

Aging and Work-Related Identity Loss Due to Retirement

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Abstract

Population aging in most developed countries and the associated aging of the workforce is an important and complex issue with far-reaching implications. Automatic adjustment mechanisms recently introduced in some EU Member States will raise the retirement age to 71 by 2060, meaning that work will occupy a large part of our lives. Work is closely linked to our identity. For many adults, a work-related identity is an important part of their personal identity. Although retirement is eagerly anticipated by many workers, it can lead to the loss of important work-related activities and social ties, which for some may affect stability and positive identity. This research aims to shed light on deeper psychological issues connected to work-related identity in the context of retirement. In particular, with a conducted literature review, this paper aims to offer a theoretical overview of work-related identity loss due to retirement. Findings reveal the importance of understanding work-related identity and the consequences of its loss. Results suggest that the transition and adjustment to retirement was particularly difficult for individuals with a strong work identity.

Keywords: aging, retirement, age management, work-related identity.

JEL classification: J14, J26, J28

Paper type: Research article

Received: 7 February 2024

Accepted: 28 May 2024

DOI: 10.54820/entrenova-2024-0018

Acknowledgements: The authors acknowledge that the paper was partly financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency, Program P5-0364 – The Impact of Corporate Governance, Organizational Learning, and Knowledge Management on Organizations in Ageing Societies.

Introduction

Population aging in most developed countries and the associated aging of the workforce (Eurostat, 2022; OECD, 2021) is an important and complex issue with far-reaching implications. Automatic adjustment mechanisms recently introduced in some EU Member States will raise the retirement age to 71 by 2060 (OECD, 2021), meaning that work will occupy a large part of our lives. Work is closely linked to our identity and many adults, a work-related identity is an important part of their personal identity (Eagers et al., 2018; Silver & Williams, 2018). Although many workers look forward to retirement, which brings the benefits of a retired life (van der Mark-Reeuwijk et al., 2019) it can lead to the loss of important work-related activities and social ties, which for some may affect stability and positive identity (Jolles et al., 2022). Furthermore, identity loss due to retirement may lead to various mental health problems (Chiesa & Sarchielli, 2009; Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014; Kragt, 2019; Wang, 2007), causing an increase in demand for healthcare services and additional health expenditure (Breyer et al., 2010; Fasbender et al., 2016). Due to population aging and the related challenges of labour shortages and the general well-being of older adults make the topic of retirement, its implications and the right time for it a focus of research. The results in of the retirement consequences are still unclear, but have a significant impact on the formation of an individual's identity as they move into this new phase of life (Manor & Holland, 2022). This research aims to shed light on deeper psychological issues connected to work-related identity in the context of retirement. In particular, with a conducted systematic literature review, using keywords of identity and retirement in the Web of Science database, this paper aims to offer a theoretical overview of work-related identity loss due to retirement. Findings reveal the importance of understanding work-related identity and the consequences of its loss. Results suggest that the transition and adjustment to retirement was particularly difficult for individuals with a strong work identity.

Aging

With the increase of life expectancy and a growing elderly population, there has been increased focus on comprehending the aging process and addressing issues related to successful aging and quality of life in old age (Burbank, 1986). Due to advances in education, technology, medicine, food distribution, and sanitary conditions people tend to live longer than ever before (Chalise, 2019), which is why defining an old age has become a challenging task, as in early old age, just after the retirement, most people remain active and competent despite the exclusion from economically productive roles (Moody & Sasser, 2020). Age identification is partly recognized as a chronological age of years since birth, but also as a strong social and psychological dimension of our lives (Moody & Sasser, 2020). We have a common, socially constructed social clock that sets an appropriate age for a certain life event to happen, for example, getting married at age 13 or retiring at age 30 is in western countries considered inappropriate, while graduating from university and retiring at age 65 is acceptable (Helson et al., 1984). There are many different theories of ageing, but in this review, we highlight just two of the main psychological theories in order to provide a sufficient basis for a better understanding of the topic of identity, identity loss and retirement. Active theory of aging (Havighurst, 1963) stating that aging is successful, when older adults stay active and maintain social contact. Similarly, continuity theory (Atchley, 1989) notes that as people age, they try to keep as much as possible the same habits, personality and lifestyle they developed in their early years. According to the activity and continuity theories of aging, any reduction in

social interaction is more a consequence of ill health or disability than some functional need of society to disengage older people from their former roles (Havighurst et al. 1968).

Identity

Identity (Burke & Stets, 2009) is defined as a shared set of meanings that individuals assign to themselves, whether through specific societal roles they occupy (e.g., a spouse, worker, parent, etc.), their affiliation with various social groups (e.g., a church, book club, etc.), or their distinct personal traits that set them apart from others (e.g., an athletic person). How identity is expressed varies depending on the social meanings attached to a role, group membership, or pertinent characteristic (Papa & Lancaster, 2015), with roles and groups often overlapping and being difficult to disentangle (Stets & Burke, 2014). Meanings are individuals' reflections on their roles, social affiliations, or personal traits (Burke & Stets, 2009). The earliest conceptualization of identity was role identity (Burke, 1980; Stryker, 2002), which encompasses the internalized meanings associated with a particular role (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Individuals adopt certain roles (e.g., the work role) that shape their actions and decision-making in alignment with their identity (Ashforth, 2001).

Role theory by Dukerich and Ashforth (2001) emphasizes on the significance of roles for an individual's identity and his or hers self-esteem and connects certain roles with certain stages of life or chronological age (e.g., retirement age discontinues the worker role). Roles are key source of self-identity (van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Role identification offers a meaning and a sense of purpose to a person and promotes well-being (Thoits, 2012). The degree to which a person identifies with a role is described as a change in the salience of the role (Thoits, 2012) referring to (1) the importance of the role to the individual, and (2) the ranking given to the role identity in relation to other identities (Thoits, 2013). Individuals possess multiple identities (James, 1890), which means that they take on different identities throughout their lives and activate numerous identities in various situations. Two primary theories regarding identity will be expounded upon in the subsequent paragraph.

Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory

The basis of identity can be understood through two main theories: (1) identity theory (Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Serpe, 1982) and (2) social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Identity theory developed out of a theoretical and research programme labelled structural symbolic interactionism (Stryker 1980), which aimed to understand and explain how social structures influence the self and how the self influences social behaviour. Both theories pose the main theoretical emphasis on the multifaceted and dynamic self that mediates the relationship between the social structure and individual behaviour (Hogg et al., 1995), however, there are also significant differences between the theories. In identity theory individuals define themselves based on their social roles and positions in society, it emphasizes the importance of individual roles and positions as the foundation of identity, meanwhile in social identity theory the basis of identity derives from belonging to social categories or groups (J. E. Stets & Burke, 2000). In both theories, individuals can categorize, classify, or label themselves in specific ways relative to other social categories (J. E. Stets & Burke, 2000). In identity theory this process is termed identification (McCall & Simmons, 1978), and in social identity theory is called self-categorization, which means including individuals, and therefore oneself, into relevant social categories, out of all existing possibilities (Froidevaux et al., 2018). Through the process of self-categorization or identification, the identities are formed (J. E. Stets & Burke, 2000). The similarities and differences

between the two theories have been discussed in detail by Hogg et al., (1995), Hogg and Ridgeway (2003), J. E. Stets and Burke (2000), and J. Stets & Serpe (2013).

Work related identity

In light of the above, we could say that humans have a psychological need to belong, to be a part of a group, but at the same time to be unique and different from others. Our understanding of who we are and who we want to become is importantly shaped by our work, and this "identity work" is central to our professional and personal lives (Brown, 2015). Work identity can be defined as the set of meanings that an individual and others in the work attach to themselves (Gecas, 1982). It includes different aspects of how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their work, including their roles, responsibilities, group membership and unique characteristics within their work environment (Ashforth, 2001). Work identity is affected by the dynamic interaction between individuals and their work environment, which shapes their self-concept and behavior at work (Miscenko & Day, 2016). Dutton et al. (2010) define work-related identity as the "aspects of identity and self-definition that are tied to participation in the activities of work or a membership in work-related groups, organizations, occupations or professions". Work-related identity can be also used as a general term, which covers various identification foci, such as manager, leader, follower, team, organization, occupation-specific, career, and so on (Froidevaux et al., 2018). Many studies have focused on work-related identities such as occupational identity, organizational identity, professional identity, assuming that individuals want to form positive identities in their work domain (Dutton et al., 2010). Occupational identity contains an implicit reference (e.g., social class position, the opportunities for class mobility) to the individual's position in the wider society, tending to define the positions that are appropriate to, or made possible by, the person doing such work (Becker & Carper, 2023). In addition, an important part in identification with one's work are the attachment to a particular set of tasks, ways of handling them and of feeling of being capable to engage in such activities (Becker & Carper, 2023, Thoits, 2012)). A strong work identity can lead to job satisfaction, a sense of fulfilment and motivation for personal and professional growth within the organizational environment (Miscenko & Day, 2016). In the context of work-related self, the key distinctions between organizational, workgroup, and professional identity are as follows: (1) organizational identity involves feeling connected to the overarching goals and culture of the company or institution; (2) workgroup identity focuses on the sense of belonging within a specific team or department, where individuals interact closely with colleagues, and (3) professional identity encompasses one's sense of belonging to a particular profession, including the values, skills, and expertise associated with it (Knez, 2016). These distinctions highlight the different ways and levels at which individuals can identify themselves in the world of work. Each type of identity plays a unique role in shaping an individual's work-related self-concept and can affect their satisfaction, motivation and sense of belonging in the work environment.

Work-related identity loss and retirement

Work identity loss refers to the erosion or disruption of an individual's sense of self in the context of their work role (Brown, 2015). This can occur due to a variety of factors, including changes in the work environment, job insecurity, or a lack of alignment between personal and organizational values (Miščenko, 2016). It is a loss of a valued sense of self that originates from work, whether is it a loss of a prized position, work-related injury, important team membership, close relationship with colleagues, or an admired work location (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). All that kind of changes lead

to disruptions in the work related identity, so the loss of work-related identity requires letting go of the current meaning of self and readjusting to a new meaning (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). In addition, work offers a number of features and rewards, including, routine, purposeful activity, sociability, status, and financial security, to which individuals assign different importance and priority during their lives and on which they depend more or less heavily, thus the loss of employment, from the view of structural positioning and social involvement, affects people in various ways (Barnes & Parry, 2004). Existence of a desired role identity has a major influence on retirement adjustment and well-being (Atchley, 1971; E. J. Mutran et al., 1997). Transition to the retirement is now a process including exit, re-entry and re-exit from the work with the creation of new life roles (Sargent et al., 2011; Wang & Shultz, 2010). Wang and Shultz (2010) summarized four theoretical conceptualizations of retirement: (1) retirement as decision making, (2) retirement as an adjustment process (3) retirement as a career development stage, (4) and retirement as a part of human resource management. The conceptualisation of retirement as decision-making emphasises that it is a deliberate choice of behaviour (Wang & Shultz, 2010). Retirement as an adjustment process refers to the adaptation of retirees to the changes that occur in the transition from work to retirement, with the aim of achieving psychological satisfaction with their retirement life (van Solinge, 2007; Wang, 2007b). Retirement is now redefined as a phase of late career development, recognizing continued opportunities for career growth even in retirement, and conceptualizing retirement as a part of human resource management emphasizes the importance of effectively managing retirement to assist organizations in achieving their goals (Wang & Shultz, 2010).

Methodology

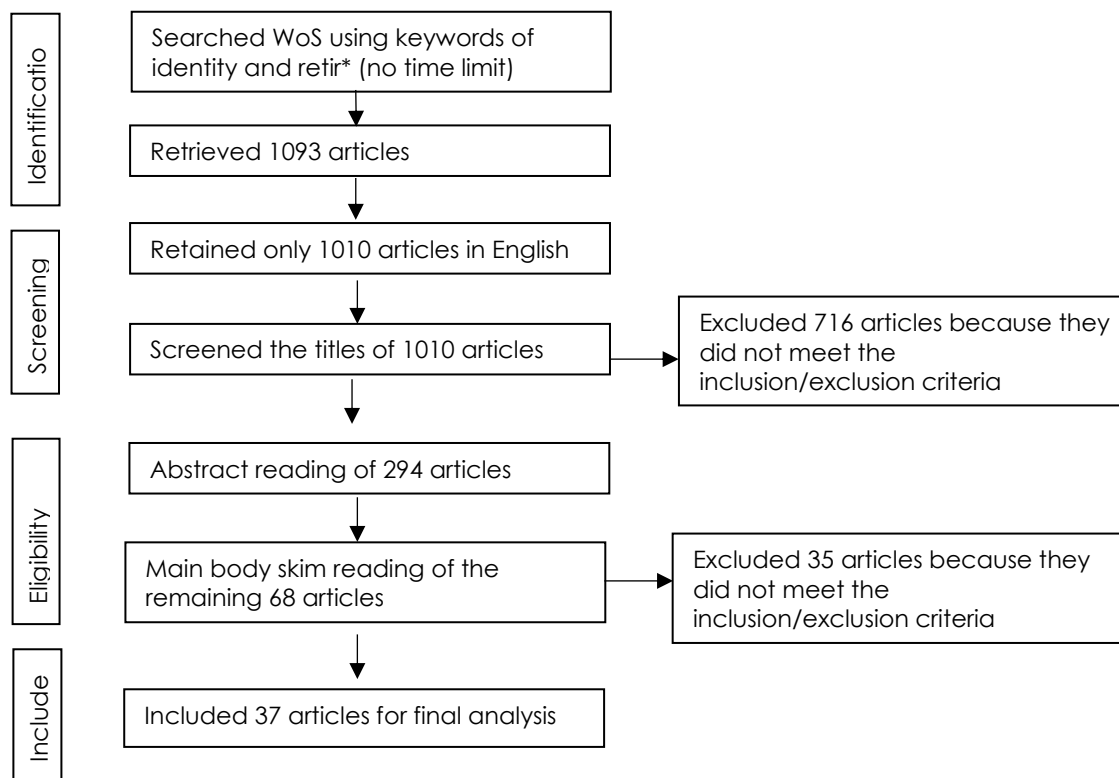
To get the most comprehensive overview of the published studies in the domain of aging and work-related loss due to retirement, we conducted an extensive search using Web of Science databases. We narrowed our search to peer reviewed journal articles. To identify relevant studies, we initially scanned identity loss – retirement literature in the Web of Science's Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) database. The initial search uncovered approximately 1.093 articles; all disciplines included.

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

The results of the initial search show that most studies were conducted and published in the Web of Science category of Gerontology (n=183), followed by Psychology Applied (n=148), Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism (n=147), and Sport Science (n=113). We considered studies on specific conditions of retirement, e.g., professional athletes finishing their sport career, to be beyond the scope of this review as this would constitute a separate literature stream that would require a different review. In addition, we also excluded all studies linked to a specific geographical region or ethnicity which resulted in 294 articles in English language. In this review we included 37 peer-reviewed journal articles that matched the inclusion criteria of having the keywords of identity and retirement in the title and/or abstract. The flow diagram for the database search of relevant articles is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Flow Diagram for the Database Search of Publications for Systematic Reviews



Source: Modified from Moher et al., 2010.

Note. The **asterisk (*)** at the end of search means any group of characters, including no character, for example, retirement, retiree, retiring, etc.

Main results and findings

After refining the results by analyzing articles' titles and main body skim reading of 68 articles, 37 articles remained for further analysis. There have been a lot of different topics explored in the area of identity, work-related identity and work-related identity loss in connection to the retirement. The main topics are presented in the next paragraphs.

Adjustment and transition to retirement

In an aging society, coping with the shift away from a work-related identity and the quality of adjustment to retirement are becoming major issues for individuals and organizations (Froidevaux et al., 2018). Work is one of the central components of a person's identity. Retirement, which is a major change in life, sometimes defined more by loss than a gain (Emerald & Carpenter, 2014) influences the way of how one's identity is established upon entering into the new stage in life (Manor & Holland, 2022). Retirement triggers significant changes in personal and social life as for many people, work is not only a about filling the time and earning money, but is also integral for their identity and meaning in life (Bogaard et al., 2014; Bullock et al., 2020). After retirement, these benefits of work are gone, so it is to be expected that people will try to find replacements for this loss (Bogaard et al., 2014). The transition into retirement has evolved into a prolonged adaptation process, including changes in role (Cahill et al., 2021). Pre-retirement identities aid in navigating this transition, yet they can also

prolong it, leading retirees to confront identity crises before embracing new roles (Bordia et al., 2020). Coping strategies involved reimagining and revaluing aspects of self through adopting new activities and reprioritizing others (Onyura et al., 2015).

Group membership

Social relationships are increasingly recognized as a factor influencing adjustment to retirement. The results showed that joining new groups has important benefits for people's well-being in the face of life changes (e.g., retirement). The findings revealed the importance of social group and identity acquisition in adapting to retirement, in particular the importance of being able to identify oneself as a retiree in the retirement process (Haslam et al., 2018). In addition, Haslam et al. (2019) present the relevance of social identity model of identity change (SIMIC) for the transition to the retirement and show that adjustment to retirement is enhanced when retirees: (1) can access multiple important group memberships and the psychological resources they provide, (2) maintain positive and valued existing groups, and (3) develop meaningful new groups, (4) when these groups are compatible with each other. Nevertheless, results of Teuscher's (2010) study indicated that the profession domain stays important for self-description even after retirement, so that retirement status does not predict the importance of occupational identity at all. On the contrary, according to social identity theory, the importance of occupation for self-description is best predicted by former or current employment status. For example, Williams et al. (2018) research revealed that many individuals crafted a 'modified military self' by engaging with the Royal British Legion, a vital social support network, during the transition to retirement. The importance of access to support in retirement has been also shown in a study of police officers (Bullock et al., 2020) with high work identity and organizational commitment, who valued their social identity as officers and appreciated the opportunities that that being part of a group offered them, as they often felt that their contribution to the organization at retirement was not formalized enough, that the links between officer and organization were suddenly and unnecessarily severed, and that the organization did not do enough to support officers or check on their wellbeing after retirement. Similarly, in another study, the dominant strategy among participants was to preserve and reconstruct parts of their previous identities, as opposed to actively seeking new connections (Miron et al., 2022).

In addition Hetschko et al.'s (2014) study has shown that unemployed people are on average less satisfied with their lives than employed people, but that life satisfaction among the unemployed increases significantly after retirement. On the basis of identity theory, the authors explain that this is due to the social norm that people of working age should be employed, while the social norm does not apply equally to pensioners. Retirement therefore increases the identity utility of the unemployed, as it changes the social norms to which they are expected to adhere. Studies showed, that people with high work identity, found transition and adjustment to retirement particularly challenging. In addition, people who accomplished the most satisfying qualities of life were those who to some degree accomplished the continuity in their activities and relationships prior and after the retirement in terms of family care, voluntary work and friendship networks (Barnes & Parry, 2004).

Working beyond retirement age

Working beyond retirement enables individuals to retain their professional identity alongside their retirement identity, thus smoothing the transition into retirement. Different studies showed, that working beyond the retirement age is strongly connected to the professional identity and occupational commitment. For example,

Manor and Holland (2022) found that doctors have difficulties of letting go their professional identity as the medical profession was, and stayed, central to their overall identity and that participants experience retirement rather than a desirable transition, as a forced event. By working beyond retirement, they preserve their position as doctors, which gives them a feeling of still being needed, and improves their self-image. Prolonging a career allows doctors to see beyond their old age and avoid self-definition as retired persons, thus allowing them to preserve their professional status and hybrid identity. This situation can be challenging when individuals are confronted with the expectation that they will easily shed this identity later in their careers, as institutions strive to integrate new generations (Silver & Williams, 2018). Another important factor for extending the career is control over retirement decision. For example, entrepreneurs are more free to decide when to retire. Morris et al.'s (2020) study showed that if retirement is a voluntary decision over which entrepreneurs have considerable control, this increases their propensity to partially retire at a later age than usual. Moreover, Cahill et al. (2021) studied eleven retired women academics, ranging in age from 64 to 73 and found that three academics, in senior roles, who had long continuous careers and had proven to be successful researchers, felt dissatisfied with compulsory retirement but were able to continue their research activities after retirement. Those with less research activity were more likely to retire early and described the impact of stress and fatigue on their health. Given the above, result show that people with strong work identity are more willing to extend their careers. In all studies, those people were either highly educated or had a strong organizational commitment. An important factor in extending careers is also the ability to control the timing of retirement and the flexible employment possibilities after the retirement age.

Health and well-being

Retirement is one of life's most challenging transitions and can be disruptive, bringing with it potential health problems and poorer wellbeing. There are several studies that have looked at the impact of retirement on people's wellbeing. For example, Newton (2021) examined the link between the identity processes, planned and unplanned retirement, and two types of well-being, hedonic (e.g., life satisfaction) and eudemonic (e.g., meaning of life). Results showed that identity accommodation and balance were related to both types of well-being after retirement, while unplanned retirement was consistently associated only with life satisfaction (Newton, 2021). Another factor that is important for life satisfaction in retirement is having multiple social identities, as study has shown that retirees who have acquired multiple social identities after retirement are more satisfied with their retirement, have better health and higher overall life satisfaction (Adelmann, 1993; Steffens et al., 2016). In addition, the results show value of multiple group membership after retirement as a basis for increased opportunities to provide meaningful support to others which is in line with findings of Haslam et al. (2023) confirming the importance of social factors, and in particular membership in social groups, for the health and well-being of retired people. Similarly, a study by Adelmann (1993) showed that there were no differences in well-being between retired women and homemakers, however women who called themselves both, therefore having multiple role identities, had higher self-esteem and lower depression than single-role women. In addition to age, education, health, and marital status, do-it-yourself and volunteer activities were important in examining which content of tensional roles could explain group differences in well-being (E. Mutran & Reitzes, 1981), suggesting that it is important to take into account individual difference factors when researching older adults' well-being (Newton, 2021). On the other hand, while studying the impact of different background variables and the retirement of

men on their community activities, visiting friends, identity, and well-being Mutran and Reitzes (1981) found that retirement is not directly connected to visiting friends, identity, or well-being, however it indirectly encourage an older identity and discourage well-being through its effect on community activities. It was shown that the lack of community activities is the strongest predictor of an older identity for both working men and retired men and that community activities has the strongest effect on the well-being of both (E. Mutran & Reitzes, 1981). All these studies suggest that staying busy, being active and being part of a group membership are some of the most important factors and the main guiding principles for maintaining good health and general well-being during the transition period and after retirement.

Volunteering

An additional thread of research on adjusting to retirement emerged as the topic of voluntarism. A study of van Ingen and Wilson (2017) on volunteers aged above 50 showed, that the volunteer role is a very important part of who they are and that the retirement is accounted for by the extra time retirees invest in the role, suggesting a compensation strategy for the lost work-related identity. After retirement, people tend to find substitutes for the lost activities and benefits they had while working. Research that focused on the effects of retirement on informal civic activities such as the support given to family and friends as well as on volunteering and organisational involvement showed that retirees seem to start spending more time volunteering after retirement, and increased their organisational memberships (Bogaard et al., 2014). Similarly, Cook (2015) found, that retirees develop a new self and found new meaning through volunteer work during retirement. Studies have therefore suggested that volunteering could be an efficient coping strategy for the lost perks of work-related identity and may bolster participants' role identity and social identity, facilitating a smoother transition to retirement and enable participants to achieve identity continuity.

Retiree identity and Gender differences

Construction of retirement identity can be context driven, varied, and subjective (Silver, 2016). Bordia et al. (2020) examine how pre-retirement role identities influence the transition process, including the nature of the identity work involved in transition and the transition trajectories. Findings provide insights into the strengths and limitations of pre-retirement role identities: they enable agentic coping in which retirees shed old identities and embrace new ones, but they also create inertia and prolong the transition until identity crises force retirees to explore identities and embrace new identities. Retirees' identities are influenced not only by their work activity but also by factors including work history, disability, spouse's retirement, economic status, and family environment, with men tending to align their retiree identity with institutionalized retirement criteria and career success, while women's perceptions are more shaped by diverse life circumstances (Szinovacz & DeViney, 1999). Multiple studies have directly or indirectly addressed differences in genders related to retirement and the adjustment to life after it. Reitzes and Mutran (2006) found that although there were no general gender differences, retirement adjustment and self-esteem were different for men and women, due to some individual identities and social background characteristics. Results of various researches suggest, that in general, man has more difficulties in letting go of their professional role in the retirement transition. For example, Barnes and Parry, (2004b) argue that gender roles and identities are central to this process and that the reflexive use of gender can be placed alongside financial assets and social capital in terms of its importance for achieving a satisfactory transition to retirement. Amongst participants, traditional gendered roles predominated, and

these seemed to create more unease with retirement for men than for women. Compared to women, men find it harder to adjust to retirement, making them more at risk of identity and meaning loss, which may reduce subjective well-being and increase the risk of depression (Kojola & Moen, 2016). The authors add that having a network, a sense of belonging to the social entity, and engaging oneself in something that provides intersubjective value can replace the feelings of meaning that previously existed in work life. Connected to this, Price (2000) identified sacrificing professional identity after retirement, loss of social contacts, loss of professional challenges and encountering stereotypes during retirement as a common challenges faced by interviewed women. Borrero and Kruger (2015) found similar themes regarding the experience of retirement and the meaning of identity for women, including consistency of significant identity components from work to retirement, importance of social connectedness, engagement in continued learning; involvement in aspects of former work roles, and the importance of helping others. Results suggest that women with continuous work history can seemingly enter retirement easily, but find it difficult to adjust to the loss of their professional role (Price, 2000).

Self-esteem

Reitzes and Mutran have extensively studied the connection between self-esteem and retirement. In their initial study on self-esteem Reitzes et al. (1996a) tracked older workers for two years, examining the social and psychological impacts of retirement. They divided participants into retirees and continuing workers, comparing their self-esteem and depression scores over this period. While self-esteem remained unchanged for both groups, retirees experienced a decrease in depression scores. Additionally, the study revealed that previous worker identity meanings had a more pronounced negative impact on depression scores among those who continued to work compared to retirees (Reitzes et al., 1996a). From the same dataset, another study (Reitzes et al., 1996b) examined whether investments in worker and spouse roles before retirement affect post-retirement self-esteem. Findings indicate that self-esteem remains stable during the retirement transition. Moreover, commitment to the worker role and worker identity meanings positively influence post-retirement self-esteem, possibly indirectly through preretirement self-esteem. Additionally, commitment to the spouse role is associated with higher self-esteem in retirement, and preretirement self-esteem continues to have a positive impact on post-retirement self-esteem. Thus, the findings suggest that preretirement self and identity factors continue to influence postretirement self-esteem (Reitzes et al., 1996b), with the latest study on self-esteem showed that lingering preretirement worker identity and emerging retirement adjustment influenced self-esteem two years into retirement (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006). End-of-career experiences have an impact on the situation of young retirees, meaning that the more individuals incorporated the characteristics of ageing workers, the more they felt personally disadvantaged by incomparable comparisons with young colleagues, which also had a negative impact on self-esteem and life satisfaction (Tougas et al., 2004). In addition, a study among academic physicians by Onyura et al. (2015) showed that self-esteem concerns are one of the main themes related to late-career transitions and retirement decisions.

Attitudes towards retirement

A longitudinal study of Mutran et al. (1997) followed older workers for two years to explore their attitudes toward retirement and found that the expectations about pensions, retirement planning, earlier retirement attitudes, and identity as a confident worker increased, while the depression decreased attitudes toward retirement for

retirees. For those who opted to continue working beyond retirement age, retirement planning, earlier retirement attitudes, and higher self-esteem improved attitudes toward retirement. A subsequent study of Reitzes and Mutran (2004) also showed that pre-retirement self-esteem, friend identity meanings, and pension eligibility contributed to higher positive attitudes towards retirement six months, one year, and two years after retirement. Moreover, retirement planning and voluntary retirement promoted positive attitudes towards retirement mainly in the earlier stages of retirement, but had less impact in the later stages of the first two years, while poor health correlated with reduced positive attitudes towards retirement, especially in the later stages of the first two years after retirement. Another interesting group of studies of Jolles et al. (2022) looked at how individuals view retirement and how they expect their identity to change as a result. Studies 1 and 2 have shown that when people with low organizational commitment think about what they will lose when they retire, those with more group memberships anticipate changes to their identity in retirement more positively than those with fewer group memberships, but Study 3 showed that in general identity changes after retirement were less positive than those expected by older workers.

Another study connected to identity-related struggles, showed that concerns about self-esteem, continuity of practice, and competence, as well as feelings of loss of meaning and belonging, influenced retirement decisions (Onyura et al., 2015). Participants reported insufficient organizational and system support which suggests that recognizing and understanding these challenges and their implications might be of help for both individuals and institutions to better manage late-career and retirement transitions (Onyura et al., 2015). Driver (2019) analyzed 49 stories about retirement aspirations that revealed the complexity and diversity of individuals' views on retirement. Participants expressed a range of meanings associated with retirement, including the reduction of pension benefits, fear of physical decline, hope for active retirement and the desire to maintain social status, highlighting the conflicts and contradictions inherent in contemporary retirement narratives. Stories highlighted the struggles, contradictions and fantasies that individuals faced in relation to retirement, which influenced their identity formation and self-exploration. Overall, the findings highlighted the nuanced and multifaceted nature of retirement aspirations and their impact on individuals' current identities and future trajectories (Driver, 2019). Therefore, the identity changes individuals will face in retirement may not be as positive as they expect, but having more group memberships is associated with both older workers' expectations and retirees' experiences of more positive changes (Jolles et al., 2022).

Discussion and conclusion

Although there have been a number of reviews of the literature on retirement (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2019; Wang & Shultz, 2010) and identity in connection to work (Miscenko & Day, 2016) in recent years, less attention has been paid to the issue of the identity loss in the context of retirement, neglecting some broad and important issues. In addition, a large number of empirical papers have been published since these review articles were written, as the aging workforce and its challenges have recently received a great deal of attention. In this article, we present a systematic review on the topic of work-related identity loss due to retirement and identify the eight main themes that emerge from the analyzed articles: (1) Adjustment and transition to retirement, (2) group membership, (3) work beyond retirement age, (4) health and well-being, (5) volunteering, (6) retiree identity and gender differences, (7) self-esteem, and (8) attitudes towards retirement. In majority of papers, different topics were investigated as some of them are closely related or overlapping (e.g., adjustment and transition

with self-esteem, gender differences and group membership. The different themes explored in the studies show that the transition to retirement is a complex, multifaceted process that affects individuals in different ways, and is particularly challenging for those with a strong working identity. Moreover, the results show that the field of work-related identity loss is still under-researched and that previous studies have produced mixed results, suggesting the need for further research on ageing populations and the large number of people approaching retirement, it is important to understand the challenges faced by individuals approaching retirement or already retired, as the potential health problems brought about by these changes are not only the domain of the individual, but also have an impact on society and place an additional burden on the health system.

There are also some limitations in this study. First limitation of this review is the use of only one database. Only the Web of Science SSCI database was used to search for scientific articles, which means that some eligible research may be excluded. Therefore, for the future studies, use of multiple databases is recommended, such as, Scopus, Science direct, Google Scholar, and so on. Second limitation is an overly broad inclusion and exclusion criteria for scientific articles in the final analysis are too broad and could be tightened in future research to focus exclusively on the loss of work-related identity due to retirement. Third, the previous review highlights a number of important areas, such as working beyond retirement age, gender differences, health and well-being, attitudes towards retirement, volunteering, self-esteem in relation to identity and retirement, where future research can extend the application. Multiple researches have been done on identity loss after retirement, however, how identity is changing in the last years of employment has been relatively less explored and could be of a potential interest for the future studies. Likewise, more attention could be paid to the specific identity closely connected to the retirement; work-related identity. Furthermore, this review could be expanded by comparison and synthesis of methods used in the reviewed studies, for example, use of quantitative, and qualitative methods and longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. In addition, comparison of used theories could also be further investigated, such as, identity theory, social identity theory, role identity theory, continuance theory and so on. Also, a comparison between pre- and post- retirement empirical researches could be done. Lastly, comparison of moderators and mediators used in the relationship of identity loss and retirement could be further explored.

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