects. A rise in applications cannot automatically be interpreted as an increase in retention, because approvals, eligibility, staffing requirements and wider conditions may also change. The evaluation design should therefore track several stages of the decision pathway and, where feasible, compare like-for-like cohorts over time.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

For management, this actual administrative case highlights the value of moving beyond a narrow financial-incentive explanation towards work redesign, fair development opportunities, accurate service-extension information and succession planning. It also recognises that legitimate retirement choices can coexist with organisational commitment. The approach may be worth examining in comparable settings, but appropriate priorities should be established through their own diagnosis.

The theoretical contribution is modest but specific: it locates familiar demand–resource and career-motivation mechanisms within a rule-governed, late-service decision involving intention, eligibility, approval and observed continuation. It offers a set of testable distinctions rather than a new validated retention model. Empirical research could evaluate whether these domains predict stated intention or actual service extension once official permission and suitable data are obtained.

The practical contribution is a case-informed framework for reviewing decision information, the sustainability of work demands, the credibility of development pathways and continuity planning. Suggested indicators include timely access to authorised guidance, development opportunities and completed handovers. Although managers in other administrative units may recognise similar challenges, those similarities must not be treated as established findings without local verification. Intervention benefits require prospective evaluation.

LIMITATIONS, ETHICS AND DATA AVAILABILITY

This article is based on an actual academic business consultation case study in one Army administrative setting, but it does not report a new participant dataset, publish informal-conversation quotations or present representative survey findings. The consultation material is interpreted at a broad organisational level rather than treated as a formally coded qualitative interview dataset. No claims of saturation, statistically tested relationships or demonstrated intervention effectiveness are made. The analysis is therefore context-specific and interpretive.

The selected research literature and absence of releasable, independently verified outcome data limit assessment of the proposed explanations. Comparable workload, career or family concerns may arise in other Army departments; however, the present case does not establish how widespread they are or whether their effects are similar. Differences in operational responsibilities, career structures and local conditions require any wider application of the recommendations to be tested and adapted.

Ethics and confidentiality statement. This article is based on a business consultation undertaken for postgraduate academic purposes in a Malaysian Army administrative setting. The consultation sought to identify organisational challenges and propose practical management improvements. To protect confidentiality, the manuscript does not identify the specific unit or individual personnel, reproduce informal participant quotations, or disclose confidential personnel records or restricted operational material. The analysis and recommendations reflect the authors' academic interpretation and do not constitute an official statement or policy position of the

Malaysian Armed Forces. No separate institutional human-participant ethics approval is claimed for this publication-focused document analysis.

Data availability statement. This article does not generate or analyse a new participant-level dataset. The underlying academic consultation report and non-public case materials are not publicly available; the manuscript reports only non-identifying case context and the authors' analytical synthesis. Published sources listed in the references are accessible through their respective publishers, subject to applicable access arrangements.

Declaration of competing interests. The first author has professional experience relevant to the setting discussed, which is disclosed as contextual involvement rather than independent research data. The authors declare no financial competing interests. This article does not represent an official statement of the Malaysian Armed Forces or its constituent organisations.

CONCLUSION

The actual Army administrative consultation illustrates why decisions about continuing military service beyond a major career milestone cannot be understood through financial incentives alone. Work demands, career resources, reliable information and future personal goals require consideration together. This 2026 business consultation case study translates documented management concerns into a structured diagnostic framework and phased recommendations. The case may offer useful questions for other departments facing similar workforce challenges, but it is not evidence that identical problems or causes exist throughout the Malaysian Army. Responsible implementation, protection of personnel information and prospective local evaluation are required to establish which interventions work and under what conditions. The proposed implementation roadmap is intended as a practical template for unit-level assessment and evaluation, not as an official policy directive of the Malaysian Armed Forces.

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