

# Older workers and post-retirement employment: A proposed decent work agenda

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## Abstract

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8) emphasizes decent work and the need to generate employment for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and low-income rural and urban residents. Though extended retirement age policies to sustain workforce productivity are promulgated across OECD states, within SDG8 there is no evident focus on older citizens' need for decent work. We believe this goal lacks detail in addressing the specific needs of older and post-retirement workers and their equal vulnerability to inadequate decent work conditions, economic strain, and diminished well-being. We expand on this issue with particular focus on this older cohort's predictors and attainment of decent work and proffer the psychology of working theory as a foundation to redress the inadequacy of SDG8 and formulate recommendations for policy and research to recognize the needs of older and post-retirement workers. This approach is aligned with the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development framework in a life-long perspective.

## Keywords

Decent work, meaningful work, post-retirement, psychology of work, sustainable development goals

As the world's population ages, so does the workforce. Across all industry sectors, productivity is impacted by shortages in skilled labour and employee retention (ILO, 2024; Mazzeo Ortolani et al., 2024). In recent years, significant global economic, technological, and demographic changes have led to new approaches in workforce development, recruitment, and skill retention. In an attempt to stabilize workforce productivity and prolong working lives, many OECD countries have extended retirement age policies and introduced incentives for employers to better engage with older workers (Sánchez Martínez et al., 2023) and re-engage with those in retirement (ILO, 2024; OECD, 2020). With policies such as these seeking to halt workforce disruptions it is important to ensure that engagement of this older cohort of workers is only for those seeking or needing to do so (Luke et al., 2016; Luke & Neault, 2020) Also, it is crucial that prolonging working lives is not detrimental to the well-being of older workers, particularly in the case of precarious low-quality work (Taylor, 2019).

Due to changes in the labour market affecting productivity, there has been a widespread increase in informal work

arrangements across all age groups, including temporary, contract, freelance, and seasonal employment (OECD, 2024). Concerns about this trend include the potential for increases in precarious low-quality working conditions, such as low wages, lack of labour protections, job instability, and overall socioeconomic vulnerability. In contrast to precarious work, *decent work* is employment that encompasses fair income, safe working conditions, social protection, opportunity for personal development, social inclusion, a pathway to sustainable economic growth and decline in poverty (Boulin et al., 2006; ILO, 2024). Decent work is crucial for sustainable and equitable employment across all career transitions in a person's life (Blustein, 2013).

The notion *meaningful work* is aligned with decent work because it is a source of personal fulfilment and sense of purpose (Blustein, Lysova, et al., 2023). Meaningful work is a topic of ongoing empirical research (Allan et al., 2019). Allan et al.'s meta-analytic structural equation modelling found meaningful work positively correlated with work engagement ( $r = .74$ ), commitment ( $r = .75$ ), job satisfaction ( $r = .74$ ), life satisfaction ( $r = .47$ ) and meaning ( $r = .53$ ), and general health ( $r = .44$ ), and, conversely, negatively with

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intent to withdraw from work ( $r = -.49$ ) and negative affect ( $r = -.19$ ). Meaningful work has been found to enhance motivation, job satisfaction, life enrichment, and general well-being (Allan et al., 2016), leading to higher productivity and the promotion of better organizational outcomes (Fasbender et al., 2016; Geldenhuys et al., 2014). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that attaining meaningful work by those in underemployment positions due to socioeconomic constraints and barriers can still lead to poor well-being and decent work (Allan et al., 2020). Whilst there is some evidence of the positive effects of meaningful post-retirement work (Fasbender et al., 2016; McIlveen & Luke, 2023) there is a need to better theorize and investigate meaningful work among older workers.

Nearly 60% of the world's employed population spend a considerable amount of their working lives in a precarious low-paying, informal economy (OECD, 2024), with a significant portion of this percentage comprising retirement age workers. Youth unemployment or underemployment within precarious work is understandably a workforce policy priority and research focus (Apunyo et al., 2022) as growing precariousness impacts stable entry level employment opportunities and training. However, these OECD statistics also highlight the need for greater focus on precarious work among older workers seeking post-retirement employment due to various socioeconomic needs (OECD, 2019). For each post-retirement age person that decides to continue or re-engage in part- or full-time employment, this significant career and life transition requires the maintenance of decent and meaningful work conditions (Bisom-Rapp et al., 2011; Froidevaux & Hirschi, 2015; McIlveen & Luke, 2023).

In regard to aging workforce concerns, it is equally important to increase advocacy of older workers within the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023), with a particular focus on the goal for decent work (SDG8). The overall purpose of the SDGs is to provide a universal call for action to end poverty by 2030 in conjunction with improving health and education, reducing inequality, tackling climate change, and strengthening economic growth. With 17 goals and 169 targets overall, the SDG framework primarily connects the older population to the SDGs focused on ending poverty (SDG1), good health and well-being (SDG3), inclusive and safe human settlements (SDG11), and reduced inequality (SDG10). These inclusions are similarly reflected in the UN's current Decade of Healthy Ageing initiative (Thiyagarajan et al., 2022). It is heartening to see these inclusions for older persons; however, we note that these inclusions are viewing older members of society as recipients of care rather than active workers seeking decent work.

SDG8 is focused on inclusive and sustainable economic growth via full and productive employment and decent work for all. SDG8 specifically includes vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and low-income rural and urban residents, but older workers are not

included. There are jurisdictional differences on statutory retirement age; however, there is no commonly agreed or defined age range for the term "older worker" (Zacher & Rudolph, 2023), which further complicates how to inclusively address their need for decent work. Though extended retirement age policies are occurring across OECD countries (ILO, 2024; OECD, 2023a), there is no clear focus on older citizens within this decent work SDG. We believe SDG8 inadequately addresses older and post-retirement workers, their socio-economic vulnerability, and inadequate access to decent work according to their needs.

It has been noted that empirical research on SDG8 remains limited (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2023); therefore, we seek to redress the inequity of excluding older workers from SDG8 by articulating the potential utility of a psychology of working perspective (Blustein, 2006; Duffy et al., 2016). Drawing on the psychology of working, empirical research, and socioeconomic grey literature, we will address the older worker and post-retirement worker gap in the UN's SDG8. From this perspective, we will offer policy recommendations related to SDG8 and suggested vocational psychology practices that encourage continued workforce participation after retirement for individuals seeking employment. Our recommendations will support age-inclusive employment that upholds decent work principles of dignity, fairness, equity, and a sense of personal meaning.

Our approach aligns with the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development framework (Di Fabio, 2017a, 2017b; Di Fabio & Cooper, 2023; Di Fabio & Peiró, 2018, 2023; Di Fabio & Rosen, 2018, 2020; Rosen & Di Fabio, 2023) in a lifelong perspective. The Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development is a discipline of theory, research, and practice akin to the transdisciplinary *sustainability science* (Komiya & Takeuchi, 2006; Rosen, 2009, 2017; Takeuchi et al., 2017) that addresses issues pertaining to the United Nations SDGs. The Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development enhances the trans-disciplinary framework of sustainability science in relation to psychological matters, such as decent work (Duffy et al., 2016), decent lives (Di Fabio et al., 2023; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016), and the construction of healthy lives (Kenny & Di Fabio, 2023), and in terms of healthy work as per the position of the American Public Health Association (Pratap et al., 2022).

### Psychology of working theory for post-retirement

We refer to the psychology of working framework (PWF; Blustein, 2006, 2013) when considering the work lives of all individuals, including those of post-retirement age. In response to the ILO's decent work agenda being macro-level, Blustein (2013) posited the PWF to provide a vocational psychology perspective on workers' individual decent work needs. The PWF views the securing of decent work

as an outcome based on contextual, economic, and psychological factors. The liberty to choose one's work to ensure security and meaning will fulfil the basic needs of survival, relatedness, and self-determination. The loss of control felt by workers in today's labour market can undermine self-determination, and this misalignment between a person and their work environment can lead to job dissatisfaction.

The psychology of working theory (PWT) was developed by Duffy et al. (2016) to empirically represent tenets of the PWF. PWT was developed in response to the need for both individual and policy-level understanding of the contextual factors that promote access to decent work for any particular cohort or individual (Autin & Duffy, 2019). The PWT is a model for understanding distal (viz. economic constraints and marginalization) and proximal (viz. work volition and career adaptability) predictors of decent work, and moderators of those predictors' effects (viz. proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and economic conditions). Furthermore, PWT posits decent work as a predictor of outcomes including fulfilment of needs of survival, social connection, and self-determination, which, in turn, predict work fulfilment and well-being.

### Decent work

PWT research has amassed a substantial body of empirical evidence, more than 100 quantitative studies (Duffy et al., 2024), testing hypothesized effects of predictors (Duffy et al., 2020) and outcomes of decent work (Blustein, Allan, et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2019). Crucially, PWT research has demonstrated links between decent work and both (Duffy et al., 2019) mental health (Blustein, Allan, et al., 2023) and physical health (Duffy et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is evidence that satisfaction of self-determination needs (i.e., *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence*) predicts meaningful work (Autin et al., 2022), which may be construed as a form of work fulfilment.

Nonetheless, there is an empirical literature gap in exploring decent work via the PWT for older individuals who are either engaged in or plan to re-engage with work. Duffy et al.'s (2021) finding that fatigue is an important mediator between decent work and health is salient for older individuals. It is axiomatic that an aged worker is more likely to experience fatigue than a worker several decades younger, particularly in physical labouring jobs. However, the bulk of PWT research is limited by age range. Duffy et al.'s (2020) study into predictors of decent work used a sample with a mean age of 44.31 years ( $SD = 14.36$ ). Furthermore, Duffy et al.'s (2019) study which found links between decent work and outcomes of physical and mental health did not include a sufficient sample of older workers ( $M = 44.40$ ;  $SD = 13.57$ ). Likewise, Blustein, Allan, et al.'s (2023) study which found links between decent work and outcomes of mental health had a limited age range of participants ( $M = 36.05$ ;  $SD = 10.75$ ). Whilst Kim et al. (2018) specifically targeted a mid-life sample, it too was restricted in average age ( $M = 49.58$ ;  $SD = 9.34$ ). Highlighting the

relatively younger average age of these studies' samples is not a criticism of the studies' designs; they were not specifically targeting older workers and retirees. The restricted age range of the samples is, however, an evident limitation about what is known about the effects of decent work on older workers.

### Predictors

There is ample evidence pertaining to older workers' experiences of the distal predictors of decent work, marginalization and economic constraints (Bisom-Rapp et al., 2011; Caines et al., 2020; Taylor, 2019); however, there is little research into its two proximal predictors, work volition and career adaptability in older individuals.

Work volition refers to the perceived ability of an individual to make employment decisions while experiencing constraints (Duffy et al., 2016). Whilst volition has been identified as important to preparation for and adjustment to retirement (Hirschi & Pang, 2020), there is scant research evidence pertaining to work volition in post-retirement workers. Cheung et al. (2016) found associations between measures of perceived age discrimination and cognitive constraint (planning and organization) and the Work Volition Scale (Duffy et al., 2012).

Career adaptability—operationalized by the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)—measured in older workers has been subject to relatively more research. Indeed, relatively recent meta-analytic research (Stead et al., 2022) suggests that age may be a moderator of career adaptability; however, the mean ages of studies used for that meta-analysis was limited to approximately 18 to 24 years. Zacher and Griffin (2015) found that age moderated the relation between workers career adaptability and job satisfaction, with older workers expressing lower levels of satisfaction. Ramos and Lopez (2018) found evidence of career adaptability's mediation effects between attachment and life satisfaction in a sample of young adults transitioning into the workforce and older workers transitioning out of the workforce; however, that research did not find evidence of a moderation effect based on age. Lim et al. (2019) found that older workers' career adaptability predicted their seeking career support and job search. A benefit of the Lim et al. research is that by design it targeted a sample of older workers including more than 60% over the age of 55 years. Takao and Ishiyama (2021) found that career adaptability (concern and curiosity) was associated with life satisfaction in workers separated into four age-groups; however, there was relatively little difference between in the strength of the beta coefficients in each age-group ( $\beta = .206$  to  $.266$ ).

Further complicating the position of career adaptability within the PWT is Duffy et al. (2024) recommendation that the most popular measure of the construct, the CAAS (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), does not sufficiently align with PWT's precepts. Duffy et al. recommended using the positively worded items from the Career Adaptability subscale of the Career Futures Inventory

(Rottinghaus et al., 2005) instead of the CAAS. Nevertheless, there is scant evidence of the CFI's Career Adaptability subscale's use in research targeting older workers.

In summary, there is minimal evidence pertaining to work volition but tentative evidence of career adaptability's relevance to older individuals' job and life satisfaction and career management behaviours. Thus, there is a need to better understand more precisely their effects as purported proximal predictor of decent work among older workers.

### Moderators

PWT posits *proactive personality* as moderator of the relations among the distal and proximal predictors and decent work. Zacher (2013) found that proactive personality positively affected older workers' engagement in job search behaviours, more so than younger workers. Nevertheless, a PWT study found that proactive personality did not act as a moderator of proximal and distal predictors' effects on decent work in a diverse sample; and it was a sample which at least included a small number of older participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.17$ ,  $SD = 8.70$ , range = 18–64; Douglass et al., 2020).

The construct *critical consciousness* has garnered considerable theoretical and empirical research particularly regarding matters of marginalization pertaining to gender, youth, race, immigration, and social class (Cadenas & McWhirter, 2022) and its measurement (Diemer et al., 2022). Yet, despite older workers' experiences of marginalization and economic constraints (Bisom-Rapp et al., 2011; Caines et al., 2020; Taylor, 2019), in the literature of vocational psychology and career development there is little attention paid to critical consciousness and older people.

In conclusion, despite PWT's empirical shortcomings apropos older workers, it nonetheless proffers testable hypothesized pathways to examine the intersection of decent work predictors and the need satisfaction of older workers and their overall sense of work fulfilment and well-being. We seek to address contextual influences, motivations, volition, barriers, and adaptability of this cohort in securing decent work.

### Older and post-retirement workers and SDG8 for decent work

Sustainable Development Goal 8 emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusive, productive, and sustainable economic growth while ensuring decent work opportunities for all, particularly in developing regions (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). With a focus on reducing unemployment, this goal also includes targets addressing gender inequality, strengthening the rate of youth employment and education, the role of the informal sector including entrepreneurship, enhancing access to financial services, and

encouraging environmental and cultural sustainability in work that is decent and meaningful.

With a strong focus on marginalized groups, targets 8.5 and 8.8 provide broad statements respectively on decent work and protection from precarious employment for all workers. Direct mention of young people, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and women are evident within these targets and throughout SDG8. However, due to policy interest in prolonging working lives (ILO, 2024; OECD, 2023a; Sánchez Martínez et al., 2023), we believe it important to also directly include older workers (i.e., pre- and post-retirement) who have motivation and volition to stay engaged or re-engage with employment. This older cohort seek and are entitled to decent work as they face economic constraints such as age discrimination, health issues, and financial concerns (OECD, 2019).

Within SDG8, the provision of financial security for all is covered by targets that highlight pay equality (8.5), eradication of forced labour (8.7), protection of labour rights (8.8), and access to essential financial services (8.10). Providing financial stability is essential in securing housing for any worker facing economic hardship due to precarious work conditions (Frota, 2008). In reference to the PWT's economic constraint and marginalization predictors of decent work (Duffy et al., 2016), we highlight insecure housing and homelessness as it is an increasing concern for older citizens (Grenier et al., 2016) and older women in particular (United Nation's Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). The European Union (Baptista & Marlier, 2019) reported an increase in older homelessness across several member countries, with unemployment or limited income as the leading factor.

In Australia, older women are a leading demographic facing economic and housing insecurity due to factors such as lower wages, unpaid caregiving, and lack of access to retirement savings (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2021). Similar international findings have been reported in empirical literature focused on global aging within homeless populations (Canham et al., 2022; Crane & Joly, 2014) and limited housing for older women experiencing precarious work (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). Without stable finances and housing, people including those in post-retirement face significant barriers to attaining decent work outcomes without sacrificing their basic needs of survival, relatedness, and self-determination. It is also of note that the issue of homelessness is absent from any explicit mention across all seventeen SDGs (Casey & Stazen, 2021).

In line with economic security is target 8.8 and its focus on the provision of safe and secure workplaces for all workers, with migrant workers and women explicitly stated. Again, this is where the particular needs of older workers must be directly mentioned. This decent work target is crucial for all workers as it ensures physical and mental well-being within the workplace (Blustein, Allan, et al., 2023). With unique challenges such as physical limitations or reduced health, the provision of safe

work environments for older workers would assist in reducing these risks and also be an encouragement in the retainment of this age group and their expertise (Bentley et al., 2023) across all industry sectors.

An industry sector assigned its own SDG8 target is tourism. A focus on sustainable tourism is included within SDG8 due to this industry sector representing up to 20 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of many countries (United Nations, 2020), and its prevalence for precarious work and inequality (Robinson et al., 2019). Precarious work within local tourism can also lead to precarious housing for local residents and workers of all ages (Valente et al., 2023). This precarity extends across direct tourism-based jobs as well as connected sectors such as transportation, hospitality, and cultural heritage. Decent work within tourism can be associated within target 8.3 and its promotion of policy to support entrepreneurship, creativity, and entrepreneurial initiatives within micro- and small-size enterprises; but it is target 8.9 that directly addresses the sustainability needs of tourism as well as the importance of supporting local economies through cultural products and services.

Cultural heritage preservation is a main tourism drive often involving local communities utilizing the knowledge of older historians and artisans. Providing decent work for these older workers is particularly important, as it provides financial security and meaningful work in generatively sharing their knowledge and expertise. For instance, older Italian artisans and historians are providing traditional knowledge to younger generations responsible for preserving Venice's architectural future (Squassina, 2022). Additionally, localized Portuguese tourism has initiated creative residencies for their older artisans to ensure decent work that covers financial needs as well as social inclusion and respect from both their community and visitors (Akdemir et al., 2023). In the creation of jobs within this area of tourism, SDG 8 supports both cultural preservation and economic development for all ages, including post-retirement workers with knowledge to share

Similar to tourism, the OECD (2023b) also recognizes the importance of encouraging older local artisanal and heritage craft workers contribute to rural economic development and agricultural manufacturing. Within this same OECD publication are examples of rising interest in post-retirement entrepreneurship for older workers delivering industry skills training and utilizing professional networks. Target 8.3 focuses on the promotion of business innovation and decent job creation via smaller size enterprises and entrepreneurship. Older entrepreneurs often have expanded future time perspectives (Caines et al., 2019) and achieve decent and meaningful work via financial independence, having opportunity to transfer skills to others, and fulfil personal basic needs (Zhu et al., 2022).

Target 8.5 aims to achieve full and productive employment for all, underscoring the need for continuous skill enhancement to secure decent work. Although SDG 8 does not explicitly mention lifelong learning for older workers, targets such as this highlight a need to strengthen

productivity via skill development and continuous education for all age groups. Employment, education, and training are a focus of target 8.6 in the development of skills for youth. As young workers enter or transition into an uncertain world of work, they must learn to actively manage their career and life balance, and maintain their employability through lifelong learning and adaptability (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2018; Kenny et al., 2023). We highlight that lifelong learning is also of importance to post-retirement workers transitioning back into work and the need to provide opportunity and encouragement for this older cohort to embrace new skills such as in technology (OECD, 2020). Additionally, mentoring youth during training and employment placements is a common intervention (Apunyo et al., 2022) across industry sectors including agriculture and other rural industries (OECD, 2023b), and one that post-retirement age workers could be of assistance.

Within SDG8's target 8.5 is the statement of "equal pay for work of equal value". This highlights the importance of financial compensation, inclusion and dignity within the concept of decent work for all workers. As per the PWT (Duffy et al., 2024), the achievement of decent work is integral to the need satisfaction and overall sense of work fulfilment and well-being of older workers. By directly addressing older and post-retirement workers in SDG 8, the goal would acknowledge an age cohort being sought after by a workforce needing their valuable contributions.

## Implications and recommendations for policy and practice

Leaving no one behind is the shared human rights promise and purpose of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and its member nations. Since the inception of the SDG Agenda in 2015, overall global labour productivity has risen and unemployment has declined, however a large proportion of these jobs across all member nations is precarious (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023).

OECD countries are extending retirement age policies in an attempt to sustain workforce productivity (ILO, 2024; OECD, 2023a), however as we have highlighted, there is no direct mention or focus on older workers within SDG8 targets. Explicit mention of this older cohort within SDG8 needs to be made so as to ensure the attention of governments and employers as they develop SDG based decent work policies and initiatives. In acknowledging the older workforce and their value, it is also important that policymakers understand their diversity when encouraging and not enforcing prolonged work engagement (Luke et al., 2016; Taylor, 2019).

To encourage older and post-retirement workers to stay engaged or re-engage in work, it is important that the needs of this demographic are considered before any intervention or policy is developed. As with any age cohort, older workers are a diverse demographic not a

homogenous one (Caines et al., 2019; Zacher et al., 2019), with varying combinations of skills, experience, economic and social constraints; as well as differing levels of work volition and career adaptability. Furthermore, the age range of an older worker is not uniformly agreed (Zacher & Rudolph, 2023) which has an impact on the precision of policy and research. All of this impacts on the motivation of older workers to stay engaged (or re-engage) in employment and in how they perceive decent and meaningful work (Fasbender et al., 2016; Froidevaux & Hirschi, 2015; Luke et al., 2016; Sewdas et al., 2017).

In a call to governments and businesses, the UN asks for integration of relevant SDG targets into economic and social policies that support innovation, collaborative strategies, and a global purpose (Podrecca et al., 2022). It is imperative that policymakers, employers, and career related service providers stay reminded of this older cohort's diversity when considering decent work-related policy, workforce planning, and career development interventions. In doing so will ensure workers retain a personal sense of control, confidence, capacity, and purpose (Fasbender et al., 2016; Luke et al., 2016; Neault & Pickerell, 2011). Additionally, in adhering to decent work tenets of both the PWT and SDG8 targets, older workers would have opportunity to decide on their level of workforce participation in relation to their physical capabilities and general well-being needs.

Though meaningful work has been considered as an outcome of self-determination (Duffy et al., 2016), it is not always accessible to the whole of society, due to social or economic barriers limiting freedom to find work that meets intrinsic needs (Blustein, 2013). Older and post-retirement age workers are one cohort that face such barriers due to factors such as age discrimination, economic and social constraints, and the need for skill-building in emerging technologies (Autin et al., 2020). Encouraging further direct mention and integration of this older cohort within the SDG8 targets would provide them a stronger sense of contribution to the overall social and economic welfare of the workforce and community (Blustein, 2019), as well as assist in the progression of SDG8 targets.

### Future research recommendations

PWT is appropriate for formulating hypotheses about older workers' access to and engagement in decent work. Whilst PWT research targeting older workers is limited it is, nonetheless, a veritable structural model of distal and proximal predictors of decent work, moderators of their effects, and purported outcomes of decent work. There are at least three interlinked strategies to enhance PWT's utility for older workers: measurement and sampling.

Psychometric measures of career development constructs designed and tested on younger samples but relevant to older workers (e.g., career adaptability, decent work, basic psychological needs fulfilment, job

satisfaction) should be the focus of research to collect datasets and conduct data analysis (e.g., invariance testing) to assure their validity and reliability. Additional research is required to determine these measures' statistical relations with other measures relevant to older people (e.g., cognitive functioning, pain, mobility). Also, there are measures specifically designed for retirement-related assessments (e.g., Leung & Earl, 2012; Maggiori et al., 2014) which could be integrated into PWT research. Rather than proliferating new measures, research should emanate from extant measurement models and their respective theories (cf. Brown, 2015). These extant measures and theories should be revised or retired prior to investing in research to invent something new that may or may not have any greater theoretical capacity for generating alternative perspectives, better explaining phenomena, and formulating hypotheses. Beyond survey research, qualitative "experience-near research" (cf. Blustein, 2006) studies may efficiently gather data to explore older workers' lived experiences of decent work, and its predictors, moderators, and outcomes.

Concomitant with improving methods of measurement to test PWT hypotheses, is research that includes a wider range of ages within datasets to better represent older workers (cf. Zacher & Rudolph, 2023). If the inclusion of older participants in PWT research studies does not vitiate their research questions or invalidate their research methods, then there may be opportunities to collect data which includes age as part of the hypotheses' formulations rather than treating it merely as a control variable. Of course, practical limitations on resources may preclude wider sampling (e.g., survey recruitment costs).

The scientific and professional disciplines vocational psychology, organizational psychology, and career development have much to offer to older workers, their employers, retirees, and society more broadly. These fields can and should contribute to practices and policies that improve older workers' and retirees' engagement in work, as needed or desired, and engagement in the relational benefits of being a valued member of the workforce. That potential contribution could be enhanced by interdisciplinary research and practice with fields that have a specific focus on the needs of older people (e.g., gerontology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, rehabilitation). These fields have much to offer career development and psychology practitioners and researchers whose education and training has not included sufficient focus on older people. Interdisciplinarity could be facilitated through joint seminars and conferences, shared coursework within university degrees, and collaborative research projects in which truly biopsychosocial approach is progressed.

### Conclusion

As OECD countries focus on workforce sustainability policies that extend working lives, the UN's decent work Sustainable Development Goal (SDG8) does not

explicitly mention older workers as a vulnerable group. With global workforce aging, SDG8 lacks detail in addressing the specific needs of older and post-retirement workers and their equal vulnerability to inadequate decent work conditions, economic strain, and diminished well-being. Policy and research must recognize the needs, values, and diversity of older and post-retirement workers to ensure understanding of how to encourage their self-determined engagement in the workforce according to their needs, rather than inequitably enforce their prolonged presence in the workforce. We assert that the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016, 2024) can be used to redress the inadequacy of SDG8. This is also in line with the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development framework in a lifelong perspective that suggests a specific attention for vulnerable works, including older workers (Di Fabio & Svicher, 2021; Svicher & Di Fabio, 2021), as well as reorganizing career interventions (Di Fabio & Svicher, 2022) with innovative career counselling throughout the life span (Maree, 2024) for a career development inspired by sustainability issues (Guichard, 2022).

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