

A Descriptive Study of Teachers' Academic Background, Experience, and Teaching Context in Suburban Secondary Schools Melaka, Malaysia

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Abstract

Understanding the demographic and professional characteristics of teachers is essential for improving teaching quality and policy planning, particularly in suburban school contexts. This study aims to provide a descriptive profile of secondary school teachers in suburban areas of Melaka, focusing on their academic background, teaching experience, employment status, educational qualifications, subject specialization, and teaching context. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed, involving 97 secondary school teachers selected from suburban schools in Melaka. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage. The findings reveal the respondents came from diverse academic disciplines, with a strong representation from Language and Literature and Technical and Vocational backgrounds. Most teachers were mid-career educators with more than ten years of teaching experience and were employed on a permanent basis. The majority held degree-level qualifications and taught a wide range of subjects. Additionally, a considerable proportion of teachers reported commuting moderate to long distances to school, highlighting potential contextual challenges faced by suburban educators. The findings provide valuable baseline information on the demographic and professional profile of suburban secondary school teachers and offer insights for policymakers, school administrators, and future researchers in planning targeted professional development and support strategies.

Keywords: Teacher Demographics, Suburban Secondary Schools, Academic Background, Teaching Experience, Teaching Context

Introduction

The quality of teaching and learning in schools is closely associated with the characteristics and professional background of teachers (Zhang et al. 2025). Teachers play a central role in

shaping students' academic development, motivation, and overall learning experiences (Merdiaty and Sulistiasih, 2024). As such, understanding who teachers are, including their academic background, teaching experience, and professional context, is an important foundation for improving educational practices and policies. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to examining teacher-related factors, particularly in relation to teaching effectiveness, professional development, and the integration of innovative instructional approaches (Dewi et al. 2024).

Suburban secondary schools often operate in contexts differ from both urban and rural settings. Teachers in suburban schools may experience a combination of challenges, including varying levels of access to educational resources, diverse student populations, and logistical constraints such as commuting distance (Beyene et al. 2023). These schools frequently serve as transitional environments where expectations for academic performance and instructional innovation are increasing, yet structural and contextual limitations may still exist. As a result, understanding the demographic and professional characteristics of teachers in suburban settings is particularly important.

Previous studies have largely focused on student achievement, learning outcomes, and instructional strategies, while comparatively fewer studies have provided detailed descriptive profiles of teachers, especially within suburban school contexts. Although some research has examined the relationship between teacher characteristics and teaching effectiveness, comprehensive demographic studies capture teachers' academic background, professional experience, and teaching context remain limited. This highlights the need for baseline empirical evidence to describes who suburban teachers are and the environments in which they work.

For Malaysian education context, suburban secondary schools play a significant role in supporting national education goals by bridging urban and rural educational environments (Aini and Ismail, 2025). Teachers in these schools often manage multiple responsibilities, including teaching diverse subjects and adapting to evolving curricular demands (Amini et al. 2024). Examining teachers' academic background and teaching experience can offer insights into workforce composition and instructional capacity (Yip and Xu, 2025). Furthermore, contextual factors such as commuting distance, employment status, and subject specialization may influence teachers' motivation, well-being, and long-term commitment to their schools (Nwoko et al. 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to provide a descriptive overview of the academic background, teaching experience, and teaching context of suburban secondary school teachers in Melaka. By presenting a detailed demographic profile of teachers, this study seeks to contribute baseline empirical evidence can support educational planning, policy formulation, and future research. The findings are expected to offer useful insights for policymakers, school administrators, and researchers in designing targeted professional development initiatives and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of teachers in suburban secondary schools.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to describe the demographic and professional characteristics of secondary school teachers in suburban areas of Melaka.

The respondents consisted of 97 secondary school teachers selected from suburban schools. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to teachers. The questionnaire focused on demographic and professional information, including academic background, teaching experience, salary, employment status, educational qualifications, subject taught, state of birth, and distance from home to school. All responses were collected anonymously.

The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis, including frequency and percentage, was used to summarize and present the respondents' profiles. The findings were reported using tables to provide a clear overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Results and Findings

This section presents the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents based on descriptive analysis. The findings are reported using frequency and percentage to provide an overview of teachers' academic background, experience, and teaching context in suburban secondary schools in Melaka.

Academic Background

The respondents in Table 1 represented diverse academic backgrounds. The largest proportion of teachers specialized in Language and Literature (26.8%), followed by Technical and Vocational Education (14.4%) and Science or Pure Science (13.4%). Other academic backgrounds included Social Studies or History (11.3%), Mathematics (10.3%), and Business and Management (8.2%). Smaller proportions of respondents were from ICT or Computer Science (6.2%), Religious Studies (5.2%), and Arts or Music (4.1%).

The findings indicate teachers in suburban secondary schools come from diverse academic backgrounds, with a strong representation from Language and Literature, Technical and Vocational Education, and Science-related fields. This diversity suggests suburban schools rely on multidisciplinary expertise to meet curricular demands. Teachers from language-based backgrounds may contribute to strong communication and literacy-focused teaching practices, while those from technical and science fields may support practical and skill-based learning. However, differences in academic training may also influence instructional approaches and confidence in adopting new pedagogical strategies, highlighting the importance of targeted professional development tailored to subject areas.

Table 1

Academic background of respondents

mic background	Frequency	Percent (%)
Science / Pure Science	13	13.4
Mathematics	10	10.3
Language & Literature	26	26.8
Social Studies / History	11	11.3
ICT / Computer Science	6	6.2
Religious Studies	5	5.2
Arts / Music	4	4.1
Technical & Vocational	14	14.4
Business & Management	8	8.2

N:97

Teaching Experience

Table 2 show in terms of teaching experience, most respondents were mid-career teachers. The highest proportion had between 11 and 15 years of experience (22.7%), followed by those with 16–20 years (20.6%) and 1–5 years (18.6%). Teachers with less than one year of experience accounted for 13.4%, while 11.3% had between 6 and 10 years of experience. Only a small number of respondents reported more than 20 years of teaching experience, and none had more than 36 years. Overall, the findings indicate a balanced mix of early-career and experienced teachers.

The majority of respondents were mid-career teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience. This suggests a stable and experienced teaching workforce in suburban secondary schools. Experienced teachers are often equipped with strong classroom management skills and pedagogical knowledge developed over years of practice (Azah et al. 2025). However, previous research has suggested teachers with longer teaching experience may be more accustomed to traditional teaching methods, which could influence their readiness to adopt new instructional practices (Abbad Alessa and Hussein, 2023). Continuous training and professional development remain essential to ensure teaching practices remain responsive to evolving educational needs (Dhungana et al. 2024)

Table 2

Teaching experience of respondents

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 1 year	13	13.4
1 – 5 years	18	18.6
6 – 10 years	11	11.3
11 – 15 years	22	22.7
16 – 20 years	20	20.6
21 – 25 years	5	5.2
26 – 30 years	6	6.2
31 – 35 years	2	2.1
36 years and above	0	0

N:97

Salary

The analysis of monthly salary showed most respondents earned a mid-range income. The largest proportion earned between RM6,000 and RM6,999 (20.6%), followed by RM7,000–RM7,999 (18.6%). A notable number of teachers earned between RM2,000–RM2,999 (14.4%) and RM5,000–RM5,999 (11.3%). Only a small proportion of respondents earned above RM10,000 per month. These findings suggest the majority of teachers were within moderate income brackets.

The salary distribution in Table 3 indicates most teachers earned a moderate monthly income. Financial stability may contribute positively to job satisfaction and motivation, as teachers with adequate income are less likely to experience economic stress (Abarca and Malonzo, 2025). However, salary alone may not fully address challenges related to workload, teaching responsibilities, and contextual demands. Additional factors such as commuting distance and access to teaching resources may play a more significant role in influencing teachers' overall well-being and performance (Adekunle and Adeyanju, 2025).

Table 3

Salary of respondents

	Frequency	Percent (%)
RM2,000 – RM2,999	14	14.4
RM3,000 – RM3,999	5	5.2
RM4,000 – RM4,999	10	10.3
RM5,000 – RM5,999	11	11.3
RM6,000 – RM6,999	20	20.6
RM7,000 – RM7,999	18	18.6
RM8,000 – RM8,999	7	7.2
RM9,000 – RM9,999	5	5.2
RM10,000 – RM10,999	4	4.1
RM11,000 – RM11,999	1	1.0
RM12,000 – RM12,999	2	2.1
RM13,000 and above	0	0

N: 97

Employment Status

With regard to employment status, Table 4 show the majority of respondents were permanently employed teachers (87.6%). A smaller proportion were employed on a temporary basis (8.2%), while only 4.1% were working under a contract. This indicates a relatively stable teaching workforce in suburban secondary schools.

The high proportion of permanently employed teachers reflects workforce stability in suburban secondary schools. Permanent employment may enhance teachers' sense of job security, commitment, and long-term engagement with their schools (Masha et al. 2025). Stable employment conditions can also encourage teachers to invest in professional development and school improvement initiatives (Edu, 2025). Conversely, teachers employed on a temporary or contract basis may face uncertainty, which could affect motivation and continuity in teaching practices (Salavera et al. 2024). These findings highlight the importance of employment stability in supporting sustainable teaching environments.

Table 4

Employment status of respondents

ymment status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Permanent	85	87.6
Contract	4	4.1
Temporary	8	8.2

N: 97

Educational Qualifications

More than half of the respondents in Table 5 held a Degree qualification (52.6%). This was followed by teachers with PISMP (16.5%) and DPLI (15.5%) certificates. A smaller proportion held a Master's degree (9.3%), while only one respondent possessed a PDPP qualification. None of the respondents reported holding a PhD. Overall, the findings show most teachers met standard professional qualification requirements.

The findings show most teachers held degree-level qualifications, with a smaller proportion possessing postgraduate qualifications. This suggests the majority of teachers met standard professional requirements for secondary education. Teachers with higher academic qualifications may bring advanced subject knowledge and pedagogical insights into the classroom (Assem et al. 2023). However, qualification level alone does not necessarily determine teaching effectiveness. Practical teaching experience and ongoing professional development play equally important roles in enhancing instructional quality, particularly in suburban school contexts.

Table 5

Education certificate of respondents

Education certificate	Frequency	Percent (%)
PPISMP	5	5.2
ISMP	16	16.5
PLI	15	15.5
DPP	1	1.0
egree	51	52.6
laster	9	9.3
hD	0	0

N: 97

Subject Taught

The respondents taught a wide range of subjects. English Language and Home Science were the most commonly taught subjects (16.5%), followed by History (15.5%) and Mathematics and Engineering Drawing (13.4%). Malay Language and Computer Science were also well represented (12.4%). Science and Visual Arts Education accounted for 10.3% each, while other subjects such as Additional Mathematics, Principles of Accounting, and Physics were taught by smaller proportions of respondents. This variety reflects the diverse instructional responsibilities of teachers in suburban schools.

The wide range of subjects taught by respondents in Table 6 show reflects the diverse instructional responsibilities of suburban secondary school teachers. Subjects such as languages, sciences, technical education, and arts require different teaching approaches and resources. Teachers may need to adapt their instructional strategies to suit subject-specific demands, which can increase workload and complexity (Hadisaputra et al. 2024). This

diversity underscores the need for adequate support and training to ensure effective teaching across various subject areas, especially in schools with limited resources.

Table 6

Subject taught of respondents

taught	Frequency	Percent (%)
Mathematics	13	13.4
Science	10	10.3
English Language	16	16.5
Malay Language	12	12.4
History	15	15.5
Islamic Education	5	5.2
Arabic Language	1	1.0
Moral Education	1	1.0
Biology	1	1.0
Physics	3	3.1
Chemistry	5	5.2
Principles of Accounting	2	2.1
Economics	1	1.0
Additional Mathematics	2	2.1
Business	3	3.1
Geography	1	1.0
Design	6	6.2
Engineering Drawing	13	13.4
Visual Arts Education	10	10.3
Home Science	16	16.5
Computer Science	12	12.4
Music Education	0	0

N: 97

State of Birth

Table 7 show nearly half of the respondents were born in Melaka (49.5%). Johor and Kelantan each contributed 11.3% of respondents, followed by Negeri Sembilan (9.3%). Other states were represented in smaller proportions. This suggests most teachers were locally based, with familiarity with the suburban school environment in Melaka.

Nearly half of the respondents were born in Melaka, indicating many teachers were locally based. Local teachers may have better familiarity with the cultural, social, and educational context of suburban schools, which can support stronger relationships with students and the community (Hamdan and Coloma, 2022). Teachers originating from other states may bring diverse perspectives and experiences, enriching the school environment (Aydin, 2026). However, non-local teachers may also face adjustment challenges, particularly in adapting to local community expectations and school cultures.

Table 7

State birth of respondents

State birth	Frequency	Percent (%)
Johor	11	11.3
Melaka	48	49.5
Negeri Sembilan	9	9.3
Selangor	4	4.1
Perak	2	2.1
Perlis	1	1.0
Kedah	2	2.1
Pulau Pinang	0	0
Kelantan	11	11.3
Terengganu	2	2.1
Pahang	4	4.1
Sabah	1	1.0
Sarawak	1	1.0
Kuala Lumpur	1	1.0

N: 97

Distance from Home to School

In terms of commuting distance, Table 8 show the highest proportion of respondents lived 11–20 km from their school (25.8%). This was followed by those living within 1–5 km (21.6%) and 6–10 km (20.6%). Notably, 28.9% of teachers reported commuting more than 20 km one way. This indicates a considerable number of teachers experienced moderate to long commuting distances.

The findings reveal a considerable proportion of teachers traveled moderate to long distances to reach their schools. Long commuting distances may contribute to physical fatigue, time constraints, and reduced work-life balance, which can affect teachers' motivation and teaching effectiveness (Santelli and Grissom, 2024). Commuting challenges may be unavoidable due to school location and teacher placement policies (Gavriil and Giannikos,

2025). These findings suggest commuting distance should be considered in teacher deployment and support planning to promote teacher well-being and sustained performance.

Table 8

Distance from home to school of respondents

Distance	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 1 km	3	3.1
1 – 5 km	21	21.6
6 – 10 km	20	20.6
11 – 20 km	25	25.8
21 – 30 km	16	16.5
More than 30 km	12	12.4

N: 97

Conclusion

This study provides a descriptive profile of secondary school teachers in suburban areas of Melaka, focusing on their academic background, teaching experience, and teaching context. The findings indicate teachers in suburban secondary schools are generally experienced, professionally qualified, and come from diverse academic and subject backgrounds.

In addition, the results highlight contextual factors such as subject diversity and commuting distance may influence teachers' professional responsibilities and well-being. Overall, this study offers baseline demographic information which can support educational planning and future research related to teaching practices and teacher development in suburban secondary school contexts.

Declaration

We declare this manuscript is our original work and has not been submitted or published in any other journal. All authors have contributed significantly to the conception and completion of this study.

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