

# We are IntechOpen, the world's leading publisher of Open Access books Built by scientists, for scientists

6,900

Open access books available

185,000

International authors and editors

200M

Downloads

Our authors are among the

154

Countries delivered to

TOP 1%

most cited scientists

12.2%

Contributors from top 500 universities



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index  
in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?  
Contact [book.department@intechopen.com](mailto:book.department@intechopen.com)

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.  
For more information visit [www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com)



# Called to Plan: Changing Patterns and Perceptions of Retirement for Australian and New Zealand Faith-Based Ministers

*Bernadene Erasmus and Peter John Morey*

## Abstract

The rising tide of aging citizens globally suggests a compelling argument for increasing understanding of factors impacting retirement. Factors such as health and finance have been identified as principal, but these results generally apply to homogenous groups with little reference to the impact of culture and tradition. This study adopted an ex post-facto, cross-sectional, self-reporting survey from working faith-based ministers in Australia and New Zealand to ascertain personal and professional factors affecting retirement perception in specific context including results for age-related differences. Results from four areas of foci show participants generally regarded retirement as a positive season. They were, however, less confident about their preparedness and mostly dissatisfied with the level of planning for retirement. Significant differences were noted in age-related groups with health and financial considerations constituting the primary differences. Increased understanding of changing patterns and perceptions for specific groups including age differences, potentially aids the response of state and society to the ageing phenomenon.

**Keywords:** retirement, culture, faith-based, planning, well-being

## 1. Introduction

The global rise in the aging population means that older individuals account for increasing numbers in society. Coupled with the challenge of providing social services for an aging population with an increased life expectancy, comes the equally significant impact of aging citizens who historically now face more years in retirement than earlier generations [1]. Statistics from the Australian Bureau of Standards [2] indicate that of 9.4 million people who had registered employment in the age group 45 years and more, approximately 3.6 million individuals (38%) were retired. The average age for recent retirees in Australia is 61.4 years [2]. The importance of enhancing the wellbeing of such a significant portion of the population becomes a necessary consideration for society in general.

These considerations advance a forceful argument for identifying factors which will lessen the burden of an aging demographic on social services and potentially improve the wellbeing of people in the retirement phase of their lives. In order to do so, it is important to guard against a perception of retirees as a homogenous group.

This has potential to construct stereo-typical profiles which may be useful for statistical purposes but limit the formation of a multi-focal lens essential for increased insight into a complex phenomenon.

To demonstrate the value of inquiry into specific groups with distinctive characteristics of culture and tradition, a sample of working faith-based ministers in Australia and New Zealand was surveyed to gauge their perception of retirement. By studying this sample, we were able to include lesser researched factors such as spirituality and the influence of a call to ministry. In addition, this sample ascribes to a culture of holistic well-being which regards fostering physical and mental health as part of their faith-based culture. Lifestyle programs such as the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP), are widely embraced and have demonstrated significant success in addressing age-related conditions. Results have been published in several international medical journals.

Traditionally, faith-based ministers did little or no planning for retirement and generally retired with no real estate. We were interested to know how these factors impacted on the way contemporary ministers viewed retirement. Consequently, this chapter will explore factors that influence the perception of the retirement season of faith-based ministers in a specific context in the hope it will spark conversation about other related contexts.

The discussion will start with a brief reference to theories on aging and the need for extending inquiry to address the lesser researched phenomenon of spirituality and its impact on retirement planning in order to increase insight into retirement patterns. This will be followed by a section on the methodology employed and an outline of the survey instrument. Results from the data analysis will then be considered with reference to demographics and an outline of the personal and professional factors which impact the retirement perceptions of this sample. We will find out just how prepared these individuals think they are for retirement; whether they view the prospect as positive; how satisfied they are with their planning and when they are thinking about retiring. The results will be collated and differences between younger and older cohorts highlighted. In the discussion section, there will be a focus on the significance of the findings of this study, its limitations and concluding remarks. The results of this study are delivered within the context of a definition of retirement which breaks with some traditional concepts of retirement as an end of career phase. The orientation of the study regards aging as a positive experience and offers valuable insights into contemporary retirement perception as a season of continued active contribution and growth.

## **2. Considerations from the literature**

As society begins to grapple with the burgeoning impact of aged citizens on many levels of contemporary living, research into aging and retirement grows across a wide spectrum of issues relating to the phenomenon. In fact, aging has been attributed to a growing impetus on the development of social gerontology [3]. Representations of aging are discussed in academic literature through the lens of various gerontological theories. Early theories include Erikson [4], the Disengagement Theory of Cumming and Henry [5], and subsequent theories such as the Activity Theory [6], Successful Aging [7], Schroots [8] and Atchley's Continuity Theory [9]. Some criticism of theories such as those relating to Rowe and Kahn's Successful Aging, question the lack of consideration given to aspects including historical and cultural context and social relationships. The current study is situated within a distinctive historical and cultural context with the aim of identifying factors relating to cohorts within a specific group with strong cultural and traditional values.

Previous studies have identified a diverse range of factors impacting on retirement timing [10]. Trends in relation to retirement in the literature are discussed by authors like Cahill et al. [11] who forecast an increase in bridge-jobs. For this purpose, issues generally identified in research as impacting on retirement, such as finance and health, will be incorporated but variables specific to context such as spirituality will also be included.

The current study adopts an orientation in which retirement is regarded as a continued phase of career and personal development. Although the value of traditional gerontological theories is acknowledged, there is agreement with the view of Lytle et al. [12] that most of these theories do not consider retirement as a career stage nor is account taken of the diversity of cultural and historical perspectives.

In its statistics on retirement, the ABS [2] rates financial security as a principal factor influencing decisions to retire. The financial context within which retirement decisions are made, however, has grown increasingly complex [1]. In fact, it is contended that the individual will be challenged to navigate a way through retirement financial planning without professional aid. It is not surprising then that results from research studies indicate financial resources as a primary consideration relative to retirement [13].

Considerations of health in relation to retirement receive significant focus in the literature. In Australia, health is rated as a primary factor in most aspects relating to retirement [2]. Health costs, however, are increasingly becoming a challenge, constituting increasing pressure on financial planning for retirement [1]. In addition to physical health, the literature also proposes factors relating to mental health such as the role of social connections which is suggested as a buffer to age-related degeneration [14].

This inquiry aims to demonstrate the need for caution when generalizing statistics in relation to age-related study. Although most of the literature on retirement considered in this study referred to retirees as homogenous groups, studies which do account for age difference found significant differences in anticipated reasons for retirement [13]. Respondents in the 55–64 years old cohort, for example, rated financial security higher than their peers in the younger age bracket. Other studies suggest that there are age-related differences in planning for retirement. Jimenez et al. [15] found that the age differences in their Spanish study, however, are representative of a relatively young cohort. The population of contemporary aging spans more than five decades but represents a confusing concept in that there is cultural non-consensus about labels and definition particularly pertaining to the last two decades of aging [16]. While cognizance is taken of this issue, the current study will identify two clearly designated groups as younger (less than 50 years of age) and older (more than 50 years of age). This may suggest a limitation of this study but also creates the opportunity for future study to investigate possible differences within sub-groups of these age brackets.

In recent decades there has been an increasing focus in the literature on aspects of the nature of spirituality. Despite this growing interest, however, there has been little work on spirituality and gerontology even though spirituality is not a marginal consideration but according to Atchley, “a vital context for understanding aging” [16]. Indeed, Pargament [17] proposes that spirituality is a distinctive motivation and process. Yet although spirituality and religiosity have been offered as distinct constructs [18], most research has been undertaken from a religion-orientated standpoint [16].

Diverse perceptions and definition of religion and spirituality have led to ongoing conversation with some ambiguity still pervading academic texts. There are instances where the terms are used interchangeably or in other cases embedded in either concept with resulting definition at times so encompassing or so narrowly focused, as to become confusing. This makes for an intriguing issue which unfortunately falls



outside the scope of this chapter. For the purposes of this discussion, the authors have taken the standpoint that religion and spirituality be understood in relation to the worldview of the participants. The concept of religion as a parasol of beliefs formed from a specific interpretation of theology has come under change in recent years. The participants in this study do not reject traditionally institutionalised religion. Spirituality as operated collectively (The Call) finds expression in individual response (A Call). Spirituality for the individual is perceived as a dynamic and on-going experience in which individuals grow and mature in their understanding of their faith journey and in relationship to a divine being. Definition, therefore, becomes context orientated. This is not to deny that “the nature of spiritual experience is complex and does not lend itself to simplistic concepts of measure” [16]. It is offered as a conceptual framework for understanding the response of the participants.

As such incorporation of spirituality within the concept of aging and retirement that reflects the perception of the participants becomes a necessary inquiry. In this study, the role of spirituality and particularly the impact of the concept of a Call, which is understood as a personal invocation to serve others, will be included in the conversation. Atchley [16] proposes that for many individuals service itself is regarded as a spiritual experience. The Call to service for individuals may transcend organizational commitment and is perceived as divinely derived [19]. These considerations point to a need indicated in the literature for new studies linking retirement planning with spirituality and the identification of specific differences in retirement planning [20].

The identification of factors influencing pre-retirement planning potentially illuminates patterns of adjustment to retirement [21]. Indeed, increased understanding of retirement and aging is significant in contributing to the response of organizations, government and society to the aging phenomenon [22]. The current inquiry will highlight the importance of considering retirement planning in specific context and of the need for differentiating between age cohorts. It is hoped that additional insight into lesser researched factors impacting aging, such as spirituality will add value to the conversation. These results will indicate the evolving trends for specific groups with strong cultural and traditional ties and suggest insights to enhance understanding for management strategies.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted an ex post facto cross-sectional self-reporting survey to collect data from working Seventh-day Adventist Ministers in Australia and New Zealand. Permission to access these ministers along with the ministers' email addresses was provided from the respective regional employers. In 2018, emails were sent to these ministers outlining the purpose of the survey and inviting them to participate in the survey questionnaire via an online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. This online link was left open for one month with three reminders sent to the potential respondents during this time. About 570 emails were sent to ministers and 228 interacted with the online survey, representing a 40% response rate.

Ethics approval for this research study was obtained from the Avondale Human Research Ethics Committee (Project number 2018.3).

#### **3.1 The survey instrument**

The survey questionnaire included 11 democratic and professional work-related questions. These included items on training, length of service, type of ministry and location. This was followed by survey items relating to personal and professional factors from which 14 personal and professional scales were constructed. All items

were rated on a 4-point Likert scale in which respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the positive stem statement from minimally to substantially.

### 3.1.1 Scales

Physical Health was measured by an overall physical health scale. Cognitive health was measured by the Cognitive Function scale [23] which measures the individual respondent's perception of their cognitive ability.

Respondent's perception of psychological stress and depression was measured using items adapted from the K10 [24] with two additional items specifically related to ministry. Items for the Wellbeing scale were adapted from the survey on Retirement Intentions for Australian Medical Practitioners [13] with the addition of one item relating specifically to the call to ministry. Items measuring the respondent's perception about aging, were adapted from the Anxiety About Ageing Scale [25].

The items for the Work Centrality scale, measuring the importance of work, were sourced from the Work Centrality Questionnaire [26] which included additional questions relating specifically to the centrality of ministry and calling.

Four items from the Retirement Resource Inventory (RRI) Financial scale, measured the respondents' view of their financial status in relation to retirement and their perception about current and future support. These items were adapted from the RRI [23]. Five items from the Retirement Resource Inventory Social scale, based on the RRI [23] measures a wide range of perceived social support.

The items from the Personal Resilience scale measure the individual's response to their perception of their ability to deal with the challenges of life. The items are adapted from the RRI [23] with two additional items sourced from The Resilience Advantage [27]. The items from the Future Pathway subscale (FS), [28] were included to measure the respondents' perception of their ability to plan and accomplish goals.

The survey also included four items relating to aspects of ministry as a career and the divine 'calling' of their work. It was anticipated that these items would generate a Calling scale. Factor and scale reliability analysis of these items indicated that these items do not generate a single scale. These separate items were, however, included in the analysis of the data.

The respondents were then asked to rate the following items on a 4-point Likert scale:

- How prepared for retirement do you think you are?
- How confident are you that retirement will be a positive season of your life?
- How satisfied are you with your planning for retirement?
- What factors will determine the timing of your retirement?

## 4. Data analysis

### 4.1 Demographics

Of the 228 respondents, 93.36% were male, 92.11% were married, 68.58% completed their primary theological training in Australia and 76% of the respondents were presently serving in Australia and 24% in New Zealand. In terms of employment history, 35.96%, 29.39%, 18.86%, 11.84% and 3.95% had been employed as ministers for 0–10 years, 10–20 years, 20–30 years, 30–40 years and 40+ years respectively.

In terms of present service orientation, 52.86% serve in an urban church; 25.11% serve in a rural church; 16.30% have some type of administration role while the rest (5.72%) have other roles. For this cohort, 11.85% reported that they worked less than 40 hours per week, 39.47% reported they worked 40–49 h per week, 32.89% reported that they worked 50–59 h per week and 15.79% reported they worked 60+ h per week.

Of the respondents 7.46% were aged under 29 years, 15.35% were 30–39 years, 24.12% were 40–49 years, 28.07% were 50–59 years, 12.72% were 60–64% and 12.8% were 65+ years. This resulted in 46.93% of the respondents being less than 50 years of age and 53.70% being 50+ years of age. This two group age division was adopted in the univariate calculations. To facilitate reading, the two groups will be referred to as the younger set (less than 50 years of age) and the older set (fifty years and older).

#### **4.2 Personal and professional factors impacting the retirement experience**

All factor scales had a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) greater than 0.75 (**Table 1**) which supported the use of these scales in this context. These factors were measured on a 4-point Likert scale signifying any reported mean greater than 2.5 indicates that the majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements relating to the respective factors (**Figure 1**).

There were significant differences by age group for some of these factors (**Table 1**). As expected, those aged less than 50 years reported significantly higher values of physical health than those aged 50 plus years [ $t = 3.250$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ]. What is interesting, however, is the absolute values of the Physical Health scale means (2.752 and 2.324) appear relatively low which was not expected given the importance of living and promoting a healthy lifestyle within the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. In terms of psychological stress, despite the significant difference [ $t = 2.673$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ], the mean scale values (1.579 and 1.416) suggest the majority of both the younger and older age group were coping relatively well with the stress generated by their profession. In contrast to physical health, it was the younger set that was more likely to register greater levels of stress in their professional role than the older set.

There was also a significant difference between the younger and the older age group in terms of their perceived retirement finance resources [ $t = 2.665$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ]. Even though the older set reported higher mean RRI-Finance ratings than their younger colleagues, a mean of 2.334 compared to 2.060, their absolute values being below 2.500 would suggest that a large percentage of the ministers are still not comfortable with their present retirement financial resources.

#### **4.3 Perceptions of the preparation for and the retirement experience**

This study focused on four aspects of current ministers' perceptions of retirement: preparedness for retirement; viewing retirement as a positive season; satisfaction with planning for retirement; factors influencing timing of retirement. Most of the ministers were quite confident that retirement would be a positive season of their life ( $M = 3.067$ ,  $SD = 0.762$ ). They were, however, less confident that, at this point in time, they were prepared for retirement ( $M = 2.585$ ,  $SD = 0.787$ ) and were not satisfied with their planning for retirement ( $M = 2.380$ ,  $SD = 0.904$ ). There were significant age group differences in the perceptions of preparation aspects for retirement. The older set was significantly more confident that they were prepared [ $t = -3.322$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ] and satisfied with their planning for retirement [ $t = -3.067$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ] than their younger colleagues.

Scale-item/Age group		Combined data		Less than 50 years		50+ years		
	Alpha	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p-value
Physical Health	Na	2.558	0.274	2.752	1.004	2.324	0.926	.001*
Cognitive Function	.828	3.680	0.406	3.655	0.450	3.701	0,363	.406
Psychological Stress	.906	1.493	0.441	1.579	0.501	1.416	0.366	.008*
Wellbeing	.872	2.950	0.504	2.930	0.523	2.968	0.489	.172
Anxiety About Ageing	.750	2.558	0.274	2.593	0.230	2.528	0.305	.097
Work Centrality	.782	3.352	0.484	3.302	0.477	3.396	0.487	.172
RRI – Financial	.799	2.208	0.726	2.060	0.734	2.334	0.698	.008*
RRI – Social	.726	2.935	0.726	2.997	0.681	2.880	0.763	.256
Personal Resilience	.772	3.056	0.356	3.083	0.382	3.033	0.332	.321
Future Scale	.826	3.203	0.425	3.233	0.439	3.176	0.412	.350
Career: Marked by external reward, following Other careers	Na	1.974	0.950	2.043	0.888	1.915	1.001	.346
Career: Contributing to the Greater good	Na	3.226	0.787	3.228	0.7278	3.224	0.839	.972
Career: A divine calling for a Specific purpose	Na	3.145	0.855	3.260	0.904	3.046	0.904	.078
Career: A divine calling that lasts a lifetime	Na	3.625	0.629	3.623	0.637	3.626	0.637	.978

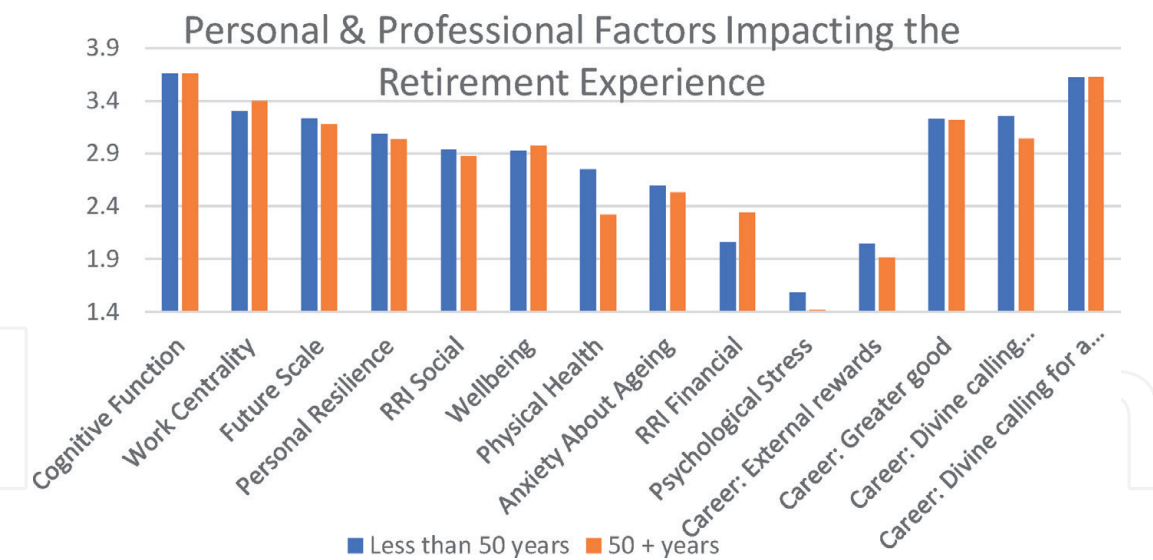
\*A significant difference in age group perceptions at the 0.05 level

**Table 1.**  
*Personal and Professional factors scale means: a comparison between respondents aged less than 50 years and those aged 50 plus years.*

**4.4 Predictors of ministers perceptions of retirement**

To explore the potential relationships between the outcome measures: How prepared for retirement do you think you are? How confident are you that retirement





**Figure 1.**  
*Personal and professional factors impacting the retirement experience.*

will be a positive season in your life? How satisfied are you with your planning for retirement? and the 14 personal and professional factors (**Table 1**), backward multiple regression was carried out (**Tables 2–4**). The resulting residual distributions were near normal. Further, the collinearity statistic ‘VIP’ was calculated to test for multicollinearity between the respective predictors. All VIP values were less than 10, indicating that multicollinearity does not appear problematic [29].

4.4.1 *How prepared did they think they were for retirement?*

For the younger set, regression analysis generated a single significant factor model that explained 33.3% of the variance in ministers’ perception of how prepared they thought they were for retirement. The single predictor of this sample of ministers’ perception of their preparedness for retirement was their rating of the Retirement Resource Inventory: Finance ( $\beta = +0.459$ ). The higher they rated their financial retirement resources, the more they felt they were prepared for retirement. For the older set, regression analysis generated a two significant factor model that explained 29.8% of the variance in ministers’ perception of how prepared they

Personal & Professional factors	R Square	Beta	t value	Sig.
Age less than 50 years	0.333			
Retirement Resources: Finance		0.459	4.623	<.001*
Physical Health		-0.196	-1.931	.057
Cognitive Functioning		-0.197	-1.906	.060
Age 50+ years	0.298			
Retirement Resources: Finance		0.394	3.947	<.001*
Psychological Stress		-0.216	-2.173	.033*
A calling which is divinely inspired and is directed to a specific purpose for a set time		0.160	1.711	.091

\*Significant at the .005 level

**Table 2.**  
*Predictors of ministers’ perception of how prepared they thought they were for retirement.*

Personal & Professional factors	R Square	Beta	t value	Sig.
<i>Age less than 50 years</i>	0.414			
Physical Health		-0.350	-3.677	<.001*
Wellbeing		0.260	2.667	.009*
A calling which is divinely inspired and is directed to a specific purpose for a set time		0.211	1.913	.023*
A vocation which allows for personal fulfilment and development and contributes to the greater good		0.185	2.028	.046*
A career, not unlike other careers, where achievement is marked by external reward and career advancement		-0.174	-1.913	.060
<i>Age 50+ years</i>	0.426			
Anxiety about Ageing (Reverse)		0.500	5.936	<.001*
Retirement Resources: Financial		0.362	4.293	<.001*

\*Significant at the .005 level

**Table 3.**  
*Predictors of ministers' perception of how confident they are that retirement will be a positive season of their lives.*

Personal & Professional factors	R Square	Beta	t value	Sig.
<i>Age less than 50 years</i>	0.574			
Retirement Resources: Finance		0.586	7.459	<.001*
Physical Health		-0.238	-0.361	.003*
A vocation which allows for personal fulfilment and development and contributes to the greater good		0.177	2.361	.021*
<i>Age 50+ years</i>	0.475			
Retirement Resources: Finance		0.525	6.150	<.001*
Future Scale		0.294	3.505	.001*
A career, not unlike other careers, where achievement is marked by external reward and career advancement		0.148	1.785	.078
Retirement Resource: Social		0.144	1.708	.091

\*Significant at the .005 level

**Table 4.**  
*Predictors of ministers' perception of how satisfied they were with their planning for retirement.*

thought they were for retirement. The strongest predictor was their rating of the Retirement Resource Inventory: Finance ( $\beta = +0.394$ ), followed by Psychological Stress ( $\beta = -0.216$ ). The negative Beta values indicate that the higher they rated psychological stress, the less their perception of their preparedness for retirement (**Table 2**).

#### 4.4.2 Did they think retirement would be a positive season of their lives?

For those ministers aged 50 years and less, regression analysis generated a three significant factor model that explained 41.4% of the variance in ministers' perception of how confident they are that retirement will be a positive season of their lives. The strongest predictor was their rating of their physical health ( $\beta = -0.350$ ). The higher they rated their physical health, the less they felt that retirement would be a positive season of their life. The next strongest predictors were Wellbeing ( $\beta = 0.260$ ), followed by their rating of "ministry is a calling which is divinely inspired and is directed to a specific purpose for a set time" ( $\beta = 0.211$ ). This was followed by their rating of "ministry is a vocation which allows for personal fulfillment and development and contributes to the greater good" ( $\beta = 0.185$ ). For those ministers aged 50+ years, regression analysis generated a two significant factor model that explained 42.6% of the variance in older ministers' perception of how confident they are that retirement will be a positive season of their lives. The strongest predictor was their rating of the anxiety about aging ( $\beta = +0.362$ ). Because of the reverse orientation of this factor, this result indicates that the less ministers are anxious about aging, the more they will see retirement as a positive season of their life. The next significant predictor was their rating of the Retirement Resource Inventory: Finance factor ( $\beta = +0.362$ ) (**Table 3**).

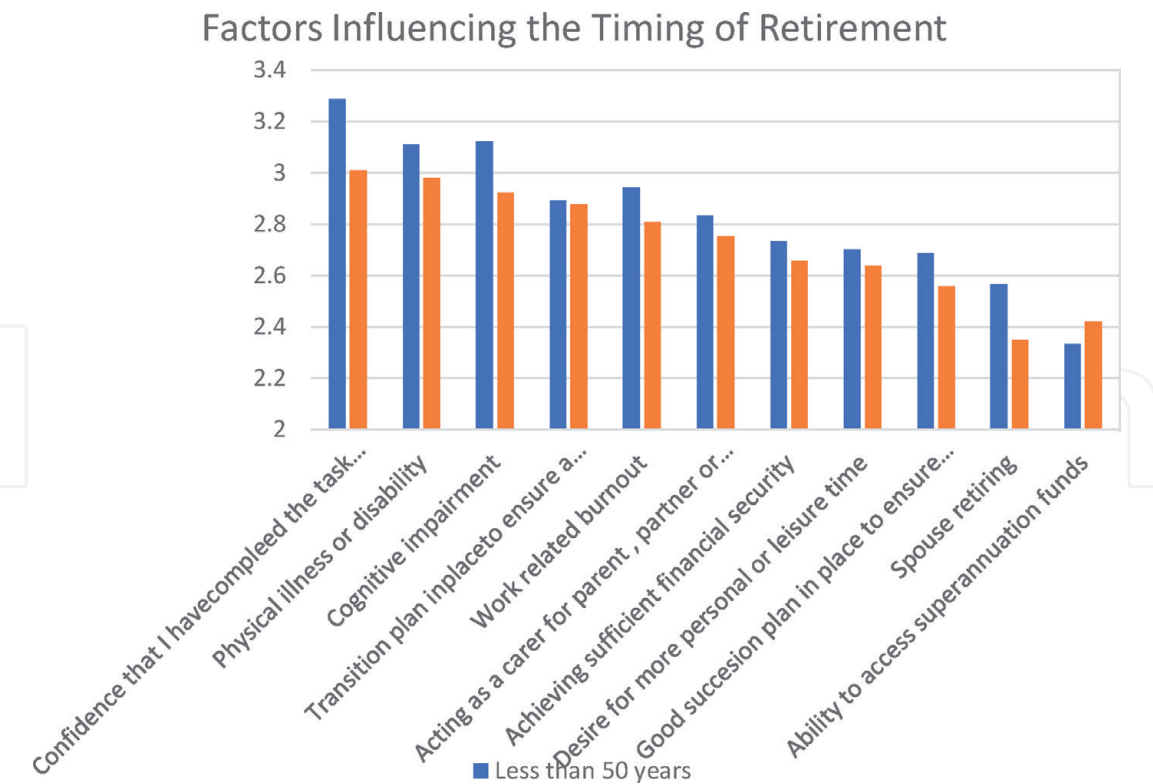
#### 4.4.3 Were they satisfied with planning for retirement?

For ministers aged 50 years and less, regression analysis generated a three significant factor model that explained 57.4% of the variance in younger ministers' perception of how satisfied they were with their planning for retirement. The strongest predictor was their rating of the Retirement Resource Inventory: Finance ( $\beta = +0.586$ ) factor, followed by their self-reported Physical Health rating ( $\beta = -0.238$ ) and then their rating of "ministry is a vocation which allows for personal fulfillment and development and contributes to the greater good" ( $\beta = 0.177$ ) factor. For the older set, regression analysis generated a two significant factor model that explained 47.5% of the variance in older ministers' perception of how satisfied they were with their planning for retirement.

The strongest predictor was their rating of the Retirement Resource Inventory: Finance ( $\beta = +0.362$ ), followed by their Future Scale—pathway rating ( $\beta = +0.294$ ) (**Table 4**).

## 5. Factors influencing timing of retirement

There were some differences between the age groups in terms of importance of some factors in timing of retirement (**Figure 2**). The less than 50 years group more often reported that impairment of cognitive function would be a significant factor in the timing of retirement than the 50+ group [ $t(196) = 2.013$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ]. The less than 50 years group also more often reported that an understanding they had completed the task God had called them to do, would be a significant factor in the timing of retirement than the 50+ group [ $t(194) = 2.492$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ].



**Figure 2.**  
*Mean ratings of the respective factors influencing the timing of retirement across the two age groups.*

The relative importance of the respective factors influencing the timing of retirement for the two age groups was strikingly similar (**Table 5**). The differences, when they occurred were minor. The pattern of the ranking of both age groups followed the same overall trend: The most important factor in terms of retirement timing was the response to God’ calling. The next important set of factors was: health assessment; both physical and psychological. This was followed by the need to retire to help others. Then with a ranking of 7/11 came ‘achieving sufficient financial security’. All the other factors were considered of lesser importance in determining timing of retirement.

In terms of ranking differences across the age groups the less than 50 years group ranked cognitive impairment above physical illness whereas for the 50+ years the order was reversed; a difference that was not predicted. The timing of the retirement of their spouse had little impact on the retirement timing for most of the ministers. Ministers within the 50+ age group ranked timing of spouse retirement lower than the younger years age group. In fact, the older age group ranked timing of spouse retirement as the least important of the respective timing of retirement factors presented to them.

## 6. Discussion

At the start of this chapter, we noted that an aging population now implies that a significant portion of society faces an historically increased number of years in retirement. Not only will an increasing percentage of citizens in developed countries live longer, but they will experience a more complex retirement dynamic as they come to realize. “Aging is not what it used to be...” [30].

This phenomenon has far-reaching implications for society in general and calls for an informed response at local and state level. A multidimensional approach to retirement necessitates a multi-focal lens in which it is recognized that retirees are not a homogenous group. This necessitates consideration of culture specific



Scale-Item/Age Group	Combined data			Less than 50 years			50+ years		
	Rank	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Confidence that I have completed the task God has called me to do*	1	3.144	0.761	3.288	0.767	1	3.019	0.737	1
Physical illness or disability	2	3.040	0.670	3.111	0.643	3	2.981	0.689	2
Cognitive impairment*	3	3.015	0.690	3.122	0.684	2	2.924	0.685	3
Transition plan in place to ensure a positive retirement experience	4	2.882	0.649	2.890	0.721	5	2.876	0.583	4
Work Related Burnout	5	2.871	0.794	2.943	0.844	4	2.809	0.748	5
Acting as a carer for a parent, partner or child or grand child	6	2.789	0.740	2.833	0.825	6	2.752	0.661	6
Achieving sufficient financial security	7	2.692	0.778	2.733	0.790	7	2.657	0.769	7
Desire for more personal or leisure time	8	2.666	0.722	2.700	0.785	8	2.638	0.666	8
Good succession plan in place to ensure continuity	9	2.618	0.733	2.688	0.788	9	2.557	0.680	9
Partner/spouse retiring	10	2.450	0.778	2.566	0.821	10	2.349	0.723	11
Ability to access superannuation funds	11	2.381	0.754	2.333	0.778	11	2.423	0.733	10

\*A significant difference in age group perceptions at the 0.05 level

**Table 5.**  
*Factors influencing timing of retirement: a comparison between respondents aged less than 50 years and those aged 50 plus years.*

impacting factors and awareness of contextual influence in age-differentiated approaches in order to gain in-depth insight into the retirement phenomena. We hoped to make a contribution to the conversation on retirement by selecting a specific group of participants with strong cultural and traditional ties to

illustrate that in addition to the well-documented impacting factors of health and finance, additional influencers have significant impact on the way retirement is viewed. In addition, we sought the response of two age identified groups (50 years and younger, 50 years and older) to identify age related differences in perception to retirement. This group of working Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Australia and New Zealand presented an opportunity to address lesser researched areas such as the impact of spirituality and a calling as well as an opportunity to study a group with a culture of adherence to promoting a holistic lifestyle as part of their faith beliefs. In addition, it became clear from a reading of the literature that there is only limited research into perceptions of contemporary ministers of religion [31].

Response to the inquiry into personal and professional factors impacting retirement indicated that these ministers rated their cognitive health very highly. They also gave regard for wellbeing, personal resilience and their ability to plan for the future relatively high ratings. The centrality of their work was also highly rated, a result common to other careers where work is regarded to some degree as a 'calling' [13]. Anxiety about aging was rated in mid-range. In terms of financial and social resources for retirement, the social component was rated highly but in contrast, the financial component received a low rating.

Most of the ministers saw their career as a divine life-long calling which may be divided into periods of particular focus but always with a service orientation. Their retirement was not seen as an end of ministry but rather a time to move into a different ministry orientation. This view finds commonality with the central premise of Atchley's Continuity Theory (1989) in which older adults seek to preserve and maintain previous lifestyle patterns, identities and values.

There were age group differences with the older set rating their psychological stress significantly lower and their financial retirement resources significantly higher than their younger colleagues. As predicted, the younger set rated their physical health significantly higher than their older colleagues.

The study focused on three principal aspects of retirement: How prepared participants thought they were for retirement?; Whether they thought retirement would be a positive season?; Whether they were satisfied with their planning for retirement? Most of the ministers were quite confident that retirement would be a positive season of their life but please see further discussion below. They were, however, less confident that they were prepared for retirement and were not satisfied with their planning for retirement. Even though both age groups ranked these elements of retirement in the same order, the younger set were less confident about each element than the older ministers.

For both age groups, financial resources were the strongest positive predictor of perceptions of preparedness for retirement. For the younger set, psychological stress was a negative predictor of preparedness; the greater the stress the less prepared for retirement they felt. Whether an increase in psychological stress was linked to a perception that retirement may come earlier than planned or that stressed ministers generated more negative assessments of their present situation, needs further exploration.

Predictors of retirement as a positive season of life were different for the two age groups; something that was not foreseen. For the 50+ years age group the two predictors were financial resources, as expected, and their anxiety about aging. The less anxious they were about aging, the more often they perceived that retirement would be a positive season of their life. In contrast, for the younger group, financial resources were not a predictor that retirement would be a positive season of their life. Rather the following factors were considered significant: wellbeing; a perception that calling to ministry was for a specified task and the view that ministry

allowed for personal development and fulfillment. These are personal and professional factors that could be seen to enhance ministers' ability to cope well with life changes in general, so it seems reasonable to have these factors associated with a positive view of retirement. For the younger set, physical health was a negative predictor of the retirement phase. Why? A possible explanation could be that younger ministers who felt physically healthy now, anticipated poorer health in the future and thus perceived that retirement will be less positive.

Associated with the ministers' perception of their preparedness for retirement, is their perception of satisfaction with their planning. For both age groups perception of retirement finance resources, once again, consistently predicted their satisfaction with retirement planning. As predicted, the older set's perception of their future orientation was a positive predictor of satisfaction with their retirement planning. What is interesting, however, is that this is not a predictor for the younger ministers, perhaps suggesting that retirement planning often does not become a focused activity until ministers reach the 50+ years age range. For the younger set, the perception that their career was a vocation which allows for personal fulfillment and development was also a predictor of satisfaction with their retirement planning. This may indicate that for these ministers, personal development orientation includes planning for the future. The awareness that a positive retirement experience necessitates taking personal responsibility for being prepared for this eventuality demonstrates an emerging trend for ministers. The weight given to personal development may also suggest that the younger group regard retirement as an opportunity to continue growing and contributing to the welfare of others.

Results from considering the responses of participants in terms of timing for retirement reiterate the importance of inquiry into specific context. The most significant factor influencing the timing of retirement was not finances but for both age groups, confidence that they had completed God's calling. Results like this have important implications for management strategies. It is clear that it cannot be assumed that monetary considerations constitute the primary decider of when individuals in this study will retire. These participants have indicated that they will continue working until they feel certain they have accomplished the task for which they were called, irrespective of financial considerations but dependent on health status.

Although both age groups placed a high premium on health when it came to decisions about when to retire, the younger group gave pre-eminence to cognitive health, while the older group considered physical health as more important. Either way, the high ranking given to health is potentially further evidence that contemporary faith-based ministers are entering a new era where they are aware of the necessity of taking personal responsibility for their personal and professional wellbeing. This may be illustrated by the increasing enrollment and growth of Seventh-day Adventist holistic health programs in the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Limitations of this study include that it only accessed ministers from one faith-based community. Even so, it is expected that this career specific study could have application to other faith-based ministers but additional studies with different faith-based ministers are needed to test this expectation. The sample size though reasonable for the Australian and New Zealand Seventh-day Adventist faith-based community, comprise a relatively small number of ministers. This limited the ability of the study to explore differences within the sample in terms of such characteristics as ministry type, location, training, gender and a larger range of age groups. Finally, the data obtained was constrained by the researchers' questionnaire framework. Factors that influence ministers' perceptions of retirement outside this framework can and should be explored by studies adopting a qualitative research orientation.

## 7. Conclusion

The rising tide of baby boomers entering retirement, coupled with global challenges of the aging phenomena, has focused the spotlight on employee preparation for retirement. Faith-based ministers, who traditionally followed a line that God would take care of them in retirement, have entered a new era in which, while not negating their faith beliefs, are advocating for a more active role in preparing for the retirement phase. Insights gained from this study will make a valuable contribution to the general understanding of retirement as a 'comma' and no longer as a 'full-stop' in an individual's life span. Results from this study show that individuals who envisage a retirement season in which, service for the greater good is continued in some form, are more likely to experience a positive retirement life phase. In particular, these results focus on the importance of understanding factors impacting retirement in specific context, strengthening the argument that retirees cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group. Results have indicated evolving patterns even within cohorts of the aging population. It is proposed that the adoption of a multifocal lens to view retirement has the potential to enhance organizational management strategies, interpersonal connectivity and intrapersonal growth and wellbeing. By increasing the wellbeing of retirees in the community, a potentially significant resource will be unleashed to augment ever-increasing social needs. This study presents an opportunity to incorporate insight from specific context into macro-evolving patterns; shifting perception of aging and retirement as an increasing burden on society to one of a potential positive contributory resource. This surely constitutes a step in the right direction.

## Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the contribution of Dr Peter Williams and Dr Bruce Manning to the work of this research.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they are not aware of any conflict of interest in the course of conducting this research.

## Thanks

A note of thanks to Lynelle Waring for editorial assistance.



IntechOpen

IntechOpen

### **Author details**

Bernadene Erasmus\* and Peter John Morey  
Avondale University College/Charles Sturt University, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia

\*Address all correspondence to: [berasmus@bigpond.com](mailto:berasmus@bigpond.com)

### **IntechOpen**

---

© 2020 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This chapter is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. 

## References

- [1] Feldman DC, Beehr TA. A three-phased model of retirement decision making. *American Psychologist*. 2011;**66**(3):1-27
- [2] Australian Bureau of Statistics. Retirement. 2017. Available from: [ABS.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nnsf/mf/4149.0](http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nnsf/mf/4149.0)
- [3] Ejechi EO. Social activities of retired nigerian academics: The applicability of the continuity theory. *Activities, Adaption & Aging*. 2015;**29**(10):64-76
- [4] Erikson EH. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton; 1950
- [5] Cumming E, Henry W. *Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement*, New York. Basic Books; 1961
- [6] Havighurst RJ. *Developmental Tasks and Education*. McKay: New York; 1948
- [7] Rowe J, Kahn R. Successful ageing. *The Gerontologist*. 1997;**37**(4):433-440
- [8] Schroots JJ. Theoretical developments in the psychology of aging. *The Gerontologist*. 1996;**36**(6):742-748
- [9] Atchley RC. A continuity theory of normal aging. *The Gerontologist*. 1989;**29**(2):183-190
- [10] Fisher GG, Chaffee DS, Sonnega A. Retirement timing: A review and recommendations for future research. *Work, Aging & Retirement*. 2016;**2**(2):230-261
- [11] Cahill KE, Giandrea MD, Quin JF. Retirement patterns from career employment. *The Gerontologist*. 2006;**46**(4):514-523
- [12] Lytle MC, Foley PF, Cotter EW. Career and retirement theories: Relevance for older workers across cultures. *Journal of Career Development*. 2015;**42**(3):185-198
- [13] Wijeratne C, Earl JK, Peisah C, Luscombe GM, Tibbertsma J. Professional and psychological factors affecting the intention to retire of Australian medical practitioners. *Medical Journal of Australia*. 2017;**206**(5):209-214
- [14] Shariffian N, Gruhn D. The differential impact of social participation and social support on psychological well-being: Evidence from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. 2018;**88**(2):107-126
- [15] Jimenez I, Chiesa R, Topa G. Financial planning for retirement: Age-related differences among Spanish workers. *Journal of Career Development*. 2018;**46**(5):550-566
- [16] Atchley RC. *Spirituality and Aging*. Maryland: John Hopkins; 2009. p. 149
- [17] Pargament K. Spirituality as an irreducible human motivation and process. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. 2013;**23**(4):271-281
- [18] Dy-Liacco GS, Piedmont RL, Murray-Swank NA, Rodgerson TE, Sherman MF. Spirituality and religiosity as cross-cultural aspects of human experience. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. 2009;**1**(1):35-52
- [19] Netting FE, O'Connor MK, Yancey G. Belief systems in faith-based human service programs. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*. 2006;**25**(3-4):261-286
- [20] Earl JK. The contribution of spirituality to the process of retirement. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*. 2015;**7**(3):223-240
- [21] Richardson V, Kilty KM. Adjustment to retirement: Continuity vs

discontinuity. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. 1991;**33**(2):151-169

[22] Breheny M, Griffiths Z. "I had a good time when I was young." Interpreting descriptions of continuity among older people. *Journal of Aging Studies*. 2017;**41**:36-43

[23] Leung C, Earl JK. Retirement resources inventory: Construction, factor structure and psychometric properties. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*. 2012;**81**:171-182

[24] Kessler R, Andrews G, Colpe L. Short screening scales to monitor population prevalences and trends in non-specific distress. *Psychological Medicine*. 2000;**32**:959-976

[25] Lasher K, Faulkender P. Measurement of aging anxiety: Development of the anxiety about aging scale. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. 1993;**37**:247-259

[26] Lim G, Ng L. Early retirement and bridge employment intentions among older workers in Singapore. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. 1997;**14**:185-210

[27] Siebert A. *The Resilience Advantage*. Berrett-Koehler: California; 2005

[28] Snyder C, Harris C, Anderson J, Holleran S, Irving L, Sigmon S. The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-difference measurement of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1991;**6**:570-585

[29] Ho R. *Handbook of Univariate and Multivariate Data Analysis and Interpretation with SPSS*. Chapman & Hall: New York; 2006

[30] Watkins D. Spiritual formation of older persons in a postmodern context.

*Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging*. 2009;**22**(1-2):1-11

[31] Davey J. What influences retirement decisions? *Social Policy Journal New Zealand*. 2008;**33**:110-125