

To retire or not to retire?

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Workers who agreed to take early retirement were likely to not have considered that option if it hadn't been for pressure at the workplace to do so. This has been revealed in a new study carried out at the University of Haifa that examined the significance of early retirement.

"A policy of late retirement or canceling compulsory retirement ought to be encouraged. This way, the 'elderly' label will be done away with, and the hard feelings experienced by the retirees themselves would disappear, along with the [stress](#) that is felt as the time for the agreed retirement approaches. Everyone would be able to decide whether to continue working based on his or her abilities and desires," suggests Sigal Naim, who carried out the study.

This qualitative study, which Ms. Naim carried out under the supervision of Dr. [Israel](#) Doron, held in-depth interviews with men who 3-5 years earlier had consented to taking [early retirement](#), from governmental companies that had undergone privatization. The survey found that the retirees view [retirement age](#) as an artificial 'finishing line' that is intended primarily for insurance companies' actuarial balancing: none of them considered himself old and they all felt that they still have a long and enjoyable life ahead.

According to the researcher, even though they willingly took early retirement – as opposed to forced early retirement – the principal feeling expressed by almost all of the participants was of profound disappointment in the workplace. She added that the centrality of employment in their lives, even quite a while after retirement, was

expressed in the way they described themselves. When asked to tell their life story, most of the interviewees described themselves in detail in terms of their working career, only a few choosing to talk about family – and even then it was in only one or two sentences.

The study also reveals that even though the participants expressed satisfaction with retirement and that they chose to retire because the work did not suit them anymore, this is in fact just a cover story. It is a cover-up – mostly for themselves – intended to bridge the difficult reality that has been forced upon them: a reality of disappointment, a sense of insult and understanding that if they refused to retire, their pension rights would be harmed. "This is in fact a sort of mask for themselves that helps them to build a new reality that they can live with," the researcher said.

With these results in hand, Ms. Naim recommends that a policy of late retirement or canceling compulsory retirement ought to be encouraged. "This would make the transition from a work-based life to retirement living smoother and less abrupt, and only those truly interested would opt for early retirement. This would enable compensation for employees who continue and persevere at work, and when they do decide to retire, they would be guaranteed better financial conditions," she concludes.

Provided by University of Haifa

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